

SUPPLEMENTS TO  
VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE

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The Trinitarian  
Theology of  
Hilary of  
Poitiers



MARK WEEDMAN

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BRILL

# The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers

Supplements  
to  
Vigiliae Christianae

Texts and Studies of Early Christian  
Life and Language

*Editors*

J. den Boeft – J. van Oort – W.L. Petersen † –  
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# The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers

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Mark Weedman



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## PREFACE

I write this not long after the first heavy snowfall of the season. It's winter, and, at the risk of over-working a metaphor, this seems like the appropriate season to bring this project to a close. This book began its life as a dissertation. Although it has gone through a number of iterations since its inception, and although it is substantially changed from its original form, I can't help but think I'm reaching the end of something. I still remember my first doctoral seminar at Marquette where I wondered why Hilary sounded so much like Gregory of Nazianzen. That was a naïve but straightforward enough question, and since then I have endeavored to not only give it scholarly shape and weight, but to come up with a satisfactory answer. I think I have answered that lingering question—at least to my satisfaction, though the readers will have to judge for themselves—and thus my feeling of closure. Not that I'll never have anything interesting to say about Hilary after this, but this question, at least, has been put to rest.

The funny thing about big writing projects like this book is how much of a group effort they are. I certainly had my share of “me versus the blank page” moments during the process, but in retrospect I remember those moments less than all of the help I've received. If what follows in these paragraphs seems like the obligatory “thank you” section of a preface so be it, but it's not obligatory to me; I'm more grateful in every case than I can possibly indicate, especially since I realize that these relationships run deeper and are more important than a mere book. Let me start with Dr. Michel Barnes of Marquette University, who directed the dissertation stage of the process. Much of what is good in here results from his training. Much of what is bad is the result of my not paying enough attention to his training. I am especially grateful for his willingness to work with me at odd hours after I left Milwaukee. I remember well a Saturday afternoon in a classroom at Marquette when this thing really began to take shape, though dinners at Famous Dave's were probably more fun. I would also like to thank Dr. Daniel Williams of Baylor University who was the dissertation's external reader. Dr. Williams played an instrumental role in helping me receive funding while writing the dissertation, and, of course, his expert comments went a long way towards shaping the dissertation's final revision.

I need to thank my parents, Dr. Gary and Janis Weedman, whose support throughout this process has been . . . well, what one might expect of parents who love their son, which means that it exists on and for a much deeper level than any book. I am very lucky. On a more tangible level, my Dad has read nearly every word of nearly every draft, which I regard as heroic, especially since my prose was even more turgid in earlier drafts than it is now. Speaking of tangible, I may owe Drs. Judith and Stephen Beall more than anyone else if only for providing me with room, board and office space during a crucial time in the writing of this thing. It's hard to imagine being finished without their support. I should also say thank you to Ivo Romein of Brill Publishers for such good humor and patience, especially in light of, u.a., my spreading rumors among his colleagues that he had resigned. Jon McGurran deserves special mention for doing the tedious job of working through the footnotes.

Finally, let me offer special thanks to the so-called Duc de Richelieu, who has demonstrated to me how much smarter and more civilized the French are, along with the meaning of *ironie* and the benefits of watching *L'espace: Au-dessus de et Là-bas*. (I should also thank Dr. Barnes for introducing me to *Babylon 5*. How many of my early academic relationships are mediated through television shows?) And who, in all seriousness, has offered excellent advice, timely encouragement, and skilled criticism. If it is the job of senior scholars to encourage their juniors, I am grateful to report that in my case, such encouragement was offered with a great deal of grace and good will.

Which leaves only Michelle and our daughters, Annalise and Eleanor. This project has been part of our life together from its beginning, and so when I read through this manuscript I find embedded there traces of some of my happiest memories. (I also used the birth of both girls as incentive to meet deadlines, which was helpful in its own way!) I should not say too much about this, though. Marriage and fatherhood are infinitely harder and infinitely more satisfying than book writing, and it would seem to belittle one and over-glorify the other to suggest that completing this project marks the end of a phase in our life. But even as I write we are eagerly waiting for the birth of our next little child, so I *can* say that this ending is really a beginning; winter is about to turn into spring. I can't wait to see what happens next.

Rochester, MN  
Advent 2006

## INTRODUCTION RE-DISCOVERING HILARY

### THE CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF HILARY'S THEOLOGY

It is becoming increasingly common for scholars to acknowledge the importance of Hilary to the development of Latin Trinitarian theology. What that means, however, is less than clear. He is certainly important as a historian, a chronicler of events and, especially, the key texts from his era. Hilary is also important as one of the leading opponents of Latin Homoianism. Although we know relatively little about his anti-Homoian activities, except that they seem to have been unsuccessful, this may be the most lasting explanation for his fame as the “Athanasius of the West.”<sup>1</sup> But this leaves the question of his theology: what is it that made Hilary distinctive, and important, as a Trinitarian theologian? That modern scholars have trouble with this question is not entirely surprising, since Hilary's contemporaries were not clear about it themselves. Augustine cites Hilary by name in his own *De Trinitate*, and he speaks of Hilary with great reverence, but he can make no sense of the formula from Hilary he cites—a formula that Hilary had offered as almost a throw-away and that plays no role in his mature thought.<sup>2</sup>

My purpose in this book is to offer an account of Hilary's Trinitarian theology that helps bring some clarity to question of what Hilary contributed to Latin Trinitarian theology. To do this it will be necessary to accomplish two tasks. The first is to describe the main themes, scope and structure of Hilary's Trinitarian theology. In order to complete this first task, however, it is also necessary to situate Hilary's thought within the matrix of the mid-fourth century Trinitarian controversies. Like every theologian, Hilary was a product of his time, but even more than most ancient thinkers, the circumstances of Hilary's biography—the reasons why he engaged in the controversies and with the people he encountered as he did so—make it impossible to understand the shape

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<sup>1</sup> For the history of this phrase as a title for Hilary, see C.F.A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966): vii.

<sup>2</sup> See *De Trinitate* 6.11.

of his thought without a thorough awareness of its historical context. Given the importance of this insight to the argument in my book, I would like to spend the remainder of this introduction exploring the reasons why “historical context” offers the key to Hilary’s theology.

Hilary’s exile was a watershed event for his development as a theologian. Prior to his exile he was steeped in the theological sensibility of his native Latin heritage. He had written a commentary on Matthew sometime before being exiled, but it operates in the third-century mindset characteristic of most Latin theologians of his era. In the works he produced either during or just after his exile, however, Hilary reveals an increasingly nuanced awareness of the issues that the Trinitarian Controversy engendered, which includes a sense of the theological tools that might help him address those issues. A crucial factor in Hilary’s development and participation in the conflict was his exposure to the unique theological perspective of the Homoiousian Party and its chief spokesman, Basil of Ancyra. While scholars have long recognized Hilary’s association with Basil and the Homoiousians, they have been unable to determine the extent of Basil’s influence on Hilary’s thought. To what extent did Hilary absorb this new perspective, and to what extent did Hilary’s thought develop as a result? This is the classic question of Hilary scholarship, and without a coherent answer, it becomes difficult to fully comprehend the scope and shape of Hilary’s Trinitarian theology.

I will attempt to answer that question by showing that there is a fundamental change in Hilary’s thought from before his exile to during it. I will make my case by examining Hilary’s writings in their polemical context, focusing a great deal of attention on Hilary’s relationship with Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousians party. Scholarly debate over the question of Hilary and the Homoiousians has either paid little attention to the changing circumstances in which Hilary wrote, or it has ignored the polemical dynamics of the late 350s, especially by assuming the presence of a flat “Arianism,” instead of the multiplicity of parties and perspectives that actually existed. However, the intertwined narratives of Western engagement in the Controversy, the circumstances of Hilary’s exile, the fortunes of the Homoiousians, and the escalating activities of the Homoians are all crucial for understanding the development of Hilary’s thought. By placing that thought in its proper context, we can see not only that he was influenced by Basil, but we can even trace the stages by which that influence occurred.

In this introduction, then, I will attempt to present my argument in the context of recent scholarship on Hilary, to explain its content, logic and significance by relating it to the shape of that scholarship. However, because my insight depends on a particular narrative of both Hilary's career and the later stages of the Trinitarian Controversy, I begin with that narrative. To be sure, this narrative has been developed extensively elsewhere, and its appearance here risks both over simplification and tedium for the reader. Nevertheless, the identification of my argument by relating Hilary's theology to key narratives is not simply a pedagogic device (or even the predictable and necessary appearance of a *status questionis*), but an initial statement of the fundamental character of both my method and my insights. Keeping this method in mind will hopefully help the reader understand the sequence of material covered in the Introduction, which will then help make clear the sequence of material covered in the chapters.

#### THE LIFE AND CAREER OF HILARY OF POITIERS

There is a great deal of uncertainty as to the precise details of Hilary life. What follows here is a summary of what we can ascertain with some degree of reliability, along with reasonable speculations based on hints found both in Hilary's own writings and other ancient sources. Hilary's ancient biographer is largely unreliable, oftentimes contradicting evidence from Hilary's own pen, but it is possible to gain a sense of the basic outline of his career. Given the importance of Hilary's exile for his career and subsequent fame as an "anti-Arian," most scholars divide Hilary's career into three stages, with the exile as the central, defining moment.

There is no record of when Hilary was born. Scholars have suggested that he was born in the early part of the fourth century, but this is only speculation. Some scholars take Hilary's claim in his letter to Constantine that he would "grow old in penitence" to be the words of a middle aged Bishop.<sup>3</sup> Equally uncertain is when Hilary was baptized into the Christian faith. Venantius Fortunatus, who wrote an early biography of Hilary, claimed that Hilary had been raised in a Christian

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<sup>3</sup> See C.F.A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers*, 2, for discussion of this evidence.

home.<sup>4</sup> In the preface to his *De Trinitate*, however, Hilary seems to indicate that he converted to Christianity after a long spiritual quest.<sup>5</sup> If so, this would imply he did not become a Christian until adulthood.<sup>6</sup> Whether Hilary was raised as a Christian or not, however, it is certain that he had a classical education. The work of Jean Doignon especially has demonstrated the extent to which Hilary's thought was informed by his exposure to Latin philosophers and rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>7</sup> It seems likely that Hilary converted early in his adult life, if only because he says there was a gap between his conversion and his consecration to the episcopate.<sup>8</sup> That same quote also suggests that by 358 he had been a bishop for some time as well.<sup>9</sup> Scholars agree that it was while bishop, but before his exile, that Hilary wrote his *In Matthaum*.<sup>10</sup>

As I will examine the circumstances surrounding Hilary's exile in some detail in the Introduction and Chapter Three, I will here only address the key events. Beginning in 353 a series of councils were held in the West to discuss the status of Athanasius. These councils were convened by two Eastern Bishops, Valens and Ursacius, who were operating as agents of the emperor Constantius. Participants in these councils were asked to subscribe to the deposition of Athanasius, and those who refused were exiled. Several leading Latin bishops did refuse and were sent to the east, including Liberius of Rome, Dionysius of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli and Lucifer of Cagliari.<sup>11</sup> Hilary was exiled by the Council of Beziers in 356 and sent to Asia Minor.<sup>12</sup> This time in

<sup>4</sup> Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Hilarii* 1.3; PL 88, 441 A–B.

<sup>5</sup> *De Trinitate* 1.14; CCL 62, 54.

<sup>6</sup> For a survey of various scholarly opinions, see Carl Beckwith, "The Certainty of Faith in God's Word: The Theological Method and Structure of Hilary of Poitiers' *De Trinitate* (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004): 17, n. 49.

<sup>7</sup> See Jean Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil* (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1971). In addition to these pagan authors, Doignon also demonstrates the early Hilary's reliance on classical Latin theologians, especially Tertullian. I will examine Hilary's Latin theological heritage in Chapter One.

<sup>8</sup> *De Synodis* 91; PL 10.545: "Though long ago regenerate in baptism, and for some time a bishop, I never heard of the Nicene creed until I was going into exile." (*Regeneratus pridem, et in episcopatu aliquantisper manens, fidem Nicaenam nunquam nisi exsulaturus audivi*)

<sup>9</sup> Hilary was bishop of Poitiers in Gaul. For the rise of Christianity in that city and its possible influence on Hilary's formation, see Doignon, *Hilaire*, 30–47.

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of the dating of this work, see Doignon, *Hilaire*, 166–68.

<sup>11</sup> For a survey of these councils, see R.P.C. Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1988): 329–341.

<sup>12</sup> The precise reasons for Hilary's exile remain a question of scholarly debate. For discussion of the evidence, see below, pp. 10–13.

exile was especially formative for Hilary. He may have learned Greek.<sup>13</sup> He also seems to have enjoyed a significant degree of freedom while in exile. Most significantly, he came into contact with Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousian party. Partly as a result of his encounter with the Homoiousians, Hilary's appreciation for the nature of the current crisis and the character of his writing changed dramatically, becoming both more polemically aware and theologically sophisticated. It was during his exile that Hilary composed his most famous works, including the *Liber I adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, *De Synodis*, and *De Trinitate*.<sup>14</sup>

At some point after the Council of Constantinople in 360, Hilary apparently decided to return to Gaul without the emperor's permission, although this too is a matter of scholarly debate.<sup>15</sup> Upon his return to the West, Hilary began to work actively against Latin Homoian interests. Along with Eusebius of Vercelli, Hilary attempted to force the removal of the Homoian Bishop Auxentius from the see of Milan.<sup>16</sup> This was unsuccessful, and we have no further evidence for Hilary's activity. He may have died as early as 367.<sup>17</sup> Hilary did leave some literary works from this time period, though nothing of great theological interest, including the *Liber contra Auxentium* and a large commentary on the Psalms that relies heavily on Origen's Psalms Commentary.<sup>18</sup>

#### THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND IMPACT OF HILARY'S EXILE

This is the skeleton of Hilary's biography, but what the skeleton does not tell us is why the circumstances of his exile mattered so much to his thought. Part of the reason it mattered that his exile forced him

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<sup>13</sup> For discussion of Hilary's knowledge of Greek both prior to and after his exile, see Doignon, *Hilaire*, pp. 531–543.

<sup>14</sup> For the historical context and theology of these works, see below, Chapters 3, 4 and 5, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Older scholarship has tended to accept that Hilary was sent back to Gaul by the emperor, but more recent scholarship has demonstrated that Hilary's actions were likely done on his own initiative. See especially, Daniel H. Williams, "The anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the 'Liber contra Auxentium,'" *Church History* 61 (1992): 7–22.

<sup>16</sup> See Williams, "Anti-Arian," 14–22.

<sup>17</sup> See A.-J. Goemans, "La date de la mort de saint Hilaire," in *Hilaire et son temps: actes du colloque de Poitiers* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969): 107–111.

<sup>18</sup> For Hilary's post-exile literary output, see Manilo Simonetti, "Hilary of Poitiers and the Arian Crisis in the West," in *Patrology IV*, ed. Angelo di Berardino (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1986): 50–54.

to re-think his core theological conceptions. At the beginning of the 350s, the Western Church was, theologically at least, rooted deeply in the patterns and traditions established by the great Latin theologians of the third century. For Trinitarian theology, this meant Tertullian and Novatian. To be sure, the West had not entirely escaped participation in contemporary controversies, especially what is commonly called the “Arian Controversy.” In the years following the Nicene Council of 325, Western representatives had attended several councils relating to that controversy, most notably the Council of Serdica in 343, and Westerners had also sheltered both Athanasius of Alexandria during his exile in the 340s and Marcellus. Even so, the bulk of the Western church remained unaware of the storm in the East. Only a few Latin texts, one of which is a commentary by Hilary himself, survive from the period between the Council of Nicea and the Council of Arles in 353, a fact that may be an indication of the theological stagnation that existed in the West during these decades. With the exception of Hilary’s commentary, these surviving texts are only fragments, and they all display a remarkable degree of reliance on their Latin predecessors.<sup>19</sup>

All of this changed in 353. In that year two Easterners, Valens and Ursacius, convened the first of a series of councils that were ostensibly to be a referendum on the fate of Athanasius. In reality, however, the councils were a covert means for Valens and Ursacius to enforce the Emperor’s pro-“Arian” agenda in the West.<sup>20</sup> Valens and Ursacius demanded that Western bishops subscribe to a condemnation of Athanasius. Those who refused were exiled, which thereby removed those bishops likely to oppose the Emperor’s policies. As we will see, this move caught the Western Church almost entirely unprepared. Athanasius had spent the first half of the 340s in Rome, but he seems to have made a surprisingly small impact in the West, especially outside of Rome itself, and Valens and Ursacius found it relatively easy to gain the required assent to the condemnation of Athanasius. However, although the bishops did not fully understand it, their condemnation

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<sup>19</sup> We will discuss Hilary’s reliance on Tertullian and Novatian in Chapter One. For the judgement with regard to Fortunatianus of Aquileia, see D.H. Williams, “Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers’ *Commentarium in Matthaeum*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 9 (2001): 154.

<sup>20</sup> These were the Synod of Arles 353, the Synod of Milan 355, and the Synod of Beziers 356. For a detailed examination of the events at these councils, see Hans Christof Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984): 133–222.

of Athanasius also entailed submission to the emperor's radical theological agenda. So, while several prominent Bishops did accept exile rather than agree to the condemnation, on the surface it appeared that Valens and Ursacius had managed to impose their agenda on the West. In the year 358 Hilary himself, writing from exile, expressed his relief at discovering that not every Western bishop had capitulated. For a Pro-Nicene in the middle years of the 350s, it did seem that all of the West had gone astray.

The activities of Valens and Ursacius in the West also signal a new stage in the Nicene Controversy for the East. Here, the theological agenda of Valens and Ursacius, along with their supporters, was beginning to come into sharper focus. While convening that series of anti-Athanasian Synods in the West, Valens and Ursacius had resolutely avoided theological matters, preferring to keep their theological agenda hidden. This began to change as the decade progressed. The duo, along with some prominent Eastern figures such as Eudoxius of Constantinople and the future "neo-Arian" Eunomius of Cyzicus, convened a council at Sirmium in 357 and issued a statement of faith. Through this document, Valens, Ursacius and their associates revealed their theological agenda, the radical subordination of the Son to the Father.<sup>21</sup>

Hilary's exile made such a difference to him, therefore, because it was only in that experience that he came face-to-face with the opponents he would spend so much energy trying to refute. His exile also introduced Hilary to a group of theologians who would provide him with some theological categories that would become the centerpiece of that refutation. Hilary's opponents, the "Homoians," as they came to be called, exerted a great deal of influence in both the East and the West.<sup>22</sup> However, they also faced strong opposition, primarily by a group

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<sup>21</sup> See below, Chapter 4, for an examination of the encounter between Basil of Ancyra and the Homoians.

<sup>22</sup> Strictly speaking it is not possible to speak of "Homoians" before the creed(s) of Ariminum-Seleucia in 359, when the Homoians first identified the Son as "like the father." For the purposes of this study, however, I will identify the theology and theologians of the Sirmium 357 Creed as Homoian as this theology and theologians seem to have provided the impetus for the 359 creeds. To do so admittedly risks overdetermining a very fluid situation. Ursacius and Valens, who were behind the Latin exiles of the 350s and the creed of Sirmium 357 had long careers and demonstrated a remarkable ability to adjust to different political and theological currents. For discussion of their career that charts their course as the eventual "champions of the Homoians," see Michel Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident 335-430* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil,

of Eastern theologians led by Basil of Ancyra.<sup>23</sup> In the year following the Sirmium 357 Synod, Basil and his associates convened a meeting of their own. They did not produce a creed, but they did circulate a letter with a number of anathemas attached, many of which were directed at early Homoian doctrines.<sup>24</sup> Basil was a formidable foe. He had a long history in Eastern ecclesiastical politics, having made his name by presiding over the Synod that deposed Photinus for the final time. He was also a skilled theologian, and his attempts to resolve the question of the relationship between the Father and the Son would prove to be influential in both East and the West.

This is not to suggest that Hilary only engaged with the Homoians because he met Basil and the Homoians. The three councils of the 350s forced the Western churches to engage directly in the controversy. Their experiences at the hands of the Valens and Ursacius drove several bishops to become active combatants in the controversy, and the late 350s saw the publication of several fiercely polemical texts that were written by Western theologians, the first such texts of the entire controversy. These texts include the writings of Lucifer of Cagliari (d. 373), Gregory of Elvira (d. 392), Phoebadius of Agen (d. 392), Marius Victorinus

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1967): 71–84. Nevertheless, to call the theology of Sirmium 357 “Homoian” is more accurate than calling it “Arian.” For additional arguments that the Sirmium 357 theology is “Homoian,” see Jörg Ulrich’s introduction to Phoebadius, *Contra Arrianos/Streitschrift gegen die Arianer*, *Fontes Christiani* 38 (Freiburg: Herder, 1999), 48–49.

<sup>23</sup> All fourth-century accounts of the Homoiousians agree that Basil was the driving force behind the party, and given Basil’s prominence in fourth century ecclesiastical politics it is natural that he would assume leadership of whatever party he was part of. Epiphanius attributes a “Homoiousian Manifesto” to another prominent Homoiousian, George of Laodicea, and most scholars have identified George as an additional Homoiousian spokesman. I am largely persuaded, however, by Steenson’s attempt to attribute the Homoiousian manifesto not to George of Laodicea but to Basil of Ancyra. See Steenson, “Basil,” pp. 212–214. (For an analysis of the manifesto, see Steenson, 214–254.) Whether or not this identification holds, the differences between these two documents do not play a role in my argument. I do think that the influence of the Homoiousians, broadly conceived, was an important factor in Hilary’s development, but that does not mean he necessarily learned directly from Basil, and, in fact, there is no direct evidence that Hilary read any Homoiousian writings apart from the anathemas attached to Basil’s 358 synodical letter. See Chapter 6 below for more discussion of Hilary’s use of these anathemas.

<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the Sirmium 357 creed’s subordinationism, Basil’s letter described the relationship between the Father and Son as “like according to nature.” Scholars would later modify this phrase to give Basil’s party the nickname by which they are commonly known: “Homoiousian.”

(d. 363), and possibly Eusebius of Vercelli (d. 370).<sup>25</sup> Although these texts have not been widely studied in modern times, they are important witnesses to the West's struggle to come to grips with both the theological and the political threats posed by this incipient Homoianism. Like their Eastern counterparts, these Westerners focused a great deal of attention on the Sirmium 357 creed, recognizing in it the hidden theological agenda of that earlier series of councils. And they all found this agenda to be incompatible with the Trinitarian theology of their Latin heritage. Although the Trinitarian theology of Tertullian and Novatian did contain subordinationist elements, especially by fourth-century, Pro-Nicene standards, it was intended to affirm the "communion of substance" between the Father and the Son. Any doctrine that tried to deny this "substantial" relationship denied something fundamental to classical Latin Trinitarian theology. Unfortunately, however, their Latin heritage did not necessarily provide the fourth-century Westerners with the tools to meet this new challenge, and we find all the Latin authors, even a sophisticated thinker like Marius Victorinus, struggling to find adequate language to explain why the Homoians are so wrong.

It is worth noting that despite this opposition, the decade of the 350s ended with a resounding Homoian victory. In 359 the Emperor summoned dual councils, one that met in the east and one in the west, with the goal of resolving the current Trinitarian crisis permanently. The statement of faith adopted by these Synods, and confirmed at a joint council of Easterners and Westerners in 360, was a modified expression of the thought contained in the Sirmium 357 creed. Basil of Ancyra was exiled and ceased to have any influence. The Homoian agenda dominated both the Eastern and Western churches. Nevertheless, a vibrant opposition remained on both fronts. Although Basil of Ancyra's party did not survive the twin councils of 359, his influence remained in the thought of some important Pro-Nicenes, including Basil of Caesarea in the East, and Hilary of Poitiers in the West.

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<sup>25</sup> The *De Trinitate* commonly assigned to Eusebius appears to have been written later than the 350s. See D.H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995): 239–242. All the dates given here are approximate. For Phoebadius and Gregory of Elvira, all we know is that they were alive but very old when Jerome wrote *De Viribus Illustribus*, e.g. around 392.

*The Circumstances of Hilary's Exile*

One additional aspect of this narrative requires special attention: the circumstances of Hilary's exile. Exactly why Hilary was exiled has been the subject of recent scholarly debate, resulting from both the lack of evidence surrounding these circumstances and the tendency of Hilary's biographers, both ancient and modern, to paint his exile in heroic, "Athanasius of the West" colors. As D.H. Williams suggests, this hagiography, which has often supplied details where none exist, may be responsible for the assumption by contemporary scholars of the traditional, hagiographic version of Hilary's exile.<sup>26</sup> In this version, Hilary was exiled because he gallantly stood up to the "Arian" infiltration of the West, primarily by defending Athanasius at the Council of Beziers in 356. However, scholars have recently begun to question this account, especially because the supporting evidence is fairly sparse.<sup>27</sup> What we do know is as follows: in 356 Hilary was summoned to a council in Beziers, where he was questioned and then summarily exiled into Asia Minor. There is good reason to assume that this exile would have been the result of Hilary's defense of Athanasius. At the earlier councils, Western bishops were exiled for that very reason, including Liberius, the Bishop of Rome.<sup>28</sup> This is only an inference, however, as the evidence for a required condemnation of Athanasius at Bézieres does not exist. It is therefore possible that Hilary's exile had nothing to do with Athanasius or the controversy.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Hilary himself hints that his direct involvement in the controversy may be later rather than earlier. In *De Synodis* 91, Hilary claims that he had never even heard of

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<sup>26</sup> D.H. Williams, "A Reassessment of the Early Career and Exile of Hilary of Poitiers," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (April 1991): 203.

<sup>27</sup> See especially Williams, "Reassessment," pp. 202–217 and Carl Beckwith, "The Condemnation and Exile of Hilary of Poitiers at the Synod of Bézieres (356 C.E.)" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13 (2005): 21–38; T.D. Barnes, "Hilary of Poitiers on his Exile," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 129–140; Paul C. Burns, "Hilary of Poitiers' Road to Beziers: Politics or Religion?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2.3 (September 1994): 273–289.

<sup>28</sup> For the circumstances and date of Liberius' exile and subsequent return see, T.D. Barnes, "The Capitulation of Liberius and Hilary of Poitiers," *Phoenix* 46 (1992): 256–265. Liberius was exiled for refusing to endorse the Synod of Milan in 355, but he later capitulated and was allowed to return to his see.

<sup>29</sup> For a summary of all the potential sources see P. Smulders, S.J., *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface to his Opus Historicum* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995): 126–131. In addition to the three passages discussed here, Smulders also includes *Ad Constantium* 2–3, *Contra Auxentium* 7, and a short passage from the *Apologetical Responsa*.

the Nicene Creed before going into exile, a claim that suggests limited involvement in the Nicene controversy, at best.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the debate centers around two passages, one in *In Constantium* and the other in *De Synodis*, where Hilary offers his own clues for the reasons behind his exile. The first of these was a brief passage in *De Synodis 2* where Hilary thanks his fellow bishops for their continuing support.

But when I received your letters that your blessed faith inspired, and understood that their slow arrival and their paucity were due to the remoteness and secrecy of my place of exile, I rejoiced in the Lord that you had continued pure and undefiled by the contagion of any execrable heresy, and that you were united with me in faith and spirit, and so were partakers of that exile into which Saturninus, fearing his own conscience, had thrust me after beguiling the emperor, and after that you had denied him communion for the whole three years until now.<sup>31</sup>

Two features of this account stand out. First, as far as Hilary explains them, the reasons for his exile were personal—an opponent named Saturninus had deceived the emperor, which resulted in the emperor sending Hilary away. Thus Hilary seems to have been the target of a personal attack rather than the victim of a systematic assault on one theological party by another.<sup>32</sup> Hilary's *Liber II ad Constantium* supports this conclusion. In this letter, which he prepared as an appeal to the Emperor for a lifting of his exile, Hilary claims that the charges against him were false, offered by “impious men with no knowledge of guilty acts on my part.”<sup>33</sup> Here again, Hilary makes no mention of specific reasons for his exile, theological or otherwise, but he recalls only the deception that led to his being sent away. Second, as Williams notes, if Hilary had been exiled because he refused to condemn Athanasius, he could not have claimed that these charges were false. There is no evidence that those bishops who were exiled for refusing to condemn

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<sup>30</sup> Hilary's ignorance of the Nicene Creed is suggestive since it had already played a role in the controversy. At the Synod of Milan in 355, Eusebius of Vercelli agreed to consent to the Synod's wishes, provided that they affirmed the Nicene creed. Hilary himself relays this story in the *Liber I ad Constantium* II.3; Alfred Feder, *S. Hilarii Episcopi Pictaviensis Opera, pars Quarta*, CSEL 65 (Vindobonae: F. Tempsky, 1916): 186.

<sup>31</sup> *De Synodis 2*; PL 10, 481; NPNF 4.

<sup>32</sup> Williams speaks evocatively of a “harsh intimacy” between Saturninus and Hilary. See “Reassessment,” 212.

<sup>33</sup> *Liber II ad Constantium*, 2; CSEL 65, 198. English translation in Lionel Wickham, *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-Century Church* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 104.

Athanasius ever claimed they were falsely accused, nor could they have legitimately done so. On the contrary, they would have worn their refusal as a badge of honor.<sup>34</sup>

The second passage comes in Hilary's second letter to Constantius, called *In Constantium*. This letter, which was written after Hilary's initial appeal to the Emperor had been either ignored or rejected, amounts to an angry declaration of war on the Emperor. In it Hilary accuses Constantius of, among other things, being the Antichrist!<sup>35</sup> Several years after having written both *De Synodis* and the *Liber II ad Constantium*, Hilary now appears more sanguine about the reasons for his exile; he goes so far as to claim that he came to Beziers and "presented a case that exposed the heresy" of Saturninus, Valens and Ursacius.<sup>36</sup> The difference between this account and his earlier versions could not be starker. Whereas in the earlier passages Hilary makes no mention of his polemical activities at the council, here these activities have become the reason both for his appearance at the council and for his subsequent exile. Hilary's archenemy Saturninus is now grouped with the Homoian leaders Valens and Ursacius, and the Latin bishops are presented as being united in their opposition to this trio. This is a far cry from *De Synodis* 2, where Hilary seems pleasantly surprised to discover that his fellow bishops have separated themselves from Saturninus only.<sup>37</sup> In short, the picture we get in *In Constantium* is of Hilary the heroic defender of the faith, who was exiled for resisting the evil schemes of the Homoians.

There is some evidence to suggest that, although Hilary was not have been exiled for standing by Athanasius *per se*, he may have invoked a confession of faith in his own defense, a confession that was anti-Homoian in character and served as the basis of Hilary's polemic during the early part of his exile.<sup>38</sup> This does not mean, however, that Hilary was

<sup>34</sup> Williams, "Reassessment," 210.

<sup>35</sup> *In Constantium* 5.1–3; A. Rocher, *Hilaire de Poitiers: Contra Constance*, Sources Chrétiennes 334 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf), 176.

<sup>36</sup> *In Constantium* 2; SC 334, 37.

<sup>37</sup> This difference is pointed out by Williams, "Reassessment," 209. Also see Brennecke, 219.

<sup>38</sup> For a detailed discussion of this option, see Beckwith, "Condemnation," especially pp. 25–28. Beckwith takes Hilary's preface to his *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* as offering the earliest and perhaps most reliable account of the exile. As Beckwith suggests, in that preface, Hilary clearly refers to a "confession of Christ" that his fellow Bishops did not support him in, all of which suggests that theology played at least some role in the exile.

active against the Homoians (or Arians) prior to his exile. As Williams suggests, the *In Constantium*, and by extension other post-exile documents, is best read as a “reflection of theological hindsight.”<sup>39</sup> Hilary evidently came to see that his exile was simply part of an overarching scheme to depose Athanasius, a scheme that he and his fellow bishops have resisted. Hilary’s lumping of Saturninus with Valens and Ursacius reads as a rhetorical device not unlike Athanasius’ practice of naming all of his opponents “Arian,” no matter their actual relationship with Arius.<sup>40</sup> After so many years of being engaged in direct conflict with the Homoians, Hilary quite naturally sees his entire experience in these terms. If this is so, then we have valuable clues as to the nature of Hilary’s involvement with the Homoians. Most importantly, we can better see that up to the point of going into exile, Hilary had little or no direct experience with the Homoian controversy. Whatever specific means Saturninus used to ensure Hilary’s exile, however, that exile forced Hilary into the role of anti-Homoian polemicist, a role he embraced passionately.

#### SCHOLARLY JUDGEMENTS ON HILARY AND THE HOMOIOUSIANS

This narrative needs rehearsing because scholars have not adequately taken it into consideration when treating Hilary’s Trinitarian theology. In light of this narrative, two aspects of Hilary’s thought come into clearer focus. First, Hilary’s thought developed as his exposure to the controversy increased. Second, this development was significantly influenced by his relationship with the Homoiousian party. Neither of these judgements has enjoyed wide acceptance among Hilary scholars. Indeed, the most influential monograph on Hilary’s Trinitarian theology,

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<sup>39</sup> Williams, “Reassessment,” 209. By contrast, Smulders takes later texts as normative, but he does so on the basis of Hilary’s anti-Arian activity prior to the exile (130). If Hilary was engaged in fighting “Arians” before he was exiled, his later accounts of his exile are more consistent, and Smulders is correct. If, however, Hilary was not exiled for something having directly to do with the controversy, then the earlier account in *De Synodis* fits the evidence better. Simply acknowledging that the council was Homoian does not mean Hilary was exiled for theological reasons, as trumped-up charges were certainly common. Thus the fault lines for this debate are hagiography and the character of Hilary’s pre-exile theology.

<sup>40</sup> For the practice of rhetorically labeling even non-Arians, “Arian,” see Rebecca Lyman, “A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism,” in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992): 45–62.

*La Doctrine Trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers* by Pierre Smulders, asserts that while a “certain evolution” in Hilary’s thought is undeniable, whatever changes occurred in Hilary’s theology were due more to his elaboration of already present doctrines than the influence of, say, “the Greeks.”<sup>41</sup> Instead, Smulders believes that the key doctrines of Hilary’s theology are already fixed in his *In Matthaeum*. These doctrines include the true divinity of the Son, his birth from the Father, the Son’s distinction from creation, and the identity of substance between the Father and Son.<sup>42</sup> Smulders is equally reluctant to admit that Hilary was influenced by the Homoiousians.<sup>43</sup> He will go so far as to theorize that it was Hilary who influenced the Homoiousians, not the other way around; it was Homoiousian thought that changed, perhaps in response to Hilary.<sup>44</sup>

Smulders’ monograph is a master-work of historical scholarship, and more than sixty years after its publication it remains an indispensable contribution to our understanding of Hilary’s thought. Its deficiencies are primarily due to its understanding of Hilary’s historical context. This can be illustrated by Smulders’ interaction with the work of the German scholar J. Gummerus, whose work on the Homoiousians has, until recently, dominated modern scholarship.<sup>45</sup> Gummerus argued that Hilary had been influenced by the Homoiousians, and that, like the Homoiousians, Hilary held to a “generic” unity of the Father and Son.<sup>46</sup> Smulders spends several pages in *La Doctrine Trinitaire* refuting Gummerus’ claim of Homoiousian influence.<sup>47</sup> Smulders seems especially anxious to deny that Hilary holds to the generic unity of the Son and Father, and there are signs that this is why he is so intent on disproving Homoiousian influence. For example, Smulders moves immediately from

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<sup>41</sup> Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine Trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers* (Roma: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1944): 82. “D’une part en effet, ce changement de vues ou plutôt cette élaboration plus complète, commença dès avant l’exil et par suite ne doit pas être attribué à la seule influence des Grecs...”

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Smulders, *Trinitaire*, 249: “Assurément Hilaire n’a pas simplement fait la sienne la doctrine des homoiousiens et il ne peut être regardé comme un défenseur de la doctrine homoiousienne sous les formules de Nicée.”

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> J. Gummerus, *Die Homöusianische Partei bis zum Tode des Konstantius* (Leipzig, 1900). For modern treatments of the Homoiousians and their theology, see, Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism* (Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979); Jeffery Steenson, “Basil of Ancyra and the Course of Nicene Orthodoxy,” Ph.D. diss., Oxford University, 1983.

<sup>46</sup> Gummerus, 117.

<sup>47</sup> Smulders, *Trinitaire*, 237–250.

his refutation of Gummerus to an emphatic assertion that Hilary held to an “identical” relationship between the Father and Son.

Mais si toute oeuvre du Fils est en même temps oeuvre du Père, tout en demeurant celle du Fils, la pensée d’Hilaire ne’est pas douteuse. *La nature identique est un seul principe d’opération dans l’un et dans l’autre.* Cette nature est donc envisagée comme concrète, identique à elle-même, non point multipliée du fait qu’elle se trouve en deux personnes.<sup>48</sup>

The italics in this quote are Smulders’ own, which only highlights his insistence on this point. Smulders’ ultimate goal may be to claim Hilary for a certain paradigm of Latin Trinitarian thought. The prime example of “identical” unity is Augustine, and by asserting Hilary’s adherence to this doctrine, Smulders may be bringing Hilary into more properly Western and Augustinian “identity” perspective.<sup>49</sup>

Smulders’ influence on subsequent scholarship may have had the unintended effect of diminishing the influence of Hilary on Latin Trinitarian theology by neglecting Hilary’s most distinctive contributions to that tradition. A new generation of scholarship, however, has begun to reevaluate Hilary’s debt to his Latin tradition and so offer a more accurate picture of what makes Hilary distinctive. The most important example of this new approach is Jean Doignon’s comprehensive treatment of Hilary’s pre-exile theology.<sup>50</sup> Doignon paints a picture of a theologian who draws from a rich theological and cultural milieu, but who also contributed to its development. Doignon believes, for example, that Hilary’s *In Mattheaum* represents an advance in Latin exegesis. For Doignon, Hilary synthesizes the hermeneutical methods he inherited from Tertullian with classical pagan education to produce a careful and original interpretation of the sacred text.<sup>51</sup>

Doignon’s accomplishment is a crucial leap forward, not only for Hilary studies, but also for our understanding of fourth century Latin Christianity. By reading Hilary from behind, as it were, Doignon has

<sup>48</sup> Smulders, *Trinitaire*, 252. The italics are in the original.

<sup>49</sup> A similar attempt is made by Anton Beck, *Die Trinitätslehre des Heiligen Hilarius von Poitiers* (Mainz: F. Kirchheim, 1903): 99. Smulders’ use of the “identical-generic” categories strongly suggests that Harnack is an unspoken dialogue partner. Although Smulders never mentions Harnack, the possibility that Smulders is refuting Harnack is raised by Borchardt, 163.

<sup>50</sup> Jean Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l’exil: recherches sur la naissance, l’enseignement et l’épreuve d’une foi épiscopale en Gaule au milieu du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Etudes augustiniennes, 1971).

<sup>51</sup> Doignon, 324.

allowed Hilary and early Latin Christianity to have its own distinctive voice. This has had the net effect of emphasizing the importance of Novatian, Tertullian and Cicero on Hilary and other Latin theologians. Hilary's early thought relies heavily on his three great predecessors, as does the thought of nearly every other of Hilary's Latin contemporaries. Even more importantly, however, Doignon has conclusively demonstrated the extent of Hilary's reliance on Latin philosophers and rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian. Other scholars have examined the influence Latin philosophy on earlier Latin theologians, especially Tertullian.<sup>52</sup> Doignon is the first to look at the role of philosophy in fourth century Latins, and he is also the first to examine the influence of philosophy with such specificity. Exploring the full range of implications of this achievement lies beyond the scope of this book, so I will note only one: in light of Doignon's work, we can no longer treat Hilary as a mere "Biblicist." Hilary does not simply regurgitate the naïve exegesis of his predecessors, but throughout his career he demonstrates himself capable of engaging with theological matters from a variety of philosophical, exegetical and rhetorical perspectives. What is true of Hilary is also potentially true of other fourth century Latins, and ultimately Doignon's work on Hilary has opened the possibility of a new picture of Latin Christianity as a whole.

With regard to Hilary's Trinitarian Theology, as Doignon himself notes, one consequence of his work is that it is now possible for scholars to ascertain how Hilary may have changed during his exile. Doignon makes no effort to explore this, but he has provided a means for doing so by establishing the parameters within which we can understand Hilary as a theologian and bishop before his exile. If we find Hilary operating outside of those parameters during or after his exile, we can then recognize his development.

The potential of Doignon's approach for understanding Hilary's Trinitarian theology is tentatively explored in a 1994 article by Paul C. Burns. Burns, whose monograph on Hilary's early Christology also fruitfully draws on Doignon's insights,<sup>53</sup> suggests that recent advances in our understanding of Hilary's Latin perspective provide opportunity to explore the way this Westerner interacted with the East, but he

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<sup>52</sup> See Jean Daniélou, *The Origins of Latin Christianity*, trans., David Smith and John Austin Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977).

<sup>53</sup> Paul C. Burns, *The Christology in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew* (Roma: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1981).

admits that this prospect remains unfulfilled. Burns offers a somewhat different approach to the task of contextualizing Hilary's thought than Smulders. Unlike Smulders, who diminishes the effect of Hilary's exile on his theology, Burns believes the exile provides "an opportunity to investigate the transformations in a person of a Latin, secular and theological background when that person is brought into effective contact with Greek traditions in the middle of the fourth century."<sup>54</sup> By placing the exile at the center of his examination of Hilary's theology, Burns accepts a methodological assumption that is absent from Smulders: that Hilary's thought developed and changed as a result of his encounter both with Homoiousian and with "Arian" (i.e. "Homoian") theology during his exile. Accordingly, Burns divides Hilary's corpus into at least three periods: early (*In Matthaëum*), middle (*Liber adversus Valens et Ursacium*, "De Fide"), and late (not discussed by Burns, but presumably includes *De Synodis* and the rest of *De Trinitate*). Burns begins his piece with a historical overview that establishes these divisions. He draws attention to Hilary's earliest work, the *In Matthaëum*, the circumstances surrounding Hilary's exile, and the historical dossier produced by Hilary in response to these circumstances.

Doignon's work on Hilary's pre-exile theology is the most important advance in recent Hilary scholarship, but one other scholarly contributions need to be mentioned, H.C. Brennecke's *Hilarius von Poitiers*.<sup>55</sup> Because Brennecke deals primarily with Hilary's political history, most of his conclusions lie outside the scope of this study. However, Brennecke offers a significant hermeneutical advance by refusing to accept after—the—fact hagiographical accounts of Hilary's exile at face value. One result of this method is that Brennecke strips away a particularly pervasive part of Hilary's legend, that he was exiled for heroically defending "the faith" against the Arians. Brennecke does not assume this to be true, and is thus able to demonstrate from a political perspective something similar to what Doignon does theologically and culturally: that when Hilary attended the Council of Beziers, he was an obscure, polemically naïve Latin theologian with no real appreciation for the

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<sup>54</sup> Paul C. Burns, "Hilary of Poitiers' Confrontation with Arianism in 356 and 357," in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*; ed. Robert C. Gregg (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundations, 1985): 287.

<sup>55</sup> Hanns Christof Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II.: Untersuchungen zur dritten Phase des "arianischen Streites" (337–361)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984).

controversy at hand. If not every detail of Brennecke's account works, this is nevertheless a valuable advance in Hilary scholarship, making it possible to see his exile as a decisive moment in Hilary's career.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, in the work of Doignon and, to a different degree, Brennecke, lies the scholarly groundwork necessary to move beyond the account of Hilary's Trinitarian theology offered by Smulders. An initial attempt to build on that groundwork is R.P.C. Hanson's chapter on Hilary in *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*.<sup>57</sup> Hanson provides a good overview of Hilary's historical and political context. Doignon again plays a prominent role, while Brennecke appears as the foil against whom Hanson presents his own arguments. Two features of the overview are noteworthy. First, the overview section is a useful summary of the key questions surrounding Hilary's exile and return: what was Hilary's anti-"Arian" activity before his exile, why was he exiled and when, why and when did he return, and what books did he write during the exile and when. For the first two questions, Hanson believes Hilary was exiled by the Emperor, not by the Council of Béziers, for having previously exiled Saturninus of Arles. Although Hanson cast this position in opposition to Brennecke, he accepts Brennecke's assertion that the exile was political. As to why Hilary returned, Hanson merely offers the possibility of Constantius' magnanimity after getting his way at the Council of Constantinople in 360. Hanson is slightly more controversial about Hilary's literary output, essentially rejecting Burns' thesis that *de Trinitate* was written in two parts and placing its entire composition before that of *de Synodis*. Hanson interacts extensively with the biographical evidence provided by Hilary's hagiographers, mainly Sulpicius Severus. In general, however, Hanson is suspicious of this evidence, accepting it only when it can be confirmed from Hilary's own writings or other similarly contemporary documents.

After the historical overview Hanson provides a long summary of Hilary's Trinitarian theology, focusing primarily on the way Hilary describes the relation of the Son to the Father and Hilary's doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>58</sup> Hanson's purpose in *Search* is to trace the devel-

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<sup>56</sup> Incidentally, although Brennecke does not explore this in any detail, he does believe that Hilary's thought after his exile does show the influence of the Homoiousians. See *Hilarius von Poitiers*, 345.

<sup>57</sup> R.P.C. Hanson, *Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1988).

<sup>58</sup> See Hanson, *Search*, 472–506.

opment of the Christian understanding of the doctrine of God, and his analysis of Hilary's theology contributes to this overall purpose. He places Hilary's theology within the overall backdrop of the Trinitarian controversy, not so much within his specific context. So, for example, Hanson investigates at length how Hilary deals with what will become the controversy's significant theological terminology, such as *persona*, *substantia* and *homoousios*.<sup>59</sup> Hanson is generally sympathetic to Hilary's achievement, comparing him favorably to Athanasius and asserting that Hilary positively advanced his own tradition. Hanson is especially positive about the care with which Hilary defends the Son's divinity by accounting for God's nature, correctly observing the importance of Hilary's phrase, "neither a solitary or diverse God." He also discusses Hilary's treatment of the "eternal generation" question and Hilary's use of *substantia* and *homoousios* to describe how the Son and Father are united, opting for Smulders' conclusion that Hilary maintains a "numeric" identity.<sup>60</sup>

Hanson's chapter on Hilary is a significant contribution to Hilary scholarship. He deals carefully with both primary and secondary sources and takes great pains to place Hilary within his historical context. Yet there lies within Hanson's work a methodological assumption that is directly related to his failure to take full advantage of the possibilities offered by Doignon. Hanson accepts the fundamental Latin character of Hilary's thought, relying heavily on Doignon, while at the same time he recognizes that certain elements of Hilary theology do not correspond to traditional Latin theology. In describing Hilary's doctrine of God, for example, Hanson refers extensively to *de Trinitate* VII, a text which reflects Hilary's most mature theology, and which owes the least to his Latin tradition, yet Hanson never acknowledges the possibility that *De Trinitate* VII represents a development in Hilary's thought. In this regard Hanson's treatment of Hilary is more tantalizing than ultimately convincing. Although Hanson does attempt to utilize the new hermeneutical tools provided by Doignon, in the end he never moves the discussion far beyond Smulders' conclusions. For Hanson as for Smulders, Hilary remains an essentially static figure, for whom the exile acted only as a spur to write polemically, not as an impetus to develop theologically.

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<sup>59</sup> Hanson, 486ff.

<sup>60</sup> Hanson, 480.

## A NEW APPROACH

All of this evidence suggests that in order to gain an accurate picture of Hilary's thought, a new approach is necessary. Such an approach must grapple with the central presupposition that Hilary's exile was a foundational event in his theological development. This is not to preclude the possibility that Hilary's thought from before to after his exile retains some of its characteristics. As we will see, in fact, certain elements are constant, especially his anti-modalist polemic. However, the way in which the exile happened and the ways in which he responded to it strongly suggest that it did force him to reevaluate and reformulate some of his previously held notions. In this regard, Hilary's claim that he did not know Nicea before his exile must be taken seriously because it provides evidence from Hilary's own pen that he was doing something new theologically. Furthermore, if Hilary's exile was so important to his development, then his association with Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousians provides a natural place to look for signs of that development.<sup>61</sup>

One advantage of this approach to Hilary's thought is that allows us to establish with some certainty the dates of his polemical writings. I will provide detailed arguments for this new dating in the various chapters below. I offer a summary of my conclusions here because this sequence provides the organizing structure of this book.

## Before the Exile

1. *In Matthaeum*. The precise date of this work is unknown, but given its lack of concern for questions associated with the Trinitarian Controversy, and its heavy use of the classical Latin tradition, most scholars date it to before Hilary's exile in 356.

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<sup>61</sup> Similarly, it is necessary to move beyond the categories of "numeric" and "generic." Such categories cannot account for either Hilary's own thought, or the complexities of both Greek and Latin thought during this period. In Hilary's case, the fact that his foundational theological scheme was designed to refute modalism suggests that he would have been suspicious of a theological system that over-emphasized the unity of the Father and the Son. A complete examination of the categories that were important to fourth-century theologians obviously lies beyond the scope of this work. However, a close reading of both Hilary and Basil of Ancyra does reveal two related categories that were decisive for each: that of "name" and of "birth." This book will demonstrate that Hilary's development follows his growing appropriation of these two theological categories.

During or Immediately Following the Exile

1. *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* (356 or early 357)
2. *De Fide* (357 or early 358)
3. *De Synodis* (late 358)
4. *De Trinitate* (359 or 360)

As we will see, Hilary moves in these writings from an unengaged perspective on the Trinitarian Crisis in *In Matthaeum*, to an engaged but naïve posture in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, to a first, tentative attempt to articulate a “doctrine of God” in *De Fide*, to his discovery in *De Synodis* that new tools are necessary, to a mature attempt to put those tools to use in *De Trinitate*.<sup>62</sup>

As this evidence suggests, to examine Hilary’s Trinitarian theology requires not only a careful examination of his thought itself, but also a reconsideration of his historical context. Accordingly, this work has two parts. The first four chapters deal with the development and context of Hilary’s Trinitarian theology. In Chapter One, I place Hilary’s earliest writing in the context of early Latin Trinitarian polemic by showing how it derives from the anti-modalist polemic of Tertullian and Novatian. In Chapter Two, I examine the initial Latin response to the Homoian crisis, especially as revealed by the writings of Phoebadius of Agen and Marius Victorinus. The witness of these two theologians is important because they reveal the extent to which Latin theologians struggled to make their traditional categories answer the Homoian threat. In Chapter Three, I turn to Hilary’s first attempts to engage in the controversy in two works written immediately after his exile, *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, and *De Fide*. These works provide evidence that while Hilary had engaged in the controversy, he did so naively, without a complete awareness of all its particularities. Chapter Four considers Hilary’s first attempt to restate his doctrine of God in *De Synodis*. The work is important because it is the first time Hilary begins to use perspectives and tools he took from his association with Basil of Ancyra.

Beginning with Chapter Five I turn to the shape of Hilary’s Trinitarian theology. These four chapters treat the four theological categories

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<sup>62</sup> Hilary wrote several works after his exile, including a polemical text known as *Contra Auxentium* and a lengthy commentary on the Psalms. Although these texts retain interest for scholars, especially in the matter of the Psalm commentary’s use of Origen, they do not contribute to our understanding of Hilary’s development or relationship with the Homoiousians, and so will not be treated here.

that make up the core of Hilary's mature theology in *De Trinitate*. I begin in Chapter Five by surveying Hilary's exegetical strategies in *De Trinitate*. Exegesis lies at the core of Hilary's thought throughout his career, but in *De Trinitate* he reveals some new strategies that are directly influenced by his participation in the Homoian conflict. These exegetical strategies go a long way towards determining the shape of his mature thought. In Chapter Six, I explore his doctrine of God from *De Trinitate* 7 by focusing on his use of the concepts "name" and "birth" to explain the relationship between the Father and the Son. Chapter Seven then brings full circle the story I began in Chapter One. In it, I show how Hilary's "mature" Christology marks a final departure from the *logos-sarx* Christology he had established in *In Matthaem*. Finally, in Chapter Eight, I conclude by examining Hilary's doctrine of eternal generation. This last chapter perhaps the most tentative, but also the most important, because in it we explore signs that Hilary's thought is moving even beyond the categories he learned from Basil of Ancyra. These are not the theological categories one normally finds discussed in histories of Trinitarian theology, but they are Hilary's categories, and from them we can gain a clearer understanding of his thought and its place in the fourth century controversies.

*A note about translation and texts:* Throughout this book I work from the critical editions of the relevant texts. When available I have used a standard English translation in order to preserve continuity, though I have on a few occasions had to make adjustments to the translation. These instances are noted in the footnotes. All remaining translations are my own.

PART ONE

THE CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF  
HILARY'S TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY



## CHAPTER ONE

### LATIN ANTI-MODALISM IN *IN MATTHAEUM*

Recent scholarship on Hilary's *In Matthaeum* has shown convincingly that in thought and exegesis it belongs squarely within the classical Latin theological tradition.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter, I will argue that this insight can be extended to demonstrate that *In Matthaeum* also includes the anti-modalism of the early Latins. This argument about the anti-modalist character of Hilary's early theology is important for my argument, because it means we can use the characteristics of Hilary's early anti-modalism as a standard to trace his subsequent development. Accordingly, I will show that Hilary's doctrine of Christ and the refutation of his opponents in *In Matthaeum* are anti-modalist in ways that reflect the direct influence of Tertullian and Novatian.<sup>2</sup> In particular, Hilary

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<sup>1</sup> "Latin," in this case, refers to the theological tradition that was established by Tertullian and that remained influential in the West well into the fourth century. Following the work of Jean Doignon, Paul C. Burns, and D.H. Williams, we can now regard the question of Hilary's reliance on this tradition as settled. Burns and especially Doignon have extensively documented Hilary's use of Tertullian and Novatian for his Christological and Trinitarian formulations. See Doignon, *Hilaire* and Burns, *Christology*. Williams has expanded on these conclusions by showing that Hilary's early polemic does not address "Arianism" of any type, including issues raised by the western creed of Serdica 343. For Williams, Hilary is dealing with the failure of a "logos-sarx" Christology to provide a consistent account of Christ's nature. According to Williams, this logos-sarx model lends itself, "to the easy endorsement of reducing the Son's divine status in relation to the Father" (169). The presence of this theology in his opponents pushes Hilary, "to clarify... his separation of the *spiritus* and *corpus* in the incarnation, such that Christ's infinite nature is not violated" (170). In this way, suggests Williams, Hilary is attempting to correct an inherent problem in western logos-sarx Christology. See D.H. Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy," 151–172, especially pp. 162–68.

<sup>2</sup> It is not necessary to decide whether Hilary had actual modalist opponents at the time he wrote *In Matthaeum*, or if he did, whether they were of the same type faced by Novatian or Tertullian. What is most significant is the extent to which Hilary appropriates Tertullian or Novatian's polemical categories in his own theology. Whether or not Hilary faced a modalist opponent, prior to his exile he wrote like an anti-modalist polemicist in the Latin tradition. Nevertheless, it is true that a form of modalism, adoptionism, was an issue in the West during the 340's and 50's. As D.H. Williams observes, for example, the acts of a council held in Cologne in 346, if genuine, condemn a current expression of adoptionist theology. In these records, the Bishop Euphratas is accused of denying that the Son is God (*Christum Deum negat*), apparently because he taught that Christ is nothing but a simple human (*qui tantum nudum hominem asserit Christum*), a belief that, as the SC editor notes, suggests Photinus.

emphasizes three aspects of early Latin anti-modalist theology: (1) its particular use of the *regula fidei*, (2) its development of a *logos-sarx* Christology, and (3) its explanation of the Son's passion.<sup>3</sup> All of these form the foundation for Hilary's anti-modalism in *In Matthaeum* and the point of departure for analyzing his subsequent encounter with the Homoians.<sup>4</sup>

The Hilary of *In Matthaeum* is not a polemicist in the manner of his predecessors Tertullian and Novatian. As many commentators have noted, Hilary's primary purpose in the commentary is pastoral, and what little "polemic" there is in the commentary acts as a way of explaining the Biblical text rather than refuting an actual opponent.<sup>5</sup> We can only identify a few passages where Hilary clearly has an opponent

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For the text, see Jean Gaudemet, ed., *Conciles gaulois du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Sources Chrétiennes 241 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1977): 70–79. Photinus himself was condemned twice in Milan, once in 345 and again in 347. None of this evidence confirms that Photinus or any other adoptionist was Hilary's opponent, but it does suggest that Adoptionism could have been a real problem for Hilary before his exile. For discussion, see D.H. Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy," 164–5 and especially Carl Beckwith, "Photinian Opponents in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentarium in Matthaeum," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 58:3 (2007): forthcoming. For the importance of anti-Photinian polemic in early Latin theology in general, see Daniel H. Williams, "Monarchianism and Photinus of Sirmium as the Persistent Heretical Face of the Fourth Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 99 (2006): 187–206.

<sup>3</sup> For a helpful overview of the Tertullian's anti-modalism, see Ernest Evans' "Introduction" to his translation of Tertullian's *Adversus Praxeas*. Evans analyzes Tertullian's arguments against Praxeas along five lines: (1) The presence of three emperors does not imperil the monarchy (unity) of the empire; in the same way, the presence of the Son and Holy Spirit does not imperil of the monarchy of the Father. (2) Numerous scriptural passages demonstrate that the Son is a second person alongside the Father, (3) He who was seen cannot be the Father, who is invisible. Therefore, that one must be the Son. (4) Texts of the Gospel of John not only show that God is One, but that the Father and Son are distinct. (5) Not only did the Father not suffer on the Cross, the Son did not suffer. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Treatise against Praxeas*. (London: SPCK, 1948) 21–22. Evans' analysis lacks sufficient detail to shed light on Hilary's polemic in *In Matthaeum*, although Hilary does use most of the arguments developed by Tertullian. My own analysis of Tertullian differs only slightly: I believe that Evans' first point ultimately, for Tertullian, has to do with the *regula fidei*, and in place of Evans' second point, I would include Tertullian's *logos-sarx* theology as an anti-monarchian category. Both *regula fidei* and *logos-sarx* will reappear in *In Matthaeum*.

<sup>4</sup> I use only with hesitation terms such as "modalist," "monarchian" and "adoptionist" to characterize the opponents of Hilary, Tertullian and Novatian. Despite the prevalence of these terms in standard histories of the development of doctrine, it is not at all clear either who these "modalists" were, or even if there is an identifiable party that corresponds to the position being attacked by "Catholics" such as Tertullian. For further discussion, see John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001): 137ff.

<sup>5</sup> For the latter point especially, see Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy," 159.

in mind, and in these he is often vague about that opponent's theology.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, these few passages are sufficient evidence to show that Hilary has an opponent who misrepresents the proper relationship between the Father and the Son, and that Hilary develops his response in ways that reflect the substance of Tertullian and Novatian's anti-modalism. In what follows, then, I will examine, in light of his Latin tradition, the various passages in *In Matthaëum* where Hilary addresses some opponent.

*REGULA FIDEI* AND "THE ECONOMY" IN *IN MATTHAEUM* 4.14

The first indication of Hilary's polemical perspective presents itself early in *In Matthaëum* 4.14. In the middle of discussing the Sermon on the Mount, Hilary pauses to offer a short confession of faith. This confession, or *regula fidei* has no overt polemical intent, but its language resembles a similar, explicitly anti-modalist *regula* in Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean*.<sup>7</sup>

Thus his incarnation and his passion are the will of God and the salvation of the world, and this is a thing that surpasses the expression of human language, that he is God of God, Son from the substance of the Father and existing within the substance of the Father; first made human, next subjected to death by his human condition, after three days he returned from death, took back to heaven the matter of the spirit and of his substance.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Burns and Doignon offer slightly different lists of key passages in *In Matthaëum* where Hilary either refers to his opponents or deals polemically with the erroneous teachings about the Incarnation. See Burns, *Christology*, 18–19 and Doignon, *Hilaire*, 369–379. I have selected the passages where Hilary refers most extensively to his opponent's teaching. In addition to these texts, however, also see, e.g., *In Matthaëum* 1.2–3, 8.2 and 26.5.

<sup>7</sup> There are at least three passages in *In Matthaëum* where Hilary uses a confessional statement such as this one. For their identification and a discussion of their place in the context of other mid-fourth century creedal statements, see Williams, "Defining Orthodoxy," 158–9. Doignon notes the similarities between this passage and the *regula fidei* in Tertullian at SC 254, p. 133, n. 17.

<sup>8</sup> *In Matthaëum* 4.14; Jean Doignon, ed. and trans., *Sur Matthieu*. Sources Chrétiennes 254 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978): 132. *Itaque et corporalitas eius et passio uoluntas Dei et salus saeculi est; et ultra humani sermonis eloquium est Deum ex Deo, Filium ex Patris substantia atque intra Patris substantiam consistentem, primum in hominem corporatum, dehinc morti hominis condicione subiectum, postremo post triduum in uitam a morte redeuntem consociatam Spiritus et substantiae suae aeternitati materiem ad caelum adsumpti corporis retulisse.*

Of special note is the care with which Hilary delineates the movement of the Son from preexistence to incarnation and back. In Hilary's account, the Son proceeded from and existed in the divine substance prior to the Incarnation. He was then made human and suffered, and ultimately returned (with his body) to the state of eternity proper to his substance. Hilary's repetition of the phrase "substance of the Father" helps confirm the Son's preexistence. By relating the Son to the Father's substance, Hilary can imply that the Son shares in the Father's eternity, which is why he is careful to refer to the "eternity of the spirit and of his substance" (*Spiritus et substantiae suae aeternitati*). It should also be noted, however, that Hilary's language for the distinction between the preexistent Son and the Father is weak. The best he can say is that the Son exists "within" (*intra*) the Father's substance, but there is no language to show how the Son is nonetheless distinct from the Father. It is not until Hilary moves to the Incarnation that he speaks without ambiguity about the distinction between the Father and the Son.

This emphasis on the preexistence of the Son in relationship with the incarnation is a key feature of Tertullian's anti-modalist *regula*.<sup>9</sup> Early in his treatise *Adversus Praxean*, Tertullian presents an "anti-modalist" rule of faith that focuses on the "economy" of God.<sup>10</sup>

We believe in only one God, subject to the dispensation, which is what we call "economy;" that the only one God has also a Son, whose Word he is, and from whom he has proceeded, by whom all things were made and without whom nothing has been made; that his Son was sent by the Father. . . .<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> For Tertullian and the *regula fidei* see L. William Countryman, "Tertullian and the Regula Fidei," *Second Century* 2 (1982): 208–227; Eric F. Osborn, "Reason and the Rule of Faith in the Second Century A.D.," in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 40–61; Paul M. Blowers, "The Regula Fidei and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 199–228.

<sup>10</sup> *Adversus Praxean* belongs at the end of Tertullian's corpus, well within his Montanist phase, from 210/11. See Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971): 30–59. No consensus exists as to Praxeas' identity, although Allen Brent has recently offered arguments connecting Praxeas with Callistus. See Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995): 525–29. Brent's thesis is confirmed and expanded on by Ronald E. Heine, "The Christology of Callistus," *Journal of Theological Studies* 49 (1998): 58–60.

<sup>11</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 2.1; Vincent Bullhart, *Quinti Septimi Florentis Tertulliani Opera*. Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 70 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1942): 90; English translation in Evans, 131: *Unicum quidem deum credimus, sub hac tamen dispensatione, quam oikonomian dicimus, ut unici dei sit et filius, sermo ipsius qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt et sine quo factum est nihil: hunc missum a patre. . . .*

There is a heavy presence of “preexistence” language in this rule. According to Tertullian, the Christian faith reveals to us that the Son is the Word, that he proceeded from the Father, and that he was responsible for creation. Each of the descriptions of the Son is only possible if the Son exists with the Father prior to the incarnation.

This emphasis on the Son’s preexistence is affirmed by Tertullian as an anti-modalist argument. The degree to which this is true becomes clear by comparing the *regula* in *Adversus Praxean* with an earlier rule from *De Praescriptione*.

There is one God, the Creator of the world, who produced all things out of nothing; through his word who was emitted in the beginning of all things; that this Word is called His Son, Who in the Name of God was seen in diverse forms by the patriarchs, was always heard by the prophets. . . .<sup>12</sup>

The basic narrative of these two rules is nearly identical. In each, the one “God” has his Son, or Word, whom he sends into Mary to be born as a human, raised from the dead, etc. The Son, in turn, sends the Spirit. In *Adversus Praxean*, however, Tertullian refines the relationship between “God” and the Son by highlighting the Son’s procession from the Father prior to the Son’s mission on earth. In this way, Tertullian affirms the mutual existence of the Father and Son prior to the Son’s human birth, thereby removing a potential modalist interpretation of his earlier rule, which does not emphasize this distinction. Furthermore, Tertullian shifts primary responsibility for creation from “God” to the Son. Whereas the earlier rule taught (against the Gnostics) that “God is one only and creator of the world” who brought forth all things through his Word, *Adversus Praxean* drops the explicit reference to God as creator and instead identifies the Son as the one through whom all things were made.<sup>13</sup> Here again Tertullian counters Praxeas’ modalist

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<sup>12</sup> *De Praescriptione* 13.2–3; Pierre de Labriolle, ed., *Tertullien De Praescriptione Haereticorum* (Paris: Picard et Fils, 1907): 28; ANF 3, 249: *Vnum omnino Deum esse nec alium praeter mundi conditorem qui uniuersa de nihilo produxerit per uerbum suum primo omnium emissum. Id uerbum filium eius appellatum in nomine Dei uarie usum a patriarchis, in prophetis semper auditum. . . .*

<sup>13</sup> Countryman claims that both rules exhibit a similar two-fold structure: “belief in the Creator and belief in Jesus as Son or Word of the Creator” (“Regula,” 209). In *Adversus Praxean* 2, however, Tertullian has very little to say about the Father, except to claim God is *unicum Deum*. This contrasts with *De Praescriptione* where God is the *mundi conditorem* (*op. cit.*). What *Adversus Praxean* does say about creation links creation with the Son rather than the Father or even “God.” By de-emphasizing the Father’s creative role, Tertullian emphasizes the Son’s participation in creation and, accordingly, his pre-incarnate distinctiveness from the Father.

theology: if the Son had a role in creation, then he must have existed before his human birth.<sup>14</sup>

The third anti-modalist feature of the *Adversus Praxean regula* is Tertullian's insistence that our belief in the one God must be subject to the economy. Scholarly evaluations of what Tertullian means by this concept vary.<sup>15</sup> In the immediate context of this *regula*, it is the economy that gives Tertullian a way of talking about the diversity in God. In a passage immediately following his discussion of the *regula*, Tertullian explores the implications of his "economic" language:

[T]hat [the Father, Son and Holy Spirit] are all of the one, namely by the unity of the substance, while none the less is guarded the mystery of the economy which disposes the unity into the trinity, setting forth Father, Son and Holy Spirit as three, three however not in quality but in sequence, not in substance, but in aspect, not in power but in its manifestation, yet of one substance and one quality and one power, seeing it is one God from whom those sequences and aspects and manifestations are reckoned out in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The polemical context of Tertullian's use of *oikonomia* corresponds to Hippolytus, who also used *oikonomia* as an anti-modalist category. God is one, Hippolytus argues, according to "power," but he is "triple" according to the economy. (*Contra Noetum* 8.2.) Hippolytus is not entirely clear in the *Contra Noetum* about how this works. He seems to regard "economy" as synonym for "*prosopon*," so that each manifestation of God in the Father, Son and Spirit is itself an "economy." These three "economies" are of such harmony that they result in a single God: "The Father gives the order, the Word performs the work, and is revealed as Son through whom belief is accorded to the Father. By a harmonious economy the result is one God." (*Contra Noetum* 14.4)

<sup>15</sup> The meaning of the word *oikonomia* was not a settled matter in Tertullian's time, apart from a certain sensitivity to its anti-modalist potential, and we should not project any modern meaning onto Tertullian's use of the word. The relative ambiguity of Tertullian's economic theology is reflected by the great amount of scholarly commentary on the subject. For a summary see Joseph Moingt, *Théologie trinitaire de Tertullien*. Vol III, (Augbier, 1968): 909–912. Moingt identifies two camps. The first, represented by Harnack, suggests that "economy" signifies "the Trinitarian process" in which the unity of the divine substances passes from the unity to the trinity through the divine plan where the trinitarian disposition "appears" only as immanent. The second, represented by G.L. Prestige, argues that Tertullian takes the economy to reveal God's "functional organization," an organization that is eternal (910). Moingt also identifies a mediating position in René Braun who admits that Tertullian maintains an eternal distinction but claims that this distinction is made in "termes historiques" (911). Moingt prefers Braun's analysis. In none of the examples, however, do the scholars attempt to describe how Tertullian's theology functions as an anti-Monarchian polemic.

<sup>16</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 2; CCL 70, 91; Evans, 132: *quasi non sic quoque unus sit omnia dum ex uno omnia, per substantiae scilicet unitatem, et nihilo minus custodiatur οἰκονομία sacramentum quae unitatem in trinitatem disponit, tres dirigens patrem et filium et spiritum, tres autem non statu sed gradu, nec substantia sed forma, nec potestate sed specie, unius autem substantiae et unius status*

This passage offers a great deal of insight into Tertullian's Trinitarian terminology, and it has attracted scholarly attention accordingly.<sup>17</sup> For our purposes, Tertullian's use here of *substantia* to describe the unity between the Father and the Son stands out as the background for Hilary's description of the unity and distinction of the Father and the Son in *In Matthaeum*. Within the polemical context of *Adversus Praxean*, *substantia* (along with quality and power) is the natural counterpart to "economy;" "substance" is the principle of unity, and the economy is the principle of diversity. Tertullian's basic claim is that the modalists err by ignoring the economy. Tertullian has no more intention of denying "the Monarchy" than does Praxeas, but neither can Tertullian deny the reality of the "trinity."

At the same time, Tertullian has to introduce language to show how the economy does not lead to three gods, and so Tertullian's doctrine of *substantia* is also important for refuting the modalists. One passage where Tertullian develops his doctrine of the *substantia* is *Adversus Praxean* 7. Tertullian begins the chapter with a narrative of the "nativity" of the Word. According to Tertullian, the Word was first established (*condo*) by the Father under the name "Wisdom," then begotten (*genero*) for activity (*effectus*), after which it proceeded (*procedo*) from the Father and became the Son. Tertullian believes that this narrative provides sufficient evidence that the Word has substance. The modalists interpret *sermo* as a "voice and oral sound" that is intelligible when heard, but otherwise is "an empty something, void and incorporeal."<sup>18</sup> This cannot be so, Tertullian argues, because of the progression of the Son from the Father that he has just described:

But I affirm that from God nothing void and empty can have come forth—for he is not void and empty from whom it has been brought forth: and that cannot lack substance which has proceeded from so great a substance and is the maker of such great substances.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the character of the Father's substance forces us to recognize that whatever progresses from it has substance, which means that the Son (as Word) also has substance. Tertullian has made a shift from

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*et unius potestatis, quia unus deus ex quo et gradus isti et formae et species in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti deputantur.*

<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Daniélou, *Origins*, 343–365.

<sup>18</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 7.6; CCL 70, 95.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* Evans, 137–8: *At ego nihil dico de deo inane et vacuum prodire potuisse, ut non de inani et vacuo prolatum, nec carere substantia quod de tanta substantia processit et tantas substantias fecit.*

*Adversus Praxean* 2. In that passage, *substantia* was the principle of unity, but here Tertullian uses it to distinguish between the Father and the Son: if the Son has substance, Tertullian suggests, then he is distinct from the Father.<sup>20</sup>

Returning to Hilary, we can see that his rule of faith reflects the anti-modalist principles of Tertullian's *Adversus Praxean regula*. In the first place, without using the word "economy" (or *dispensatio*), Hilary appears nonetheless to reproduce the basic logic of that doctrine. Tertullian's emphasis in the *Adversus Praxean regula* on the Son's preexistence foreshadows Hilary's reliance on the same doctrine. For Hilary, as for Tertullian, it was the Son who existed beforehand, in the substance of the Father, and who later appeared in the Incarnation. Second, Hilary has accepted Tertullian's argument that the Son receives his own substance through his progression from the Father. One clue to this is Hilary's repetition of *substantia* while describing the Son's existence before the Incarnation. Another clue is when Hilary says that the Son is "from the substance of the Father." This language mirrors Tertullian's claim in *Adversus Praxean* 7 that the progression of the Word causes the Father to be Father, and the Son to be Son.<sup>21</sup> So while Hilary does not appear to have an explicit polemical purpose in this *regula*, he does articulate his statement of faith in language that has anti-modalist roots.<sup>22</sup>

#### LOGOS-SARX CHRISTOLOGY

A second indication of Hilary's polemical perspective is his use of a *logos-sarx* Christology to refute his opponents. This Christology, which has roots in Latin Trinitarian theology, appears as part of Hilary's first extended reference to an opponent in *In Matthaëum* 12.18.<sup>23</sup> Commenting on Matthew 12.33 ("produce a good tree and its good fruits, or

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<sup>20</sup> Daniélou believes Tertullian escapes neither modalism nor subordinationism: "Tertullian does not manage to get beyond the combination of modalism with regard to the distinctness of the individual persons and a subordinationism with regard to their existential plurality." Daniélou, *Origins*, 364.

<sup>21</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 7.1; CCL 70, 95.

<sup>22</sup> Doignon suggests that Hilary also draws on Tertullian's insistence that "substance" constitutes the material of the divine being. See Doignon, *Hilaire*, 365.

<sup>23</sup> *Logos-sarx* is usually thought of as a Greek model (hence the use of the Greek terms *logos* and *sarx*), one that owes in particular to Origen. In its Latin form, the language is *sermo, caro*. See A. Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. I, trans. J. Bowden (London: Mowbrays, 1975): 121–131.

produce a bad tree and its bad fruits”), Hilary suggests that these words refer both to Jesus’ time and to a future time after that. For his own time, Jesus is rebuking the Jews, but the “future sense” of the words pertains to those in Hilary’s time who “strip away from the Lord the dignity and communion of the Father’s substance.”<sup>24</sup> A little later, Hilary claims that this is the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, to deny the communion of substance between the Father and the Son. A more proper response, he continues, is to maintain the “good” (*bonus*, which Doignon translates as “orthodoxe”) confession because it produces “eternal fruit” (*fructus aeternus*).<sup>25</sup>

The Christology that supports the language in this passage has roots in the entire Latin tradition. It is Novatian, however, who provides the immediate source for the language, so we begin with him. Although Novatian borrows heavily from Tertullian for his Trinitarian theology, he argues against a different variety of modalism than Tertullian, now usually called adoptionism, and this difference occasionally gives Novatian’s thought a different emphasis.<sup>26</sup> According to Novatian, his opponents conclude from Christ’s bodily presence that he is “only and merely a man” (*hominem tantum et solum*).<sup>27</sup> For these opponents, the most important characteristic of Christ is his humanity, and what “divinity” he manifests is secondary and derived. As a corollary to this point, Novatian’s opponents seize upon Christ’s human weaknesses as proof of his humanity. The “human frailty” (*humanam fragilitatem*) that Christ manifests during his life on earth seems to provide their *crux*

<sup>24</sup> *In Matthaeum* 12.18; SC 254, 284: *Dignitatem et communionem paternae substantiae Domino detrahentes.*

<sup>25</sup> *In Matthaeum* 12.18; SC 254, 286.

<sup>26</sup> Novatian is aware of the differences between adoptionists and the “monarchian” modalists that Tertullian faced, and he devotes different sections of his *De Trinitate* to refuting each. For a helpful discussion of this aspect of Novatian’s treatise, see Geoffrey D. Dunn, “Diversity and Unity of God in Novatian’s *De Trinitate*,” *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* LXXVIII (2002): 385–409, especially 394–5. Very little evidence identifying actual “adoptionists” and their theology survives. Apart from Novatian, most of the evidence occurs second or third hand in anti-heretical works, including Hippolytus, Pseudotertullian, Eusebius of Caesarea and Epiphanius, and is notoriously unreliable. For an analysis of these sources see Friedrich Loofs, *Theophilus von Antiochien Adversus Marcionem* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1930); Winrich A. Löhr, “Theodotus der Lederarbeiter und Theodotus der Bankier—ein Beitrag zur römischen Theologiegeschichte des zweiten und dritten Jahrhunderts,” *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 87 (1996): 101–125; Frederick W. Norris, “Paul of Samosata: Procurator Ducenarius,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 35 (1984): 50–70.

<sup>27</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.1; G.F. Diercks, *Opera*. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 4 (Turnholti, Brepols, 1972): 28.

*interpretationis*. Novatian's opponents use Christ's sufferings positively to demonstrate his full humanity, but emphasizing the sufferings also leads them to de-emphasize the nature of Christ's divinity.<sup>28</sup> Thus Novatian has encountered a different polemical task. Whereas Tertullian had to show how the Son was distinct from the Father, Novatian's opponents radically distinguish the Father and the Son. Accordingly, Novatian has to demonstrate that Christ is God and fully divine—without denying the reality of Christ's humanity or too closely identifying the Father and the Son.

To fulfill this task, Novatian employs two unique arguments, both of which help illuminate Hilary's thought. The first is his development of the phrase "community of substance" (*substantiae communionem*). Like Tertullian, Novatian argues that Word is not to be taken as sound or a tone of voice forced from the lungs, but he is the "substance of power" (*substantia virtutis*) that is "born" (*nativitatis*) from God.<sup>29</sup> Novatian then produces a series of proofs that, despite the sharing of substance, the Son is not equal with the Father in the sense that there are two gods. So the fact that the Son is generated, visible, Son, obedient, and an angel all establish that there is only one God, the Father alone.<sup>30</sup> Novatian believes that it is possible for the Son to share in the divine substance without disrupting God's oneness because of the movement of the divine substance from the Father to the Son:

From this, the true and eternal Father is shown to be the one God, the divine power having been sent out from Him alone, and communicated and extended in the Son, it was been reverted back to the Father again through the sharing of substance.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.4; CCL 4, 28–29.

<sup>29</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.2; CCL 4, 75.

<sup>30</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.4–16; CCL 4, 75–77. Novatian takes up the question of whether Christ is an angel in chapter 20 where he offers the possibility that the theophanies reveal an ordinary angel. Novatian seems to deny this, but he explores what it would mean for an angel to be present. Because angels themselves, even those subjected to Christ, can be called gods, how much more is Christ greater than all angels (*De Trinitate* 20.3; CCL 4, 51)? Although Novatian seems to follow this logic as a hypothetical situation, he never explicitly denies that Christ is an angel, instead emphasizing Christ's superiority to ordinary angels (20.9; CCL 4, 52). Also see 31.17. This has given rise to speculation that Novatian holds an "Angel Christology." For discussion see Felix Scheidweiler, "Novatian und die Engelchristologie," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 66 (1954/55): 126–139; P. Joseph Barbel, "Zur 'Engelchristologie' bei Novatian," *Trieyer Theologische Zeitschrift* 67 (1958): 96–105.

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.20; CCL 4, 77–8. ET in James Papandrea, "Between Two Thieves: The Christology of Novatian as 'Dynamic Subordination,'" (Ph.D. diss., Northwest-

The key phrase in this passage is “community of substance” (*substantiae communionem*). Novatian seems to mean that when the Father generates the Son (and there is a definite sense in Novatian that this generation is not eternal), the Father extends his substance to the Son. Having received the divine substance, however, the Son then returns it to the Father who had originally given it. There is a genuine “mutual sharing” between the Father and Son, therefore, in which they both give and receive the divine substance of the Father.

As with Tertullian, it is not at all clear that Novatian has avoided the trap of either modalism or subordinationism with this doctrine. He does, however, offer arguments for the distinction of the Son from the Father that attempt to preserve the Son’s divinity. We see this attempt in his exegesis of Philippians 2.<sup>32</sup> Novatian uses this text to prove that Christ is divine: If Christ were only human, Novatian argues, he would have been called the “image” of God, not the “form,” because we know humans were created in God’s image.<sup>33</sup> “Form,” however, points to Christ’s divinity. The scriptures do not refer to anyone else as God’s “form,” except for the one who does the Father’s work, and who is before all things and holds authority over all things.<sup>34</sup>

To prove that the Son is distinct from the Father, Novatian next emphasizes the voluntary character of Christ’s obedience and subjection. Although Christ was God, he was careful not to identify himself with the Father. Had the Son claimed equality with the Father he would have misrepresented his relationship with the Father.<sup>35</sup> The

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ern University, 1998): 604: *Vnde unus Deus ostenditur uerus et aeternus Pater, a quo solo haec uis diuinitatis emissa, etiam in Filium tradita et directa, rursus per substantiae communionem ad Patrem reuoluitur.*

<sup>32</sup> Novatian is the first Latin theologian to offer a detailed interpretation of Philippians 2. For patristic interpretation of Philippians 2, see Paul Henry, “Kénose,” in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 5 (Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1957): 55–138; Pierre Grelot, “La traduction et l’interprétation de Ph 2, 6–7,” *Nouvelle revue théologique* 91 (1971): 897–922.

<sup>33</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.2; CCL 4, 55.

<sup>34</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.3–4; CCL 4, 55.

<sup>35</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.5; CCL 4, 55. Henry suggests that Novatian articulates a “two-stage” *kenosis*. The first stage takes place when the Son gives up his claim to equality during his pre-existent state, the second stage during the Incarnation itself. As Henry observes, “L’humiliation est présentée comme un renforcement de la kénose, comme un second moment affectant jusqu’à l’humanité elle-même” (113). Scholars have taken Novatian to task for subordinating the Son to the Father in this way. For discussion and summary of this scholarship, see R.J. DeSimone, “Again the Kenosis of Phil. 2: 6–11: Novatian Trin. 22,” *Augustinianum* 32 (1992): 108–113; for a dissenting opinion see Papandrea, 418–19. Whether or not Novatian’s theology is actually “subordinationist”

decisive example of Christ's obedience was his assumption of the *forma servi*. Christ obeyed God by becoming human, that is, by being born and receiving the substance of flesh and body (*substantiam carnis et corporis*). At this time Christ also emptied himself by not refusing to accept human frailty.<sup>36</sup> This act of emptying, as Papandrea observes, strikes Novatian as important, because it presumes the Son's prior divinity. If Christ were only human, he would have had no need to empty himself when becoming human. Instead, by emptying himself, Christ temporarily denied his divine powers and assumed the humility of human existence.<sup>37</sup> As a final proof of the Son's divinity, Novatian cites Christ's exaltation, since if Christ were not God, every knee could not bow to him. Therefore, the scripture names the *forma Dei*, the emptying, and Christ's exaltation, all as a way of showing Christ to be more than just a human; he is shown to be God without being identical to the Father.<sup>38</sup>

Both Novatian's doctrine of the "communion of substance" and his belief that the incarnation proves the diversity and divinity of the Son builds on Tertullian's doctrine of the Logos. This doctrine is one of Tertullian's most important anti-modalist arguments, and he devotes several chapters in *Adversus Praxean* to its development. Tertullian argues that it makes no difference whether we interpret Logos as "Reason" (*ratio*) or "Word" (*sermo*), because in either case God always had it with him. Consequently, even before he established the world, God was not alone (*solum non fuisse*).<sup>39</sup> Reason and Word, along with Wisdom, were always present, lacking only the open revelation of their own species and substance. This changed when God uttered the words, "let there be light," because then the Word proceeded from the Father and became

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in a technical sense, he does locate the Son's voluntary obedience and subordination to the Father before the incarnation itself. By doing so, he would seem to be protecting the Son's divinity while also guarding the Father's Monarchy.

<sup>36</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.6; CCL 4, 56.

<sup>37</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.7–9. Papandrea also suggests that for Novatian Christ's humanity "is more than just putting on flesh, it is a full humanity, with all of the attendant humility and suffering." Yet Novatian consistently qualifies statements about Christ's humanity with phrases such as *substantiam carnis et corporis* (22.6; CCL 4, 56). Thus he seems to limit Christ's humanity precisely to the assumption of flesh and its inherent "fragility." Novatian, of course, was under no obligation to respond to later Christological issues, and in any case his primary emphasis was on Christ's divinity against those who assert a certain interpretation of Christ's human weakness, not his humanity (341).

<sup>38</sup> *De Trinitate* 22.11–12; CCL 4, 56.

<sup>39</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 5.7; CCL 70, 94.

manifest.<sup>40</sup> This then, is the “nativity” (*nativitas*) of the Word: it was first established as Wisdom, but was then begotten as the Son from the heart of God. So under the name of Wisdom, Reason and Word, the Son proceeds in his own person from the Father.<sup>41</sup>

Tertullian is anxious to join the concept of the Son as Logos with that of the Son as Wisdom, Reason, etc. By doing so, Tertullian is able to identify in the Logos a “substantial” existence that might not otherwise be recognizable. If the concept of the “Logos” is properly conceived, we can recognize that the Son as Logos is “substantial.” This is significant because of the tendency by modalists to interpret Logos scriptures such as Ps. 44.2 and John 1 as though the Logos were a category of speech rather than of substance. As Heine has shown, modalist exegesis borrowed from a Stoic distinction between the *logos endiathetos* (reason) and *logos prophorikos* (speech), and they interpreted the Biblical Logos as though it were *logos prophorikos*.<sup>42</sup> Thus Tertullian claims that Praxeas has accused him (Tertullian) of believing that the Logos is substantial. Tertullian readily admits to this charge, because by connecting Logos with Wisdom and Reason he can then argue for activities and procession not otherwise permitted by modalist theology. Tertullian believes that the Word can only create if he is also substantive. The Word, therefore, has its own substance, to which Tertullian gives the name Son.<sup>43</sup>

The logic for identifying the Logos as a substance applies equally to the incarnation.<sup>44</sup> The question of the Son’s humanity arises because the modalists argue that the humanity is what we call “Jesus.” The

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<sup>40</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 6.1–7; CCL 70, 94–95.

<sup>41</sup> Tertullian’s triad of Reason, Wisdom and Word resembles a similar grouping used by Hippolytus in his polemic against Noetus. Hippolytus does not develop as extensive a cosmology as Tertullian, but he does offer the argument that although God was “alone” he was “many” because he was never without his Word, Wisdom, Power or Will. See *Contra Noetum* 10.2.

<sup>42</sup> Heine, 66.

<sup>43</sup> Tertullian follows-up this argument identifying the Logos as Son with a discussion of the names “Father” and “Son” as proof of their distinction. Just as night cannot be day, he claims, neither can the Father be identical with the Son. In order to have a Father there must be a Son, and so a son must have a father if he is to be a son. The Monarchians are being illogical, therefore, when they say the Father makes himself his own son. Nor is Tertullian impressed with their suggestion that God can act contrary to nature. Though true, we cannot apply this principle rashly; it is necessary to first prove God did so, which the Monarchians cannot do (*Adversus Praxean* 10; Evans, 98–99).

<sup>44</sup> Grillmeier, 124: “It can hardly be by accident that precisely in his *Adversus Praxean* Tertullian’s formula for the incarnation closely follows this development of Trinitarian conceptuality; here there is an analogous use of the same language and concepts.”

modalists claim that the Father is the “Spirit” (following Luke 1.35, “The Spirit of God will come upon you. . .”) in Christ’s humanity, which means that the Father and the Christ (or Spirit) are the same, and the humanity has no fundamental connection to the divinity. For Tertullian, this interpretation fails to acknowledge the connection between the Word and Spirit. When Luke mentioned the “Spirit of God,” he did not mention “God” in the nominative; nothing in “genitive dependence” is that on which it is dependent (*nulla res alicuius ipsa est cuius est*).<sup>45</sup> Instead, “Spirit” must be taken in the same sense as “Word.” Spirit is the substance of the Word, and “word” is an operation of the Spirit, and the two are one. And so, just as the Word of God is not God himself, so also the Spirit, taken in this sense, is not God himself. Turning next to the relationship between flesh and “divinity” within the incarnate Son, Tertullian asks whether the Word transforms the flesh or “clothes himself” in the flesh, and concludes that he clothes himself. If the Word transformed the flesh, he would cease being Word, and the flesh would cease being flesh. Yet the Spirit in Christ carried out powers, works and signs, while the flesh experienced passions such as hungering and suffering. Thus we see that the spirit is its own substance while the flesh is its own substance, and each substance is capable of performing acts that are proper to its substance. We must understand, therefore, that each substance, Word and flesh, remains distinct and performs its own acts.<sup>46</sup>

We are now in position to see the extent to which Hilary’s terminology draws from his Latin polemical tradition. The phrase “communion of substance” has an immediate source in Novatian, a fact that may provide insight into Hilary’s overall point in 12.18.<sup>47</sup> For Novatian, the phrase “communion of substance” is an extension of the traditional Latin Logos theology. Novatian insists that concept “Word” (*sermo*) must be recognized as the “substance of power” (*substantia uirtutis*) that extends from the Father, and it is this divine power that is extended in the Son (and returned to the Father) through the communion of the substance.<sup>48</sup> This is precisely how Hilary uses the phrase in *In Matthaeum*

<sup>45</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 26; Evans, 122.

<sup>46</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 27.11; CCL 70, 124–125.

<sup>47</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.20. See above, p. 28. For further examples of the Latin background to Hilary’s language in 12.18, see Doignon, *Hilaire*, 365, n. 5 and Williams, “Defining Orthodoxy,” 163–4.

<sup>48</sup> See *De Trinitate* 31.2, 20; CCL 4, 75, 78.

12.18. When the heretics refuse to recognize the nobility (*generosus*) of the Son's works, they deny what is fundamental to the Christian faith, namely, that the Son obtains this dignity because, as Logos, he shares in the communion of substance with the Father.

Hilary continues this line of thought in *In Matthaeum* 16.9. He reiterates his earlier suggestion that the opponents deny Christ's divinity and suggests that it is a work of the Devil not to recognize Christ in the man (*Christum in homine nescire*). There is an equal danger, moreover, in saying of Christ that there is a body without its God, or to say that there is God without his body.<sup>49</sup> By the standards of classic Latin theology this is the great heresy, because it denies both the economy and the reality of the Son's divine substance.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, Hilary advocates striking a balance between the humanity and the divinity. Believing in only the humanity or only the divinity brings an end to faith because it confuses the *regula*. Complete and true faith, accordingly, requires belief in the substance of both the humanity and the divinity. Hilary's argument would be most effective against an adoptionist, emphasizing as it does the divinity of the Son, but the foundational doctrine of the Logos—as—substance and flesh—as—substance belongs to the whole Latin anti-modalist tradition.

#### THE PASSION OF THE SON

Hilary offers his fullest appraisal of his opponents' theology in *In Matthaeum* 31.2–3. According to Hilary, some are of the opinion that Christ's affliction and fear of death “shatters” (*fregerit*) his divinity. If he is sorrowful from fear, weak from pain or trembling over his death, then his divinity, or “eternity” (*aeternitas*), will become corrupt and he will not be God.<sup>51</sup> These opponents take scriptural evidence for the Son's fear and passion as proof that the Son does not derive his being or proceed from the Father's substance. Instead, they argue, the Son

<sup>49</sup> *In Matthaeum* 16.9; SC 258, 56. Doignon attributes this “style didactique” to Novatian: SC 258, 57, n. 14.

<sup>50</sup> See Doignon, *Hilaire*, 370: “Ceux-ci, tous héritiers plus ou moins directs du marcionisme judaïsant, introduisent, par leur inconséquence, la division caractéristique de l'hérésie dans l'unité de la confession de Celui qui est «Dieu et homme, dans l'Esprit et dans la chair».” Doignon cites *In Matthaeum* 16.9 as a demonstration of this tendency in Hilary.

<sup>51</sup> *In Matthaeum* 31.2; SC 258, 226.

was made and created within time.<sup>52</sup> In response, Hilary produces a lengthy analysis of Jesus' words in the Garden (as recorded in Matthew 26.38–39), concluding that when Jesus says things like, “may this cup pass from me,” he is expressing hope that his disciples will not suffer after he is gone.<sup>53</sup>

Tertullian deals with a nearly identical problem in *Adversus Praxean* 28–30. As is the case throughout the work, Tertullian addresses this topic in response to a specific modalist teaching. Many anti-modalist writers claimed that their opponents believed that the Father suffered. According to Hippolytus, for example, the modalists accepted the Father's suffering as a logical necessity: there is only one God, Christ is God, therefore Christ is the Father. Likewise, Christ suffered, Christ is God, therefore the Father suffered.<sup>54</sup> The author of the *Refutatio* reiterates the logical character of the argument, this time with reference to Callistus, but adds a qualification:

For he is not willing to say that the Father suffered and is one person, but this senseless and wily man, who utters blasphemies high and low off the cuff, [wants] to avoid blasphemy against the Father, so that he may appear to speak only in accordance with the truth. At one moment he falls into the teaching of Sabellius, and at another he is not ashamed to lapse into threat of Theodotus.<sup>55</sup>

Tertullian also considers this teaching to be one of the most distasteful features of modalist doctrine, but he acknowledges modalist attempts to refute the charge. In *Adversus Praxean* 29 he cites his modalist interlocutor as claiming that “[we] do not blaspheme against the Lord God; for we say that he died not in respect of his divine but of his human substance.”<sup>56</sup>

As Heine suggests, it is likely that later modalists, such as Callistus and Praxeas, did attempt to mitigate the patripassionist implications of their theology. The *Refutatio* represents Callistus as claiming that the Father is *συμπόσχω* with the Son. This word has a philosophical

<sup>52</sup> *In Matthaeum* 31.3; SC 258, 228.

<sup>53</sup> *In Matthaeum* 31.8; SC 258, 234.

<sup>54</sup> *Contra Noetum* 2.3; Robert Butterworth, ed and trans., *Contra Noetum* (London: Heythrop College (University of London), 1977): 45. Heine, likewise, believes the Monarchian conclusion that the Father suffered is logical in character, rather than exegetical, and presupposes the prior thesis that Christ is identical with the Father (83).

<sup>55</sup> *Refutatio* 9.12.19; Miroslav Marcovich, *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (Berlin: W. De Gruyter, 1986): 354; English translation in Heine, 63.

<sup>56</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 29.3; CCL 70, 127; Evans, 177.

background which may offer clues to its use by Callistus and others. Drawing on Chrysippus, Heine argues that the modalists are drawing on the Stoic theory of κράσις, or “blending,” to show how the Father interacts with the Son’s humanity. In κράσις, two elements can completely participate in one another, but with neither element losing its own characteristics. The soul provides the classic example: it thoroughly pervades the body, but retains its own “substantiality.”<sup>57</sup> Heine identifies three terms in the *Refutatio*’s account of Callistus that suggest this Stoic background: (1) the Father as *pneuma* is joined to the Son as flesh, (2) the spirit and flesh are “unified,” (3) the two “interact with” one another. Finally, Heine offers the possibility that Tertullian seems to be arguing against a similar theory in *Adversus Praxean* 27. Here Tertullian argues against the possibility that the Son was “transformed into flesh” precisely by ignoring the possibility of κράσις. The two substances, Spirit and Flesh, either exist in juxtaposition, or they each lose their distinct identity.<sup>58</sup> The modalists, then, held that the Son retained the Father’s spirit even while in the flesh, so that the Father interacted fully with the Son. Because this divine spirit retained its own character, however, they could argue that the Father (spirit) did not suffer, even though the Son (flesh) experienced such suffering.<sup>59</sup>

If Heine’s thesis holds, it casts new light on the polemical burden faced by Tertullian in *Adversus Praxean* 28–30. Tertullian did not have to disprove that the Father suffered so much as show, positively, how the Son suffered. By accepting the premise that the Son suffered according to his human substance, the modalists put pressure on Tertullian’s own theology, which accepted the same premise. Accordingly, Tertullian has to find a way of retaining the distinction between the Father and Son within this traditional spirit—flesh differentiation. He begins this task by restating the traditional affirmation that the Son suffered according to his humanity, not in his Spirit and Word, and admits that the Monarchians claim to believe the same. Yet what they really believe is different, he argues, because they place the Father on the cross and, by implication, blaspheme against the Father “with that curse upon one crucified.”<sup>60</sup> The Monarchians, in fact, recognize the problem because they try to mitigate the Father’s “suffering” by referring to the Father’s

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<sup>57</sup> Heine, 75–6.

<sup>58</sup> Heine, 76.

<sup>59</sup> Heine, 78.

<sup>60</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 29.4; CCL 70, 127.

“suffering” as “compassion” (*compatitur*), thus removing the Father from a direct “passionate” experience. Tertullian rejects this, noting that if the Father is impassible, he is equally “incompassible” (*incompassibilis*). He wonders how the Son suffered without the affecting Father, and he offers the analogy of a spring and its source as an answer: if a river is defiled by muddying, the defilement will not affect the spring’s source; it “suffers” as the river, not the source. This analogy seems to deny Tertullian’s previous assertion that the Son does not suffer, although it could be that this analogy is a hypothetical situation that emphasizes the distinction between the Father and Son.<sup>61</sup> The reality is, Tertullian continues, the Son as Spirit or Logos did not suffer anything, thus removing even the possibility of the Father also suffering.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, when the Son cried out on the cross, this fleshly utterance (*vox carnis*) further highlights the Father’s impassibility. The Father delivered the Son to death by receiving the Son’s spirit. Only when the spirit departed from the flesh could the flesh die. So when the Son delivered his spirit to the Father, the Father “forsook” the Son, and the Son’s flesh died. This is how the Son suffered while the Father remained impassible.<sup>63</sup>

This attempt to deny that the Son suffered is precisely what Hilary tries to do in *In Matthaeum* 31, and in the process he uses Tertullian’s motifs and terminology extensively. Tertullian’s image of the spring and the river, for example, was intended to address the monarchian claim that the Son’s suffering would corrupt the Father’s divinity, and this may be why Hilary picks up on this claim in his opponents.<sup>64</sup> There are some differences between Hilary’s account of the Passion and Tertullian’s. For one thing, Hilary is less interested in the suffering of the Father than Tertullian. Although Hilary does seem to allude to God suffering early in 31.2, he never mentions the “Father” suffering.<sup>65</sup> Hilary’s

<sup>61</sup> Moingt, 279.

<sup>62</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 29.6–7; CCL 70, 127–8.

<sup>63</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 30.2; CCL 70, 128. The *Contra Noetum* also deals with the Son’s passion, but not in the context of the Father’s impassibility. In this case, the Son’s suffering is seen primarily as a sign of his true humanity (18.1–9; Butterworth, 87, 89).

<sup>64</sup> For this and additional examples, see SC 258, 227, n. 2, and *Hilaire avant l’exile*, 373–379.

<sup>65</sup> See *In Matthaeum* 31.2. Doignon translates “*quod cadere propter se maestitudo in Deum potuerit*” with “que l’affliction éprouvée à son sujet a pu atteindre sa divinité.” This is potentially misleading because it softens the impact of the “Deum,” and diminishes the phrase’s attribution of the suffering to God himself (SC 258, 226). His translation of the same passage in *Hilaire* is more literal, but preferable: “que l’affliction a pu atteindre Dieu à cause de lui-même” (374).

focus, instead, is on the ways in which his opponents' theology removes the Son's divinity. Hilary's language throughout chapter 31 focuses on Christ's *aeternitas*, not the Father's *passio*. Here again, Hilary may have an adoptionist opponent in mind. According to Novatian, some Adoptionists seized upon the Son's passion and death as evidence that the Son was "only human," a claim that Hilary takes care to refute in *In Matthaëum* 31.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Hilary's approach to this issue throughout *In Matthaëum* 31 draws heavily on standard Latin anti-modalist polemic and is further proof of his reliance on that polemical tradition.

It is worth repeating that Hilary's purpose in writing the *In Matthaëum* is not polemical, and any attempt to identify a polemical tradition in this text does, to a certain extent, misconstrue it. Nevertheless, what polemic there is in *In Matthaëum* derives from classical Latin anti-modalism. That this is so tells us two things about Hilary's thought prior to his exile. First, Hilary did come into the Trinitarian controversy as a traditional Latin anti-modalist. This does not imply, however, that Hilary would have been completely naïve about issues he would have to face. Even before his exile, Hilary assumed that the divinity of the Son had to be defended, in ways that preserved his separation from the Father, as a matter of faith. That Hilary would not have gone into exile with the same theological tools as more experienced "anti-Arians" does not mean he could not recognize the problem, and from a theological perspective, it is not surprising that he would be inclined to join with those who affirmed that divinity. Second, the way Hilary appropriated his tradition suggests that the benchmark for his pre-exile theology is Latin Logos-Sarx Christology. Hilary believed that "Logos" must be conceived as a substance, related to but distinct from the Father. This claim, in turn, leads to an assertion that is equally fundamental: because of the Logos, and because of the economy, it is necessary to confess that the Son is God and man, at once in the Spirit and in the body. It is from this standard, then, that we will judge subsequent development in Hilary's thought.

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<sup>66</sup> Novatian, *De Trinitate* 25.1–11; CCL 4, 234–41.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE LATIN WEST AND THE BEGINNING OF THE HOMOIAN CRISIS

The Councils of Arles (353), Milan (355) and Beziars (356) were crucial for Western involvement in the Homoian controversy, which is not to say that those who participated in these councils immediately recognized their significance. This confusion was most likely caused deliberately by the ones who convened the councils. The apparent purpose of the meetings was to deal with matters of church polity, i.e. the condemnation of Athanasius, and not doctrine, which seems to have allowed the bishops to believe that there was no doctrinal agenda at all; Athanasius was to be condemned solely for violating church law.<sup>1</sup> It was only in retrospect, especially after the Blasphemy of Sirmium 357 was published, that the full implications of what had happened at Arles and Milan became clear. Nevertheless, once Valens and Ursacius revealed their theological agenda, and it became clear to all that this agenda was behind the attacks on Athanasius, several theologians from the West did respond theologically.

In this chapter, we will look at the anti-Homoian writings of two Latin theologians who, though not exiled, offered rebuttals of the subordinationist theology contained in the Sirmium manifesto. The witness of these two theologians, Phoebadius of Agen and Marius Victorinus, is important because they attacked Homoian theology from a classically Latin perspective. Their work reveals the ways that Homoian theology came into conflict with the Latin tradition, while at the same time it reveals areas where that tradition was unable to meet the Homoian challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> Although there is no direct evidence that the participants at Beziars were required to condemn Athanasius, we will assume that all three councils were called under similar, if not identical, auspices. See above, p. 10.

## SIRMIOUM 357 AND THE “HOMOIAN PLOT”

The three councils of the mid-350's were called as part of a larger campaign by Valens and Ursacius to discredit Athanasius. Sulpicius Severus reports that the crusade against Athanasius was linked to the widespread condemnations of Photinus and Marcellus.<sup>2</sup> Valens and Ursacius seem to have had a relatively free hand in carrying out this anti-Athanasian agenda because they, along with several other Homoian leaders, including Acacius of Caesarea, had gained the Emperor's confidence and were exploiting that influence to secure the condemnation of Athanasius.<sup>3</sup> Despite the claims of some scholars that Valens and Ursacius must have required some sort of consent to their theological position, on the grounds that no Western bishop would have necessarily objected to condemning Athanasius, it is more likely that Athanasius was indeed the subject treated by both councils.<sup>4</sup> According to Sulpicius Severus, who conflates the councils of Arles, Milan, and Béziers (356), most of the Western bishops were indeed willing to subscribe to the condemnation of Athanasius. However, when certain bishops called for an “inquiry” (*quaero*) into the faith, Valens and Ursacius demurred and merely insisted that all the bishops assent to the condemnation or face banishment.<sup>5</sup> Sulpicius Severus believes that Valens and Ursacius did have a specific, anti-Nicene theological agenda. He also believes, however that they went to some lengths to hide that agenda.

This version of the councils is confirmed by contemporary accounts. Both Hilary and Liberius emphasize that the councils were about Athanasius, not points of doctrine. Liberius is especially important in this regard.<sup>6</sup> In a letter written to the emperor shortly after the council

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<sup>2</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II. 36–37; Ghislaine de Senneville-Grave, ed and trans., *Chroniques*, Sources Chrétiennes 441 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999): 306–310; NPNF 11, 92. The sources for these three councils are (with the exception of Hilary) late and (including Hilary) tend to be overly hagiographic and unreliable. I have chosen to focus on Sulpicius Severus' account because he recognizes and reports the hidden intention behind Valens and Ursacius' actions at these councils—intentions that the contemporary participants only recognized in retrospect. For an overview of the three councils and their sources, see Hanson, *Search*, 329–334.

<sup>3</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II. 39; SC 441, 316.

<sup>4</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 332.

<sup>5</sup> Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica* II. 39.4; SC 441, 316.

<sup>6</sup> Liberius was initially exiled for refusing to condemn Athanasius. He later recanted and was allowed to return to Rome as Bishop. For Liberius' activity and writing during this period, see Glen Louis Thompson, *The Earliest Papal Correspondence*, (Ph.D. diss.,

of Arles in 353, Liberius requests a new council on the basis canon law. He first defends himself from a legal charge, that he withheld evidence that might have incriminated Athanasius.<sup>7</sup> He then asserts that the reason why he did not condemn Athanasius at Arles was his suspicion that the “Eastern” decision to condemn Athanasius did not reflect the will of the majority of Eastern bishops.<sup>8</sup> Liberius regrets having to obstruct the Emperor’s agenda on a mere point of law, but as a bishop of the church, he is sworn to uphold that law he received from the Apostles, and he is certain Constantius will honor his request for a council of all the bishops.<sup>9</sup> Liberius does seem to recognize that Valens and Ursacius do have a theological agenda; on several occasions in the letter he alludes to “other issues” that have arisen and requests that the new council take up “issues of faith” (*fidei causa*).<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Liberius sticks to the actual issue that Valens and Ursacius put before the council. Furthermore, when Liberius later recants his earlier defense of Athanasius, he claims that he is now at peace with the Eastern bishops because he accepts the condemnation of Athanasius as valid. In a letter to Vincentius, for example, he asserts that he has “withdrawn from the controversy over Athanasius’ reputation.”<sup>11</sup>

Although Hilary was apparently not present at either Arles or Milan, he gives an account of the entire controversy that corresponds with that of Liberius. In the preface to his *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* (356), Hilary offers a summary of the current state of affairs:

Indeed, I recollect that it has been a theme of men’s discussion for a long time that certain of God’s priests are in exile because they object to condemning Athanasius; and such is the error that has taken possession of almost everybody’s mind, that they think an exile undertaken for his sake a cause insufficiently worthy of each of them.<sup>12</sup>

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Columbia University, 1990): 184–202. For the circumstances and date of Liberius’ return, see T.D. Barnes, “Capitulation,” 256–265.

<sup>7</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series A. VII. 2; CSEL 65, 90.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series A. VII. 6; CSEL 65, 92.

<sup>10</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series A. VII. 2; CSEL 65, 90.

<sup>11</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B. VII. 11; CSEL 65, 173; Wickham, 80. Also, see CAP Series B. VII. 8.6, where Liberius does agree to accept the Sirmium 357 formula (much to Hilary’s chagrin). However, this acceptance follows his formal rejection of Athanasius, and it reads more as an afterthought, designed to convince his former opponents that his recantation is genuine.

<sup>12</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B. I. 4; CSEL 65, 101; Wickham, 18. *Enimvero uersari in sermone hominum iam diu memini quosdam sacerdotum dei idcirco exulare, quod in*

As this synopsis indicates, whatever the actual motives behind the exiles handed down by the emperor at these councils, their ostensible reason was the refusal on the part of those exiled bishops to condemn Athanasius. What Hilary is attempting to do, in fact, is to explain to his readers why these bishops, or indeed anyone at all, would bother accepting an exile for the sake of Athanasius. Like many modern scholars, Hilary's contemporaries are unable to understand why a Latin bishop would care one way or another about Athanasius. Accordingly, Hilary's task in the *Liber* is to show not only why Western bishops should defend Athanasius and support those bishops who are in exile, but he also wants to show the hidden motives behind this seemingly innocuous concern over Athanasius. When Hilary moves on to defending the actions of Paulinus of Triveri at Arles, he does so precisely to show that Paulinus was exiled not for "personal partiality" (*favor in hominem*) towards Athanasius, as was claimed, but from disagreement about the fundamental "confession of faith" (*confessio fidei*).<sup>13</sup>

Both Hilary and Liberius, then, agree that the councils of Arles and Milan were convened to condemn Athanasius and nothing else. Some Western bishops may have had suspicions about the actual motives of Valens and Ursascius, but these two were able to keep doctrinal matters off the table and to keep the focus on Athanasius. The one exception to their triumph was the dramatic appearance of Eusebius of Vercelli at the Council of Milan (355). The ecclesiastical historian, Socrates, credits Eusebius with recognizing that the Eastern bishops were "intent on subverting the faith" by demanding the condemnation of Athanasius. According to Socrates, Eusebius loudly protested that the accusations against Athanasius were a covert attempt to subvert the faith, at which point Valens and Ursacius dissolved the council.<sup>14</sup> This might be an example of anachronistic hagiography except for an unusual detail added by Hilary that tends to give Socrates' account credence. According to Hilary, Eusebius disrupted the proceedings by

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*Athanasium sententiam non ferunt, et hic error prope omnium mentes occupavit, ut sub nomine eius non satis unicuique eorum dignam causam suscepti exilii arbitrentur.*

<sup>13</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B. I. 6; CSEL 65, 102; Wickham, 19. Unfortunately, Hilary's account of Paulinus' experience is no longer extant. We do have Hilary's statement that he will next deal with Paulinus, at which point the text is lost.

<sup>14</sup> Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* II.36; William Bright, ed., *Socrates Ecclesiastical History*, second edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893): 123. Sulpicius Severus credits this to Dionysius. See *Chronica* II.29. According to Hilary, Dionysius was the first to accept the Nicene Creed at Eusebius' insistence, but it was Eusebius who presented the creed.

claiming that some of those present were “stained with heresy,” and that he would subscribe to the condemnation against Athanasius provided everyone would write down the profession of faith. To this end, Eusebius produced a copy of the Creed of Nicea and demanded that all present affirm it. When Dionysius attempted to do just that, Hilary says that Valens snatched the pen out of his hand and the meeting quickly dissolved in chaos.<sup>15</sup>

Eusebius’ actions at the council demonstrate the exceeding reluctance of Valens and Ursacius to engage directly in doctrinal matters at these councils. Both Hilary and Socrates report that in the aftermath of Eusebius’ challenge, the two bishops withdrew to the sanctuary of the Emperor’s palace, only to return and insist again on the condemnation of Athanasius. Eusebius paid a personal price for his boldness. After failing in his attempt to turn the council to doctrinal matters, Eusebius left Milan and was subsequently exiled.<sup>16</sup> Less clear are the reasons why Eusebius presented the Nicene Creed for the council’s approval. It is possible, especially in light of conflicting historical accounts of the council, that Hilary either revises the story or reproduces an apocryphal tale to better support his own pro- Athanasius agenda in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*.<sup>17</sup> Assuming the accuracy of Hilary’s account, however, one possible explanation for Eusebius’ use of it may be its association with Athanasius. In a letter to Constantius written before the Council of Milan, Liberius asks that the exposition of the faith ratified at Nicea by all the bishops be agreed to all. Liberius invokes

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<sup>15</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B Appendix (= *Liber I ad Constantium*). II. 3; CSEL 65, 187. As I noted in the Introduction, it is possible that Hilary also attempted to introduce some doctrinal matter at Béziers, and it may have been this act that resulted in his exile.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed reconstruction of Eusebius’ actions at the Council of Milan, see Williams, *Ambrose of Milan*, 52–58.

<sup>17</sup> This is the conclusion of Brennecke, *Hilarius*, 178–82. According to Brennecke, Eusebius’s correspondence suggests that he never publicly supported Nicea until the Alexandrian Synod of 362, and until then, Eusebius, like all the Western theologians, followed the theology of the Serdican Synod of 343. Brennecke believes that when Hilary writes his account, he is entirely interested in a defense of Athanasius and modifies his narrative accordingly (p. 181). Hilary is capable of re-interpreting historical facts to fit his polemical agenda, and Brennecke’s suggestion deserves consideration. However, if it is true that Hilary is committed to Athanasius, there is no reason why the same could not be true of Eusebius. In addition to this, Brennecke’s emphasis on the priority of the Serdican theology for the West remains to be proven. It seems just as likely that Western theologians would have attached themselves to Nicea as a way of defending Athanasius as holding on to the Serdican formula—provided Serdica was ever that important for any Latin theologian.

the memory of Constantius' father, Constantine, who presided over Nicea, as the authority for invoking this council.<sup>18</sup> However, Liberius' use of Nicea, along with Eusebius' appearance with it at Milan, may reflect the growing insistence on the priority of Nicea by Athanasius himself. As Hanson suggests, Athanasius first began to emphasize Nicea and *homoousios* around the year 356, largely in response to the attempts of Valens and Ursacius to discredit him in the West.<sup>19</sup> In this context, Nicea had the advantage of being relatively old, recognized in both the East and the West, and thus authoritative. Even more significantly, it was one creed that his new opponents could not accept under any circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

In short, the Western experience at the councils of Arles and Milan reveals a group of bishops struggling to make sense of the controversy they found themselves embroiled in. The activity of Liberius and Eusebius, especially the latter's attempt to force Valens and Ursacius to address doctrinal issues, suggests that by the time of the Council of Milan, the Western bishops were slowly beginning to perceive Valens' and Ursacius' true intentions. And for those bishops whose perception failed them at Arles and Milan, these intentions would become crystal clear after the publication of a creed issued by a synod that met in Sirmium in the year 357.

### *Sirmium 357 and the First Look at Homoian Theology*

The Council of Sirmium 357 was more like a gathering of likeminded theologians than a council, and the document issued by this body is more like a "position paper" than a formal creed.<sup>21</sup> Estimations of who was present at this council vary, but nearly all the ancient historians

<sup>18</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series A. VII. 6; CSEL 65, 93.

<sup>19</sup> Hanson notes that Athanasius first began to defend *homoousios* in his *De Decretis*, which Hanson dates to 356. (*Search*, 438) Quasten dates the work to the early 350s, though within the early stages of the Homoian controversy. See Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1994), 61–62.

<sup>20</sup> *De Decretis* 20.1–3; PG 25, 449–452. In this section Athanasius walks through the process by which the Council decided on *homoousios*, concluding that the council Fathers were, "compelled to collect the sense of scriptures, and to re-say and re-write what they had said before, more distinctly still, that the Son was *homoousios* with the Father." (NPNF 4, 163) For the reception of Nicea in the West, see Gustave Bardy, "L'occident et les documents de la controverse arienne," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 20 (1940): 28–63; Jörg Ulrich, *Abendländische Rezeption des Nizänums* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994); Williams, *Ambrose*, 12–18.

<sup>21</sup> Williams applies this term to the document. See *Ambrose of Milan*, 19.

agree that the total number was small, including those theologians and bishops who would become the leaders of the new Homoian party.<sup>22</sup> Valens and Ursacius were both present and may have been responsible for the shape of the final document.<sup>23</sup>

The Sirmium creed is especially noteworthy for its explicit subordination of the Son to the Father. The rationale for this subordination lies in the difference between the Father and Son. The creed asserts, in fact, that the very name “Father” reveals that the Father excels the Son in “honor, in dignity, in glory, in majesty.”<sup>24</sup> By the same token, since catholic doctrine declares that there are two *personae*, Father and Son, the creed argues that the one is greater than the other. The logic here seems to rely heavily on a belief that distinction yields a hierarchy. Because we must confess the two (different) persons, the creed argues, we must also confess that one is greater than the other. However, the creed also makes much of the notion that the Father generated the Son to demonstrate the subordination of one to the other. The Father has no beginning, but the Son is born from the Father. Again, the operative assumption is, if generated, then subordinate.

Ultimately, however, the creed wants nothing to do with discussions about the Son’s generation, which leads its authors to another contentious claim.

But as for the fact that some, or many, are concerned about substance, which is called *ousia* in Greek, that is, to speak more explicitly, *homoousian* or *homoiousian* as it is called, there should be no mention of it whatever, nor should anyone preach it. And this is the cause and reason, that it is not included in the divine Scriptures, and it is beyond man’s knowledge, nor can anyone declare the birth of the Son, as it has been written, “who can declare his generation (Isaiah 53.8)?”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> For a summary of the council, and a list of those bishops who were present, see Hanson, *Search*, 343.

<sup>23</sup> Surprisingly, however, Hilary claims that the actual creed was written by Ossius and Potamius, two Westerners. See *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 487. Also see *Liber Contra Constantium* 23; SC 334, 214, where Hilary refers to the creed as “Ossius’ Lunacy” (*deliramenta Ossii*).

<sup>24</sup> *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 489.

<sup>25</sup> *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 488; NPNF 9, 6: *Quod vero quosdam aut multos movebat de substantia, quae graece usia appellatur, id est ut expressius intelligatur, homousion, aut quod dicitur homoousion, nullam omnino fieri oportere mentionem; nec quemquam praedicare ea de causa et ratione quod nec in divinis Scripturis contineatur, et quod super hominis scientiam sit, nec quisquam possit nativitatem Filii enarrare, de quo Scriptum est, Generationem eius quis enarrabit?*

The ostensive concern here is for the generation of the Son. Isaiah 53.8 was a polemical text in both the Arian and Homoian controversy, and the creed's authors surely knew its history.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the most radical element of this creed is its insistence on the unsuitability of substance language for talking about the relationship between the Son and Father. The prohibition against "substance" language seems to be directed primarily against Nicea and especially Basil of Ancyra, but it is equally proscriptive against any theology that draws upon Tertullian or Novatian's doctrine of *substantia*.<sup>27</sup> Hanson's suggestion may have merit that the creed's authors reject the "concept of substance" because it implies that God is somehow corporeal.<sup>28</sup> However, prohibiting substance language also allows the authors to focus on the hierarchical difference between the Father and Son without having to cloud the issue with contentious debate about "substance." Once discussion of the Fathers and Son's substance is removed, it is then possible to offer a Scriptural and therefore authoritative account of how the Father is greater than the Son.

#### THE FIRST LATIN RESPONSE: PHOEBADIUS OF AGEN

The first surviving Western response to the publication of the Sirmium 357 creed came from the pen of Phoebadius of Agen. Phoebadius does not depart far from his traditional Latin heritage, relying heavily on Tertullian and Novatian to repudiate Homoian doctrine.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, however, Phoebadius is a fully engaged polemicist. He has a copy

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<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of this text in the Nicene Controversy, see Manlio Simonetti, *Studi sull' Arianesimo* (Roma: Editrice Studium, 1965): 128–32. Simonetti shows that the Isaiah text was a "Pro-Nicene" proof text, primarily because it could be used to remove the Son from the taint of material generation. Thus the appearance of the passage in the Sirmium 357 is an example of Homoian "counter-exegesis" of an established controversial passage.

<sup>27</sup> Hanson notes that the prohibition could also have been directed against the Dedication Creed of 341, which also contains "substance language" (*Search*, 347). For Basil of Ancyra's defense the substantial relationship of the Father and the Son see below, Chapter 4, pp. 116–122.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> This is the judgment of Hanson, *Search*, 517, and reflects the scholarly consensus. Also see Ulrich, *Contra Arrianos*, 68–73, and Manlio Simonetti, "Hilary of Poitiers and the Arian Crisis in the West," in *Patrology IV*, ed. Angelo di Berardino, (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1986): 83–84.

of the Sirmium 357 document and an understanding of its content and intent. He also apparently has access to Hilary's early polemical writing, along with other "Arian" or Homoian texts, such as those by Potamius of Lisbon.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Phoebadius reveals the ways in which Western theologians had to struggle to make their traditional doctrines fit in the new polemical climate.

Phoebadius makes a concerted effort to deal with the Sirmium 357 creed in a systematic fashion. Instead of going through the creed point by point, Phoebadius condenses the creed's theology into six "theses," which he considers in sequence.<sup>31</sup> Phoebadius begins his survey by investigating the first Homoian assertion that, "It is certain that there is one God."<sup>32</sup> Although this is a perfectly orthodox claim, Phoebadius is suspicious about its intention. The Homoians defend the doctrine of "One God" so vehemently, he suggests, because they do not want to admit that the Son is God. They will confess that the Son is a god, but what they will not admit is that there is one "God the Father" when they speak of One God.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, we should take great care when considering their claims:

Nobody should believe that with these words the catholic confession has already been reached if we confess God the Father and do not deny the Son as a god. Since God the Father can be called one God in such a way that there is one Father but not one God. Also the Son can be named God in such way that he is not a god.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The extent of Phoebadius' exposure to Hilary remains uncertain, though most scholars assume that Phoebadius did have access at least to Hilary's *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*. Following the editor of the CCL edition of Phoebadius, Pierre Smulders examines twenty-one possible instances of Phoebadius borrowing from Hilary and concludes that Phoebadius knew only the first book of the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*. See Smulders, *Preface*, 132–140. Williams recognizes only three of these parallels as viable, though he also acknowledges that some borrowing occurred. Williams, "Reassessment," 213, n. 53.

<sup>31</sup> For overview and outline of *Contra Arianos* organized around these theses, see Ulrich, *Contra Arianos*, 60–64. Ulrich observes that Phoebadius does not strictly follow the plan he sets out in *Contra Arianos* 2, treating theses 5 and 6 out of order.

<sup>32</sup> *Contra Arianos* 3.1; R. Demeulenaere, ed., *Foebadius, Victricius, Leporius, Vincentius, Lerinensis, Evagrius, Ruricius [collectanea]*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 64 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1985): 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Contra Arianos* 3.5; CCL 64, 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Contra Arianos* 3.7; CCL 64, 26: *Ne quis ergo putet his verbis perfici catholicam professionem, si et unum Deum Patrem confitemur et Deum Filium non negamus. Potest enim et Deus Pater sic unus Deus dici ut sit unus Pater, non Deus unus. Potest et sic Filius Deus dici ut Deus non sit.*

In other words, when properly framed, even the confession that the “Son is God” can be used to deny the proper divinity of the Son. Phoebadius assumes that the Homoians have two levels of divinity in mind, which allows them to say that the Son is “god” without being equal in divinity to the Father. That the Homoians intend this meaning is confirmed by their further assertion that, “we cannot and should not preach two gods,” and “so there is one God over all.”<sup>35</sup> Phoebadius believes that the Homoians use these claims to deny the true divinity of the Son and to subjugate him as one of the creatures.<sup>36</sup>

Phoebadius continues his examination of the first Homoian thesis by perceptively suggesting that the reason why the Homoians insist on the “one God” is that they want to protect the Father from suffering.<sup>37</sup> He quotes Potamius of Lisbon by name to the effect that when the “flesh and spirit of Christ are combined (*coagulatis*) by the blood of Mary” in one body, then “God is made passible.”<sup>38</sup> Phoebadius then asserts that this is the goal of Homoian theology, to separate the “passible” Son and the “impassible” Father.

Therefore, the spirit does not become flesh, and the flesh does not become a spirit. These “egregious” teachers want this, so that just our Lord and God is made passible on account of this mixture of the substances. That he is passible, however, they want, so that one cannot believe that he came out from the impassible one.<sup>39</sup>

On one level, Phoebadius has misrepresented Homoian theology, because it is not clear that Potamius, or any Homoian, would define “spirit” (or “Spirit of Christ”) as Christ’s divinity in the same way Phoebadius would. For the Homoians, the Son’s “spirit” is of a lesser order than the Father’s, while Phoebadius sees them as equal in stature.

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<sup>35</sup> *Contra Arianos* 4.1; CCL 64, 26.

<sup>36</sup> *Contra Arianos* 4.5; CCL 64, 26.

<sup>37</sup> Ulrich, *Contra Arianos*, 60, claims that Chapter Five functions as an excursus. However, Phoebadius’ shift to “Christology” in this chapter suggests that he has understood why the Homoians emphasize “One God.” By doing so, and by implying that the Son is thereby separated from the Father, the Homoians attempt to protect the Father from suffering. Consequently, Phoebadius shifts naturally to the issue of how the divinity and humanity co-exist in Christ, which amounts to a discussion of how Christ suffers.

<sup>38</sup> *Contra Arianos* 5.1; CCL 64, 27.

<sup>39</sup> *Contra Arianos* 5.6; CCL 64, 28: *Non ergo fit Spiritus caro, nec caro Spiritus. Quod isti volunt egregii doctores, ut factus sit scilicet Dominus et Deus noster ex hac substantiarum permixtione passibilis. Ideo autem passibilem volunt dici ne ex impassibili credatur.*

Nevertheless, Phoebadius has recognized that a key component of Homoian theology is that the Son suffers, not the Father.<sup>40</sup>

Phoebadius' language in *Contra Arianos* 5 is significant not only because it demonstrates the extent to which Phoebadius has understood Homoian theology, but also because it highlights his reliance on earlier Latin trinitarian theology. Phoebadius is sympathetic with the Homoian desire to guard the Father from passion. What he objects to is this apparent "mixing" of Jesus' humanity and divinity into a brand new substance, along with the Homoian attempt to separate the Father and Son. Both of these concerns reflect the influence of Tertullian. In *Adversus Praxean* 27, Tertullian complains that if, as Monarchian theology seems to teach, the Word was made flesh as the result of a transformation of substance, then Jesus, "will then be one substance out of two, flesh and spirit, a kind of mixture."<sup>41</sup> Then in *Adversus Praxean* 29, Tertullian asserts that the Son can share in the divine substance and yet not suffer:

For also if a river is defiled by some muddying, although the one substance comes down from the spring and there is no interruption at the spring, yet the malady of the river will not attach to the spring; and though the water which suffers belongs to the spring, so long as it suffers not in the spring but in the river it is not the spring that suffers, but the river which comes from the spring. So also how could the Spirit of God suffer in the Son?<sup>42</sup>

Thus for both Tertullian and Phoebadius, it is necessary to distinguish between the "flesh" and "spirit" of the incarnated Christ. However, both theologians also believe that attributing the divine substance, or "spirit," to the Christ does not mean that the Son suffers. This, then, is the source of Phoebadius' complaint that the Homoians deny that the Son comes out of the Father, because, as Tertullian asserts, the source of the "spring," or spiritual substance, is protected from the suffering and yet shares the Father's substance. Within his own tradi-

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<sup>40</sup> Hanson, *Search*, claims that Homoian Christology was "specifically designed" to show how the God the Son, as opposed to God the Father, suffered. (565)

<sup>41</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 27.8; CCL 70, 124; Evans, 173: *una iam erit substantia Iesus ex duabus, ex carne et spiritu, mixtura quaedam*. Compare to Novatian, *De Trinitate*, 24.8.

<sup>42</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 29.6; CCL 70, 127; English translation in Evans, 177: *nam et fluvius si aliqua turbulentia contaminatur, quanquam una substantia de fonte decurrat nec discernatur a fonte, tamen fluvii iniuria non pertinebit ad fontem; et licet aqua fontis sit quae patitur in fluvio, dum non in fonte patitur sed in fluvio non fons patitur sed fluvius qui ex fonte est. ita et spiritus dei qui pati possit in filio?*

tion, therefore, Phoebadius found the resources to counter this key Homoian doctrine.

The next thesis that Phoebadius considers is the Homoian assertion that, “no-one should speak of substance.”<sup>43</sup> Phoebadius immediately recognizes this prohibition as an attack on Nicea. “What have you done,” he asks rhetorically, “to the men of blessed memory” who met at Nicea and formulated a “perfect rule of the catholic faith” (*perfectam fidei catholicae regulam*)<sup>44</sup> In light of Eusebius of Vercelli’s appropriation of Nicea at the council of Milan two years before, Phoebadius’ defense of it is perhaps unsurprising. However, Phoebadius does nothing else with the Creed, other than this brief defense of its honor, though his reference to it demonstrates the extent to which Phoebadius—and the Latin West—have now fully engaged in the controversy. Phoebadius’ main line of attack on the substance prohibition is to emphasize how this prohibition artificially separates the Father from the Son. After walking through a series of scriptures that mention “substance,” Phoebadius focuses on 1 Corinthians 1.24, which he takes as a demonstration that the Father and Son share the divine substance.

Also we both say that there is a Power. About this the Apostle well says: ‘Christ is the Power of God.’ This Power (*virtus*), because it needs no foreign help, has been named substance, as we said above. Whatever it is, it owes to himself. Also nothing is new in this name, nothing we call strange, nothing in him is incompatible with divinity. . . . With what ears would those who separate the Son from the Father and propose that each one continues (lives on) with divided substances in its own property, with the community of divinity repudiated, be able to hear that there is proclaimed one substance of the Father and the Son—this is the honor, dignity, glory, power, majesty common with equal truth in each one?<sup>45</sup>

As this passage indicates, Phoebadius believes that *virtus* and *substantia* are synonyms, which suggests to him that the Father and Son share a common substance.<sup>46</sup> Because Christ as the Power of God exists in

<sup>43</sup> *Contra Arianos* 6.2; CCL 64, 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Contra Arianos* 6.3; CCL 64, 29.

<sup>45</sup> *Contra Arianos* 8.3–5; CCL 64, 31: *Et unam utriusque dicimus esse virtutem, de qua idem Apostolus ait: Christus, virtus Dei est (I Cor. I, 24). Quae quidem virtus, quia nullius extraneae opis indiget, dicta substantia est, ut supra diximus, quidquid illud est sibi debens. Nihil ergo in hoc vocabulo novum, nihil extraneum dicimus, nihil incongruum divinitati. . . . Quibus enim accipere auribus possint unam Patris et Filii substantiam praedicari, hoc est, honorem, dignitatem, claritatem, virtutem, majestatem pari in utroque veritate communem; qui a Patre Filium separant, et divisas substantias in sua unumquemque proprietate degentem, repudiata divinitatis communiione proponunt?*

<sup>46</sup> See Michel R. Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2001), 151.

himself, without outside “help,” then whatever we predicate of the Father we can predicate of the Son. So when the Homoians reject substance language, they make it impossible to credit the Son’s own properties to himself. Thus, Phoebadius believes, the Sirmium 357 prohibition on substance language does indeed separate the Son from the Father.

Phoebadius’ claim that *virtus* is a synonym for substance is unusual. It does not have a precedent in Tertullian, for whom *virtus* is decidedly not a substance, and other attempts to find a source for it have been inadequate.<sup>47</sup> However, although Phoebadius’ use of the word *virtus* in idiosyncratic, his use of *substantia* has a strong resonance in his Latin heritage. This resonance is especially evident in Phoebadius’ phrase “community of divinity” (*divinitatis communionem*), which recalls Novatian’s “community of substance” (*substantiae communionem*). For Novatian, this phrase provides a means of describing how the Father and Son can share the divine substance without being identical. In *De Trinitate* 31, for example, Novatian seems to argue that the divine substance flows from the Father to the Son and back again in a kind of loop: the Father sends divinity to the Son who then returns it to his Father, through the *substantiae communionem*.<sup>48</sup> Thus the Father “communicates” (*traditur*) his divinity, and other attributes, to the Son without causing an imbalance or division in the divinity.<sup>49</sup> Although Novatian’s language in *De Trinitate* 31, especially his description of how the Son “hands over” his divinity to the Father, tends toward subordinationism, his “community of substance” is the background for Phoebadius’ “community of divinity.” What Phoebadius takes from Novatian is this notion that the divinity of the Father must be communicated to the Son in an unbroken stream, so that the Son receives his “divinity” from the Father. This is why,

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<sup>47</sup> Tertullian identifies “power” as “an attribute of spirit, and will not itself be spirit.” He is countering a modalist exegesis that argues that the “power of the Most High is the Most High.” See *Adversus Praxean* 26.7; ET in Evans 170–71. Given Phoebadius’ insistence on the substantial unity of the Son, it is possible that his use of 1 Corinthians 1:24 and *virtus* reflects the influence of Marcellus. However, as Barnes suggests, this was not an important doctrine for Marcellus, and Marcellus’ actual influence on the Western church remains an unsettled question. See *The Power of God*, 150. It also seems unlikely that Phoebadius would adopt one aspect of modalist doctrine within an overall system that owes a great deal to the anti-modalist theology of Tertullian. Ulrich is baffled by Phoebadius’ interpretation of *virtus*. See *Contra Arianos*, 82.

<sup>48</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.20; CCL 4, 78.

<sup>49</sup> *De Trinitate* 31.18; CCL 4, 77.

then, Phoebadius insists that when the Homoians prohibit substance talk, they separate the Son from the Father and separate him from the attributes that otherwise demonstrate the Son's full divinity, because they separate him from the source of all he is.<sup>50</sup>

Phoebadius' builds on his understanding of the *divinitatis communio* when he turns to the third Homoian thesis, that "the Son has a beginning, but his birth is unknowable."<sup>51</sup> Once again, Phoebadius is unimpressed by this thesis, finding a contradiction built into the very proposition: both the "birth" and the "beginning" refer to the same thing, so how can you declare one and be silent about the other?<sup>52</sup> For the remainder of his response to this thesis, Phoebadius adduces a number of scriptural texts that show the Son's beginning. For several of these Scriptures, Phoebadius draws on the traditional notion that says that the Son receives his divine substance from the Father, to demonstrate how the passage in question refers to a birth. For example, he considers a phrase from Romans 11.36: "from him, with him and in him." Phoebadius warns that it is important not to confuse these three phrases. "From him" refers to the author of the birth, "with him" refers to the fact that the Son is the only—begotten one, but "in him" refers to the "birth of the substance" (*ad nativitatem substantiae respicit*).<sup>53</sup> By taking "in him" as the indicator of the Son's birth, in the sense that the Son proceeds from "within" the Father, Phoebadius recalls the traditional Latin claim that the Son's substance is communicated to the Son by the Father. In addition to Novatian's *substantiae communionem*, which also depends on this model, similar claims are found in Tertullian. In *Adversus Praxean* 9, for example, Tertullian claims that the Father is the whole substance, while the Son is a "diversion (*derivatio*) and "portion" (*portio*) of the whole.<sup>54</sup> Unlike Tertullian, Phoebadius is not so much interested in demonstrating the diversity of the Father and Son, but he does find

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<sup>50</sup> Phoebadius' phrase "community of divinity" is a natural development of Novatian's "community of substance," because it emphasizes that the substance the Father and Son share is that of divinity—something which would have been important in the fourth century. In addition to Phoebadius, Hilary will use "community of divinity" in the same way that Novatian uses "community of substance," to describe how the Father and Son can both be divine. See *In Matthaeum* 12.18.

<sup>51</sup> *Contra Arianos* 9.2; CCL 64, 33.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *Contra Arianos* 9.10; CCL 64, 34.

<sup>54</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 9.2; CCL 70, 97.

in his predecessor's thought support for his claim that the Son's birth is, on some level, knowable.<sup>55</sup>

Up to this point, Phoebadius has been primarily recasting his Latin theological heritage against a new opponent, taking what was an anti-modalist or anti-adoptionist theology and applying it to the subordinationist Homoian theology. When he comes to consider the fourth Homoian thesis, however, Phoebadius finds himself forced to find a new approach to go along with his old. One reason for this is that the Homoian claim, that the Father is greater than the Son (using John 14.28 as a proof-text), had support among the early Latin theologians. Tertullian uses this Scripture as proof that the Son and Father are distinct: because the Son proceeds from the Father, we know that the Father is "other than the Son as a being greater than the Son."<sup>56</sup> Whether Phoebadius could accept Tertullian's exegesis of John 14.28 or not, he cannot accept what the Homoians do with it, because they use it as yet another way of separating the Father from the Son, claiming that the Father is greater in, "honor, glory, dignity and majesty."<sup>57</sup>

Accordingly, Phoebadius has to find a way of interpreting this passage that maintains the substantial unity between the Father and the Son. He begins by articulating two elementary hermeneutical principles. The first progresses from his basic conviction that the fullness of the Father's divinity is in the Son. Phoebadius wonders if those statements or actions of Christ that the Homoians might use to prove the Son's subordination, such as his obedience, truly separate Christ from the Father. This "separation" would be the case, he concludes, only if we inappropriately attribute these statements to his divinity.

Everything in Christ that is God is dissolved (*solvo*) if he is taken to be of another majesty. He will be of another [majesty], however, if "the father is greater than I" refers to the majesty. This majesty, however, cannot be

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<sup>55</sup> Phoebadius makes a similar argument in *Contra Arianos* 11, when he considers several Scriptures that all attribute "spirit" to the Son and concludes that, "Even if the Son is born, nevertheless, he is in every way complete because he is born by the perfect one. . . . As a whole he has given him the whole, so that he is a whole in accordance with the Power of the Spirit as a whole." *Contra Arianos* 11.8; CCL 64, 36: *Non igitur imperfectus Filius, licet natus, quia natus est a perfecto. . . . Totus enim dedit totum, ut secundum Spiritus virtutem totus esset in toto.*

<sup>56</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 9.2; CCL 70, 97; Evans, 140: *sic et pater alias a filio, dum filio maior.*

<sup>57</sup> *Contra Arianos* 12.2; CCL 64, 37.

imperfect, because it is one, namely that of one God, since imperfect means unequal; it is unequal, however, if it is lower in the other.<sup>58</sup>

It is probably too much to see in this statement a fully developed “subordination statements to the humanity, superiority statements to the divinity” hermeneutic.<sup>59</sup> Although Phoebadius affirms that texts such as John 14.28 cannot be applied to the Son’s divinity, he never quite gets to the point of applying it to the Son’s humanity.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the building blocks for this kind of hermeneutic are present, and to this degree Phoebadius anticipates what will become a foundational principle for Pro-Nicene hermeneutics.<sup>61</sup>

Phoebadius refines this hermeneutical principle by warning that when we interpret John 14.28, we must guard against falling into the trap set by either Sabellius or Arius.

With this word [of Jesus in John 14.10f] he has rejected two heresies: Sabellianism and Arianism. He has taught that Father and Son are not one person, as with Sabellius, and not two substances, as with Arius, but as the catholic faith confesses, one substance and two persons.<sup>62</sup>

Phoebadius’ doctrine of *una substantia, duo personae* owes directly to Tertullian. To cite just one example, in *Adversus Praxean* 7.5, Tertullian gives his own interpretative guide, suggesting that in Scripture there are, “statements made sometimes by the Father concerning the Son or to the Son, sometimes by the Son concerning the Father to the Father... [these] establish each several Persons as being himself and none other.”<sup>63</sup> However, Phoebadius’ insistence, which he reiterates in *Contra Arianos* 27.2–3, that this doctrine should refute both the both the

<sup>58</sup> *Contra Arianos* 12.8; CCL 64, 37: *Soluitur enim in Christo omne quod Deus est, si majestatis alterius accipitur: alterius autem erit, si majestate Pater major est. Quae quidem majestas, quia una est, unius scilicet Dei, non potest non esse perfecta: imperfecta, inaequalis est: inaequalis autem, si altero minor est.*

<sup>59</sup> This is Ulrich’s claim. See *Contra Arianos*, 62.

<sup>60</sup> However, see *Contra Arianos* 13.1, where Phoebadius criticizes the Homoians for taking Christ’s title, “Son of Man,” as being an absolute title for Christ, thereby separating him from the Father.

<sup>61</sup> See below, Chapter 5, pp. 130–135.

<sup>62</sup> *Contra Arianos* 14.3; CCL 64, 39: *Quo dicto duas haereses elisit, Sabellianam scilicet et Arianam. Patrem et Filium esse, non unam personam ut Sabellius, aut duas substantias, ut Arius, sed (ut fides catholica confitetur) unam substantiam et duas docuit esse personas.*

<sup>63</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 11.10; CCL 70, 101; Evans, 145: *Quae nunc a patre de filio vel ad filium, nunc a filio de patre vel ad patrem... unamquamque personam in sua proprietate constituunt.* Ulrich identifies this and several other passages in Tertullian that articulate this theme in an anti-Sabellian context (124).

modalists and the subordinationists owes directly to his involvement in the Homoian controversy. That he would name the Sabellians is especially suggestive, in part because it highlights the extent to which Western theology in the tradition of Tertullian was aware of, and designed to refute, the problems with modalism. At the same time, the anti-modalism in Phoebadius' thought demonstrates that he has understood what is at stake in the Homoian controversy, that it will not be enough simply to refute the Homoians. The need to bridge between modalism and subordinationism, which has no precedent in Latin Trinitarian theology, will become a key ingredient in the maturing of Latin Trinitarian theology in the late 350s.

Phoebadius continues his discussion of John 14.28 by considering it in light of both the Father's and Son's common activities and their common knowledge. He begins with John 5.29: "Everything the Father does, so also does the Son." The Son cannot do what the Father does, Phoebadius maintains, if the Son cannot approximate the "summit" (*summa*) of the Father's glory.<sup>64</sup> Thus we must affirm the equality of the Father and the Son, especially in light of texts such as John 1.3 and John 10.30, both of which speak of their common activity. This line of thought leads Phoebadius to consider a series of Scripture texts from John that affirm the Father and Son's common knowledge. This knowledge would only be available to the Son, Phoebadius claims, if the Son were eternal in the same way as the Father.

However, I do not know whether the Son could have actually known the Father if the Son had a beginning. As generated the Son could not know the ungenerated, before he was generated. Then he would have not so known the Father, as he is known by Father; and an untruth would be ascribed to him such as cannot occur in the Lord. And one would ascribe the untruth to him rightly if his assertion could not stand firm before reason. However, it will not be able to stand firm if he is not the one who not only went out from the Father, but who is and has been in the Father always.<sup>65</sup>

Thus, the Son must always have been the Son in order to know fully the Father. Otherwise, we could never reasonably say that the gener-

<sup>64</sup> *Contra Arianos* 15.1; CCL 64, 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Contra Arianos* 15.4; CCL 64, 39: *Nescio autem an nosse potuerit Patrem Filius, si initium sortitus est Filius. Genitus enim nosse non potuit ingenitum, antequam genitus est. Iam ergo non sic Patrem novit, ut notus a Patre est: et adscribendum est ei mendacium quod in Domino cadere non debet, et merito adscribendum si adsertio eius ratione non steterit. Non stabit autem nisi ille est et qui non solum exiit a Patre, sed in Patre et est, et fuit semper.*

ated Son has knowledge of the ungenerated Father. This becomes even clearer for Phoebadius when he considers John 3.35: “The Father has given everything in his hand.” How could the Father give the Son everything, asks Phoebadius, unless he also gives him time? But the Father could not give the Son “time” (*temporis*) if the Son had a beginning. If the Homoians take John 14.28 as proof that the Son was created or had a beginning, then they cannot explain how the Son has attained everything at all times.<sup>66</sup>

Phoebadius’ argument in *Contra Arrianos* 15 is a mix of both traditional Latin theology and alterations of that tradition suggested by his new polemical engagements. His discussion of the Son’s common activity is a characteristic Latin motif. Although Tertullian does not refer to John 5.19, he does affirm that, “by means of the works we understand that the Father and the Son are one.”<sup>67</sup> Novatian, though, uses John 5.19, along with a number of Johannine proofs texts for the Son’s divinity, to support this doctrine.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, Phoebadius’ argument for the Son’s eternal generation has no precedent in the Latin tradition. Tertullian believed that the Son as Word was first “established” (*condo*) by God under the name Wisdom, then begotten for activity, and thereafter proceeded from the Father to become the Son.<sup>69</sup> Novatian’s “two-stage” incarnation also adheres to this pattern, and it is even reproduced by Hilary in his *In Matthaeum*.<sup>70</sup> The problem for Phoebadius is that none of his predecessors seem to have dealt with a theology that attempted to turn the Son into a creature, as Phoebadius believed the Homoians were trying to do. Consequently, the arguments he had available to him could not adequately refute the Homoian teaching, and on some level they may have even supported it. Although Phoebadius’ solution awaits more developed arguments from theologians such as the later Hilary, he does represent the growing engagement of the West in all phases of the controversy.

The rest of Phoebadius’ thought in *Contra Arrianos* follows in this vein, as he variously defends the eternal generation of the Son from

<sup>66</sup> *Contra Arrianos* 15.5; CCL 64, 40.

<sup>67</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 22.13; CCL 70, 117; Evans, 164: *et ita per opera intellegimus unum esse patrem <et filium>*.

<sup>68</sup> *De Trinitate* 14.12; CCL 4, 35.

<sup>69</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 7.1; CCL 70, 94; Evans, 137.

<sup>70</sup> For Novatian see *De Trinitate* 22.5 and above, Chapter 1, p. 37, n. 34. For Hilary, see *In Matthaeum* 31.3 and below, Chapter 3.

the Father or argues against the subjection of the Son to the Father.<sup>71</sup> One final aspect of the latter discussion deserves mention, because in it he once again departs from the established Latin tradition. To demonstrate that the Son is not subject to the Father, Phoebadius affirms that attributes belonging to the Father also belong to the Son. These include impassibility, immortality and invisibility.<sup>72</sup> By attributing invisibility to the Son, Phoebadius is making a clean break with both Novatian and Tertullian. The Son's visibility is especially important to Novatian, who uses it to distinguish the Father from the Son.<sup>73</sup> Phoebadius may well have Novatian in mind, in fact, because he pauses briefly to consider the appearances of God in the Old Testament. Novatian thought that they were appearances of the Son, but Phoebadius denies that they are actually appearances at all: "Then if he has also appeared Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, nevertheless, the state of this appearance can be explained. Since it is reported that he has appeared in the dream and in the mirror and in the enigmatic vision (*enigmatē visus*)."<sup>74</sup> As with the eternal generation, the visibility of the Son—and the exegesis of the Old Testament theophanies—will garner a great deal of attention as the Homoian controversy progresses. And while Phoebadius' solution to this problem will receive some refinement by Hilary and others of his Latin successors, Phoebadius has once again recognized that a solution is necessary.

Phoebadius' contribution lies primarily in his attempt to apply his Latin, anti-modalist heritage of Trinitarian theology to the contemporary Homoian crisis. This is most clear in his use of the "community of substance" motif to meet Homoian claims that the son is subordinate to and distinct from the Father. This tradition held some promise for Phoebadius, because it offered a way of affirming that the Father and Son both share in the divine substance and are yet distinct. In the end, however, it is not clear whether Phoebadius' tradition can bear the weight he has placed on it. For one thing, it depends on a material understanding of the divine substance, which makes it difficult to avoid the problem of subordinationism. Phoebadius recognized that it needed modification in key areas, and later theologians will move away from

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<sup>71</sup> Phoebadius discusses eternal generation in *Contra Arianos* 17, and he discusses the subjection of the Son in *Contra Arianos* 16.

<sup>72</sup> For an overview of this section, see Ulrich, *Contra Arianos* 64.

<sup>73</sup> See *De Trinitate* 18.13; CCL 4, 46.

<sup>74</sup> *Contra Arianos* 20.2; CCL 64, 44.

it altogether. To examine the beginning of this process, we turn to the writings of Marius Victorinus.

#### THE SECOND LATIN RESPONSE: MARIUS VICTORINUS

If Phoebadius relies heavily on his Latin tradition, particularly Tertullian, Marius Victorinus shows a great deal more independence. In fact, scholarly evaluations of Victorinus' thought tend to minimize his formal involvement in either the Nicene controversy or even his own tradition.<sup>75</sup> This judgement is largely due to the heavily philosophical character of his thought. As the work of Pierre Hadot has shown in detail, and as even a cursory reading of his writings reveals, Victorinus' theology reflects his training in and commitment to Neoplatonic philosophy.<sup>76</sup> While Victorinus' philosophical vocabulary does depart from that of his Latin predecessors (and contemporaries), he responds to the Sirmium 357 creed not simply as a philosopher, but as a theologian formed by the same theological tradition that informs Phoebadius. And, like Phoebadius, Victorinus experiences the pressure that Homoian theology puts on that tradition. However, unlike Phoebadius, Victorinus is also aware of—and unsympathetic towards—a Greek response to the Blasphemy, namely the Synodical Letter by Basil of Ancyra. Although scholars have dismissed Victorinus' polemical endeavors as merely formal exercises in philosophical technique, underneath his philosophical idiom Victorinus was a Latin theologian fully aware of what was at stake in both the Sirmium 357 prohibition and the Homoiousian response. This dual engagement forces Marius Victorinus in theological and exegetical directions not available to Photinus.

Most scholars agree that Victorinus composed four Trinitarian works before the year 359: The *First Letter of Candidus*, Marius Victorinus'

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<sup>75</sup> Hanson believes that Victorinus' theology betrays no awareness of the contemporary crisis. See *Search*, 534; Simonetti suggests that Victorinus' knowledge of the Old Testament is limited and that he has no connection with Tertullian or Novatian. See "Hilary," 80; Ulrich argues that Victorinus' theology owes more to Serdica 343 than to Nicea. See *Rezeption*, 172. The complete lack of scholarly consensus on Victorinus' theological, as opposed to his philosophical, background suggests that there is a serious *lacuna* in Victorinus and Trinitarian Controversy scholarship on his polemical context, though see now John Voelker, "The Trinitarian Theology of Marius Victorinus: Polemic and Exegesis" (Ph.D. diss., Marquette University, 2005).

<sup>76</sup> See especially Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 2 vols. (Paris: Études augustiniennes, 1968).

*Letter to Candidus*, *The Second Letter of Candidus*, and the *Adversus Arium* IA.<sup>77</sup> In the first three of those works, Victorinus' account of "Arianism" is truly more perfunctory than fully engaged. The *Second Letter of Candidus*, for example, merely reproduces Eusebius of Nicomedia's *Letter to Paulinus* and Arius' *Letter to Eusebius*, as an example of the current "Arian" theology. In *Adversus Arium* IA, however, Victorinus deals with theological positions that are contemporary to him, namely, the Homoian theology of Sirmium 357. The first clue to Victorinus' new engagement with Sirmium 357 comes in *Adversus Arium* IA. 9. In the midst of a complex exegesis of John 10.30 and John 14.10, Victorinus identifies a teaching of "Arius," that the Father is greater than the Son in "honor, power, glory, divinity, action."<sup>78</sup> As Hadot shows, this list closely resembles a similar one in the Sirmium 357 creed, which claims that the Father is greater in honor, dignity, glory and majesty.<sup>79</sup> Victorinus clearly recognizes the polemical pressure on this list, and in response he argues the opposite, that all the attributes of the Father and Son are fundamentally the same. "For in God," he writes, "there is complete identity between power, substance, divinity and act."<sup>80</sup> Thus the Son cannot be from another substance, for example, because this would mean that he would be incapable of receiving divine "powers." However, because in God all is "simple unity," and the Son is in the Father just as the Father is in the Son, they are one and equal.<sup>81</sup>

In addition to the Sirmium creed, Victorinus also engages directly, if not always favorably, with Basil of Ancyra's response to that creed. In *Adversus Arium* IA. 15, Victorinus argues that because the Son shares the name of the Father, and because we can attribute the attribute "life" to

<sup>77</sup> For discussion, see Simonetti, "Hilary," 71.

<sup>78</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.9; Paul Henry and Pierre Hadot, *Marii Victorini Opera*, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 83 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1971): 66–7; English translation in Mary Clark, trans., *Marius Victorinus*, Fathers of the Church 69 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1978): 101.

<sup>79</sup> Pierre Hadot, *Traité théologiques sur la Trinité II: Commentaire*, Sources Chrétiennes 69 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1960): 713. Compare with *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 489. The lists do not entirely correspond, sharing only "dignitate" and "claritate." Nor, as the editors of the CSEL volume show, does Victorinus' list correspond to the Greek translation in Athanasius (66). However, even if Victorinus has altered the Sirmium list, or if he is reproducing one from an entirely different source, he is reacting to an aspect of that creed's theology.

<sup>80</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.9; CSEL 83, 67; Clark, 101.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.* Victorinus' use of "substance" as an illustration in this passage may also be a sign that he is engaging Sirmium 357 in this case, the creed's prohibition on substance language. What Victorinus means by substance, however, is not yet clear.

the Son as well, the Son and the Father are therefore “*homoousioi*.”<sup>82</sup> This argument has two closely related components, both of which suggest Victorinus’ participation in the Sirmium 357 debate. First, Victorinus’ emphasis on the Son’s receiving life from the Father may result from his exposure to early Homoiousian theology. As Hadot suggests, in *Adversus Arium* 1A. 15, Victorinus is continuing a discussion he began at AA 1A. 13, where he identifies the Son as “to live” (*vivere*) and the Spirit as “to understand” (*intellegere*).<sup>83</sup> Victorinus employs these two terms as part of a triad to show how the Son is both equal and inferior to the Father. The Father, whom Victorinus will come to identify as “to be” (*esse*), is greater than the Son because he is “inactive action” (*actio inactiosa*). The Father gives the Son all that he is and is the cause of the Son’s being. The Son receives from the Father and is always “fullness” (*plenitudo*), so he is equal. However, because the Son is always the “receptacle” (*receptaculum*), the Father is also greater. When Victorinus returns to this argument in AA 1A 15, he emphasizes that “life” is a category of substance. If “everything God has, the Son also has,” (an allusion to John 16.15), then the Father and Son share the substantial quality of “life,” which means that they share the same substance.<sup>84</sup> According to Hadot, Victorinus’ argument both here and at AA 1A 13 is a direct response to Homoiousian theology. Early Homoiousian theology, as represented by the Sirmium Creed of 351, affirmed that if the Son received everything from the Father, then he was equal to the Father.<sup>85</sup>

The second component of Victorinus’ argument, his naming the Son as “life,” also points to his interchange with the Homoiousians. Like Victorinus, Basil of Ancyra had emphasized the category “life” in the anathemas attached to his letter of 358. In anathema two, Basil condemns anyone who believes that the one who receives life from the Father is the same as the one who gives life.<sup>86</sup> Then, in anathema four, Basil condemns anyone who denies that “life” refers to substance.

And if any one hearing this text, “For as the Father hath life in Himself so also He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself;” denies that the Son is like the Father even in essence, though He testifies that it is

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<sup>82</sup> *Adversus Arium* 1A.15; CSEL 83, 75.

<sup>83</sup> Hadot, *Commentaire*, 754. See *Adversus Arium* 1A.13; CSEL 83, 72–73.

<sup>84</sup> *Adversus Arium* 1A.15; CSEL 83, 75.

<sup>85</sup> Hadot, *Commentaire*, 753.

<sup>86</sup> *De Synodis* 13; PL 10, 491.

even as He has said; let him be anathema. For it is plain that since the life which is understood to exist in the Father signifies substance, and the life of the Only-begotten which was begotten of the Father is also understood to mean substance or essence, He there signifies a likeness of essence to essence.<sup>87</sup>

For both Basil and Victorinus, “life” provides a viable category for demonstrating how the Father and Son can share a relationship on a substantial level. Both Basil and Victorinus assume that “life” naturally refers to substance, so that if the Son receives life from the Father, he thereby has a similar substance as the Father. In both cases, moreover, this argument offers a direct challenge to the Sirmium 357 prohibition on substance language, drawing on both scripture and recognized creedal confessions. Although Victorinus’ use of “life” does not necessarily mean he has read or is specifically dealing with Basil’s theology, their common use of the motif suggests that “life” played an important role in the early debate on the Sirmium 357 creed. Victorinus does close his section on “life,” however, with a direct reference to the Homoiousians, claiming that his argument eliminates the possibility that the Father and Son are *homoiousion*, and it seems likely that he did have Basil’s document in view.<sup>88</sup>

A final sign that Victorinus is directly engaged with either the Sirmium 357 creed or its Homoiousian critics is his discussion of “image.” Victorinus begins this discussion by recognizing that in the material world, an image is not a substance. It does not have “body” or “senses” or “understanding,” but only that which the image “manifests” has any substance. However, Victorinus believes that the Son as “Image” is different. Because the image of God is through itself, and because it both gives life and has life, this image has actual existence and is *homoousion* with the Father.<sup>89</sup> This is true, according to Victorinus, because the Father exists “in potentiality” (*in potentia*), but the Son is “action” (*actio*), which means that he is manifest. Thus the Son is “image,” because he is the image of all that is in potentiality, namely, the Father. This does not necessarily prove that the image has substance, so Victorinus makes

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<sup>87</sup> *De Synodis* 15; PL 10, 492; NPNF 9, 8: *Et si quis audiens hoc, Quomodo enim Pater habet vitam in semetipso, sic et filio dedit vitam habere in semetipso; similem non dicat etiam juxta essentiam Filium Patri, testantem quod sic habet quemadmodum dixit: anathema sit. Manifestum est enim, quod quae vita in Patre intelligitur, substantia significata; vita quoque Unigeniti, quae ex Patre generata est, essentia intellecta, ita similitudinem essentiae ad essentiam significat.*

<sup>88</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.15; CSEL 83, 75.

<sup>89</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.19; CSEL 83, 83–84.

a distinction between “species” and “being.” Every being, he asserts, has a species that is both inseparable from the substance and which defines the substance. Furthermore, each species has its own being that receives its cause from the being of the substance. Thus, the Father is the “being” (*esse*) and the Son is the “species,” while the “being” of the species is the image of the original being.<sup>90</sup>

In addition to his defense of the unity of substance between the Father and the Son, Victorinus’ additional use of “image” to defend that unity also recalls Basil of Ancrya, and illustrates Victorinus’ engagement in the early Homoian crisis. In his very first anathema, Basil condemns anyone who, “says that the image of God is the same as the invisible God, as though refusing to confess that He is truly Son.”<sup>91</sup> Basil’s anathema most likely condemns the theology of Marcellus of Ancrya, who engaged in a debate with both Asterius and Acacius on the meaning of image. By affirming the separate existence of the image, Victorinus’ theology corresponds to Basil’s concerns, and it may owe to this anti-Marcellan tradition.<sup>92</sup> However, Hilary’s later gloss on Basil’s first anathema suggests another dimension to this image language.

[E]very image is similar in species to that of which it is an image. For no one is himself his own image, but it is necessary that the image should demonstrate him of whom it is an image. So an image is the figured and indistinguishable likeness of one thing equated with another. Therefore the Father is, and the Son is, because the Son is the image of the Father: and he who is an image, if he is to be truly an image, must have in himself his original’s species, nature and essence in virtue of the fact that he is an image.<sup>93</sup>

Several features of this gloss are important. First, Hilary takes Basil’s anti-modalist anathema and effectively turns it into a defense of the substantial existence of the image. For both Victorinus and Hilary, then, “image,” when properly understood, provides a viable means

<sup>90</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.19; CSEL 83, 84.

<sup>91</sup> *De Synodis* 12; PL 10, 490; NPNF 9, 7.

<sup>92</sup> Hadot, *Commentaire*, 761. Hadot quotes Acacius, who accuses Marcellus of denying the substantiality of the Image of God. As we have seen, this anti-Marcellan motif may also lie behind Phoebadius’ insistence that the Power of God has substance.

<sup>93</sup> *De Synodis* 13; PL 10, 490; NPNF 9, 7: *Cum quando imago omnis, eius ad quem coimaginetur species indifferens sit. Neque enim ipse sibi quisquam imago est; sed eum, cuius imago est, necesse est ut imago demonstret. Est ergo Pater, est et Filius: quia imago Patris est Filius; et qui imago est, ut rei imago sit, speciem necesse est et naturam et essentiam, secundum quod imago est, in se habeat auctoris.*

of refuting the Homoian prohibition on substance language. Second, both Hilary and Victorinus use the category, “species,” to demonstrate how the Son as image can exist separately from the Father while at the same time sharing the Father’s nature and essence. This similarity may indicate that Victorinus had read Hilary.<sup>94</sup> It also suggests that when Victorinus defends the real existence of the “image,” he is taking part in a specific anti-Homoian, debate.

Victorinus is, therefore, a full participant in the Sirmium 357 debate, interacting with both the Homoians and Homoiousians. Like Phoebadius before him, Victorinus will devote much of his work to defending the suitability of substance language to define the Father-Son relationship. Although his philosophical background provided Victorinus with distinctive tools and vocabulary, neither his theological language nor his exegetical strategies depart significantly from his immediate (Latin) context. What ultimately makes Victorinus unique is this engagement with Basil and Homoiousians. Especially when compared to Phoebadius, Victorinus seems more keenly aware of the necessity of reading scripture in a way that demonstrates the substantial unity between the Father and the Son; whereas Phoebadius is aware of why the Sirmium 357 is bad, Victorinus is aware of what kinds of arguments are necessary to refute that theology. This increased awareness forces Victorinus to push both his Latin heritage and contemporary Latin Pro-Nicene exegesis in new directions. Accordingly, we turn to two examples from Victorinus’ thought that illustrate this dynamic.

The first example of Victorinus’ new exegesis is his exposition of Matthew 11.27 (No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son). Victorinus begins by asking why only the Son knows the Father and the Father knows the Son. Everyone can know the Father in his “glory and his divinity, in his power, in his very act,” and those who know him in this way adore him.<sup>95</sup> The Son, however, knows the Father in a different way. The Son knows the very “being” (*esse*) of the Father, which also means that he knows the Father’s substance. The Son could not know the Father’s being or substance unless he had that substance himself, so this is the reason that the Father knows the Son and the Son knows the Father: the Son has the same substance as the Father, and he has it from the

<sup>94</sup> For Victorinus’ sources, see Hadot, “Introduction” in SC 68, pp. 83–88.

<sup>95</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.15; CSEL 83, 76–77.

Father.<sup>96</sup> Victorinus then quotes John 1.18 (“The only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father”) to prove that the Son is in the “bosom” or μήτρα of the Father, and he concludes that the Father and Son are *homoousios* because they are in each other and know each other.<sup>97</sup>

This exegesis is characteristic of Victorinus, especially as an application of his pattern of interpreting controversial scriptural passages in light of John 16.15. However, Victorinus’ exegesis of Matthew 11.27 also corresponds closely to similar exegesis in other Latin Pro-Nicenes, especially Hilary and Phoebadius. Early in his *De Fide*, written around the same time as Victorinus’ *Adversus Arium* 1A, Hilary cites both Matthew 11.27 and John 1.18, along with John 16.15, as part of a catena of Pro-Nicene proof texts.<sup>98</sup> This alone suggests that the three passages traveled together as a standard Latin response to the early Homoian theology; that response deserves some attention. Phoebadius, for example, omits John 16.15, but he does connect John 1.18 with Matthew 11.27 in an explicitly anti-Sirmium 357 context. After recalling the creed’s assertion that no one knows the generation of the Son, Phoebadius cites John 1.18 and suggests that if the Son comes to us from the bosom of the Father, the Father did not want us to be ignorant. This means, however, that we must investigate what Jesus meant when he said, “no one knows the Father except the Son, nor does anyone know the Son except the Father” (Matthew 11.27).<sup>99</sup> To answer this, Phoebadius skirts around the issue of the Father-Son relationship, and instead focuses on the last part of the verse, “...to whom the Son wanted to reveal him.” What can be revealed, Phoebadius claims, cannot be entirely hidden. However, because we are unworthy of receiving the revelation, it remains hidden until we receive the Spirit of Truth.<sup>100</sup> Thus the Homoians are wrong when they claim that the generation of the Son excludes any knowledge of the Son’s substance, because the Son himself has revealed the Father to us.

Phoebadius is certainly aware of the polemical pressure put on this text by the Homoians, and he is aware of the general structure that a Pro-Nicene response should take. He has not moved far from his

<sup>96</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.15; CSEL 83, 77.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *De Trinitate* (= *De Fide*) 2.10; Pierre Smulders, ed., *Sancti Hilarii Pictaviensis Episcopi De Trinitate*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 62 (Turnholt: Typographi Brepolis, 1979): 9.

<sup>99</sup> *Contra Arianos* 10.3; CCL 64, 35.

<sup>100</sup> *Contra Arianos* 10.5, 6; CCL 64, 35.

Latin heritage, however. In *In Matthaeum*, written before the Homoian controversy, Hilary also emphasizes the revelatory nature of the Son's unique knowledge of the Father. The point of their mutual knowledge, Hilary claims, is so that whoever knows the Son, "should also know the Father in the Son."<sup>101</sup> As we have seen, Hilary does speak of an identity of substance, but he does so in a way that recalls Novatian and emphasizes the revelatory quality of the Son.<sup>102</sup> Likewise, when Phoebadius takes this passage as a demonstration that the Son reveals the hidden Father, his exegesis moves within the same pattern established by his predecessors. By contrast, Victorinus' exegesis of Matthew 11.27 is more polemically developed than Phoebadius', if only because he has used the text to affirm explicitly the unity of substance between the Father and the Son. Whether he knows the traditional way of interpreting this passage or not, Victorinus has focused his exegesis on a specifically anti-Homoian reading. He makes no mention of the Son as revealer, instead focusing solely on the "substantial" aspects of the Father and Son's mutual knowledge. This difference in emphasis may reflect Victorinus' engagement with the Homoiousians, just as it may also reflect a growing awareness on the part of the Latin Pro-Nicenes of the need for new theological and exegetical approaches to meet the Homoian threat.

The second example of Marius Victorinus' new polemical exegesis centers on Romans 8.9–11.<sup>103</sup> Victorinus has only a short section on Romans in the examination of Paul's writings in *Adversus Arium* IA, and while he ostensibly deals with the entire text of Romans, he concentrates on this passage in Romans 8. Paul's language in the passage is fluid, speaking at once of the Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of God. Victorinus takes this fluidity as an instance of Trinitarian language, and he is even more intrigued by the "spiritual" connection between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As Hadot suggests, Victorinus turns Paul's terminology into a kind of syllogism: "the Spirit of Christ = Christ; The Spirit of Christ = The Spirit of God; The Spirit of God =

<sup>101</sup> *In Matthaeum* 11.12; SC 254, 266.

<sup>102</sup> See above, Chapter 1, p. 34.

<sup>103</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.17; CSEL 83, 80; Clark, 112: "You, in truth, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not his. But if Christ is in you, the body, it is true, is dead by reason of sin, but the spirit is life by reason of justice. But if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then he who raised Christ from the dead will also bring to life your mortal bodies through the Spirit who dwells in you."

God.”<sup>104</sup> Therefore, because both the Father and Son share the substance of Spirit, they are *una substantia*. And because the Holy Spirit is, by definition, “Spirit,” the three are *homoousion*.<sup>105</sup> Victorinus concludes this account of Romans 8 by denying that the shared substance means that the Father experiences passion. Because the Son and Spirit proceed from the Father, they are exposed to passion, but as the source of the spiritual progression, the Father is removed from it.<sup>106</sup>

The basis of Victorinus’ argument that “if the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are spirit, then they share the same substance” is traditionally Latin. Despite Hanson’s claim that Victorinus owes little to Tertullian, this passage demonstrates Victorinus’ debt to Tertullian. This notion of the “spirit as the divine substance” is typical of Tertullian’s Trinitarian theology. In *Adversus Praxean* 26, for example, Tertullian used Lk 1.35 with John 1.14 to demonstrate that the Son’s substance was *spiritus*:

For when he said “The Spirit of God,” although God is spirit, yet since he did not mention God in the nominative case he wished there to be understood an assignment of the whole which was to go to the Son’s accounts. This Spirit of God will be the same as the Word. For as, when John say, “The Word was made flesh,” we understand also Spirit at the mention of the Word, so also here we recognize the Word under the name of the Spirit. For spirit is the substance of the Word, and word is an operation of the Spirit, and the two are one.<sup>107</sup>

Although Tertullian’s object in this passage is different than Victorinus’—Tertullian is setting up a contrast between the Son’s “spirit” and his “flesh”—the basic argument is the same. For both Tertullian and Victorinus, that the Father and Son are both Spirit is a “substantial” sign of their unity.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Hadot, *Commentaire*, 758: “Esprit du Christ = Christ; Esprit du Christ = Esprit de Dieu; Esprit de Dieu = Dieu.”

<sup>105</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.17; CSEL 83, 80.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 26.3–4; CCL 70, 122; Evans, 170–71: *Dicens autem, Spiritus dei, etsi spiritus deus, tamen non directo deum nominans portionem totius intellegi voluit quae cessura erat in filii nomen. hic spiritus dei idem erit sermo. sicut enim Ioanne dicente, Sermo caro factus est, spiritum quoque intellegimus in mentione sermonis, ita et hic sermonem quoque agnoscimus in nomine spiritus. Nam et spiritus substantia est sermonis et sermo operatio spiritus, et duo unum sunt.*

<sup>108</sup> Tertullian also provides a source for Victorinus’ assertion that although the Father is Spirit he does not suffer. Like Victorinus, Tertullian uses the “procession” of the Son to show how the Father and Son can both be Spirit, and yet the Father not suffer. See *Adversus Praxean* 29, and above, Chapter 1, p. 46.

In this way, Tertullian provides the background for Victorinus' use of *spiritus* in *Adversus Arium* 17. Victorinus departs from that tradition, however, by drawing on a different Biblical text, Romans 8.9–11, to provide the exegetical foundation for arguing for the Son's *spiritus*. The reason for this change lies in Victorinus' new polemical environment.

Hilary's polemical work illustrates how the change occurred. In the *In Matthaeum* Hilary asserts, in a manner reminiscent of Tertullian, that that *spiritus* is the Son's divine substance.<sup>109</sup> This assertion remains in the later *De Fide* and *De Trinitate*, but it is altered: Hilary shifts from *substantia* to *natura*, and he also turns to Romans 8.9–11 for exegetical help. In *De Fide* 2.29 Hilary invokes Roman 8.9, 11 against his opponents as evidence that Christ is the Spirit of God.<sup>110</sup> Then in *De Trinitate* 8, he cites all of Romans 8.9–11, and says:

We are all spiritual if the Spirit of God is in us. But, this Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ. And, since the Spirit of Christ is in us, the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to our mortal bodies because of the Spirit of Him who dwells in us. We are vivified, however, because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in us through Him who raised Christ from the dead. And since the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead is in us, the Spirit of Christ is in us; nevertheless, it is the Spirit of God that is in us. Hence, O heretic, separate the Spirit of Christ from the Spirit of God...since the Spirit of Christ that dwells in us is the Spirit of God.<sup>111</sup>

Hilary then shows how "Spirit of God" refers to nature. The similarity between Hilary's and Victorinus' choice and interpretation of this passage, especially in light of their common traditional belief in the Son's *spiritus*, is significant. Both Hilary and Victorinus have interpreted Romans 8 in light of the traditional understanding of "Spirit as the divine substance," but they have directed that interpretation towards a new polemical context. Most importantly, for both Victorinus and the later Hilary, this traditional doctrine, especially when linked to a new

<sup>109</sup> See Doignon, *Hilaire*, 364–65.

<sup>110</sup> *De Fide* 2.29; CCL 62, 64.

<sup>111</sup> *De Trinitate* 8.21; CCL 62A, 334; McKenna, 292: *Spiritales omnes sumus, si in nobis est Spiritus Dei. Sed hic Spiritus Dei et Spiritus Christi est. Et cum Christi Spiritus in nobis sit, eius tamen Spiritus in nobis est, qui Christum suscitavit a mortuis, et qui suscitavit Christum a mortuis, corpora quoque nostra mortalia vivificabit propter habitantem Spiritum eius in nobis. Vivificamur ergo propter habitantem in nobis Spiritum Christi, per eum qui Christum suscitavit a mortuis. Et eius, qui suscitavit Christum a mortuis, in nobis est Spiritus, et Spiritus tamen in nobis est Christi, nec tamen non Dei est Spiritus qui in nobis est. Discerne, igitur, o heretice, Spiritum Christi a Spiritu Dei...cum inhabitans in nobis Spiritus Christi Spiritus Dei sit.*

scriptural proof text, becomes a way of defending the substantial unity of the Father and Son against those who deny the very possibility of applying “substance” language to the Trinity.

Thus, Marius Victorinus represents a turning point in Latin Trinitarian theology. Like Phoebadius, he recognized that the theology of the Creed of Sirmium 357 came into conflict with their traditional Latin, but Pro-Nicene heritage. Unlike Phoebadius, however, Victorinus also saw that more was needed to counter the Homoian threat. At least part of Victorinus’ advancement in this regard lies in the fact that he dealt explicitly with Homoiousian theology. This is not to say that he always appreciated the Homoiousian response, nor to deny that he would expend some effort attempting to refute any notion that the Son was *homoiousios* to the Father. Neither has Victorinus entirely solved all of the problems raised by either the Homoians or Homoiousians, particularly the need to straddle between modalism and subordinationism—in this regard, at least, Victorinus lags behind Phoebadius. Nevertheless, by working with the Homoiousian categories, and shifting the discussion from Tertullian’s categories to the context of a more modern concern for unity of substance, Victorinus has pushed Latin Trinitarian theology in a new direction. In this, he anticipates Hilary, whose mature work represents a growing attempt to merge the Homoiousian response with his Latin heritage.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HILARY'S FIRST ATTEMPTS TO ENGAGE THE HOMOIANS

During the first years of Hilary's exile, he produced two works, the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* (356–7) and *De Fide* (357–8). In tone and content, these two works could not be more different from the irenic exegesis of *In Matthaeum*: the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* is fiercely polemical, and while *De Fide* is less overtly polemical, it too deals with issues arising from the Homoian controversy. Consequently, these works provide an insight into Hilary's growing engagement in his fight against the Homoians. In contrast to his *In Matthaeum*, Hilary's writings now reveal his detailed knowledge of key texts, figures and issues of that controversy. Most of all, Hilary recognizes that Valens and Ursacius have a larger agenda beyond just condemning Athanasius. At the same time, the first two works from Hilary's exile reveal that his transformation into an anti-Homoian polemicist was not instantaneous. This chapter focuses upon Hilary's first steps toward gaining an awareness of what Homoian doctrine is, how it challenges his own conceptions of God, and what he will have to do to meet these challenges. This story does not end here, for neither *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, or *De Fide* reveal Hilary as the anti-Homoian polemicist one find in *De Synodis* or *De Trinitate*, nor do these works give us a complete picture of Hilary's Trinitarian theology in its full maturity. They do, however, show us the process by which Hilary will eventually reach this point of maturity.

#### *LIBER ADVERSUS VALENTEM ET URSACIUM*

The first work Hilary produced during his exile was a catalogue of documents known as the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*.<sup>1</sup> The provenance of this work, which now only exists in fragments, is uncertain. Most scholars agree with Feder, the editor of the *CSEL* edition of the fragments, that the text was composed in three stages. The second and third stages were written after Hilary's exile, so the focus here is on the

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<sup>1</sup> For this title see Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus*, 100.

earliest, “first” book.<sup>2</sup> The main question for this book revolves around whether it was prepared by Hilary for his trial at Béziers, or if he put it together sometime soon afterwards to refute those who exiled him. The book was certainly composed before Phoebadius wrote his own *Contra Arianos*.<sup>3</sup> Since Phoebadius’ work must be dated sometime during 358, Hilary’s Book One must have been composed sometime before that, but after the council of Milan in 355 to which Hilary also refers.

Less clear is precisely when within that time frame Hilary wrote Book One. Following Feder and Wilmart, scholars have tended to assume that Hilary prepared the dossier as part of his defense before the Council of Beziers.<sup>4</sup> As Williams has suggested, however, this assumption depends on a presupposition of anti “Arian” activity by Hilary before the council. If Hilary had indeed engaged in such activity, his summons to appear before the council came as the result of this activity; thus, it might make sense that he would compile such a dossier in preparation for it.<sup>5</sup> If, however, the formal reasons for Hilary’s exile had nothing to do with theological issues, then there is no reason for Hilary to compile the documents prior to his exile. Furthermore, as Williams suggests, there are aspects of the work itself that indicate Book One was written after Hilary had been exiled. First, it seems more likely that Hilary would have encountered documents associated with the Eastern synod at Sardica while in the East, as these documents apparently had little circulation in the West prior to Hilary. Second, in the demonstrably later *De Synodis*, Hilary claims not to have known the Nicene Creed

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<sup>2</sup> The documents and creeds Hilary reproduces in books 2 and 3 date from after Hilary’s return from exile in 361. For the dating of the various “stages,” see Feder, CSEL 65, xx–lxxxvi. Other important contributions to the date and provenance of this text include A. Wilmart, “L’*Ad Constantium Liber Primus* de saint Hilaire de Poitiers et les Fragments Historiques,” *Revue Bénédictine* 24 (1907): 149–179; 291–317; and especially Smulders, *Preface*, 1–28. As Smulders suggests, though the known texts of this work are fragmented, there are surprisingly few lacunae. In general, the documents Hilary presents are complete as are Hilary’s comments. What is missing tends to be whole units of material (13). Smulders, citing Wilmart, suggests that the mutilations of the manuscripts were the result of an early “excerptor” who extracted or excerpted part of the book. This would have happened very early, perhaps in the fourth or fifth century (16). Later, perhaps in the ninth century, when the earliest known manuscript was copied, a different editor attempted to put the work back together, resulting in the disordered, fragmented work we have now (16).

<sup>3</sup> For a comparison of Phoebadius’ *Contra Arianos* and Hilary’s dossier, see Smulders, 132–140 and above, Chapter 2, p. 59, n. 29.

<sup>4</sup> This is Smulders’ conclusion. For arguments and a helpful summary of the various positions see pp. 17–23.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, “Reassessment,” 214.

before his exile, while in the *Liber I*, he quotes the creed and supplies commentary.<sup>6</sup> Smulders proposes that the purpose of Book One was to bring to light the secret schemes of the Homoians, to argue that what looks merely like an attack on Athanasius is actually an attempt to undermine the entire faith of the church.<sup>7</sup> If Smulders is right, then this bishop, having received exile himself as a result of those same schemes, is bent on warning his fellow bishops about what is actually afoot. And, indeed, this account fits the picture Hilary himself gives a few years later in *De Synodis*, where he alludes to earlier letters and documents he had already sent to his colleagues, warning them of the true nature of this controversy.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, I will treat the *Liber I adversus Valentem and Ursacium* as a document dating from the earliest part of Hilary's exile, that is, the years 356–357. As such, the *Liber I* is important because it represents Hilary's first, deliberate attempt to respond to the Homoian threat.

I begin with the preface to the *Liber I*, in which Hilary lays out his purpose for putting these documents together. The preface begins with a mini-sermon on 1 Corinthians 13.13 (“and now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love”). After extolling the virtues of faith, hope and Love, Hilary declares that by cleaving to the love of God, he refuses fellowship with unbelievers. Even though at Beziers he had been offered comfort and prestige had he only subscribed to falsehood and heresy, he was unwilling to yield. Not only would he not yield, but he can now expose an affair that is “grave and many-sided, intricate through the devil's wiles, subtle on the heretics' part, decided beforehand because of many people's dissimulation and fear.”<sup>9</sup> This scheme was enacted under the guise of condemning Athanasius. Hilary knows that, while Athanasius is worth defending, the actual goal of the plot was far more sinister. Hilary claims that

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<sup>6</sup> Both of these points following Williams, “Reassessment,” 214. Williams' suggestion Hilary wrote it in response to the Blasphemy of Sirmium 357 may date the dossier later than is necessary. As Smulders suggests, after Sirmium 357 the Homoians no longer bothered to hide behind attacks on Athanasius, which means that a defense of Athanasius by Hilary would be unnecessary. In those works where Hilary deals directly with the Sirmium creed, he makes little to no mention of Athanasius.

<sup>7</sup> Smulders, *Preface*, 23.

<sup>8</sup> *De Synodis* 1; PL 9, 480. Williams makes the same point, 215.

<sup>9</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.I.4; CSEL 65, 101; Wickham, 17. Though preferring the traditional title of the collection, *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, I will follow Feder's numbering and so for the sake of convenience also use his title for the collection in citations. For this title, see Feder, xx–xxv.

even at Beziers, it was clear that the accusers were after more, including the “corruption of the Gospels, the depravity of the faith, and the insincere and blasphemous confession of Christ’s name.”<sup>10</sup> As a result, Hilary is determined to examine all of the relevant events, beginning with the exile of Paulinus of Trier (d. 358), to show clearly what it is his enemies are truly after.<sup>11</sup>

Two features of this preface are noteworthy. First, Hilary offers what may be the first account of his experience at Beziers. Hilary is on the defensive here, but no so much towards his accusers: he does not even mention why he was exiled. Instead, Hilary wants his readers to understand that although his reasons for being exiled differ from that of Paulinus, Eusebius and the others, all of these exiles were part of the same strategy as his own exile. Whatever he was formally charged with at the council, Hilary wants it clear to all that by resisting that charge, he was also resisting heresy.<sup>12</sup> Second, Hilary has come to realize that the charges against Athanasius are only a feint, that their real goal was the promotion of the Homoians’ theological agenda. It does seem likely that the Western bishops missed the import of what was happening, focusing instead on the legal issues of how a bishop could be deposed.<sup>13</sup> As can be seen, one feature of Hilary’s escalating encounter with the Homoians is his growing awareness of what they stand for, both theologically and politically. This preface represents the first step in this process.

Hilary next offers comments of theological interest in his introduction to the Nicene Creed. Hilary introduces the Creed in order to compare it

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<sup>10</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.I.5; CSEL 65, 102.

<sup>11</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.I.6; CSEL 65, 102.

<sup>12</sup> Smulders believes that Hilary’s use of the conditional “if” (*si*) when describing his status as compared to the other Latins exiled in the mid-350’s refers to a period of time between the Synod of Béziers’ decision and the Emperor’s ratification of that decision. The relevant text is found at *CAP*, series B.I.3 (CSEL 65, 100) and reads as follows: *si quid mihi post eos loci est* (“If I have a place after them”). According to Smulders, Hilary uses the conditional because he is not sure if the Emperor will actually send him into exile, but since he is willing to accept exile, he hopes to be counted as a confessor of the faith. This conclusion is unnecessary, however. The use of the conditional “if” is best explained by the *difference* between Hilary’s exile and the others. Whereas they had been exiled for religious reasons (defending Athanasius), his exile had been the result of Saturinus’ treachery, and Hilary is not sure if his fellow Bishops will accept them as the same. Hilary’s argument in the preface is that all of these exiles are the result of the same strategy.

<sup>13</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.I.5; CSEL 65, 101. Smulders points out that Liberius was actually exiled for adhering to church law and refusing to exile a bishop in his absence, 72.

with an unnamed “Arian” creed sent by the Eastern Bishops in response to a report by the Western bishops of their deposition of Photinus.<sup>14</sup> Hilary begins this section with a short preface in which he claims that Nicea was intended to counter the “Arian” teaching that God begat the Son as a “new substance” (*in substantiam nouam*) and “another new God” (*alteram deum nouum*). In this way, the Arians deny the unity of substance between the Father and the Son:

When they were taught by the *persona* of the Father that, ‘There is no other God but me,’ and by the Son: ‘I am in the Father and the Father in me’ and ‘The Father and I are one,’ they broke the link of sacred unity in the two belonging to the substance, not existing by creation, awarding God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, a temporal beginning, origination from nothing, and a secondary name.<sup>15</sup>

Only one component of this list, the reference to “temporal beginning” (*initium de tempore*) has strictly to do with eternal generation. When Hilary next quotes the Nicene Creed, however, he claims that it is “full and perfect,” because it proclaims the “eternal union” of the Father with the Son.<sup>16</sup> In fact, Hilary seems especially concerned to emphasize that the Nicene Creed teaches the eternity of the Son. Because this is not a particular emphasis of the creed itself, Hilary has to resort to non-creedal language to emphasize the mutual eternity of the Father and the Son, proclaiming that the Son is “ever in the Father[,] is God [,] born of God...ever in him of whom he is.”<sup>17</sup>

Hilary continues to emphasize the Son’s eternity when he turns to the “Arian” creed. He does not quote this creed. Instead, he focuses on its exegesis of the Pauline doctrine that the Son is “first-born of all creation.” According to Hilary, the Arians take this phrase to mean that there is a certain order to creation, in which the Son was originally created out of nothing, after which the Father created everything else.

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<sup>14</sup> For survey of the anti-Photinian activity in both the East and the West during the late 340’s, see Hanson, *Search*, 313.

<sup>15</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.II.9.6; CSEL 65, 149; Wickham, 60: ... *cum didicissent ex persona patris: non est deus alius praeter me et a filio: ego in patre et pater in me, et: ego et pater unum sumus, sanctae in utroque unitatis uinculum abrumperent non extantis creationis substantiae dantes dei ilio domino nostro Iesu Christo initium de tempore, ortum de nihilo, nomen ex altero.*

<sup>16</sup> This is the first known Latin translation of the Nicene Creed. For the reception of the Nicene Creed in the West, see above, Chapter 2, p. 49, n. 20.

<sup>17</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.II.11.1; CSEL 65, 151.

By this theology, Christ is not eternal.<sup>18</sup> Hilary believes that the Nicene Creed avoids this error by its use of *homousios*: both the Father and the Son subsist within themselves, “one and the same substance of eternity equal in both.”<sup>19</sup> If the Son is *homousios* with the Father, he is eternal and could never have come to exist in time; “the Son is eternal with the substance of eternity.”<sup>20</sup>

Hilary’s emphasis on the eternal generation of the Son represents departure from his theology in *In Matthaeum*. In the earlier commentary, Hilary had affirmed the Son’s “eternity,” but not to the degree required by the Pro-Nicene theology:

This is the true and inviolable faith, from the eternal God—who, because he always had a Son always has the authority (*jus*) and the title of Father, for surely, if there had not always been a Son, there was not always a Father—proceeded God the Son who has eternity from the eternity of his Father (*parens*)... The Son of God therefore is God from God, one [God] in the two (*theoteta*, which the Latins translate *deitas*); he received eternity from his Father (*parens*), from whom he proceeded while being born. He received that which he is when the Word was born, because he always was in the Father. And thus the Son is at once eternal and born, because what was born in is not something else than what is eternal.<sup>21</sup>

This is not the doctrine of eternal generation that Hilary articulates in *Liber I*. As Smulders suggests, Hilary here believes that neither the procession nor the birth of the Son is eternal. Hilary claims that “eternity” belongs to the Father, but he can only speak of the Son’s “eternity” as something communicated by the Father. This is not to say just that the Son “becomes eternal” by proceeding or being born from the eternal Father. Rather, the Son always existed in the Father as Son and Word, though not distinct from the Father, so when the Son proceeds from the Father, he does so as the eternal Word who previously existed in

<sup>18</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.II.11.2; CSEL 65, 151.

<sup>19</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.II.11.5; CSEL 65, 153.

<sup>20</sup> *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina*, Series B.II.11.1; CSEL 65, 151.

<sup>21</sup> *In Matthaeum* 16.4; SC 258, 52. *Est autem haec uera et inuolabilis fides, ex Deo aeternitatis, cui ob id quod semper filius fuerit semper et ius patris et nomen sit, ne, si non semper filius, non semper et pater sit, Deum filium profectum fuisse, cui sit ex aeternitate parentis aeternitas... Est ergo filius Dei ex Deo Deus, unus in utroque; theotetam enim, quam deitatem Latini nuncupant, aeterni eius parentis, ex quo nascendo est profectus, accepit. Accepit autem hoc quod erat et natum est Verbum quod fuit semper in Patre, atque ita Filius et aeternus et natus est, quia non aliud in eo natum est quam quod aeternum est.*

the Father.<sup>22</sup> Thus Hilary believes, in a manner reminiscent of Novatian, that the Son's birth happens in two stages, neither of which is eternal.<sup>23</sup> This "two-stage" theory of the incarnation, however, does not allow Hilary to show how the Son is not a creature, which is just what the "Arians" are teaching. Accordingly, Hilary has to abandon his old doctrine in favor of a more Nicene position that emphasizes the eternal character of the Son's substance. As will be seen, Hilary's appreciation of full polemical significance of eternal generation is still somewhat naïve. Nevertheless, by recognizing the need to affirm this doctrine, even to the point of stretching the theology of the Nicene Creed, Hilary has begun to engage "Arian" theology directly.

### *DE FIDE*

I turn next to the second work Hilary wrote during his exile, a two-book treatise called *De Fide*. Hilary eventually integrated the two books of *De Fide* into his *De Trinitate*, and a few scholars have denied that *De Fide* was ever a separate work. Accordingly, I begin the discussion of it by examining its provenance.<sup>24</sup>

In Book One of *De Trinitate*, which functions as a prologue for the entire work, Hilary gives a plan for the work that includes all twelve chapters, which would seem to indicate that it was all written at the same time. But in Book Four Hilary refers to his earlier books on the subject of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

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<sup>22</sup> Smulders, *Trinitaire*, 78: "Dans cette naissance, le Fils reçut du Père la divinité c'est-à-dire ce que le Père est éternellement. Ayant donc reçu une nature éternelle, il est éternel lui aussi, tout en étant né. Hilare semble concevoir la génération divine de telle sorte que le Fils, avant de naître, soit dans le Père non seulement en tant que Verbe, mais aussi en tant que Fils. Cette existence du Fils dans le Père n'est point personnelle et distincte tant que le Père n'a pas transmis au Fils de la plénitude de sa propre nature et ne l'a pas fait procéder." Smulders also notes that by *De Trinitate* Hilary is clearly arguing for eternal generation: see pp. 172–78.

<sup>23</sup> For the background to Hilary's "two-stage" Christology in *In Matthaëum*, see Smulders, *op. cit.*, 79, n. 25 and Doignon, *Hilaire*, 354–55.

<sup>24</sup> I have been unable to consult Carl Beckwith's forthcoming monograph on Hilary's theological method in *De Trinitate*, which promises to provide a definitive analysis of the chronology of *De Trinitate*. One of Beckwith's most important contributions will be to show the extent to which Hilary's polemic in *De Fide* reflects his earlier anti-Photinianism. This insight is significant because it highlights the importance of anti-modalism in Hilary's thought after his exile and engagement with the Homoians.

Yet certain points remained which I have felt myself bound to include in this and the following books, in order to make our assurance of the faith even more certain by exposure of every one of their falsehoods and blasphemies. Although we believe that it is clearly evident from our earlier books, written some time ago, that our faith in and profession of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are derived from the teachings of the Gospels and the Apostles, and that we hold nothing in common with the heretics, in as much as they deny without condition, reason and fear, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, certain facts must be brought together in the following books that the knowledge of the truth may become clearer after we have pointed out all their fallacies and blasphemous doctrines.<sup>25</sup>

Of itself, this quotation could refer to books Hilary wrote before the exile, such as the *In Matthaeum*, or even an early post-exilic book such as the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*. However, there are hints within *De Trinitate* that the “earlier books” are actually the first three books of that work. First, Hilary calls Book Five the “second book,” as though he had begun the work with Book Four.<sup>26</sup> Then in Book Six, Hilary calls Book Four the “first’ book, although in the same sentence, he also calls Book Six the “sixth.”<sup>27</sup> He identifies Book Seven as the “seventh” and then stays consistent this scheme throughout the rest of the work. Adding to this confusion, both Rufinus and John Cassian know of a work by Hilary called *De Fide*, which could refer to these two books of *De Trinitate*, assuming they were indeed written separately from the others.<sup>28</sup>

This evidence has led many scholars to conjecture that Hilary wrote books two and three of what is now called *De Trinitate*, along with

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<sup>25</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.1; CCL 62, 101; McKenna, 91: *Quamquam anterioribus libellis quos iam pridem conscripsimus absolute cognitum existimemus, fidem nos et confessionem Patris et Fili et Spiritus sancti ex euangelicis adque apostolicis institutis obtinere, neque quicquam nobis cum hereticis posse esse commune, quippe illis diuinitatem Domini nostri Iesu Christi sine modo et ratione et metu abnegantibus, tamen etiam his libellis quaedam necessario fuerunt comprehendenda, ut omnibus fallaciarum eorum et impietatibus editis absolutior feret cognitio ueritatis.*

<sup>26</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.3; CCL 62, 153.

<sup>27</sup> *De Trinitate* 6.4; CCL 62, 198.

<sup>28</sup> For an examination of the literary structure of *De Fide*, see Carl Beckwith, “The Certainty of Faith in God’s Word: The Theological Method and Structure of Hilary of Poitiers’ *De Trinitate* (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004): pp. 210–239. Using an analysis of the prefaces to Books 4, 5 and 7 of *De Trinitate*, Beckwith suggests that Hilary added the later books of *De Trinitate* to correct two criticisms of the original *De Fide*. The first is that *De Fide* was unorganized and hard to understand. The second is that Hilary wanted to correct errors in the perception of his theological method, particularly his use of human analogies. For additional evidence that the books of *De Fide* circulated independently of the whole *De Trinitate*, see Smulders, *Preface*, 141. Also see below, n. 29.

sections of Book One, independently of *De Trinitate*.<sup>29</sup> In this scenario, at some point during the writing of the larger work, perhaps around the time when he was writing Book Six or Seven, he then decided to merge the two but neglected to fix all of the cross-references.<sup>30</sup> Hilary could have written these earlier books before going into exile and encountering Greek theology. However, in *De Trinitate* 1.16–17, he walks through various Trinitarian heresies, including a description of a modalist theology that sounds suspiciously like Sabellius.<sup>31</sup> Because Sabellius was an Eastern figure, scholars have taken the reference to mean that Hilary has been exposed to “Greek” theology and is thus writing from the East.<sup>32</sup> This argument is not conclusive, however, because as Doignon and others have suggested, what Hilary describes in 1.16 could equally apply to any Western adoptionist, such as those condemned by Novatian.<sup>33</sup>

Another factor is the evidence of Book One, where Hilary gives a plan of the entire work that includes books 2–12 as a unity, which would suggest that he wrote the entire work as a unity. However, this evidence is also inconclusive. It is possible that Book One was originally part of *De Fide* and Hilary appended the “outline” section of Book One after writing Books 4–12 and adding them to 2–3. But if Hilary appended chapters to Book One, there is no longer any reason to assume that that he wrote any of Book One before Books Two and Three. A scenario in which Hilary wrote all of Book One after deciding to merge the two separate works, or even after writing the entire work is just as plausible as one in which Hilary appends chapters to the end of an already written Book One. There is nothing in the first nineteen

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<sup>29</sup> One exception is E.P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982): 1–11. Meijering believes that minor differences in the plan given in Book One and its execution suggest that Hilary had 12 books in mind from the beginning. Had the plan been written after the fact, it surely would have been accurate. Also, Hilary’s plan as given in Book One seems to follow Quintillian, which again would suggest that he had in mind all twelve books from the beginning. In this reading, 4.1 refers to a new beginning of the work as a whole (3). Though the connection between Quintillian and Hilary is suggestive, Hilary could easily have adapted his work to Quintillian’s model after the fact, making books he had already written fit into a new scheme.

<sup>30</sup> See especially Doignon, *Hilaire*, 80–83; M Simonetti, “Note sulla struttura e la cronologia del De trinitate di Ilario di Poitiers,” *Studi Urbinati* 39 (1965): 274–300; Burns, “Confrontation,” 287–302. For a summary of the basic positions see Borchardt, 39ff.

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 1.16; CCL 62, 16. For the correlation between the doctrines Hilary names and Sabellius, see Meijering, 55.

<sup>32</sup> Simonetti, 277.

<sup>33</sup> Doignon, *Hilaire*, 82.

chapters of Book One that necessarily connects them with just Books Two and Three. This is not to claim that they are unconnected, but the evidence of Book One by itself is insufficient for determining the date of either that book, or Books Two and Three.

A more helpful approach will be to examine the polemical and theological contexts of Books Two and Three. Scholars have assumed that in both books two and three and the rest of *De Trinitate*, Hilary argues against a generic "Arianism."<sup>34</sup> By assuming an "Arian" opponent, these scholars have not examined the theological differences in Hilary's polemic between books two and three and the remaining nine—differences that may belie different opponents as well. Hilary's polemical theology in *De Trinitate* books two and three, hereafter referred to as *De Fide*, more closely resembles his polemical emphases in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, especially when compared to later works such as *De Synodis* and the nine books of *De Trinitate*.

The *De Fide* opens with an apology from Hilary for speaking of divine things and an assurance that he does so only because his opponents have forced him to do so.<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, following the pattern of scripture, he is going to explain the Christian faith in the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. After a brief discussion of the nature of the Father (DF 2.6–7), Hilary begins an extended investigation into the nature of the Son. This section is the center of Hilary's argument in *De Fide* 2, and as such it contains important insights into this document's polemical concerns.

From the outset, Hilary is primarily concerned with the generation of the Son. After acknowledging the Son's unity with the Father, Hilary shows exactly what Trinitarian theology *cannot* say about the Son's generation. It is not a separation from the Father, on the basis of John 10.38. It is not an adoption, because of John 14.9. The Son was not born by a command, given John 5.26, nor is he part of the Father in the Son, following several John texts, including John 16.15 and John 17.20.<sup>36</sup> This is a distinctly anti-modalist list, and Hilary is using it to establish his main theme: the generation of the Son is hidden, known only to the Father and the Son himself.<sup>37</sup> Since the opponents have forced him to speak about these things, he is going to rely on the

<sup>34</sup> For a representative example of this approach, see Borchardt, 18–37.

<sup>35</sup> *De Fide* 2.1; CCL 62, 38. This analysis of the organization and structure of *De Fide* 2 follows the outline given by Meijering, 63–4.

<sup>36</sup> *De Fide* 2.8; CCL 62, 45.

<sup>37</sup> *De Fide* 2.9, 11; CCL 62, 46, 48.

wisdom of an “illiterate and unlearned fisherman,” whose foolishness confounds the wisdom of the world.<sup>38</sup> The “fisherman” turns out to be John, the author of the Gospel, and his appearance here gives Hilary a literary device for walking through key texts from that Gospel, beginning with its prologue. Hilary recognizes how a modalist could distort this text, by claiming that the “Word” was something internal to the Father that only received “being” when it was uttered. Hilary himself does not accept this premise, because a word can only be spoken and heard “in time,” but the Word existed from the beginning, eternally.<sup>39</sup> However, the teaching of the fisherman is even more helpful, because he reminds us that the Word was “with” God. And if the Word was “with” God, then he exists externally to God. Thus the Word is not the utterance of a voice or an expression of a thought. The word is a thing, a nature and God.<sup>40</sup>

Having established that the Word was “external” to the Father, Hilary next turns to the Word’s eternity. For this he focuses on the Son’s role as creator, as indicated by the phrase from the prologue, “all things were made through him.” The must mean that the Word is eternal, Hilary reasons, because time itself is a created thing, so if the Son created all this, he created time, which means that the Word exists apart from time, eternally.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the fact that the Word was the “life” also confirms his eternity. He who is the life, says Hilary, was not made the life after he was born, because in the Son there is nothing that he received after his birth. Accordingly, it seems that there is no intervening time between his birth and growth.<sup>42</sup> The Son is eternal.

Hilary abandons his “Poor Fisherman” motif in *De Fide* 3. The logical organization of this book is rather haphazard, in fact, although many of the same themes from Book Two appear here as well. Ostensibly, the book is an exegesis of another Johannine text, John 14.11. He begins the book abruptly, quoting the passage (“I in the Father and the Father in me”) and noting its obscurity: how could something be inside another thing and outside of it at the same time? To answer this question, Hilary reminds his readers of all the things to be said about the Son, the first of which is that the Son received through his birth

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<sup>38</sup> *De Fide* 2.13; CCL 62, 50.

<sup>39</sup> *De Fide* 2.15; CCL 62, 52.

<sup>40</sup> *De Fide* 2.16; CCL 62, 53.

<sup>41</sup> *De Fide* 2.17; CCL 62, 53.

<sup>42</sup> *De Fide* 2.20; CCL 62, 55.

everything that God is. Thus one must confess that from the unbegotten, perfect and eternal Father there is the only-begotten, perfect and eternal Son.<sup>43</sup> This relationship between the Father and the Son explains how the Father can be in the Son and the Son in the Father. Those things that are in the Father (perfection, eternity) are also in the Son, just as those things that are in the Son are in the Father. Thus the Father is in the Son because the Son is from the Father.<sup>44</sup> Following this exegesis, Hilary embarks on a series of related examples from the Gospel of John whose purpose seems to be to illustrate the omnipotence of the Son.<sup>45</sup> He follows the John 14 discussion with an examination of some of Jesus' miracles. This is followed, in turn, by a long analysis of John 17, a text that will play a key role in his later Christological discussions.<sup>46</sup> He concludes with more examples of the Son's power, all of which demonstrate the truth of the original claim that the Son is "in the Father."<sup>47</sup>

*De Fide* must be judged as a transition point in Hilary's increasing engagement in the Homoian controversy. As with the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, Hilary sometimes appears to be arguing against Arian instead of Homoian doctrine, while at other moments he demonstrates that he is starting to recognize some of the particulars of Homoian theology—and anti-Homoian polemic. Hilary's exegesis of John 1.1 highlights this tension. On the one hand, Hilary reveals his continuing reliance on his Latin predecessors. Hilary repeats Novatian's emphasis on the Son's role as creator, and like Novatian Hilary connects the prologue of John with Colossians 1.15–16.<sup>48</sup> Tertullian also uses John 1.1 to establish the unity of the Father and the Word (Tertullian even connects John 1.1 and John 14.11), just as Hilary had used it in *In Matthaëum* and as was common the early Latin Trinitarian theology.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *De Fide* 3.3; CCL 62, 74.

<sup>44</sup> *De Fide* 3.4; CCL 62, 75.

<sup>45</sup> This what Hilary gives as the purpose of this book. *De Fide* 1.22; CCL 62, 20. Also see Meijering's outline of book 3, 125–26.

<sup>46</sup> For an analysis of Hilary's exegesis of John 17, see below, Chapter 5, pp. 130–135.

<sup>47</sup> *De Fide* 3.23; CCL 62, 95.

<sup>48</sup> *De Fide* 2.19; CCL 62, 55. Compare with Novatian, *De Trinitate* 13.2.

<sup>49</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 8.4. Hilary refers to John 1.1 in *In Matthaëum* 31.1; SC 258, 229. However, Paul Burns points out that Hilary's use of the text here is much different than Tertullian's (and, by extension, than his own purpose in *In Matthaëum*). Hilary is trying to find ways to defend the unity of the Father and the Son, while Tertullian had tried to distinguish between the two. Burns, "Confrontation," 293.

On the other hand, Hilary's changing polemical context forces him to distance himself from this tradition. Although Novatian uses John 1.1 to establish the divinity of the Son, he is more interested in John 1.14 and other verses that confirm the Word's visibility, as opposed to the Father's invisibility.<sup>50</sup> This visibility—invisibility distinction no longer serves Hilary, and he has to abandon it.<sup>51</sup>

Although Hilary is aware of polemical pressure on John 1.1, however, he does not have an informed appreciation for how this text is being used by in the controversy. Hilary still believes that the key issue in the controversy is the eternity of the Son, and his exegesis of John 1.1 defends that eternity. This is entirely consistent with the exegetical strategy of both Alexander and Athanasius in his anti-Arian phase, both of whom used John 1.1 as a proof text for the Son's eternity.<sup>52</sup> Apart from this general sense that John 1.1 is important, however, Hilary's exegesis does not correspond to the example of other anti-Arian or anti-Homoian writers. Both Athanasius and Alexander, for example, typically use John 1.1 as one in a series of proof texts. Athanasius' practice is characteristic of this procedure. Athanasius nearly always cites John 1.1 along with either John 1.14, Philippians 2.6–8 or Hebrews 1.3 (or all three or one of these combined with a related text). His point seems to be that John 1.1 requires an additional text to account for the entire *scopos* of scripture: John 1.1 shows us the Son's divinity, while Philippians 2 highlights his distinction from the Father. Through these texts one sees the entire experience of Christ, including his pre-existence, incarnation and glorification.<sup>53</sup> This is not to suggest that Hilary has to follow Athanasius' exegesis to be fully engaged in the controversy, but in the one place in his Trinitarian corpus where he treats John 1.1 in any extended fashion, he shows little awareness of how the "Arians" have used this text. Nor does Hilary seem to know the anti-Arian tradition of supplementing John 1.1 with additional "diversity" texts. Hilary seems to believe that because the text says the Son is "with" the Father, this is enough to assure his diversity. This is

<sup>50</sup> *De Trinitate* 13.3; CCL 4, 32.

<sup>51</sup> See *De Fide* 2.11, where Hilary explicitly identifies the Son as the "invisible one from the invisible one" (CCL 62, 48). Hilary will also have to abandon Novatian's two stage theory of Christ's birth. In *In Matthaëum* 31.3, Hilary claims that the Son was born into the same state that he was before he was born. As Doignon suggests, this does not conform to the Nicene Creed, and in his post-exilic writings Hilary regularly equates generation and birth to defend the Son's eternal generation.

<sup>52</sup> For discussion of Athanasius' use of John 1.1, see Hanson, *Search*, 167.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, *Contra Arianos* III.29; PG 26, 385.

not how other Pro-Nicenes take it, though, perhaps because “with” does not connote for them ontological status. Hilary’s exegesis of John 1.1, especially his emphasis on the phrase “with God” may betray his anti-adoptionist roots.<sup>54</sup> As he becomes more engaged in the controversy, he will abandon John 1.1 in favor of texts more relevant to the Homoian controversy.<sup>55</sup>

Hilary’s naivete about the role of John 1.1 in the Homoian controversy corresponds to his emphasis on “eternal generation” in both *De Fide* and the *Liber I*. Although eternal generation remained important in later stages of the Trinitarian controversy, it dominated the early stages. Much of Arius’ theology was intended to deny that the Son was generated eternally. In order for God to be unknowable, which for Arius is a first-order theological principle, the Son must be a creature, produced out of nothing by the will of God.<sup>56</sup> Arius’ opponents often attacked him for calling the Son a creature on the basis of this teaching, but they also recognized the importance of eternal generation to his scheme. Anti-Arian attacks on his teaching that, “there was when he was not,” focused on that teaching’s denial of eternal generation.<sup>57</sup> According to Alexander, for example, Arius teaches:

That God was not always the Father, but that there was a period when he was not the Father; that the Word of God was not from eternity, but was made out of nothing; for that the ever-existing God (“the I AM”—the eternal One) made him who did not previously exist, out of nothing.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For this text in Photinus, see Simonetti, *Studi*, 146. Simonetti shows that Photinus emphasized the Word’s *apud Deum*. For Photinus, the Son’s “with God” corresponds to his *extentum* from the Father, while the Son’s “was God” correspond to his *collectum*. If Hilary does know Photinus’ theology, it is possible he also knows a tradition of interpreting John 1.1 to emphasize the “with God” over against Photinus.

<sup>55</sup> The index to the CCL edition of Hilary’s *De Trinitate* lists nine citations of John 1.1 after book 4. Of these, however, only one is an actual quote of the text, the rest being allusions to it, such as when Hilary says that the “Word was God.” Hilary offers no additional exegesis of the passage. No major theologian during Hilary’s time has an extended exegesis of the passage, with the notable exception of Basil of Caesarea, who devotes several chapters in his *Contra Eunomium* to John 1.1ff. See *Contra Eunomium* II.14–15; Bernard Sesboué, *Contre Eunome, Tome II*, Sources Chrétiennes 305 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983): 53–61.

<sup>56</sup> This is the conclusion of Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, revised edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 105.

<sup>57</sup> R.P.C. Hanson, “Who Taught ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων?” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Assessments*, ed. Robert C. Gregg (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985): 79–84.

<sup>58</sup> Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* I.6.7–8; Bright, 5–9; NPNF 2, 4. Also see Hanson, 16. For this emphasis is in Athanasius, see *Contra Arianos* I.17–18.

Likewise, Athanasius will explain the Nicene Council's decision to include *homoousios* in its creed as an attempt to affirm the Son's eternal generation: "[Since] the Word is ever in the Father and the Father in the Word... therefore the Council, as understanding this, suitably wrote homoousios, that they might both defeat the perverseness of the heretics, and show that the Word was other than originated things."<sup>59</sup> It may be, therefore, that Hilary concentrates on the doctrine of eternal generation in *De Fide* and *Liber I* because he does not yet understand the nuances of Homoian theology; he is fighting battles that belong to earlier stages of the Trinitarian Controversy.

Other elements of Hilary's theological vocabulary also demonstrate a lack of perception about Homoian thought. As Smulders has shown, in both the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* and *De Fide*, Hilary uses *ingenitus* as a title for the Father in a way that he will abandon in later works. This title, in its Greek form *agennētos*, had played an important role in the Arian controversy itself, and it had reappeared by the mid-350's as a key term in early Homoian theology.<sup>60</sup> As a result, anti-Arian writers such as Athanasius, and anti-Homoian (or anti-Eunomian) writers such as Basil of Ancyra and Basil of Caesarea, will argue against the suitability of *agennētos* as a title for the Father. Hilary, however, uses it frequently in these early polemical works, apparently unaware of its unsuitability. As proof of this, Smulders notes that Books Two and Three of *De Fide* use *ingenitus* 26 times as an attribute of the Father. Strikingly, however, the term disappears from the later books *De Trinitate*, replaced by *innascibilis*.<sup>61</sup> This strongly suggests that sometime between the writing of *De Fide* and the rest of *De Trinitate*, Hilary had discovered the problems with *ingenitus* and had found a replacement that better fit his theological and polemical needs.<sup>62</sup>

Despite these moments of unawareness, however, Hilary does show signs in *De Fide* of coming to terms with his newfound polemical undertaking. One example of this change is Hilary's use of the Gospel of

<sup>59</sup> *De Decretis* 20; PG 25, 449; NPNF 4, 164.

<sup>60</sup> Smulders, *Preface*, 113. This term became the keyword of Eunomian theology. See Hanson, *Search*, 621.

<sup>61</sup> Smulders, *Preface*, 113.

<sup>62</sup> A similar indication of Hilary's development is his use of *virtus*. Barnes suggests that there may be a change in Hilary's use of this concept. In his early works, he seems to adopt an "older" use of "power," which identifies Christ as the "Power of God," while in his later works Hilary will argue that the Father and the Son share the same "power." Barnes, *Power*, 161.

John apart from his exegesis of John 1.1. As Burns has shown, Hilary utilizes John's Gospel in a distinctive way here, allowing it to dominate all of the central passages in the work.<sup>63</sup> Both Tertullian and Novatian had given a great deal of attention to the Gospel in their Trinitarian writings, but they had not focused on it exclusively, nor had Hilary given it much attention in his earliest writings.<sup>64</sup> Hilary's preoccupation with the Gospel thus seems to be a new development. The reasons for this change, however, are somewhat obscure. Although passages from John were crucial during all facets of the Arian controversy, again no Pro-Nicene writer concentrates on these Johannine texts this exclusively.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the polemical demands of the controversy may explain why Hilary focuses on John. At one of the few places in *De Fide* where Hilary confronts his new opponents directly, he provides a list of eight proof texts that he believes counters their arguments.<sup>66</sup> Six of the eight texts are from John, and it may be that Hilary's emphasis on John's Gospel signifies his growing awareness of contemporary Pro-Nicene exegesis and polemics.<sup>67</sup>

Another sign of Hilary's continuing development is his growing concern for God's *infinitas*. Hilary alludes to this in a number of texts in *De Fide*.<sup>68</sup> In 2.6, for example, Hilary explains how God's infinity is central to his character

He is infinite because he himself is not in anything and all things are within him. He is always outside of space because he is not restricted; He is always before time because time comes from him. Stir up your understanding if you believe that anything is the ultimate limit for him. You will always find him, because, while you are seeking after it, there is always

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<sup>63</sup> Burns, "Confrontation", 290. In addition to John 1.1 and 17.3ff, which Burns rightly emphasizes, Hilary also examines John 14.11 and chapter 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Of the nine key proof texts that Athanasius deals with between *Contra Arianos* I.11 to III.25, only three, John 14.10, 17.3 and 10.30, are from John.

<sup>66</sup> *De Fide* 2.10; CCL 62, 55–6. The rote character of Hilary's list suggests that these passages had traveled to him as a *catena* of Pro-Nicene proof texts, and it is significant that Hilary does nothing with them after this recitation, at least until he writes the later books of *De Trinitate*.

<sup>67</sup> Burns proposes that Hilary uses these John passages to demonstrate how the divinity of the Son is crucial for our understanding of soteriology, 296. If so, this suggests a link between books two and three of *De Fide* and the prologue, where the theme of salvation and Christ's divinity go hand-in-hand. See Doignon, *Hilaire*, 85–156.

<sup>68</sup> For discussion of these texts, see John M. McDermott, "Hilary of Poitiers: The Infinite Nature of God," *Vigiliae Christianae* 27 (1973): 172–202. McDermott deals with *De Fide* on pp. 180–81.

some object present after which you can seek. Thus, it is always characteristic of you to seek after his place as it is for him to be without limits.<sup>69</sup>

God's infinity has religious connotations for Hilary, as this quote illustrates. Because God is infinite, "whoever seeks infinite things with a pious mind, although he never overtakes them, will still advance by pressing forward."<sup>70</sup> As McDermott suggests, Hilary most likely employs this motif in a polemical sense. He can use it to chastise his opponents for not worshipping God correctly. Their theology fails because, in their "wisdom," they place limitations on the infinite nature of God and expect him to act within the laws of nature. Hilary believes that his approach is "foolish," but more pious, because it accounts for God's infinity.<sup>71</sup> He also believes that God's infinity confronts key aspects of "Arians" doctrine. The Arians believe that the Son is created and so is not eternal. But Hilary argues that the Son was with God "in the beginning," that is, before time, and so he shares the Father's infinity—and is eternal.<sup>72</sup> Hilary will develop this doctrine even further in *De Trinitate*, especially Book Twelve where he discusses Proverbs 8.22, another key Homoian and Arian proof text, in detail. As compared to his thought in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, therefore, and even other places within *De Fide*, the presence of a doctrine of God's infinity signals a growing awareness of his new polemical and theological climate.<sup>73</sup>

A final indication of Hilary's theological development is his fledgling attempt to emphasize the names "Father" and "Son." He refers to the names Father and Son early in *De Fide*. In 2.3 Hilary complains that the heretics deny the force of scripture by denying the names Father and Son. However, these names are important, Hilary claims, because they point us to the nature of God. When one hears the name "Father,"

<sup>69</sup> *De Fide* 2.6; CCL 62, 42–3; McKenna, 40: *Infinitus quia non ipse in aliquo, sed intra eum omnia. Semper extra locum, quia non continetur. Semper ante aeuum, quia tempus ab eo est. Curre sensu si quid ei putas ultimum: esse eum semper inuenies, quia cum semper intendas, semper est quod intendas. Semper autem locum eius intendere ita tibi est, ut ei esse sine fine est.*

<sup>70</sup> *De Fide* 2.10; CCL 62, 48; McKenna, 45.

<sup>71</sup> *De Fide* 3.26; CCL 62, 99.

<sup>72</sup> *De Fide* 2.13; CCL 62, 50.

<sup>73</sup> McDermott believes there is continuity between *In Matthaem* and *De Fide*, primarily because of Hilary's use of *aeternitas* in each work. See "Infinite Nature," pp. 176–77. It is unlikely, however, that one can establish that Hilary has a doctrine of God's infinity based on his use of *aeternitas* in *In Matthaem*. Neither Novatian nor Tertullian would have thought this was about the Son, and Hilary uses *aeternitas* there as a synonym for the classical Latin doctrine of *substantia*. For *aeternitas* in *In Matthaem*, see Doignon, *Hilaire*, 343–379.

one should also recognize that this name contains the nature of the Son. The heretics deny that the Son is son by nature, but by doing so, they deprive the Father of what a father is, just as they deny the Son of what a son is. For Hilary, however, the Father cannot be a father unless he has a Son who shares in his substance and nature.<sup>74</sup> This is true, Hilary claims, because “names are applied to divine things in accordance with the concept of their nature.”<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, when one hears the name “Father” and “Son” one can know with certainty that they are what they are named. Thus the Son is son by nature, not by will, creation or adoption.<sup>76</sup> Hilary does not make much more of either of these doctrines apart from these two passages. In *De Fide*, this doctrine appears as an *ad hoc* argument that is introduced but not developed. For the moment, Hilary is primarily concerned with the Son’s eternal generation, and his arguments to verify that generation focus on the Son’s pre-existence rather than the Son’s birth. This mode of reasoning will have changed entirely by the time he writes Book Seven of *De Trinitate*. However, even the mention of “name” is a new development, and the presence of this doctrine here anticipates its importance in his later writings.

Thus *De Fide* and *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* represent early but authentic attempts to address the Homoian controversy. To be sure, Hilary has not understood the particulars of Homoian thought as he will in the later *De Synodis* and *De Trinitate*. In both *De Fide* and *Liber I* Hilary still believes that “eternal generation” is the most important question in this debate. He concentrates on proving that the Son is truly eternal, because if he can demonstrate the Son’s eternity, he believes he has proven that the Son is equal and external to the Father. Still, each of these early works reveals Hilary struggling to find ways to engage with his new polemical context. Although Hilary has not entirely understood his opponents’ theology, he has started to explore new ways of thinking about God that might better address the challenge of Homoian thought. Already he has had to correct an important Latin doctrine regarding the Son’s visibility, and as he becomes more fully engaged in the controversy, he will have to find a new theological center. The beginning of this process is in his next work: *De Synodis*.

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<sup>74</sup> *De Fide* 2.3; CCL 62, 39.

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of the philosophical roots of Hilary’s theory of naming, see below, Chapter 5, p. 132, n. 50.

<sup>76</sup> *De Fide* 3.22; CCL 62, 94.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HILARY, BASIL OF ANCYRA AND SIRMIUM 357

Along with his Latin contemporaries, Phoebadius and Marius Victorinus, Hilary responded quickly to the publication of the Sirmium 357 creed. Hilary's response, in a work known as *De Synodis*, is remarkable because it is so different than anything he or any other Latin theologian had written on the controversy. There is no use of the classical Latin motif of "community of substance," as found in Hilary's *In Matthaeum* and in Phoebadius. Nor does Hilary continue to emphasize "eternal generation" as he had in *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* and *De Fide*. Hilary will defend the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in his later works, but between the writing of *De Fide* and *De Synodis* he came to realize that other issues—i.e. the substance of the Son—are now decisive. This change can be explained in two ways. The first is Sirmium 357, which forced all Pro-Nicenes to reevaluate what this controversy was about. The second is Hilary's new association with Basil of Ancyra and the so-called "Homoiousian party." The historical details of this association are ambiguous, but in *De Synodis* Hilary is explicitly defending key Homoiousian documents and theological perspectives.<sup>1</sup> In fact, *De Synodis* is a less a point-by-point refutation of Sirmium 357 than an attempt to establish what theological categories will be necessary to refute Homoian theology. And the perspective Hilary draws on to establish these categories that of Basil and the Homoiousians. Accordingly, in this chapter I will look first at Basil's response to Sirmium 357. I will then examine *De Synodis* in light of that response in

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<sup>1</sup> For an analysis of the historical details of Hilary's association with Basil and the Homoiousians, see Brennecke, *Hilarius*, 335–351. Basil is clearly the leader and chief spokesman of the Homoiousians, and so he provides the most likely source for Hilary's knowledge of Homoiousian thought. Epiphanius identifies George of Laodicea as the author of a Homoiousian "manifesto," and most scholars have accepted that identification. Steenson, however, argues that Basil was the actual author of the manifesto, and I will accept that conclusion for the purposes of this book. See Steenson, "Basil," pp. 212–214. For an analysis of the manifesto, including some suggestions for how it might represent an advance in Basil's thought, see pp. 214–254. I explore some possible influences of Basil's exegesis in the manifesto on Hilary's thought below, Chapter 7.

order to assess Basil's influence on Hilary new, "mature" engagement with the Homoians.

#### BASIL OF ANCYRA AND THE CREED OF SIRMIUM 357

Basil of Ancyra quickly positioned himself as the leading opponent to the new Homoian theology represented by Sirmium 357.<sup>2</sup> It is even possible that the prohibition on "substance" in the Sirmium 357 creed was directed against Basil.<sup>3</sup> In early 358, Basil gathered a group of like-minded bishops to Ancyra. This group issued a letter and series of anathemas which do not attack the Sirmium 357 document explicitly but which do attempt to offer an alternative to its theology.

Basil's theology in this letter relies on two fundamental insights. The first is that any refutation of the Homoians must avoid slipping into modalism. Basil's sensitivity to the problem of modalism is highlighted by his choice of the creeds he uses to situate his thought. These creeds include: The Creed of Constantinople 336, The Dedication Creed of Antioch 341, the re-issuance of that creed by the Eastern Synod of Serdica in 343, and the first Creed of Sirmium 351.<sup>4</sup> The choice of these four creeds is significant to Basil because they establish the parameters within which Basil believes he must operate. Most notably, the creeds Basil cites were all written to condemn some form of modalism. The Sirmium 351 creed, for example, whose writing was presided over by Basil himself, was called to deal with the problem of Photinus. It featured a debate between Photinus and Basil, after which Photinus was exiled, and the synod promulgated a creed and long series

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<sup>2</sup> For the conflict between Basil and his party versus the Homoians, see Kopecek, *History*, vol. 1. Before 357, Basil had a long and distinguished career in Eastern ecclesiastical politics, but he is best known for his opposition to the Homoians. Basil went to the councils in 359 and 360 confidently expecting that his position would "win," at the expense of his Homoian enemies. The opposite happened, with all three councils in 359 and 360 affirming a Homoian creed. Basil was exiled in 360, and his party faded into obscurity.

<sup>3</sup> See Hanson, *Search*, 350. This could equally be an attack on Nicea and *homoousios* although it is not clear that Nicea had as much prominence as the position advocated by Basil.

<sup>4</sup> Steenson believes that Basil refers to the Fourth Creed published by the council, not the Second as most scholars assume. However, Hilary, who had direct access to Basil, publishes the Second, which suggests that this was the one Basil had in mind. See Steenson, "Basil," 39–40.

of anathemas.<sup>5</sup> Hanson observes that fourteen of these new anathemas were directed against some form of modalism, including both the doctrines of Photinus and Marcellus, while an additional 5 seems to have a modalist interpretation of Nicea in view.<sup>6</sup> This anti-modalist polemic was also present in the earlier creeds of Constantinople 336 and Antioch 341. The 336 council condemned Marcellus, while three of the four creeds produced at Antioch in 341 were anti-Marcellan, and the second “Dedication” creed, while not explicitly anti-Marcellan, was anti-modalist.<sup>7</sup>

By citing these four creeds, therefore, Basil emphasizes the importance of avoiding any form of modalism when speaking of the relationship between the Father and the Son. However, these creeds are also important because they also to varying degrees condemned Arianism. This is not to say that these creeds were anti-subordinationist. When Hilary examines the Dedication Creed of 341, which he regards as faithful to the catholic faith, he will admit that it does not adequately account for the identity between the Father and the Son.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, these creeds all agree that along with modalism, a separation of the Son from the Father should also be avoided. The Dedication Creed, for example, condemns anyone who teaches that:

[T]here is or was time, or space, or age before the Son was begotten, let him be anathema. And if any one says that the Son is a formation like one of the things that are formed, or a birth resembling other births, or a creature like the creatures [let him be anathema]<sup>9</sup>

By the same token, while the Synod of Constantinople in 336 focuses on Marcellus, it also re-affirms Arius’ condemnation.<sup>10</sup> The new anathemas issued by the Sirmium 351 council include at least three that may have some radical subordinationist theology in view.<sup>11</sup> Thus while

<sup>5</sup> See Hanson, *Search*, 328. The creed it issued was identical to the Fourth Creed of Antioch 341, but the Sirmium 351 version contained 26 additional anathemas.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> This is Hanson’s conclusion, 287.

<sup>8</sup> *De Synodis* 31; PL 10, 504.

<sup>9</sup> *De Synodis* 30; PL 10, 503; NPNF 9, 12: *Dicens aut tempus, aut spatium, aut saeculum, aut esse aut fuisse prius, quam generatus Filius: anathema sit. Et si quis Filium conditionem dicit, quemadmodum unum conditionum; aut nativitatem, sicut sunt nativitates; aut factionem, sicut sunt facturae.*

<sup>10</sup> See Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History* I.36.8; Bright, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 328. Hanson claims that the Sirmium 351 creed “foreshadows” Sirmium 357. However, given the prominence of Basil in 351, and his role as the main critic of the Homoians, this claim seems forced. The Sirmium 351 anathemas do con-

Basil's theological heritage establishes him as an opponent of modalism, he also proceeds from a perspective that, if itself tending towards subordinating the Son to the Father, nevertheless recognized a danger in radically separating the Son from the Father.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, none of these creeds denies the legitimacy of substance language, and on the basis of this tradition Basil can be expected to reject Sirmium 357's prohibition on that language.

The second point that informs Basil's theology is the priority he gives to the Scriptural names Father and Son. What makes Basil's strategy of particular interest is his insistence of the "natural" meaning of the Scriptural names.<sup>13</sup> According to Basil, we can learn something about the nature of God from the names of God. This is especially true of the names "Father," and "Son." About Jesus' statement, "Baptize them in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit," Basil asserts, "we also hear the names in the nature, and a father always begets a son like himself, and we may understand the Father to be the cause of an essence like his."<sup>14</sup> The same is true of the Son. Upon hearing the name, "Son," one can believe that the Son is "like" the Father whose Son he is.

Basil draws a number of conclusions about theological language on the basis of this epistemological principle. First, because the Scriptural names in questions (Father and Son) reveal something about the nature of the Father and the Son, Basil believes that one must avoid names for the Father and Son that do not correspond conceptually to the Scriptural ones. Thus such titles as "Incorporeal and Incarnate," or "Ingenerate and Generate" must be rejected if applied to the Father and Son, because they are not Scriptural and because they distort the

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demn the misuse of "substance" language, but this does not necessarily mean that they are also condemning Nicea or substance language itself. The only theological connection between Sirmium 351 and 357 is that they are both suspicious of modalism.

<sup>12</sup> For Basil's innovations to his heritage, see Steenson, "Basil," 133–35.

<sup>13</sup> Basil's insistence on the priority of the Scriptural names may be due in part to the influence of the Dedication Creed of 341. This creed cites Matthew 28.19, Basil's foundational Scripture passage, and then asserts that the names Father, Son and Holy Spirit signify the substance (*hypostasis*), order and glory of those who are named. See *De Synodis* 29; PL 10, 503B.

<sup>14</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.3; J. Dummer, ed. *Epiphanius*, vol. III, *Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985): 271; English translation in Frank Williams, trans., *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1987): 436.

natural meanings indicated by the Scriptural names.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, Basil is quick to assert that these names must not be understood as though they connoted anything material. When one considers the names “Father” and “Son,” any notion of physical begetting and passion is immediately eliminated; the Father did not engender the Son sexually, nor did the Son come to maturity through natural physical process. Once these material considerations are eliminated, then the proper concepts of “likeness” (a Father produces a Son “like” himself), and even more importantly, the proper concept of “substance” remain.

For it is plain from natural considerations that the “Father” does not mean the Father of an activity, but of an essence like himself, whose subsistence corresponds with a particular activity. God has many activities, and is seen to be a creator from another activity whereby he is the creator of heaven, earth and everything in them. . . . But as Father of the Only-begotten he is seen to be, not a creator but a Father who has begotten a Son.<sup>16</sup>

Thus the Son is “like” the Father “according to essence.” Not only does Basil believe that substance language is appropriate, but on the basis of the Scriptural names—and his epistemology—he suggests that it is necessary. A proper understanding of the names Father and Son forces us to talk about their substance, because a father relates to his son on a substance level.<sup>17</sup>

One advantage to this approach is that it allows Basil to explain how the Son experiences human passion. In the Sirmium 357 creed, the Son’s passion was a sign of his radical subordination to the Father. In the creed’s language, the Son took human nature from Mary, and it was through this nature that he suffered.<sup>18</sup> Basil believes that his insight about the relationship between the Father and the Son also applies to

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<sup>15</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.2; Dummer, 271. Also see Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* I.32 for a similar claim.

<sup>16</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.4.5; Dummer, 273; Williams, 437.

<sup>17</sup> Although he believes the Father and Son relate to each other on the level of substance, Basil is careful to avoid the concept of “identity” when discussing this substantial relationship. As Steenson has shown, Basil believes that identity of substance depends on a “common mode of origination.” In other words, humans share the same substance because they are all begotten in the same way, or by the same process. Only material substances, for Basil, can be *homoousios*, so, for example, humans can be *homoousios* with each other. Spiritual substances, however, are always distinct from one another, meaning that they are *homoiousios*. See Jeffery N. Steenson, “Basil of Ancyra on the Meaning of *Homoousios*,” in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Assessments*, ed. Robert Gregg (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristics Society, 1979): 267–279.

<sup>18</sup> *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 489.

the relationship between the Son and humanity. The incarnate Son, who was born in the “likeness of men” (following Philippians 2.7), shares in human flesh, but not the effects of human passion, e.g. sin and suffering. As a result of this likeness, there is no reason to assume that the Son suffered in the same ways that humans suffer.<sup>19</sup>

I will examine additional details of Basil’s theology in the context of Hilary’s adaptation of them in *De Synodis*. For now, it is enough to see how Basil has offered an argument against the Sirmium 357 prohibition on substance language, and in the process how he offered a potentially fruitful way of meeting the incipient Homoian threat. For Basil, the tradition represented by the Dedication Creed of 341, Serdica 343 and the anti-Photinian creed of Sirmium 351 prevents him from identifying the Father and the Son, but it does not prevent him from affirming the legitimacy of substance language. This tradition is joined with an epistemological principle that demonstrates how Christians must acknowledge the substantial equality between the Father and Son on the basis of the names “Father” and “Son.” Basil’s emphasis on “like according to substance” allows him to steer between the two extremes of modalism and radical subordinationism. On the one hand, if the Father and Son are “like” but not identical, then they cannot be confused in any modalistic sense. On the other hand, by reclaiming the priority of substance language when speaking of the Father-Son relationship, Basil has provided a way of removing the Son from the category of creation and placing him on more level footing with the Father—if not completely equal.<sup>20</sup> The extent of Basil’s influence on Pro-Nicene theology in general remains a matter of debate, but this is the perspective that Hilary adopts when he responds to Sirmium 357 in *De Synodis*.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.8; Dummer, 279; Williams, 442.

<sup>20</sup> See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.4.6; Dummer, 273.

<sup>21</sup> Scholars have generally accepted the supposition that Basil of Caesarea’s theology, and thus that of all three Cappadocians, was heavily influenced by Basil of Ancyra. Recently, however, scholars have begun to challenge that account. See Johannes Zachhuber, “Basil and the Three-Hypostasis Tradition,” *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 5 (2001): 65–85. Zachhuber’s criticism of the “three-hypostasis tradition” does identify certain inconsistencies in the standard account of the first Basil’s influence on the latter. However, when examined from the perspective of their common anti-Homoian polemic, especially their common insistence on the priority of the Scriptural names, these lines of influence become clearer.

*DE SYNODIS* AND HILARY'S RESPONSE TO SIRMIUM 357

Scholars have noted the significance of Hilary's *De Synodis* as an attempt to find common ground between his Latin colleagues in the West and his new associates from the East.<sup>22</sup> While this accounts for part of Hilary's purpose, the work actually has two discrete parts. In Part One Hilary attempts to notify the Latin Bishops, "what the Easterns have since said in their confessions of faith," and to inform them of his "sentiments" on the Eastern decisions.<sup>23</sup> In Part Two, Hilary turns to the Nicene Creed and tries to show how both Latin and Greek theologians can accept and use *homoousios*. In both parts, Hilary's goal is the same: to establish what theological categories and doctrines—and what creedal authorities—are necessary for refuting Homoian doctrine. In the course of laying this foundation, Hilary reveals a great deal about his own theological development, especially the degree to which he has adopted Basil's categories, doctrines and creedal authorities.

*Sirmium 357 and the Homoiousian Anathemas*

As Paul Burns notes, Hilary presents the Eastern creeds he wants to examine in rhetorical order, not chronological, with Sirmium 357 placed in the position of most visibility and importance.<sup>24</sup> Following that creed, which he calls, "the Blasphemy," Hilary lists the anathemas issued with Basil of Ancyra's Synodical Letter of 358. He then reproduces the texts of three eastern creeds: the "Dedication Creed" of Antioch 341, the Eastern Creed of Serdica 343, and the anti-Photinian creed of Sirmium 351. The inclusion of these three creeds, which are the same three that Basil names in his letter, are an initial clue to Hilary's new polemical strategy for addressing the Homoians.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to his approach in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, where an offensive against the Homoians meant defending Athanasius, the first part of

<sup>22</sup> See Paul Löffler, "Die Trinitätslehre des Bischofs Hilarius von Poitiers zwischen Ost und West," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 71 (1960): 26–36; Paul Galtier, "Saint Hilaire trait d'union entre l'Occident et l'Orient," *Gregorianum* 40 (1959): 609–623.

<sup>23</sup> *De Synodis* 5; PL 10, 483.

<sup>24</sup> Paul C. Burns, "West Meet East in the *De Synodis* of Hilary of Poitiers," *Studia Patristica* 28 (1993): 26. Scholars have widely neglected the polemical context of this work, but along with Burns' study, also see Michel Meslin, "Hilaire et la crise arienne," in *Hilaire et son Temps*, (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969): 19–42. For the dating of *De Synodis*, see Meslin, 28 and Williams, "Reassessment," 209.

<sup>25</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.2.2; Dummer, 269.

*De Synodis* contains no mention anything having to do with Athanasius, creedal or otherwise.<sup>26</sup> Instead, Hilary has adopted Basil's strategy of situating his thought within a particular tradition contained in that sequence of creeds.

Hilary begins to explore this tradition almost at once. After a short preface addressed to the Latin Bishops, Hilary quotes Sirmium 357, which he calls "The Blasphemy." He does not investigate any part of that Creed, other than to note its "blasphemous" character, but instead he immediately reproduces the anathemas from Basil's Synodical Letter and offer comments on each one of them.<sup>27</sup> In course of these comments, several key themes emerge.<sup>28</sup> The first is the importance of the concept of "image" for understanding the distinction between the Father and the Son. This concept appears in the very first anathema, which condemns those who say that the image of God *is* God, thereby eliminating any distinction between the Father and the Son. Hilary thinks that the theology condemned in this anathema tries to represent the relationship between the Father and Son as a matter of convention or appearance, but not of any real "difference." In response, Hilary argues that the claim that the image of God is God himself contains a logical fallacy, since no one can be his own image. As Hilary says, "an image is the figured and indistinguishable likeness of one thing equated to another."<sup>29</sup> This means that the image must be distinguished from that of which it is an image. Hilary takes this even further, however, claiming that a true image must contain within it the "image, species and nature" (*imago, species, natura*) of the original.<sup>30</sup> He continues this line of reasoning after the third anathema where he argues that the

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<sup>26</sup> Meslin, 28, remarks on the strategy, and notes that given the prominence of the Serdican creed, in which Athanasius played a key role, Hilary would have had opportunity to defend the Alexandrian bishop. Hilary does quote Nicea in Part Two of *De Synodis*, but here again he makes no mention of Athanasius.

<sup>27</sup> Hilary does not reproduce all of the anathemas, although there seems no reason why, if he knew the entire list, he was selective. Scholars have noticed that one anathema Hilary omits condemns *homoousios*, which is an anathema Hilary would not have supported. The others he omits, however, support doctrines Hilary approves of. For a comparison of Epiphanius' list and Hilary's, see Steenson, "Basil," 258 n. 51. Meslin, 31, believes that Hilary's omissions were deliberate.

<sup>28</sup> In *De Synodis* 27 Hilary gives a summary of his treatment of the anathemas, and my treatment of the "key themes" largely follows that summary. Steenson, *Basil*, 258, gives a similar summary. Burns, "West," 26, emphasizes slightly different themes.

<sup>29</sup> *De Synodis* 13; PL 10, 490: *Imago itaque est rei ad rem coaequandae imaginata et indiscreta similitudo.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

Son contains the “properties” of the Father, including “glory, worth, power, invisibility and essence” (*gloria, virtus, potestas, invisibilis, essentia*). One can know this to be true, Hilary suggests, because as the image of God, the Son must “reflect the truth of the Father’s form by the perfect likeness of the nature imaged in Himself.”<sup>31</sup>

This understanding that image corresponds to “nature” derives from Basil.<sup>32</sup> In his Letter, Basil holds that Word, Wisdom and Image must be as synonyms. In each case, “that the Word, Wisdom and Image of God are.”<sup>33</sup> Basil’s conclusion about the relationship between Word, Wisdom and Image is part of a larger exegetical strategy of identifying the “Wisdom” as something outside of God but being of similar essence to God.<sup>34</sup> Having related Wisdom to the being of the Father, Basil shows how Image and Word are also related to the Father’s being. Because all three of the titles are Christological (a fact which Basil assumes but does not seem to defend), their status as “substantial but not identical” gives further weight to Basil’s fundamental point, which is that the Son is “like according to substance” with the Father. Thus for Basil as for Hilary, “Image” is a term that distinguishes the Son from the Father without separating the Father and Son on the level of substance.

Hilary’s second theme is the Trinitarian implications of the theological notion of “Life.” Hilary first addresses this theme in conjunction with anathema two. Basil’s letter anathematizes anyone who takes John 5.26 (“As the Father has life in himself, so also has he given to the Son to have life in himself”) to mean that the one who receives life from the Father is the Father.<sup>35</sup> Hilary’s comments at this point are straightforward and brief, pointing out that the recipient and giver should be

<sup>31</sup> *De Synodis* 15; PL 10, 492: *paternae scilicet formae veritatem coimaginatae in se naturae perfecta similitudine retulisse.*

<sup>32</sup> Steenson, “Basil,” 260, points out that this use of image was unheard of among Latin theologians until Hilary, a fact that suggests Hilary borrowed it from the Homoiousians. This is only true, however, if Victorinus had read Hilary before developing his own distinct, but related theory of the Son as the substantial image. See above, Chapter 2, pp. 63–73. It is possible that Hilary and Victorinus seized on this theme separately through their exposure to Basil.

<sup>33</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.5; Dummer, 278.

<sup>34</sup> See Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.6.7ff. Also see Steenson, “Basil,” 151: “From this Basil’s argument proceeds: because (a) the Son must be thought to be an *ousia*, and (b) Wisdom is known to be an *ousia* similar to the *ousia* of the Wise God, and (c) the Son is thought to be from the Father as Wisdom is from the Wise; therefore, the Son must be similar in *ousia* to the Father.”

<sup>35</sup> *De Synodis* 13; PL 10, 491: *Sicut enim Pater habet vitam in semetipso, sic et Filio dedit vitam habere in semetipso.*

distinguished, so that the one who gives life is not identical with the one who receives that life, which means that the Father and Son are not identical.<sup>36</sup> Hilary pursues this reasoning more fully following anathema four. The anathema condemns those who take John 5.26 to deny that the Son is like in essence to the Father. Presumably the Homoians had taken the giver-recipient relationship implied by this verse to indicate a hierarchical relationship between the Father and the Son. In response, Hilary asserts that “life” signifies “essence,” so when the Son receives life from the Father, he receives the Father’s essence.

For what in each is life, that in each is signified by essence. And in the life which is begotten of life, i.e. in the essence which is born of essence, seeing that it is not born unlike (and that because life is of life), He keeps in Himself a nature wholly similar to His original, because there is no diversity in the likeness of the essence that is born and that besets, that is, of the life which is possessed and which has been given. For though God begat Him of Himself, in likeness to His own nature, He in whom is the unbegotten likeness did not relinquish the property of His natural substance. For He only has what He gave; and as possessing life He gave life to be possessed. And thus what is born of essence, as life of life, is essentially like itself, and the essence of Him who is begotten and of Him who begets admits no diversity or unlikeness.<sup>37</sup>

This is a classic “X from X” argument, and here again, Hilary uses it to affirm overarching point: that the Son and Father are distinct but not diverse; while the giver and recipient are distinct, whoever receives life from life shares in the giver’s essence.<sup>38</sup> The logic of this argument is similar to Hilary’s image discussion. In both cases, whatever is granted

<sup>36</sup> *De Synodis* 14; PL 10, 491.

<sup>37</sup> *De Synodis* 16; PL 10, 492–3; NPNF 9, 8: *Quod enim in utroque vita est, id in utroque significatur essentia. Et in vita quae generatur ex vita, id est, essentia quae de essentia nascitur, dum non dissimilis nascitur, scilicet quia vita ex vita est, tenet in se originis suae indissimilem naturam; quia natae et gignentis essentiae, id est, vitae quae habetur et data est (nempe a Patre et data est Filio), similitudo non discrepet. Quod enim ex se Deus, cum ex naturae suae similitudine, genuit; non deseruit, in quo ingentia similitudo, naturalis proprietatem substantiae. Non enim aliud habet, quam dedit: et sicut vitam habens, ita habendam dedit vitam. Ac sic quod de essentia, tamquam vita ex vita, simile sui secundum essentiam nascitur, nullam diversitatem ac dissimilitudinem admittit nascentis et gignentis essentia.*

<sup>38</sup> Hilary makes this sharing even more explicit in his comments on anathema 6: “Therefore similarity of life contains similarity of might: for there cannot be similarity of life where the nature is dissimilar. So it is necessary that similarity of essence follows on similarity of might: for as what the Father does, the Son does also, so the life that the Father has He has given to the Son to have likewise.” See *De Synodis* 19; PL 10, 495; NPNF 9, 9: *Tenet ergo vitae similitudo virtutis similitudinem: similitudo enim virtutis non potest esse dissimilis naturae. Atque ita necesse est, ut essentiae similitudo virtutis similitudinem*

or given by the “original” (*origo*), whether that is “life” or “image,” shares a similar substance to the original.

Having already seen how this treatment of “life” as a category of substance reflects the influence of Basil,<sup>39</sup> it is worth noting here the degree to which Hilary’s argument for both “life” and “image” corresponds to Basil’s assertion that spiritual substances cannot be identical (see above, n. 17). A comparison between Hilary and Victorinus’ doctrine of “substance” helps make this clear. Victorinus objects to the phrase *homoiousios* because it violates the proper understanding of the relationship between the Father and Son. This is true no matter how one understands *homoiousios*. For example, if “similarity of substance” refers to *genus*, such as that of man or animal, then Victorinus believes there must be a preexistent substance from which the substances in the *genus* derive.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, if the similarity is between two of the same substances, then once again there is either a superior, preexistent substance or the one substance has been divided. Either option presents problems for the catholic faith, particularly the latter.

But if the substance is divided, whether in equal or unequal parts, neither one is perfect. But there are two perfects, and a perfect from a perfect. Therefore, there is no similarity, especially with respect to similarity within the same substance. . . . But not one of these is the case since there is both one principle and the Father is the cause of all existents through the *Logos* who was “in principle” and consequently always was.<sup>41</sup>

In other words, without a doctrine of *homoouios*, it is impossible to affirm the Pro-Nicene doctrine of the Son’s eternal generation. For Victorinus, to claim that the Father and Son are *homoiousios* is to admit that there is a separation between the Father and Son on the level of their substance. In this regard, therefore, there is ultimately no difference between *homoiousios* and Arian (or Homoian) theology.<sup>42</sup>

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*consequatur: quia sicut ea quae Pater facit, eadem et Filius facit: ita sicut habens vitam Pater sic habendam Filio dedit vitam.*

<sup>39</sup> See above, Chapter 2, pp. 78–79.

<sup>40</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.23; CSEL 83, 94. For a very helpful analysis of Victorinus’ argument in this passage, including a chart of the options Victorinus finds for interpreting *homoiousios*, see Hadot, *Commentaire*, 774–75.

<sup>41</sup> *Adversus Arium* IA.23; CSEL 83, 94; Clark, 125: *Sed si divisa, neque in aequalia neque in inaequalia habet alterum perfectum. Sed duo perfecta et a perfecto perfectum. Non igitur in ipsa similitudine quippe et similitudo. . . . Sed nihil horum, quoniam et unum principium et eorum quae sunt omnia causa pater secundum τὸν λόγον qui in principio erat et idcirco semper erat.*

<sup>42</sup> See Hadot, *Commentaire*, 776: “On tombe alors dans l’arianisme. Donc impossibilité logique absolue de l’*homoiousios*.”

As this analysis suggests, Victorinus takes *substance* as the fundamental category for conceiving God's existence; there is no ontological category that supersedes substance, which means that a unity of substance denotes a unity on the most basic level.<sup>43</sup> By contrast, Hilary offers a definition of substance that does identify an ontological category that is distinct from substance and may belong to a more basic level of being than substance.

Essence is a reality which is, or the reality of those things from which it is, and which subsists inasmuch as it is permanent. Now we can speak of the essence, or nature, or genus, or substance of anything. And the strict reason why the word essence is employed is because it is always. But this is identical with substance, because a thing which is, necessarily subsists in itself, and whatever thus subsists possesses unquestionably a permanent genus, nature or substance. When, therefore, we say that essence signifies nature, or genus, or substance, we mean the essence of that thing which permanently exists in the nature, genus, or substance.<sup>44</sup>

Hilary's definition of *essentia* as *res quae est* most probably derives from Seneca, who defines *essentia* as *quod est*.<sup>45</sup> For Seneca, *substantia* is the category that includes both living and inanimate things. However, because not everything possesses substance, there must be a "superior" (*superius*) category to substance, i.e. essence.<sup>46</sup> By distinguishing *essentia*

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<sup>43</sup> Hanson notes that Victorinus will at times claim that God is "not existent," in the sense that God is beyond all substance or existence. See Hanson, *Search*, 536. Nevertheless, "substance" is the category Victorinus most often uses for God, as evidenced by his insistence on *homoousios* to account for the relationship between the Father and the Son.

<sup>44</sup> *De Synodis* 12; PL 10, 490; NPNF 9, 7: *Essentia est res quae est, vel ex quibus est, et quae in eo quod maneat subsistit. Dicitur autem essentia, et natura, et genus, et substantia uniuscujusque rei poterit. Proprie autem essentia idcirco est dicta, quia semper est. Quae idcirco etiam substantia est, quia res quae est, necesse est subsistat in sese: quidquid autem subsistit, sine dubio in genere vel natura vel substantia maneat. Cum ergo essentiam dicimus significare naturam vel genus vel substantiam, intelligimus ejus rei quae in his omnibus semper esse subsistat.*

<sup>45</sup> Seneca, *Epistulae Morales Ad Lucilium* LVIII.8; Richard M. Gummere, *Seneca, vol. IV*, Loeb Classical Library 75 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1917), 390. Note that Victorinus defines "substance" as τὸ ὄν. See *Ad Candidus* III.16. In addition to the similarities between their formal definitions of *essentia*, Hilary's treatment of "essence" also mirrors Seneca's in the way he relates *essentia* to categories such as *genus*, which for both are sub-categories of the broader "essence."

<sup>46</sup> See *Epistulae* LVIII.11; LCL 75, 392; ET in LCL 75, 393: "I shall classify substance by saying that all substances are either animate or inanimate. But there is still something superior to substance; for we speak of certain things as possessing substance, and certain things as lacking substance. What, then, will be the term from which these things are derived? It is that to which we lately gave an inappropriate name, *quod est*;" *Hoc sic dividam, ut dicam corpora omnia aut animantia esse aut inanima. Etiamnunc est aliquid*

from *substantia* or *natura*, accordingly, Hilary has allowed himself room to describe how similar substances might share the same essence. If, as Smulders believes, Hilary means that *essentia* is something distinct from the concrete subject (or “substance”),<sup>47</sup> then there is no logical reason why Hilary could not say that the Father and the Son share the same *essentia*, since two natures or substances could conceivably have one essence. Thus when Hilary describes the “essential” relationship that obtains when “life” is “born” of the Father’s essence,<sup>48</sup> he can affirm the similarity of substance between the Father and Son without the fundamental rupture between them that so concerned Victorinus. Hilary never formally defends Basil’s assertion that spiritual substances can only be “like according to substance,” but his technical analysis of essence supports that assertion and leads to the same conclusion about the relationship between the Father and Son. This may also explain why Hilary does not emphasize, with Basil, the importance of incorporeality. By having a category beyond substance Hilary does not necessarily need to distinguish between divine and human substances on the basis of their corporeality.

The third theme that emerges from this section is Hilary’s insistence on the proper use of the Biblical names “Father” and “Son.” He most explicit explanation of this principle comes in his comments on anathema seven. The anathema condemns those who say that the Father is Father of an essence unlike himself, but of similar activity. Hilary believes that the problem belies the Homoians’ determination to maintain that the relationship between the Father and the Son corresponds to the relationship between the Father and the universe

By this model they acknowledge that the Father and the Son are related according to the common names of the universe, so that they might be *said* to be the Father and the Son rather than they actually *are* [the Father and the Son]. For they are said to be [Father and Son], but certainly they are not [actually Father and Son], if the nature of their different

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*superius quam corpus. Dicimus enim quaedam corporalia esse, quaedam incorporalia. Quid ergo erit, ex quo haec deducantur? Illud, cui nomen modo parum proprium inposuimus, “quod est.”*

<sup>47</sup> Smulders, *Hilary*, 283: “L’essence signifie donc ce qu’il y a de plus profond dans les choses, ce qui constitue la chose dans son identité; ce par quoi elle est ce qu’elle est. Cette essence peut être considérée d’une façon abstraite, comme quelque chose de distinct de l’être concret, ou d’une façon concrète, comme identique à la chose.”

<sup>48</sup> See *De Synodis*, 16; PL 10, 493.

essences is separated in them, since the truth of the Father's name cannot be acquired except from the offspring of His own nature.<sup>49</sup>

It is tempting to see in this passage a philosophical analysis of naming, but if this is the case, Hilary lacks technical precision.<sup>50</sup> Hilary seems to be objecting to a Homoian teaching that the Son relates to the Father just as the Father relates to the universe. In other words, the names Father and Son are just matters of convention and do not tell us anything about the "substance" of the person who is named. The Father is only Father of the universe because of the customary use of that word, e.g. the Father has authority over the universe in the same way a natural father has authority over his son. Between the Father and the universe, however, there is no natural relationship—the universe does not share in the Father's nature. Thus the names Father and Son are "common," because as with the Father and the universe, the Father and Son do not share a relationship of nature. For Hilary, however, the names Father and Son indicate the substance of the one named. So the Father is inherently (or "really") Father, which means that he must also have a Son, for how else could he be a real Father? The same is true with the Son: if he is "really" Son, then he must have a Father. Hilary will go on to say that the only way one can call God "Father" is by admitting that he is Father of a Son who shares his nature, "for a natural birth does not admit of any dissimilarity with the Father's nature."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> *De Synodis* 20; PL 8, 496: *Quo exemplo Patrem et Filium secundum communia universitatis nomina confitentur; ut Pater et Filius dicantur potius, quam sint. Dicuntur enim, non etiam sunt, si in his differentis essentiae discreta natura est, cum non possit paterni nominis veritas nisi ex naturae suae prole acquiri.* My thanks to Dr. Joyce Penniston of Crossroads College for help in sorting out the grammar of this paragraph.

<sup>50</sup> Unfortunately, the NPNF translator makes it sound as though Hilary is using technical language. In the NPNF translation, the verb *dico* is rendered as a noun, "Title," and the passage's logic is rearranged to clarify and sharpen Hilary's thought (9). Nevertheless, even without the technical vocabulary, Hilary is taking sides in a long-standing debate about the value of names. The Platonic/Stoic view held that names revealed nature, so that one could learn from the name something about the nature of the object named. By contrast, the Aristotelian tradition argued that names were matters of convention, assigned to an object by the common judgement of the speakers but bearing no relationship to that object's nature. For an overview of the debate in classical philosophy on naming, see Raoul Mortley, *From Word to Silence I: The Rise and Fall of Logos* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1986), 94–109. For the impact of this debate in the controversy between Eunomius and Gregory of Nyssa, see Jean Daniélou, "Eunome l'Arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle," *Revue des études grecques* 69 (1956): 412–432, and Mortley, *op. cit.*, vol II, 128–191.

<sup>51</sup> *De Synodis* 20; PL 10, 496: *quia diversitatem paternae naturae nativitas naturalis non recipit.*

This emphasis on the reality of the names Father and Son, and the related doctrine that the Son receives the Father's nature through his perfect birth, is characteristic of Basil's theology. As this theology is examined in further detail below in Chapter 5, for the present, two features of Hilary's use of the names Father and Son here in *De Synodis* deserve mention. First, Hilary uses them to explain the problem of Proverbs 8.22. Basil anathematizes anyone who takes the words "create me" from this verse to mean that the Son is a creature. Hilary goes further, claiming that one must harmonize this passage with the reality of the name Son. If he is truly a Son, he cannot have been created. Something cannot be both born (as a Son) and created, because a birth attains its nature from the nature that begets it, while a creation can be formed out of nothing according to the power of the creator. For Hilary then, the word "create" in the Proverb merely explains the character of the birth. Because creation does not involve passion or any kind of corporeality, Proverbs used that word to demonstrate that the Son's birth had no kind of passion or corporeality associated with it. Otherwise, one must understand that the Son's birth was a perfect birth in which he was born, X from X, perfect God from perfect God. Hilary's interpretation of Proverbs 8.22 corresponds well with Basil's, and it mirrors his continual admonition that the Son's birth, while central, was devoid of human passion and corporeality.<sup>52</sup>

Second, Hilary uses the Son's birth as a theological concept to combat Modalism. Anathema eight condemns those who say that the Son is the same as the Father, part of the Father, or emanates from the Father. Hilary comments that there have been many who have held that the similarity between the Father and the Son makes them identical. And he understands why someone might think this, because what does not differ in kind seems to retain identity of nature.<sup>53</sup> The birth, however, makes this kind of reasoning impossible, because a birth necessarily includes differentiation along with identity. The birth actually functions in two ways. The divinity of the one born is inseparable from that of the begetter, but the begetter and begotten cannot be the same. Hilary understands that there are different kinds of "modalisms," and he feels that the birth disproves each. By virtue of the birth, the Son is not part of God (Sabellius), nor is he a corporeal emanation from

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<sup>52</sup> For Basil on Proverbs 8.22, see Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.9.8.

<sup>53</sup> *De Synodis* 21; PL 10, 497; NPNF 9, 9.

the Father (Photinus), but the incorporeal Son who takes his existence from the Father according to the likeness of their nature.<sup>54</sup> Here again, Hilary's theology betrays the influence of Basil, who made his name at the Sirmium 351 council that deposed Photinus.<sup>55</sup> Hilary's association with the Homoiousians manifests itself in his awareness of the dangers posed by the modalists as well as the subordinationists.<sup>56</sup>

*The Dedication Creed, Serdica 343 and Sirmium 351*

Hilary's awareness of the problems with modalism continues in his discussion of the Dedication Creed from Antioch 341. He admits that this creed is not explicit enough about the "identical similarity" (*indifferenti similitudine*) of the Father and Son, especially since it only refers to their unity of "agreement" (*consonantia*).<sup>57</sup> However, because this creed is concerned solely with refuting Marcellus, a modalist, it instead declared that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were three distinct substances.<sup>58</sup> This does not, Hilary asserts, introduce any dissimilarity of essence between the three. One knows this because of the creed's X from X language. When the creed says that the Son is "God of God" and "whole God of whole God," it admits that there is no difference, because this indicates that the Son's nature contains all that is in the Father's. The

<sup>54</sup> *De Synodis* 22; PL 10, 497.

<sup>55</sup> For Basil's activities at the Council of Sirmium in 351, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 71.1–5. As Hanson, 325, points out, the historiography of this council is somewhat confused, but it is clear that Basil of Ancyra played a prominent role. The importance of his opposition to Photinus for Basil's theology cannot be overemphasized. For discussion, see Steenson, *Basil*, 71–103, though Steenson focuses on Marcellus as well as Photinus.

<sup>56</sup> Hilary defends the eternal birth in this section, asserting that the likeness of essence between the Father and Son is a likeness in time. That is, there cannot be any time when the Father was not the Father, just as there cannot be any time when the Son was not the Son. The true meaning of either name cannot exist without the other. *De Synodis* 25; PL 10, 499. What is also significant, however, is that what was central in the *Liber adversus Valentem et Ursacium* and *De Fide*, eternal generation, is not as important in this work. Although Hilary affirms eternal birth in *De Synodis*, it pales in importance to the other concepts such as image, life and especially birth and name.

<sup>57</sup> *De Synodis* 31; PL 10, 504.

<sup>58</sup> *De Synodis* 32; PL 10, 504. In an odd move, Hilary defends the council's use of *consono* by pointing out that this is acceptable since they included the Paraclete. The relationship of birth applies only to the Father and the Son, and, apparently, "agreement" is as good as any other term when talking about the interrelationship of all three. Whether Hilary means that the Holy Spirit is in some way subordinate to the Son is not clear. He surely would not have accepted "agreement" to describe the relationship between the Father and Son, just as he rejected "will."

same is true when the creed says the Son is “One of One,” because this means that the Son comes from no other source than the Father. And in the case of “King of King,” a power that is expressed by one and the same name allows no dissimilarity of power.<sup>59</sup> Hilary takes the X from X language as a demonstration of the Son’s unity with the Father, which may not correspond to how it was intended to work in the creed itself, since the creed at all other points emphasizes diversity.<sup>60</sup> However, by doing so, Hilary is preparing his readers to accept what is his ultimate thesis, that the tradition represented by the Homoiousians contains the truest expression of the Christian Faith in the Father and the Son by avoiding both modalism and subordinationism.

This pattern continues as Hilary examines the remaining two Eastern creeds. His treatment of the Serdican Creed of 343 is rather perfunctory, but he provides an extended analysis of the Sirmium 351 Creed, especially its anathemas. This synod was convened specifically to condemn Photinus, so the anathemas are primarily concerned with aspects of Photinus’ teaching. As has been his practice, however, Hilary focuses on the anathemas’ understanding of how to avoid both modalism and subordinationism. Anathemas two and three, for example, condemn anyone who says that the Father and Son are two gods, along with anyone who says that the God is one but does not admit that the Son is God. For Hilary, these anathemas get to the heart of the matter. One is compelled to confess God as Father, and the Son as God, but one can never confess two gods. The key for Hilary is the unity of essence. “There is no other essence,” he declares, “except that of God the Father from which the Son of God was born.”<sup>61</sup> This theme continues throughout his comments, though for the first time in *De Synodis*, Hilary speculates about the possible subordination of the Son to the Father. In response to anathema ten, which condemns anyone who says that the person born of Mary is the unborn God, Hilary affirms that this anathema preserves the name and power of the divine substance. The Father is not distinguished from the Son in the name of the nature or the diversity of substance, but only in the “authority” granted him by his being *inascibilitas*.<sup>62</sup> Then, following anathema seventeen, Hilary

<sup>59</sup> *De Synodis* 33; PL 10, 505

<sup>60</sup> Hanson, *Search*, 284, suggests that the entire council may have had Arian undertones.

<sup>61</sup> *De Synodis* 41; PL 10, 513: *Non enim est alia, praeter illam Dei patris ex qua Dei filius Deus intemporalis est natus, essentia.*

<sup>62</sup> *De Synodis* 47; PL 10, 515.

explores this subordination in more detail. Hilary repeats his insistence on the unity of the name and the nature, but he also allows that the Son is subject to the Father by virtue of his filial love for his Father. By being called Son, he is subject in both service and name to the one who is his Father. Nevertheless, Hilary maintains, one must always affirm that the subordination of his name bears witness to the “true character of his natural and exactly similar essence.”<sup>63</sup>

As this analysis suggests, the names “Father” and “Son,” and the “birth” that these names imply, are crucial to Hilary’s argument here. Hilary’s comments on the Sirmium 351 anathemas are illuminative, because they reveal the extent to which Hilary has adopted the Father/Son conceptuality. The creed and anathemas contain hints of this language, but not to the degree that Hilary uses it to explain the anathemas. The extent to which Hilary has appropriated Father/Son/Birth is especially evident in a confession of faith with which Hilary closes the “Councils” section of *De Synodis*.

Kept always from guile by the gift of the Holy Spirit, we confess and write of our own will that there are not two Gods but one God; nor do we therefore deny that the Son of God is also God; for He is God of God. We deny that there are two incapable of birth, because God is one through the prerogative of being incapable of birth; nor does it follow that the Only-Begotten is not God, for His source is the Unborn substance. There is not one subsistent Person, but a similar substance in both Persons. There is not one name of God applied to dissimilar natures, but a wholly similar essence belonging to one name and nature.<sup>64</sup>

In this confession Hilary carefully treads between the two potential dangers: there is one God, but the Son of God is God. There is not one name of God applied to difference substances, but one name and one nature applied to similar substances. The Father is greater because he is Father, but the Son is not less because he is Son. In short, their

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<sup>63</sup> *De Synodis* 51; PL 10, 519.

<sup>64</sup> *De Synodis* 64; PL 10, 523; NPNF 9, 21: *Confitemur sane in sancti Spiritus dono semper innocentes, et scribimus volentes, non deos duos, sed Deum unum: neque per id non et Deum Dei filium; est enim ex Deo Deus. Non innascibiles duos, quia auctoritate innascibilitatis Deus unus est: neque per id non et Unigenitus Deus est; namque origo sua innascibilis substantia est. Non unum subsistentem, sed substantiam non differentem. Non unum in dissimilibus naturis Dei nomen, sed unius nominis atque naturae indissimilem essentiam.* The NPNF translated *unigenitus* as “Unbegotten,” which I have changed to “Only-Begotten.”

difference is the meaning of a name, not of a nature, just as they are one through the similarity of an identical nature.<sup>65</sup>

### *DE SYNODIS, PART II*

#### *The Nicene Creed*

This, then, is the conclusion to Hilary's survey of the Eastern Councils. They are authoritative and commendable to his Western colleagues because they faithfully maintain the proper balance between unity and diversity. Having established this to his satisfaction, Hilary abruptly shifts gears and produces what amounts to a second treatise on the relationship between *homoousios* and *homoiousios*. This treatise has two parts. The first is a discourse on how properly to interpret *homoousios*, directed towards the Latin bishops who, presumably, were already sympathetic to it, but were in danger of misinterpreting it.<sup>66</sup> The second part of the treatise is intended for the Eastern Homoiousian bishops, this time commending *homoousios* (and the authority of the Nicene Creed) to them. Hilary's purpose in the second half of *De Synodis* is the same as in the first half: to show how an authoritative creed refutes the current heresy and to rally all parties to the anti-Homoian cause. He wants to reclaim the Nicene Creed for both groups, correcting its potential for misuse by the Western bishops, and showing how it could be an effective anti-Homoian tool for the Eastern bishops.

Hilary begins his address to the Western bishops by declaring that many of them maintain the one substance in ways that are in error. There are three potential problems with *homoousios*. First, by confessing the one substance, one really says that the Father and the Son constitute one undifferentiated substance; one does not "keep the Son

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<sup>65</sup> *De Synodis* 64; PL 10, 524.

<sup>66</sup> Hilary's use of Nicea here again raises the question of how authoritative this creed was in the West. As we have seen, there is reason to suppose that the creed was relatively unknown until championed by Pro-Nicenes such as Hilary and Eusebius of Vercelli. For discussion, see above, Chapter 2, p. 49, n. 20. If so, then it is possible that Hilary's defense of Nicea is directed as much to his own Latin bishops as the Homoiousians. He wants both groups to understand that *homoousios* is necessary to confront the Homoian threat, provided it is interpreted properly. Accordingly, the ecumenical motivation of this section is not only an attempt to bridge the gap between *homoousios* and *homoiousios*, but also an attempt to convince all sides that, in light of the prohibition on substance language in the Blasphemy, this language is a crucial weapon in the fight against the Homoians.

in our hearts.” Second, the one substance also allows for the belief that the Father is divided, and that he cut off a portion of himself to be the Son. Third, it is also possible to take “one substance” to mean that there is a prior substance that both the Father and the Son have “usurped” (*usurpata*), which is called “one” because that is how it was before the Father and Son divided it up among themselves. The problem with these three errors is that they do not account for the Father and the Son. If the names Father and Son are not explained by the birth, argues Hilary, then one cannot speak of them in any meaningful way.<sup>67</sup> It is imperative to follow the correct order when speaking of the one substance:

He will be safe in asserting the one substance if he has first said that the Father is unbegotten, that the Son is born, that he draws his subsistence from the Father, that he is like the Father in power, honor and nature. . . . He did not spring from nothing, but was born. He is not incapable of birth, but equally eternal. He is not the Father, but the Son begotten of him. . . . After saying all this, he does not err in declaring the one substance of the Father and the Son.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, only after preaching the distinction of the Son and the likeness of his nature can one speak of the one substance.<sup>69</sup>

Hilary is aware that some who have been schooled in *homoousios* may question the legitimacy of using “similarity” to explain *homoousios*, but Hilary believes this need not trouble anyone. How else, he asks, can one explain the equality of the Father with the Son? Since equality does not exist between things that are unlike, nor does it exist in things that are one, “similarity” is the only way to properly express the equality between the two who are one substance.<sup>70</sup> To defend this claim, Hilary offers a series of proof texts, beginning with Genesis 5.3: “And Adam lived two hundred and thirty years, and begat a son according to his own image and according to his own likeness, and called his name Seth.” This passage is important to Hilary, because it seems to offer him proof of his governing presupposition, that every son, by virtue

<sup>67</sup> *De Synodis* 68; PL 10, 525.

<sup>68</sup> *De Synodis* 69; PL 10, 526; NPNF 9, 22: *Tuto unam substantiam dicet; cum ante dixerit, Pater ingenuus est; Filius natus est, subsistit ex Patre, Patri similis est virtute, honore, natura. . . . Non est ex nihilo, sed natus est. Non est innascibilis, sed cointemporalis. Non est pater, sed ex eo filius est. . . . Et post haec, unam substantiam Patris et Filii dicendo, non errat.*

<sup>69</sup> *De Synodis* 70; PL 10, 527.

<sup>70</sup> *De Synodis* 72; PL 10, 527.

of his natural birth, is the equal of his father in that he has a natural likeness to him. Thus Seth was equal to Adam in nature, because he was born with a likeness to Adam's nature. Next, Hilary turns to John 5.18: "[Jesus] said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Here again the basic principle holds. The Son was born of the Father, which makes equal with the Father, which means that one can say he was one with the Father.<sup>71</sup> The final proof text is John 5.19: "The Son can do nothing of himself, only what he sees the Father do." Hilary has already referred to this text in *De Synodis* 19, and he will examine it in detail in *De Trinitate* 7. For the moment, the text demonstrates the likeness of equality between the Father and the Son. If the Son can do whatever he sees the Father doing, then there is a corresponding power in each. It is his nature that gives him the power to act, which means that the Father and Son have equal natures.<sup>72</sup>

The Homoiousian roots of this argument are evident, both from Hilary's choice of proof texts and his insistence on using "similarity" when talking about the Father-Son relationship. Interestingly, Hilary is careful to require that the use of *homoousios* always be qualified. *Homoousios* is never a first order theological concept, as are Father/Son/Birth, but it can only be introduced once these first order concepts have been established. His reasons for this requirement reveal a great deal about his theological and polemical objectives in *De Synodis*. In the first place, they reflect Hilary's continuing attempt to mediate between the dual dangers of subordinationism and modalism. In the second, Hilary's modification of *homoousios* discloses his discomfort with identity language when talking about the Father and Son, along with his preference for equality language. He wants the Father and Son to be equal but not identical. There is no overt sense that Hilary is defending Basil of Ancyra's belief that spiritual substances are only equal in "similarity" with one another, never in identity.<sup>73</sup> Still, the overall thrust of Hilary's thought suggests that he is operating with this presupposition. Apart from his general distrust of "identity" language, Hilary seems to believe that the Father and Son have distinct substances. They are equal in substance because they share the substance of divinity, and this is the only way that one can speak of their being "one."<sup>74</sup> It may be that

<sup>71</sup> *De Synodis* 73–74; PL 10, 528–529.

<sup>72</sup> *De Synodis* 75; PL 10, 529.

<sup>73</sup> See above, p. 96, n. 17.

<sup>74</sup> *De Synodis* 71; PL 10, 527.

Hilary's presupposition is of the priority of the Father/Son/Birth language, which he also took from Basil, but in either case he is building on the theology that is fundamentally Homoiousian.

*Hilary to the Homoiousians*

If there was any uncertainty about Hilary's close relationship with Homoiousians, it is erased in the final part of *De Synodis*, where Hilary addresses Basil and his associates themselves. He begins this final section by praising the Homoiousians, whom he identifies by name near the end of the book, for their faithfulness, and he is especially pleased that they have persuaded the emperor to their point of view (a status that will change within a year). Hilary then turns to a number of questions that he has about Homoiousian theology. In particular, he is concerned about a document that they apparently introduced at the synod of Sirmium in 358 challenging the appropriateness of *homoousios*.<sup>75</sup> According to Hilary, the Homoiousians have three problems with *homoousios*. First, they believe it suggests a prior substance between the Father and Son, the same problem Hilary warned the Western bishops of. Second, the Council of Antioch in 268 condemned *homoousios* because of its association with Paul of Samosata, and the Homoiousians are worried both about this association and the authority of the council in condemning the term. Third, the Homoiousians reject *homoousios* because it is unscriptural.

On this third point, Hilary is slightly incredulous, since *homoousios* is equally unscriptural.<sup>76</sup> The other two objections, however, deserve further consideration. In the first place, Hilary points out that the council of Nicea used the word in a wholly appropriate way, as an antidote to Arian theology. Whoever rejects the Nicene use of *homoousios* would seem to affirm the Arian rejection of that same word.<sup>77</sup> A little later, Hilary will also point out that 318 bishops affirmed *homoousios* at Nicea, while only eighty bishops rejected it at Antioch, which might suggest that Nicea has even more authority than Antioch.<sup>78</sup> Hilary next examines the theological reasons for supporting the term, which necessitates quoting the entire Nicene Creed. By doing so, he hopes

<sup>75</sup> See Steenson, "Basil," 262–265, for a reconstruction of this document.

<sup>76</sup> *De Synodis* 81; PL 10, 534.

<sup>77</sup> *De Synodis* 83; PL 10, 535.

<sup>78</sup> *De Synodis* 86; PL 10, 538.

that Basil and company will see that *homoousios* appears in this creed in a way that is entirely consistent with their own theological objectives. Most importantly, Hilary wants the Homoiousians to recognize that the Nicene Creed also teaches that the Son was born from the Father. In case anyone might think that the word “born” means that the Son is a creature, the creed includes “one substance,” to secure our understanding that the Son was born of the substance of God, so that there is no diversity of substance.<sup>79</sup> Moreover, the fact that others have misunderstood *homoousios* need not deter us from understanding it correctly. And if one does understand it properly, its pedagogical value is significant:

I understand by *homoousios* God of God, not of an essence that is unlike, not divided, but born, and that the Son has a birth which is unique, of the substance of the unborn God, [that he is begotten yet co-eternal and wholly like the Father]. I believed this before I knew the *homoousios*, but it greatly helped my belief.<sup>80</sup>

Hilary will also claim that although he had not heard of Nicea before his exile, the Gospels and Epistles suggested its meaning to him.<sup>81</sup> In any case, he believes his faith and that of Basil and his associates are one, united by their common belief in the birth of the Son from the Father’s substance. Whatever term they choose to explain their faith, whether *homoousios* or *homoiousios*, it can only enhance their ability to stand firm against the Homoians—provided it is properly interpreted.

In conclusion, therefore, Hilary has now aligned himself with the key insights of Basil’s theology. Hilary’s language and theology reflects Homoiousian theological heritage and concerns, not only his insistence on the priority of the Biblical names Father and Son, but also his scriptural exegesis and use of theological concepts such as “life” and “image.” Furthermore, and perhaps more importantly, he has thoroughly appropriated their polemical agenda. Hilary now has a sophisticated, fully realized appreciation of who the Homoians are

<sup>79</sup> *De Synodis* 84; PL 10, 536.

<sup>80</sup> *De Synodis* 88; PL 10, 540; NPNF 9, 28: *Homousion, sanctissimi viri, intelligo ex Deo Deum, non dissimilis essentiae, non divisum, sed natum, et ex innascibilis Dei substantia congenitum in Filio, secundum similitudinem, unigenitam nativitatem. Ita me antea intelligentem, non mediocriter ad id confirmavit homousion.* Note: the translated text in [ ] is not in the Latin of the PL but appears to have been added by the NPNF translator. The lack of a critical edition of *De Synodis* remains a significant lacuna in Hilary scholarship.

<sup>81</sup> *De Synodis* 91; PL 10, 545.

and why they are dangerous. As his stress on the Blasphemy of Sirmium and the Ancyran anathemas demonstrates, his understanding of Homoian theology depends a great deal on the author of those anathemas, Basil of Ancyra. Nevertheless, in certain respects Hilary's use of the Homoiousian theology remains underdeveloped, particularly his sense of the full theological and philosophical implications of the Father/Son/Birth conceptuality. This development awaits the writing of his *magnum opus*, *De Trinitate*.



PART TWO

THE SHAPE OF  
HILARY'S TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY



## CHAPTER FIVE

### EXEGETING SCRIPTURE

In Hilary's thought world, in order to have a right conception about the relationship between the Father and the Son we have to read Scripture correctly. But in order to read Scripture correctly we have to properly understand the relationship between the Father and the Son. Hilary's attempt to explore the interplay of these two dynamics is the driving factor of his mature Trinitarian theology in *De Trinitate*. Everything he does in Books 4–12 of *De Trinitate* is directed towards establishing a correct exegesis of controversial passages of Scripture. This has, of course, been true of much of Hilary's thought, especially the early books of *De Fide*. However, in *De Trinitate* Hilary's exegetical strategies take on new characteristics. In the experience of his exile, his relationship with the Homoiousians (and Homoians), and the writing of both *De Fide* and *De Synodis*, Hilary has learned which Scripture passages are at issue in the current controversy and why they are so controversial. He has also learned new strategies for dealing with these controversial passages, and it is these strategies that I will examine in this chapter. The goal here is not to provide a comprehensive account of Hilary's exegesis. This has been done ably by others.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I want to examine the

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Hilary's exegetical method, see the posthumously published work of Jean Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers: Disciple et témoin de la vérité* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 2005). Though useful, Doignon focuses largely Hilary's commentary on the Psalms, which he wrote well after the time period being studied here. The standard treatment of Hilary's exegesis is Charles Kannengiesser, "L'exégèse d'Hilaire," in *Hilaire et son Temps* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969): 127–142. Kannengiesser does not treat Hilary's exegesis in *De Trinitate* in and of itself, but he does offer insight into Hilary's preferred method of dealing with long sections of the Biblical text, which is exactly what Hilary does in *De Trinitate*. Kannengiesser identifies two "hermeneutical rules" in Hilary's scripture commentaries, both of which seem to be operative in *De Trinitate*. The first rule is that, "Le sens d'un texte biblique doit être cherché dans le respect de la lettre même de ce texte." In other words, the exegete must look first to the intention of the author, which requires investigating a passage in its "textual" ("textuelle") context. Hilary employs this rule throughout *De Trinitate* by examining a controversial passage in its broader context, with the goal of ascertaining what the author originally meant. This is how he treats the John passages here. The second rule states that, "Le sens d'un texte biblique doit être cherché à la lumière de la Révélation globale du mystère

particular strategies Hilary uses in a specifically anti-Homoian context, which will then allow us to recognize those strategies as we encounter them in various section of *De Trinitate*.

Hilary's mature exegetical method follows what Lewis Ayres has called the "grammatical" method.<sup>2</sup> That is, Hilary uses specific grammatical techniques, the kinds of techniques that, as Ayres suggests, he might have gained through a formal rhetorical education, to uncover the "plain sense" of the text. Hilary is particularly adept at identifying the *scopos* of a text, its rhetorical strategies, context, etc.<sup>3</sup> Beyond these general techniques, however, Hilary's mature thought reveals two strategies that drive his Trinitarian exegesis. First, Hilary places his exegesis of a particular text within the context of the controversy at hand, thereby producing a kind of exegesis that is polemical in character. This is not, for Hilary, as straightforward as it might seem, because it requires the exegete to know all of the permutations of his or her opponents' exegesis and theology—and to refute both at the same time. Second, in his mature exegesis, Hilary begins to use one passage to determine the meaning of other difficult passages. It is worth noting that Hilary does not identify a single passage that he then uses as a hermeneutical guide throughout *De Trinitate*. However, Philippians 2 becomes more and more important to him, and in order to illustrate this strategy, we will look at how he begins to use it as a hermeneutical guide.

#### STRATEGY 1: POLEMICAL EXEGESIS

##### *Arian, not Homoian*

In *De Trinitate* 4, Hilary signals a new and different engagement with his opponents. For the first time, Hilary engages in an extended and polemically aware exegesis of the Scripture passages that his opponents

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de Dieu, manifesté en Jésus-Christ." Hilary also uses this rule throughout *De Trinitate*, especially by interpreting key scripture passages with his foundational Christological insights, such as "name" and "birth."

<sup>2</sup> Lewis Ayres, *Nicea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 31–40. Ayres' discussion of the two kinds of exegesis among Pro-Nicenes begins on p. 34ff. Although Hilary does employ an occasional typology, he engages in very little of what Ayres calls "figural" exegesis. Accordingly, I will limit my treatment of Hilary's Trinitarian exegesis to how Hilary determines the "plain sense" of a passage.

<sup>3</sup> Ayres, 36. Though they use different terminology, how Ayres defines grammatical exegesis is very similar to how Kannengiesser describes Hilary's exegesis.

use to construct and support their theology. To be sure, he had devoted the bulk of *De Fide* to exegetical considerations, but these were, as we have seen, relatively naïve in their understanding of Homoian exegesis. In *De Trinitate* 4, however, Hilary demonstrates not only a technical awareness of Homoian theology and exegesis, but also a growing sense of what resources—especially the Nicene Creed—are at his disposal for constructing a counter exegesis. Hilary begins this new exegetical strategy with a technical defense of *homoousios*.<sup>4</sup> At first glance it seems as though Hilary is simply reviving the older Arian polemics, but careful examination of what Hilary does with this material shows that he actually has the Homoians in mind. Hilary's procedure in *De Trinitate* 4 reveals much about how he thinks Pro-Nicene exegesis should work. It is not enough simply to derive meaning from the text. It is also necessary to establish what the text cannot say, e.g. what his opponents take it to mean, which requires a thoroughgoing awareness of what the opponents believe in general and how they exegete the specific passages at stake.

Hilary begins *De Trinitate* 4, accordingly, with an extended theological examination of Homoian opponents' theology; he calls them "Arians," but, as we will see, this is a polemical convention rather than a claim about the character of their theology. According to Hilary, the Homoians attempt to weaken the authority of Nicea and *homoousios* by claiming it leads to modalism. They argue that *homoousios* must be understood to mean that, "He himself is the Father who is also the Son;" *homoousios* means *one* substance. Thus there are three potential problems with *homoousios*, from a Homoian perspective: First, it can be taken to mean that the Father himself "extended" his divinity into the Virgin and "annexed" the name Son to himself. Second, *homoousios* can also be taken to refer to some pre-existent substance that is neither the Father nor the Son. The term should be rejected, accordingly, both because it does not distinguish the Father from the Son, and because it indicates that the Father comes after this prior substance. Third, the final problem with *homoousios* is that it might indicate that the Son received

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<sup>4</sup> Hilary's practice here corresponds to a common Pro-Nicene strategy of using Creeds, rules of faith, etc. as hermeneutical guides. See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 336–339. Hilary's appropriation of this strategy is more formally polemical than the examples cited by Ayres, however, in that he self-consciously places his exegesis in opposition to another exegetical tradition. This polemical context then determines what hermeneutical guides Hilary chooses to govern his exegesis. In this way, then, Hilary represents an early example of the tendency cited by Ayres.

his existence from a division of the Father's substance, as though God were capable of division or diminution.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike *De Synodis*, however, Hilary is not interested in defending *homoousios* and Nicea *per se*: he does not quote Nicea in *De Trinitate*, nor does he provide a substantive defense or explanation of *homoousios*.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Hilary wants to show why the term and the council are important for refuting the heretics.<sup>7</sup> To this end he launches into an account of the Homoian doctrines of the Father and the Son, an account that he ends by quoting Arius' letter to Alexander. The letter's appearance in this context is significant, not so much for what it says about Hilary's opponents, but for what it says about Hilary's strategy for refuting those opponents. As Michel Barnes has suggested, Hilary recognizes substantive differences between the theology of his opponents and that of Arius, and he cites Arius' letter, accordingly, as an attempt to convince his readers that the Homoians are like the already condemned Arians.<sup>8</sup> Several features of *De Trinitate* 4 point towards this conclusion. First, although Hilary quotes the letter here and in Book Six, he does not do anything with it, other than to claim that it reflects the heretical teaching of his opponents. He offers no refutation of its actual contents, and he seems content to cite it and move on. The same is true of *homoousios*, which Hilary does not use again after 4.6. Second, Hilary's translation of the letter in *De Trinitate*, along with fragments of the letter quoted by Phoebadius, are the earliest Latin appearances of this letter. If, as Bardy argues, Phoebadius represents an independent (from Hilary) source for the letter, both Hilary and Phoebadius may witness a new rhetorical strategy by Western Pro-Nicenes to paint their opponents as "Arians."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.4; CCL 62, 103. This list of the problems with *homoousios* corresponds exactly, except for the order, to the one he gave in *De Synodis* 68. However, in *De Synodis* Hilary suggests that the Western Bishops might be interpreting *homoousios* in this way. Here he identifies the Homoians as the source of this list. In each case, Hilary realizes that the potential problems with *homoousios* are primarily related to its modalist connotations.

<sup>6</sup> He does run through each of the objections briefly in *De Trinitate* 4.6, though apart from a brief reference to Luke 24.49, he makes no extended argument. He seems content to assert that the Homoians' problem with the word is beside the point and then move on to their specific teachings.

<sup>7</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.7; CCL 62, 106.

<sup>8</sup> Michel R. Barnes, "Exegesis and Polemic in *De Trinitate* I," *Augustinian Studies* 30 (1999): 47: "In other words, Hilary introduces Arius' *Letter to Alexander* in order to establish continuity between the beliefs of the heretics of old, namely Arius, and the new heretics, and thus to tar his opponents with the brush of Arius."

<sup>9</sup> Bardy, "Occident," 30. For further discussion of this dynamic in the fourth century

A third proof that Hilary does not think his opponents are theologically Arian is the differences between the theology he attributes to them both before and after his translation of the letter, and that of the letter itself. According to Hilary, the Homoians marshal a number of Biblical texts to prove their belief in the Son's subordination to the Father. For example, to highlight the Father's divinity, over and against the Son's, they will cite texts such as Deuteronomy 6.4 ("Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one"). The Homoians especially seem to favor Biblical texts that indicate that only God (the Father) possesses the attributes of divinity. An especially important text in this regard is John 17.3 (which Hilary has already dealt with in *De Trinitate* 3), "Now this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only *true God*, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ." Other such texts include Mark 10.18, which declares that only God is mighty, and Malachi 3.6, in which only God does not change.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the Homoians take the very name "Father" to indicate that the Father alone is unbegotten. Although Hilary recognizes that these attributions to the Father are of themselves worthy, he also believes that the Homoians have an ulterior motive for emphasizing them:

When they say that He alone is true, alone just, alone wise, alone invisible, alone good, alone powerful, alone immortal, then in their opinion the fact that He alone possesses these attributes means that the Son is excluded from any share in them.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Hilary continues, if the Father alone possesses these attributes, then the Son is a "corporeal being composed of visible matter."<sup>12</sup> And, in fact, this is close to what the Homoians say about the Son. The Homoians maintain that Son is a perfect creature like the other creatures, and to support this they cite several Old and New Testament passages, including Proverbs 8.22, Hebrews 3.1, John 14.28 and John 1.3.<sup>13</sup>

Like the Homoians, Arius' letter also confesses one God who is *alone* unmade, everlasting, true, immortal, etc. Arius also, like the Homoians,

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Trinitarian Controversy, see Michel R. Barnes, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," in Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones, eds., *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (London: Routledge, 1998): 47–67.

<sup>10</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.8; CCL 62, 107.

<sup>11</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.9; CCL 62, 110; McKenna, 99: *Cum enim dicunt: solum uerum, solum iustum, solum sapientem, solum inuisibilem, solum bonum solum potentem, solum immortalitatem habentem, in eo quod solus haec sit a communione eorum secundum hos Filius separatur.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.11; CCL 62, 112.

maintains the subordination of the Son to his Father, in part on the basis of the Son's creation, and like the Homoians he frames his theology in an explicitly anti-modalist context. Despite these broad similarities, however, several differences are evident between Arius' theology in the letter, and Hilary's account of Homoian theology. In the first place, Arius' letter is not supported by the scriptural authorities that the Homoians offer. This is not to say that Arius does not use scripture, but this letter, at least, it is not exegetical in the same way that Homoian theology appears to be. Second, Arius' letter has a different emphasis. Whereas the Homoians emphasize the ontological difference between the Father and Son, Arius is more concerned with the Father's temporal priority. He spends a great deal of time accounting for the Son's generation (or birth), describing how the Son was created by the will of God, was brought forth and created by the Father, and showing what the expressions "from Him" and "from the womb" mean.<sup>14</sup> The result, as Rowan Williams suggests, is a theology that defends God's absolute freedom and sovereignty against anything, such as passion, that might encroach upon it.<sup>15</sup> Although this is not foreign to the Homoian theology Hilary describes, his opponents are more concerned with demonstrating that the Son does not share in the attributes of divinity. Third, as a result of these different emphases, Arius' letter offers a different Christology than the Homoians. Unlike the Homoians, Arius is comfortable with continuity between Father and Son on a substantive level. Arius insists that the Son subsists in the Father's substance (*solus a solo Patris subsistit*).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Arius not only claims that the Son receives his being and life from the Father, but that the Father also makes his own "glorious qualities" exist in the Son, a move that the Homoians would have rejected.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.13; CCL 62, 114.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, *Arius*, 98.

<sup>16</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.13; CCL 62, 113.

<sup>17</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.12; CCL 62, 114. The key here is the extent to which either Arius or the Homoians allow for the Son to share the Father's actual qualities. For example, compare Arius' comment about the "life" of the Father with Hilary's comments on the position anathematized by the Homoiousians in *De Synodis* 16 (see above, Chapter 4, pp. 100–104). By Hilary's time, "life" had become a category by which the Pro-Nicenes demonstrated the equality of nature between the Father and Son.

*Polemical Exegesis of the Genesis Theophanies*

By citing the Letter to Alexander, therefore, Hilary is not assuming that his opponents are “Arian” in any technical or literal sense. He merely wants his readers to believe that the Homoians are committing the same error the Arians already committed—and were condemned for. Nevertheless, this comparison between the two theologies highlights the nature of early Homoian theology and the nature of Hilary’s task in the latter part of *De Trinitate*. He has to show, against the exegetical arguments offered by his opponents, how the Son shares the Father’s divinity despite the Son’s apparent corporeality and mutability. This is the task Hilary takes up immediately following his translation of Arius’ letter by turning to an exegesis of the Old Testament theophanies. Hilary divides his treatment of the theophanies into two parts. In the first, comprising the rest of *De Trinitate* 4, Hilary considers whether Moses included the Son when he spoke of “one God.” In the second part, Hilary turns again to the question raised by the Homoians, whether the theophanies reveal the Son to be “true God.” The Genesis theophanies, then, became a focal point in his direct engagement with the Homoians, so we turn to the ways in which Hilary uses these texts to further his polemical purposes.<sup>18</sup>

Hilary begins his examination of the theophanies by quoting Deuteronomy 6.4 (“Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one”) and claiming that this is their central doctrine. Hilary had already cited the Deuteronomy passage in his summary of Homoian proof texts (*De Trinitate* 4.8), although it played no role in the Letter to Alexander, and this claim about its centrality does correspond to his portrayal of Homoian theology. Hilary admits that no one would legitimately challenge this confession that God is one. The question, for Hilary, is whether Moses, who first said to Israel that God is one, also proclaims the Son of God as God.<sup>19</sup> To answer this question, Hilary turns to the creation story in Genesis, making a typical Pro-Nicene claim that the words “let us make” refer to both the Father and the Son; by declaring “let us make,” suggests Hilary, God reveals the mutual participation of both

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<sup>18</sup> For an overview of Hilary’s treatment of the theophanies see G.T. Armstrong, “The Genesis Theophanies of Hilary of Poitiers,” *Studia Patristica* 10 (1970): 203–207.

<sup>19</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.15; CCL 62, 116.

Father and Son in creating humanity.<sup>20</sup> Hilary then considers the actual theophanies themselves. The first of these is Hagar's encounter with an angel over the banishment of Hagar. Hilary observes that although it was an angel who spoke to Hagar, the angel assumes authority normally reserved for God.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, Hagar addresses the angel as "God," suggesting that the angel is actually God himself. The reason he is called an angel, according to Hilary, is so that "the distinction of persons should be complete."<sup>22</sup> Later in the narrative, Hilary notes, God speaks to Abraham as God, making the same promise the angel already made to Sarah. The next episode concerns the three men who appear before Abraham at Mamre. As Hilary observes, Abraham immediately recognizes that one of the three is God, and although Abraham saw the figure as a man, the Patriarch recognized and worshipped him as God. By doing so, Hilary exclaims, Abraham recognized the future Incarnation, that the Son of God would appear on earth as a human! As further support to this claim, Hilary cites John 8.56, where Jesus seems to indicate that Abraham saw "his day" and was glad.<sup>23</sup>

Hilary's exegesis of the theophanies in Book Four falls within the framework established by his Latin predecessors, particularly Novatian. In his own *De Trinitate*, Novatian devotes two long chapters (18 and 19) to a discussion of the theophanies. Novatian places his discussion within the larger concern of the Son's visibility. For Novatian, the theophanies demonstrate that the Son is the "image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1.15). Humans are unable to view God directly, so the Son appears in order to gradually strengthen human capacities to one day see God the Father himself.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, when God appears in these Old Testament stories, this must refer to the Son. Novatian then takes up the same two stories Hilary examines. In the first story, that of Sarah and Hagar, the angel who speaks is both "Lord and God," because only God could make the promises of offspring to the woman. However, we know that the one who appeared to Hagar is not God the Father, because this one is called an angel, which could never apply to the Father. The only conclusion, therefore, is that the one who appears is the Son, being both God and an angel.<sup>25</sup> The second story Novatian

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<sup>20</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.17; CCL 62, 120.

<sup>21</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.23; CCL 62, 126.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *De Trinitate* 4.27; CCL 62, 131.

<sup>24</sup> Novatian, *De Trinitate*, 18.5; CCL 4, 44.

<sup>25</sup> *De Trinitate* 18.10; CCL 4, 45.

examines is the appearance of three “men” to Abraham at Mamre. As does Hilary, Novatian immediately notices that Abraham identifies one of the three as “God.” Here again, this cannot mean God the Father, because that would suggest the Father was visible. The one who appears, then, can only be the Son: “God” in that he acts like and is called God, “angel” in that he accepts the limitation of visibility.<sup>26</sup>

In Novatian, then, Hilary had a tradition that defended the divinity of the Son through an exegesis of the theophanies. Both Hilary and Novatian take the “angel’s” assumption of authority as proof of his divinity, just as they each accept the name “angel” as a sign of the Son’s distinction from the Father.<sup>27</sup> What is different is that Hilary has adapted this originally anti-modalist exegesis to refute a subordinationist theology. Most importantly, Hilary shifts the focus to a discussion of God’s nature. Although Novatian calls the Son, “God,” he never explains exactly how the Son is both “angel” and “God” at the same time, beyond asserting that the Son has a status above that of angels. Novatian is primarily interested in defending the distinction between the invisible Father and visible Son. If Novatian can demonstrate that the visible Son has the same authority as the Father, then he has shown that there are “two,” whereas the modalists believe there is only “one.” Hilary, however, de-emphasizes, without entirely losing, the visible—invisible distinction that is so important to Novatian.<sup>28</sup> For Hilary, what matters is how the Son’s authority revealed by these passages proves that he (the Son) shares in the Father’s divinity. In a sense, Novatian’s exegesis is actually more effective than Hilary’s, because it is more comprehensive. Novatian accounts for both the Son’s distinction from and unity with the Father. However, because Novatian leaves open the possibility of the Son’s subordination to the Father, Hilary must avoid, for the moment, emphasizing the Son’s visibility, concentrating instead on the relationship between the Father and the Son. Hilary does not now discuss the

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<sup>26</sup> *De Trinitate* 18.22; CCL 4, 47.

<sup>27</sup> Compare, for example, Hilary’s *De Trinitate* 4.23 with Novatian, *De Trinitate* 18.10. In each case, both emphasize the distinction of the Son from the Father on the basis of the angel’s status as messenger; God the Father could never be his own messenger; therefore the angel is both Son and distinct.

<sup>28</sup> Hilary, *De Trinitate* 4.32; CCL 62, 135. Hilary modifies Novatian only slightly, claiming that the angel who is seen and heard is seen as the angel of God. Because the angel is called “God,” however, we also learn that he possesses the name and glory of God, which means that God is not alone. Thus Hilary maintains the importance of the angel’s visibility, but moves quickly to emphasize that this points to the equality of nature between the Father and Son.

nature of divinity as a technical, philosophical question, but he does want to show how the Son “fits” within an overall picture of God’s unity—or God’s “unity-in-diversity.” For the moment, therefore, Hilary is content to defend, exegetically, the apparent unity of the Father and Son, but his work in Book Four also reveals a struggle to make his old, traditional exegesis work in a new polemical context.

Hilary returns to these same texts in Book Five, and in the process he addresses some of the questions he left unanswered in Book Four. The purpose of Book Four, Hilary claims, was simply to show that the Son is God. The purpose of Book Five, however, is to show that the Son is “true God.” The distinction here is not so much logical as polemical. Having appropriated his traditional exegesis of the theophanies in Book Four, Hilary is now going to confront the specific doctrines of his opponents. In the process, he will use the theophanies in a new way to provide positive proof of the Son’s full divinity.

When Hilary underscores the phrase “true God,” he is lifting from his opponents’ confession of faith: “We know the one true God.”<sup>29</sup> The phrase itself is a sign of the Homoians craftiness, Hilary believes, because it hides their attempt to exclude the Son from possessing the Father’s nature or divinity.<sup>30</sup> Later in the book, he will explain their rhetorical strategy in a way that corresponds to his early characterization of it:

When they profess that there is only one God and this same one is alone true, alone just, alone wise, alone unchangeable, alone immortal, alone powerful, they make the Son also subject to Him by a distinction in substance, not as one born into God but adopted as the Son by creation . . . thus, He must be wanting in all those attributes which they proclaim as belonging exclusively to the solitary majesty of the Father.<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, Hilary’s intent is to show not just that the Son is divine or “god,” but that he shares in the Father’s nature; to be true God means to possess the true nature of God. In Book Four, Hilary made a preliminary attempt to prove the Son’s divinity by emphasizing, in a traditional way, the Son’s (or angel’s) authority. Here, however, Hilary

<sup>29</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.3; CCL 62, 153.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.34; CCL 62, 188; McKenna, 163: *Cum enim confesso uno Deo eodemque uero et solo iusto solo sapiente solo indemutabili solo inmortalis solo potente, subicitur et Filius in diuersitate substantiae—non ex Deo natus in Deum, sed per creationem susceptus in Filium . . .—necesse est ut his omnibus Filius careat, quae ad priuilegium solitariae in Patre maiestatis sunt praedicata.*

is going to employ a much more technical, and deliberately polemical, strategy by examining whether the Son manifests the *power* of the Son's nature. According to Hilary, the power of a nature is suitable to the nature itself, so we can use "power" to test whether the Son possesses the Father's true nature. In practical terms, this means that we must examine the Son's activities. If the Son does things that show he is using the "power of his nature," then we can know that he possesses the Father's true nature. For example, when we see the Son creating, we should recognize that he shares the Father's nature. The "power" to create belongs to the nature of the Father, and the resulting act, or "work," which is creation, demonstrates that the Father has the power of creation. So when we see the Son perform the work of creation, we know for certain that he also has the power of creation, which means that he shares in the Father's nature.<sup>32</sup> This same logic also applies to the theophanies. As in Book Four, Hilary dismisses the fact that the Son is called an angel, as if that has anything to do with the Son's nature. By angel, Hilary asserts, we understand the office of messenger, rather than an actual "angel."<sup>33</sup> Instead, what truly matters is whether the Son speaks or performs the deeds of God. If, in the case of Hagar, he did raise Ishmael to a great nation, which is the work of God, then we must understand that "the power of his nature . . . preserves the faith in his true nature." If the Son does what God does, then he is himself God. Likewise, Abraham would not recognize nor worship someone who did not reveal the true nature of God, just as only God could destroy Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>34</sup>

This is no longer, as in Book Four, an argument about the Son assuming divine authority. As Barnes has shown, Hilary uses "power" here in a technical, philosophical sense to make claims about the actual nature of God.<sup>35</sup> Hilary is drawing on a philosophical tradition in which *virtus*

<sup>32</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.5; CCL 62, 155.

<sup>33</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.11; CCL 62, 161.

<sup>34</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.16; CCL 62, 165. Another change between Book Four and Book Five is that in the latter book Hilary deals, briefly, with the problem of the Son's visibility, although he does so by again recycling Novatian: the Patriarchs gazed upon a shadow of the true incarnation which was yet to come. The purpose of these initial appearances of the Son was to make us familiar with his external appearance, so that when he is born we will be better able to accept that reality (5.17). Novatian makes almost the exact same argument in 18.2–5, though for Novatian this is an important part of his entire "visibility" motif: the gradual appearances of the Son strengthen the human condition, so that at some point we will be able to see God himself (18.5).

<sup>35</sup> Barnes, *Power*, 159–60.

has a causal relationship with its nature: a nature produces a power, which is its “very reality.” This power produces operations, or the “capabilities of the power,” which in turn produce effects. Because a power cannot be separated from its nature, we can identify the nature of something by its powers. Hence, Hilary’s argument that if Son has powers associated with the Father, he also shares the Father’s nature.<sup>36</sup> Hilary clarifies the significance of this argument in 5.14. It is absurd, he explains, to claim that something is “fire,” but not “true fire.” That which is fire cannot lack in anything that constitutes true fire. If you remove something that makes it fire, then it ceases being fire. Thus, while a nature can lose its existence, only a true nature can continue to exist. In the same way, either the Son is true God, or he is not God at all, and if he possesses the attributes of God’s nature, then we must acknowledge that he is true God.<sup>37</sup> This is far removed from the polemical and exegetical concerns of the Latin Novatian. Whereas Novatian was content to assume a fundamental, but vaguely defined, unity between the Father and the Son, for Hilary this unity is central and decisive. And, ultimately, Novatian proves only marginally helpful for this task. In Book Four, Hilary had taken Novatian about as far as he could go towards articulating the unity between the Father and Son. In Book Five, accordingly, Hilary had to find new resources—philosophical and exegetical—to meet the challenge posed by the Homoians, which then changes not only the results of his exegesis but the strategies he employs as well.

#### STRATEGY 2: PHILIPPIANS 2 AS A HERMENEUTICAL GUIDE

One of Hilary’s most distinctive exegetical strategies was to use a single passage of Scripture to interpret one or more controversial passages. By “distinctive” I do not mean “unique.” The method was common among Pro-Nicenes, especially Athanasius, whose well known search for the “scope” of scripture follows the same procedure. Hilary’s use of the method is distinctive in the sense that it becomes his primary means of making sense of controversial texts, and paying attention to how he uses it can go a long way towards understanding his thought

<sup>36</sup> Barnes, *Power*, 159.

<sup>37</sup> *De Trinitate* 5.14; CCL 62, 163. Barnes, *Power*, 159, remarks on the technical character of the fire analogy.

as a whole. In what follows here I will not discuss every instance where Hilary employs this method, nor will I highlight every passage that Hilary uses as a hermeneutical guide.<sup>38</sup> In the following chapters, we reencounter the method in the course of describing the main themes of Hilary's Trinitarian theology. Instead, as an illustration of how Hilary uses the hermeneutical guide strategy, I will discuss how he uses the most important of his controlling passages, the Christ Hymn of Philippians 2.6–11.

Hilary devotes Books Eight and Nine of *De Trinitate* to a discussion of a number of controversial New Testament passages. He tends to examine these texts in thematic clusters: in Book Eight he investigates those statements of Jesus where the Son claims “oneness” with the Father, while Book Nine considers Homoian proof—texts for the Son's inferiority to the Father. In order to interpret the various texts, Hilary chooses a single biblical passage that seems to encompass the aspect of the faith under discussion, and he then uses that passage to interpret the others. The procedure is most evident in Book Nine, where he uses Philippians 2. 6–7 as a guide for interpreting the “inferiority” passages. Hilary begins *De Trinitate* 9 by identifying a series of texts that the Homoians use to demonstrate the Son's inferiority to the Father, including Mark 10. 18, John 17.3, John 5.19, John 14.28 and Mark 13.32.<sup>39</sup> He quickly reminds his readers that in Jesus Christ we are discussing a person of two natures (*utriusque naturae personam*), human and divine, because “He who was in the form of God (*forma Dei*) received the form of a slave (*forma servi*).”<sup>40</sup> Because we know that the one who receives the *forma servi* does not lose the *forma Dei*, since it is the same Christ who takes on the *forma servi*, Hilary believes we can now better understand these

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, 9.1, where Hilary identifies, after the fact, Colossians 2.8, 9 as the controlling passage for the previous discussion from Book 8. In Books 9–12, Philippians 2 is by far the most important of these controlling passages.

<sup>39</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.2; CCL 62a, 372. Hilary claims that the Homoians use these texts to prove that when the Son is called “God,” this is merely a title and not a “true description” of his nature. The fact that the Son lacks knowledge (Mark 13:32), for example, means that there is a difference in the divinity of the Father and the Son, since the true God should have all knowledge.

<sup>40</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.14; CCL 62a, 385; McKenna, 334. The editors of the SC edition of *De Trinitate* give a helpful explanation of how Hilary uses *forma*: “La ‘forme’ est la condition caractéristique d’un être, l’expression déterminée d’une nature. La ‘forme’ peut changer, le sujet restant le même. Ainsi en est-il du Christ, qui est passé de la condition de serviteur avant sa résurrection (*in forma servi*) à la condition glorieuse (*forma Dei*) qu’il a acquise en ressuscitant.” See G. Pelland, ed., *La Trinité*, Sources Chrétiennes 462 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999): 41, n. 3.

texts. Indeed, he claims, the Homoians misread these passages because they ascribe what is appropriate to the *forma servi* to the *forma Dei*.

Accordingly, since we have explained the plan of salvation in the mysteries by which the heretics would... [attribute] everything that was said and done through the nature of the man that he assumed in weakness to the nature of the Godhead, and ascribed what was appropriate to the form of a slave to the form of God, we must now draw up our answer to the questions that they themselves have proposed. Since the faith only requires us to confess the Word and the flesh, that is, Jesus Christ both as God and man, we will now be able to make a safe judgement about the different specific statements.<sup>41</sup>

They misunderstand that the confession of Christ as both Word and flesh means that we can apply specific statements about Christ to one nature or the other; authentic interpretation requires viewing every such statement through this lens.

Hilary then begins to consider the various New Testament passages through the *forma servi*—*forma dei* lens.<sup>42</sup> As he does so, however, his application of this hermeneutic changes, moving from a straightforward exegetical principle to a theological “dynamic.” That is, Hilary uses the movement from *forma dei* to *forma servi* that is implied by the Philippians 2 language in order to describe the Incarnation itself. This shift in approach becomes evident in a section of Book Nine (9.28–42) devoted to an exegesis of John 17.3 (“this is everlasting life, that they may know you, the only true God and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ”).<sup>43</sup> Hilary begins this section by making it clear that this passage concerns the Son’s status as “true God.” He has already considered the question of “true God” in *De Trinitate* 8, the appearance of this discussion here is an additional sign that Hilary is engaged in a technical, anti-Homoian polemic. Although Arius had claimed that the Son was not the “true God,” he had done so without explicit reference to John 17.3, and by the end of the 350’s John 17.3 had become one of the key

<sup>41</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.15; CCL 62a, 386; McKenna, 335: *Ostensa itaque sacramentorum dispensatione, per quam heretici... ut ea quae per adsumpti hominis naturam dicta gestaue sunt omnia infirmitati diuinitatis adscriberent, et formae Dei deputarent quidquid formae serui proprie aptum est, nunc ipsis propositionibus eorum respondendum est. Tuto enim iam dictorum singulorum genera diiudicabuntur, cum uerbum et carnem, id est hominem et Deum, Iesum Christum sola fides sit confiteri.*

<sup>42</sup> Hilary examines Mark 10.18 in *De Trinitate* 9.15–27, John 17.3 in *De Trinitate* 9.28–42, John 5.19 in *De Trinitate* 9.43–57, Mark 13.32 in *De Trinitate* 9.58–75.

<sup>43</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.39; CCL 62a, 412: *Haec est autem uita aeterna, ut cognoscant te solum uerum Deum et quem misisti Iesum Christum.* Hilary also quotes the verse at *De Fide* 3.13.

battlegrounds over which the Son's status as "true God" was fought.<sup>44</sup> Hilary, accordingly, opens the section in Book Nine by quoting John 17.3. He then looks at other Johannine passages to show how "eternal life" depends on both the Father and the Son (9.28–32), e.g. John 14.9–11 and John 16.27–32, and he follows this with a restatement of an earlier argument (from Book Seven) that establishes the Son's divinity (9.33–37). All of this, he believes, proves that the Son is "true God."

In 9.38, however, Hilary takes his argument in a new direction when he begins to consider the John 17 passage in light of Philippians 2. Hilary recognizes that his argument for the Son as "true God" applies primarily to the Son apart from the incarnation. This naturally raises the question of whether the incarnation involves a change in this status, and to answer this, Hilary turns to Philippians 2. The incarnation, Hilary asserts, involved only a change in *habitus*, not one of power (*virtus*) or nature (*natura*). Although the Father and Son's natures remained united, the incarnated Son lost the unity with the Father's *forma*; he retains the Father's power, but not his form. The assumption of the humanity, however, did create an obstacle to their unity. The *forma servi* lost the unity of nature with the Father, and this disunity will only be overcome when the Son's humanity assumes the glory of the Son's divine nature.<sup>45</sup> This is why, Hilary believes, John 17 includes Jesus' petition to receive the Father's glory. With this prayer Jesus does not ask for something unique to himself, but that the assumption of the *forma servi* might not estrange him from the *forma Dei*. The unity of their glory had departed in the incarnation, but when the *forma servi* receives the Father's glory, the Son will remain what he always was, united with the Father's glory and form.<sup>46</sup>

Hilary had previously dealt with John 17 in *De Fide* 3.9–17, and a comparison of these two expositions reveals the extent to which the exegesis in *De Trinitate* 9 is controlled by his understanding of the dynamic suggested by Philippians 2.<sup>47</sup> In *De Fide* 3, Hilary actually

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<sup>44</sup> This following Roger Gryson, ed. and trans., *Scolies ariennes sur le concile d'Aquilée*, Sources Chrétiennes 267 (Paris: Éditions de Cerf, 1980): 180. Athanasius claims that Arius denied that the Son was "true God" (*Orationes Contra Arianos* 1.6, 9), but as a technical polemic this question seems to belong to the Homoian stage of the Trinitarian Controversy. See Michel Barnes, "Exegesis and Polemic," 45.

<sup>45</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.38; CCL 62a, 411.

<sup>46</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.39; CCL 62a, 413.

<sup>47</sup> See *De Trinitate* 9.31 where Hilary refers his readers to the previous discussion in *De Fide* 3.

examines all of John 17.1–6, which he believes is concerned with one central theme: the mutual exchange of glory between the Father and the Son. Hilary observes that the Son’s glorification occurs at his Passion—specifically, the cross, because as the Centurion’s confession proves, the cross reveals, or “manifests,” the Son’s true nature.<sup>48</sup> *Glory as manifestation*, accordingly, is the key to understanding how the Son and Father affect this exchange of glory. We know that this exchange of glory does not imply a weakness, or loss, in either the Father or the Son. Instead, the fact that the exchange of glory is mutual indicates that Father and Son share the same “power of divinity;” they can each give and receive.<sup>49</sup> So this exchange must indicate something other than loss or gain. Moreover, John 17.3 (“this is everlasting life, that they may know you, the only true God”) shows that the Father receives glory when humans perceive him through Christ. The Son gives glory by granting eternal life to all flesh, an act that allows humans to “know God.”<sup>50</sup> Whatever the Son *does* commends, or glorifies, the Father.<sup>51</sup> Finally, the glory given to the Son also entails its manifestation, only in this case, it is the Son’s body that is so glorified. When the Son prays for glorification, he is praying that his flesh might be assimilated into the power and incorruptibility of God. The point of this glorification, however, is that at the end-times, all will see and recognize the Son in his body.<sup>52</sup> Just as the Son reveals the Father, the Father will glorify, and so reveal, the Son.

With this exposition in Book Three, Hilary is still moving within the confines of his Latin background. Novatian, for example, asserts that the Son’s flesh receives its glory after the ascension, at which time he is “manifestly proved to be God” (*Deus manifestissime comprobatur*).<sup>53</sup> This is Hilary’s perspective in *De Fide* 3, where “glory” is roughly equivalent with “honor;” it is something external and, at least in the case of the Son, visible (i.e. the Son’s visible glory). So when the Son’s humanity receives the Father’s glory it loses its corruptibility and is assimilated into the *virtus Dei*. The problem here is how the incorruptible God can transform and assume corruptible flesh. Hilary does not entirely lose this

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<sup>48</sup> *De Fide* 3.9–11; CCL 62, 80–82.

<sup>49</sup> *De Fide* 3.13; CCL 62, 84.

<sup>50</sup> *De Fide* 3.13; CCL 62, 84.

<sup>51</sup> *De Fide* 3.15; CCL 62, 86.

<sup>52</sup> *De Fide* 3.16; CCL 62, 87.

<sup>53</sup> *De Trinitate* 13. CCL 4, 57.

perspective in Book Nine, but the problem and the language are different: how can the one God exist in two forms. The concepts of “form” and “emptying” which he borrows from Philippians are now decisive. Whereas in Book Three the glory manifests God and transforms humanity, in Book Nine through the true birth and emptying of the “form,” Christ retains the power whereby his humanity receives glory. The shift to the language of *forma* moves the discussion from the external “glory” to the internal “nature” and *habitus*. Thanks to Philippians 2, Hilary is able to portray the Incarnation as a movement of *habitus*, or *forma*, which does not necessarily imply that the Son was ever separated from the Father’s nature. As a result, Hilary can articulate a more robust account of the Incarnation than he did in *De Fide* 3, because he can show how the Son is “true God” even while in the *forma servi*—without implying change or absorption of creature into creator.

In conclusion, finding the plain sense of Scripture was not limited simply to pulling out meaning from the words on the page. For Hilary, true exegesis required using a variety of resources to shed light on the passage, chief among them an awareness of what the text could and should accomplish polemically. What we have seen in this chapter is not the end of the story of Hilary’s exegetical method. Philippians 2 and *forma servi*—*forma dei* will play a decisive role in the exegesis Hilary uses to support his doctrine of the Incarnation in *De Trinitate* 10, which we will discuss in Chapter 7. A different motif surfaces to govern the exegesis Hilary uses to support his doctrine of God in *De Trinitate* 7, one that has significant polemical implications and that ultimately makes a decisive impact on Hilary’s thought as a whole. It is to this part of the story we now turn.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE NAME AND BIRTH OF GOD

At the very beginning of *De Trinitate* 7, Hilary makes a startling claim about this book's relationship to what he has already written, including the *De Fide*.<sup>1</sup> "In number," Hilary writes, "it is true [Book Seven] comes after the others that have preceded, but it is first or the greatest in regard to the understanding of the mystery of the complete faith."<sup>2</sup> By this simple claim, Hilary signals that his thought is going in a fundamentally new direction. He has taken the Homoiousian concepts of "name" and "birth," which he first explored in *De Synodis*, as the fundamental categories for constructing his doctrine of God. The significance of this change cannot be overstated: he now has an account of the relationship between the Father and Son that has previously been exclusively Greek and that owes nothing to his Latin heritage. Hilary's theology in *De Trinitate* 7, however, is not merely a restatement of Basil's *Synodical Letter*, but a creative adaptation of some of its concepts and exegetical models. This adaptation forms the basis for Hilary's most original and important contributions to Latin Trinitarian theology. In this chapter, then, we turn to Hilary's development of "name" and "birth" in *De Trinitate* 7, paying special attention to these concepts' polemical and historical background in the Greek Trinitarian tradition.

#### NAME AND BIRTH IN *DE TRINITATE* 7

Hilary begins his formal argument in *De Trinitate* 7.9 by claiming that we know that the Son is God by virtue of five characteristics: "name, birth, nature, power and confession" (*nomine, natiuitate, natura, potestate, professione*).<sup>3</sup> He then proceeds as though he will provide an exposition of each attribute, but after dealing with "name" and "birth," Hilary

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<sup>1</sup> Hilary refers to this as the "seventh" book, which presumably includes the three books of the *de Fide*. See above, Chapter 3, pp. 80–83.

<sup>2</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.1; CCL 62, 259; McKenna, 259; *Ceteris quidem anterioribus numero posterior, sed ad perfectae fidei sacramentum intellegendum aut primus aut maximus*.

<sup>3</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.9; CCL 62, 268.

abruptly stops this examination. The reason for stopping with “birth” is that the concept of the Son’s *nativitas* contains within it the other characteristics:

...because we have learned that our Lord Jesus Christ is God in accordance with his name, birth, nature, power, and confession, our exposition should consider the specific steps in the proposed arrangement, but the nature of the birth, which embraces within it the name, the nature, the power, and the confession, does not allow for this. For, without these there would be no birth, because by being born it contains all these things in itself.<sup>4</sup>

Once Hilary has explained the Son’s birth, he feels prepared to continue with the exegetical style of argument that has characterized his polemical engagement in *De Trinitate* to this point. Accordingly, the rest of Book Seven consists of exegesis of John 5.19 (7.16–21), John 10.30 (7.22–32), and John 14.33 (7.33–41), each of which, Hilary believes, speaks to the Son’s equality with the Father. Thus the priority Hilary gives to “birth” heralds its importance for his anti-Homoian arguments as a whole, a suggestion that is confirmed by the prevalence of this language in the remainder of *De Trinitate*.<sup>5</sup>

Hilary’s doctrine of the *nativitas* depends on his understanding of the divine names, and so Hilary begins his discussion of the “birth” by explaining the character of the Son’s “name.” Here Hilary’s argument develops his assertion in *De Synodis* that the “name designates the nature” (*nomen naturae significatio*).<sup>6</sup> For Hilary, names can either belong to their subject by nature, or they can be given to the subject from without. In the first instance, the name corresponds to the subject’s nature, while in the second the name has no relationship to the object’s nature. As an example, Hilary cites Moses, who was called “god of Pharaoh” in Exodus 7. This does not mean that Moses was God, or that he assumed God’s nature. Instead, Moses’ “divinity” had solely to do with the

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<sup>4</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.16; CCL 62, 277; McKenna, 240: *Ut quia Deum esse Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum Dei Filium nomine natiuitate natura potestate professione didicissemus, demonstratio nostra gradus singulos dispositionis propositae percurreret. Sed natiuitatis id natura non patitur, quae in se et nomen et naturam et potestatem et professionem sola complectitur. Sine his enim natiuitas non erit, quia in se haec omnia nascendo continet.*

<sup>5</sup> A CETEDOC search of *natiuitas* (and cognates) with *filius* reveals that prior to *De Trinitate* 4, Hilary uses the two terms in proximity only once, in the prologue (1.17). After Book Four, however, Hilary uses these two terms in proximity 37 times. In general, Books 4–12 contain a virtual explosion in the use of *natiuitas* as compared to Hilary’s earlier writings, apart from *De Synodis*.

<sup>6</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.9; CCL 62, 268.

power given him by God for dealing with Pharaoh; he is “given as God” because he receives “godhood” as something external from God. The same principle applies to the line from Psalm 81.6, “I have said: you are gods.” Here again, the name “god” is dependent on another’s will, and is thus external and accidental, not a true name derived from nature (*non naturale nomen in genere*).<sup>7</sup>

In the case of the Son, however, his names do indicate “the substance of his birth.” This is especially true of three names in particular, “Word,” “Wisdom,” and “Power.” The rationale for this claim is similar for each name. The names have been transmitted from the Father to the Son (via the birth). This does not mean that the Father loses the name, nor is he in any way diminished by this transmission. The perfect begetting of the Son does not lead to loss in the Father, while it does produce perfection for the one who is born.

The name “Word” belongs to the Son of God from the mystery of the birth just as do the names of wisdom and power. And even if they have been transmitted to the Son with the substance of true birth, they are not wanting in God, as attributes that are proper to him, although they have been born from Him into God. As we have often declared, we do not teach a division in the Son, but the mystery of the birth.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, for the name “Word,” the Son is the Word, and while God is never without the Word, the Son’s nature is not “an utterance of a voice.” Instead, the Son subsists as God from God by virtue of the birth. In the same way, the Son is not God’s Wisdom and Power because of an “internal power or thought.” Instead, the Son “subsists in the names of these attributes” (*per haec proprietatum nomina subsistens ostensus est*). So, when we hear that ‘the Word was God,’ we know that the Son is not only called God, he is shown to be God. Being (*esse*), according to Hilary, is not an accidental name, but a “subsistent” (*subsistens*) truth that fully demonstrates the Son’s nature.<sup>9</sup>

Hilary continues by considering Thomas’ confession of Christ as, “My Lord and my God,” from John 20.28. Hilary takes this as support

<sup>7</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.10; CCL 62, 269.

<sup>8</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.11; CCL 62, 270; McKenna, 234: *Verbi enim appellatio in Dei Filio de sacramento natiuitatis est, sicuti sapientiae et virtutis est nomen: quae cum in Deum Filium cum substantia uerae natiuitatis extiterint, Deo tamen ut sua propria, quamuis ex eo in Deum sint nata, non desunt. Non enim, sicut frequenter dictum a nobis est, diuisionis in Filio, sed natiuitatis sacramentum praedicamus.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

for the name argument: when Thomas called the Son, “God,” he was not using an honorary name, but one that reveals the Son’s true nature.<sup>10</sup> The question, however, is how did Thomas know to apply this true name to the Son. The answer, for Hilary, has to do with the “things and the powers” (*res, virtus*). Thomas recognized that the Son was truly God because he saw the Son doing things that belonged to the nature of God, especially rising from the dead; the Son displayed the “power” of God in his own Resurrection, which revealed to Thomas his true nature. As a result, Thomas confessed (as should all orthodox Christians, according to Hilary) that the Son was God.<sup>11</sup> The Son of God, therefore, is God, because that is what the name indicates.<sup>12</sup>

Having established the implications of the Son’s name for our understanding of his divinity, Hilary turns next to the Son’s birth. Like the name, Hilary believes that the “birth” offers proof for the Son’s divinity. To demonstrate this, Hilary begins with the character of birth itself. Something that is born, he claims, cannot be distinct from the nature of its origin. A birth can only proceed from the “properties of the nature” (*proprietas naturae*) that produced it, so that if these properties are not present, there has been no birth.<sup>13</sup> Hilary admits that sometimes two creatures of different natures come together and give birth to an entirely new substance. This, however, only lends additional credence to his argument, because even in this case the newly combined natures come directly from the progenitors, not from something external, and is based on properties common to them. Since the birth of the Son is not corporeal, we can eliminate the possibility of a second nature, which means that through his birth, the Son shares the Father’s nature. Moreover, the birth of the Son eliminates the possibility of his being created or having a beginning. His birth proves that he did not “come from nothing” or receive a nature different from God, which means that the birth reveals that the Son is eternal. Because the Son did not come into being from nothing into something, and because the Son did not develop from one thing into another, he perfectly shares the Father’s nature. Accordingly, by virtue of his birth, which maintains the nature from which it subsists, the Son shares in the Father’s eternity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.12; CCL 62, 272.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.13; CCL 62, 273.

<sup>13</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.14; CCL 62, 274.

<sup>14</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.14; CCL 62, 275.

For exegetical support for this claim, Hilary turns to John 5.18, where the Jews are seeking to kill Jesus because he was, “calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.”<sup>15</sup> This passage has two advantages for Hilary. First, it establishes the Father-Son relationship by naming the Father as “father,” and the Son as his “son.” Second, the text makes the equality between the Father and the Son explicit, on the basis of their father-son relationship. In fact, this genetic relationship leads to claims of equality between the Father and the Son. For Hilary, it is a “birth” relationship, which by its very character produces an equality of nature. This is not to suggest that the Father and Son are identical, as the John passage also demonstrates. The birth produces “another,” which prevents us from speaking of God’s “solitude” (*solitudo*), but because the Son shares the Father’s nature, neither can we speak of “diversity” (*diversitas*) in God.<sup>16</sup>

It is at this point that we come to the passage where Hilary announces that, having dealt with the Son’s birth, he has done enough, because the birth “embraces within it the name, the nature, the power, and the confession.”<sup>17</sup> He has not said all that he will say about how the birth helps us account for the nature of God, but he has established how he is going to use it. For Hilary, the theological concept of the Son’s birth contains everything he needs to articulate his own understanding of God’s nature while at the same time refuting his Homoian opponents. We will examine how this functions as an anti-Homoian polemical device below. For the present, this analysis of Hilary’s thought suggests that “name,” and especially “birth,” provide him with two crucial tools to construct his theological formulations. First, each of the concepts Hilary mentions in Book Seven depend on the birth, because it is the birth that conveys the Father’s nature to the Son. In the case of power, for example, the birth explains how Son receives the nature that produces the powers that, ultimately, demonstrate his unity with the Father. Second, the birth is especially important because it provides Hilary with a way to account for both unity and diversity within God’s nature. In so far as the birth is a birth, then there must be two, Father and Son; in so far as the birth yields another who shares the divine nature equally, then there is one God. By emphasizing the Son’s birth, therefore,

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<sup>15</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.15; CCL 62, 275.

<sup>16</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.15; CCL 62, 276.

<sup>17</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.16; CCL 62, 277.

Hilary believes he has avoided the dual dangers of subordinationism and modalism.

*The Birth of the Son in Hilary's Exegesis of John*

The extent to which Hilary has appropriated the name/birth conceptuality is illustrated by his exegesis of key disputed passages from the Gospel of John. His doctrine of the name and birth now become an "interpretative guide" for understanding how these passages reveal the relationship between the Father and Son.

Hilary begins his exegesis of the Johannine passages by taking up John 5.19. (The Son can do nothing of himself, but only what he sees the Father doing.) For Hilary, this passage confirms our faith in the birth because it reveals the way in which the Son shares in the Father's power. In the first place, Hilary says, the Son's power to work does not come from an increase in power that would be given for a specific task. Instead, the Son possessed his power beforehand, by reason of his knowledge. This knowledge, however, does not take the form of material work, as though the Son sees the Father do something and then does it himself. Instead, the Son came into existence with the nature of the Father, and he possesses the same capability of the Father to work. Thus the Son's "knowledge" is of the Father's nature within him, which is why he would say that he could do nothing besides what he saw the Father doing. "To see," in this case, is the functional equivalent of "to know;" the Son can do as much as he is conscious of.<sup>18</sup> The proof of the Son's capacity to do what the Father does comes from his actual work: if the Son does the same things as the Father, then he shares the Father's nature. By the same token, since the text informs us that the Son does these things "in like manner," we know that the Son is not the Father. In this way, the mystery of the birth is confirmed. The Father and Son are one, but not the same.<sup>19</sup> Thus, concludes Hilary, "[The text of John] declared that the works of the Father were shown to [the Son] rather than that the nature of the power was added in order to perform them, to teach us that the manifestation was the substance of the birth itself."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.17; CCL 62, 277.

<sup>19</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.18; CCL 62, 279.

<sup>20</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.19; CCL 62, 281; McKenna, 244: *Demonstrata enim ei potius opera Patris esse ait, quam ad operationem eorum naturam uirtutis adiectam: ut demonstratio ipsa naturae esse substantia doceretur.* This exegesis depends on the same philosophical background that

Following his examination of John 5:19, Hilary turns to John 10:30, another classic “unity” text for early Trinitarian theology. Hilary’s exegesis of this passage is long and complex, but once again he relies heavily on the concepts of name and birth. Hilary believes that John 10:30 confronts Homoian theology, which he summarizes at 7.24. The Homoians declare that, “you [the Son] are not Son by birth, you are not God by true nature, you are a creature more excellent than the others, but you have not been born into God...not only are you and the Father not one, but neither are you the Son, nor are you like him, nor are you God.”<sup>21</sup> On one level, Hilary believes that the Gospel itself answers the Homoian objections to this passage when, in the following verses, Jesus points out that the Law allows for men to be called “sons of God.”<sup>22</sup> However, this exegesis does not necessarily demonstrate that the Son is truly God, so Hilary has to turn again to the birth. Hilary believes that the phrase “I and the Father are One” confirms the Son’s divinity through the name, nature and birth. For the name, “I and the Father” are names of two (things). “One,” however refers to nature, so that there are two names and one nature; the two do not differ in that which they are. “Are” must refer to the birth, because there is no union. Therefore, the Father and Son “are” only one through the birth. The birth cannot yield any nature except for that from which it subsists.<sup>23</sup>

To develop this line of thought further, Hilary puts forward three additional arguments. First, he offers a variation of his “joint operations” doctrine, building on Jesus’ words in John 10.34–38 (“If you are not willing to believe in me, believe in my works”). We can believe that the birth does not produce a new or alien nature because we can see the Son carrying out the works of the Father. Only someone who is similar to the Father is the Father’s and can carry out the Father’s works. By his birth, the Son possess everything in himself that is God, so we must acknowledge that the works the Son does are characteristic of

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informs Hilary’s initial analysis of name and birth. In 7.17, for example, he gives a picture of divine causality that reflects his concept of power. Hilary claims that the Son would do his “work” (*operationis*) by the operations of his Father’s “power” (*virtus*). This, in turn, means that his “nature” (*naturae*) is one with the Father. As Barnes has shown, this is a technical analysis of causality, in which the same work reveals or depends on the same power, which depends on the same nature. See Barnes, *Power*, 159–60.

<sup>21</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.24; CCL 62, 288; McKenna, 251: *Non es Filius ex natiuitate, non es Deus ex ueritate. Creatura es praestantior cunctis, sed non es in Deum natus. . . . Non modo tu et Pater non unum estis, sed nec Filius es, nec similis es, nec Deus es.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.25; CCL 62, 291.

God.<sup>24</sup> Second, Hilary's conviction that the same works demonstrate the same nature leads him to offer an account of God's simplicity. Because everything in God is one, we must understand that he cannot be changed by parts, nor become different in nature. None of the characteristics of God, such as spirit, light, power or life, are found in God as portions, but they are all one and perfect within him. Accordingly, the life that the Son receives from the Father through birth is the Father's life, because there can be no separation or apportionment. Thus the one who was born from the living Father has a birth without a new nature. There can be nothing new that is generated "from the living one into the living one."<sup>25</sup> Third, this notion of God's simplicity leads Hilary to consider the analogy of fire. While a fire has brightness, warmth and the power of burning, it remains one fire, and the totality of these is one nature. When we observe a fire from a fire, we do not see any division or separation. So too with a birth: there is no separation, yet there is "light from light."<sup>26</sup> And if anyone might take this to mean that the Father and Son are identical, Hilary reminds us that this is a birth, not a "mutual transfusion and flowing."<sup>27</sup>

Hilary concludes Book Seven with a long exegesis of John 14. Hilary had already dealt with John 14.11 in *De Fide*. Here he tackles another section of the chapter, Jesus' claim that "he who has seen me has seen the Father," and once again he uses the biblical text to confirm his understanding of the name and birth. Hilary is especially interested in how the Son can reveal the Father. We see the human man Jesus, but this is only the outward manifestation of his nature, and God is not bound by a material body. Thus there must be a movement from "seeing" to "knowing," so that after seeing the man Jesus we come to know him as the Son.<sup>28</sup> Here again the works that the Son performs are decisive, because they are what we see that points us to the Father's nature. Thus the miracles that Jesus performs, such as changing water to wine, declare him to be the Son of God.<sup>29</sup> This argument is very similar to the one Hilary used in *De Fide* 3.5–8, where he also used miracles such as changing water to wine as evidence that the Son is "in the

<sup>24</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.26; CCL 62, 292.

<sup>25</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.27; CCL 62, 294.

<sup>26</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.29; CCL 62, 296. For an analysis of the technical background to "fire" as a Trinitarian concept in this passage, see Barnes, *Power*, 158.

<sup>27</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.31; CCL 62, 298.

<sup>28</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.35; CCL 62, 302.

<sup>29</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.36; CCL 62, 303.

Father.” In *De Fide* 3 Hilary was content to use the miracles as evidence of the incomprehensible power of God.<sup>30</sup> In *De Trinitate* 7, however, Hilary is making a different epistemological argument. God is only recognized in the Son by the power of the Son’s nature. When we see the visible deeds, we are led to know the true nature, in which the Son is the image and form of the invisible God.<sup>31</sup> Thus none of the heretical options for describing how the Son relates to the Father are valid. The Son is not in the Father by a harmony of natures, nor through a superimposed nature of a larger substance, but through the birth of a living nature from a living nature.<sup>32</sup>

Hilary’s exegesis of these three Johannine passages reveals two important aspects of his development in *De Trinitate*. First, as Hilary works through these texts, he demonstrates a much more sophisticated awareness of Homoian theology than he had displayed in *De Fide* and even *De Synodis*. His treatment of John 14 is especially significant. In *De Trinitate* 7, Hilary has moved from a naïve exegesis of John 14.11 in *De Fide* to a rather technical discussion of the Son’s visibility. Emphasis on the Son’s visibility will become a characteristic doctrine for later Latin Homoians. Hilary’s exegesis suggests that the debate was already present, even while it anticipates its ongoing importance for Latin Homoians and Pro-Nicenes. Furthermore, through his exegesis, Hilary can demonstrate awareness of the specifics of both Homoian and modalist doctrines and use his exegesis to avoid both. Second, this exegesis demonstrates the extent to which Hilary has appropriated the Homoiousian doctrines of name and birth. He has taken this theological category and used it as a lens to interpret these scripture texts. This latter development is key, because it also points to the importance of name and birth for the wider controversy with the Homoians. Accordingly, we turn now to the polemical background for this doctrine.

#### “NAME” AND “BIRTH” IN GREEK TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

The doctrines of “name” and “birth” that Hilary appropriates in *De Trinitate* 7 belong to a tradition of Trinitarian thought that existed exclusively in the East. The most visible and influential exponent of

<sup>30</sup> *De Fide* 3.5; CCL 62, 76.

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.37; CCL 62, 304.

<sup>32</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.39; CCL 62, 307.

this tradition is Origen of Alexandria. Accordingly, I will begin this survey of that tradition with Origen. I will then consider two leading exponents of it in the fourth century, Athanasius of Alexandria and Basil of Ancyra. My point in this section is not so much to trace lines of influence in Hilary, although this is possible between Hilary and Basil. Instead, I will show that this tradition existed and that it was a central point of debate between the Homoians and their opponents at the time Hilary was writing *De Trinitate*. Examining the status of this tradition in Eastern thought helps demonstrate the extent to which Hilary is also involved in the central issues of the Homoian controversy and has developed his own thought to better meet the contemporary challenge.

### *Origen on Naming*

Origen's doctrine of naming is unsystematic at best, but it is possible to gain a sense of his basic beliefs.<sup>33</sup> Most importantly, Origen accepts the same principle that Hilary will follow, that names correspond to nature. In *Contra Celsum* I. 24, for example, Origen cites Celsus' assertion that, "It makes no difference whether the God who is over all things be called by the name of Zeus, which is current among the Greeks, or by that, e.g., which is in use among the Indians or Egyptians."<sup>34</sup> Origen recognizes that there is an important philosophical question at stake in Celsus' claim. Origen contends that to answer this question we have to decide whether names are a matter of convention, as Aristotle teaches; names are a matter of nature, as the Stoics believe; or names are a combination of the two, as the Epicureans teach. Celsus' "conventional" approach to naming, in which "Zeus" or some other name could refer to the same reality, according to the convention of the culture invoking the name, fails to recognize the inherent power of the name. Origen is especially interested here in the "magical" power of names, the ability of a name to cast out a demon or exert power over spirits.<sup>35</sup> The

<sup>33</sup> For Origen on naming see, Daniélou, "Eunome," pp. 422–426 and Peter Widdecombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, revised edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000): 58–62.

<sup>34</sup> *Contra Celsum* I. 24; Paul Koetschau, ed. *Origenes Werke, Erster Band, Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Leipzig, J.L. Hinrichs, 1899): 74; ANF 4, 406.

<sup>35</sup> For Origen on the divine quality of names, see Naomi Janowitz, "Theories of Divine Names in Origen and Pseudo-Dionysius," *History of Religions* 30 (1991): 359–372; John Dillon, "The Magical Power of Names in Origen and Later Platonism," in *Origeniana Tertia*, ed. R. Hanson and H. Crouzel (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1985): 214–23.

power associated with some names, which Origen accepts as proven, requires care when applying names to their object. It is important not to apply different names to different things, because we run the risk of degrading the nature of the object that they name.<sup>36</sup> In other words, the Stoics are right, and Aristotle is wrong, which means that Celsus is also wrong.<sup>37</sup> Names do correspond to nature, and they cannot be arbitrarily “changed” at the whim or convention of the speaker. Thus the Biblical names for God are of themselves indispensable, because they alone point us to God’s true nature.<sup>38</sup>

Origen assumes this understanding of God’s names when he comes to talk about the relationship between the Father and the Son. On a basic level, the names Father and Son prove that the Son is “another” than the Father. If the names “Father” and “Son” do reveal their nature, then for each to be “true,” the other must exist: a son, by nature and definition, has a father; just as a father, by nature and definition, has a son.<sup>39</sup> Origen develops this theme even further in *On First Principles* I. 2. As Widdecombe suggests, Origen has two purposes in this chapter: (1) To deny the presence of corporeality in the Son’s nature, which entails proving the Son’s eternal generation, and (2) To prove that the Son’s generation differs from that of the rest of creation.<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, in I.2.2, Origen argues that we must take Christ the “Wisdom” of God to mean that God’s Wisdom exists hypostatically. And since wisdom has nothing associated with that which is corporeal, we know that we can associate nothing corporeal with the Son. Furthermore, because we cannot conceive of the eternal Father existing without his Wisdom, we know that the Son is eternal also. Or, to put it another way, “We recognize that that God was always the Father of his only begotten Son, who was born indeed of him and draws his being from him, but is yet without any beginning. . . .”<sup>41</sup> Again, Origen’s conception of naming drives this point. If God’s Fatherhood is both eternal and

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<sup>36</sup> *Contra Celsum* 1.24; Koetschau, 74.

<sup>37</sup> Daniélou, “Eunome,” 423, notes that Origen displays “une précision remarquable” by situating his doctrine so precisely within the various philosophical options on naming.

<sup>38</sup> *Contra Celsum* 1.24; Koetschau, 74. Also see *Contra Celsum* 5.45.

<sup>39</sup> Origen will repeat this claim in *De Principiis* 1.2.10; Paul Koetschau, *Origenes Werke, Fünfter Band: De Principiis*, Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte (Leipzig, J.L. Hinrichs, 1913): 41–42.

<sup>40</sup> Widdecombe, 66.

<sup>41</sup> *De Principiis* 1.2.2; Koetschau, 29; English translation in G.W. Butterworth, *On First Principles* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966): 16.

necessitates the existence of a son, then we can know with certainty that the Son is himself eternal.

Origen explains how the Father and Son relate with the concept of “image.” According to Origen, “image” can refer either to an object that is painted or carved on a stone, or to a child who can be said to be in the “image” of his parent, reflecting the parent’s likeness in every respect. The first definition applies to humanity, who is created in the image and likeness of God. The second, however, applies to the Son.

But in regard to the Son of God, of whom we are now speaking, the image may be compared to our second illustration; for this reason, that he is the invisible image of the invisible God, just as according to the scripture narrative we say that the image of Adam was his own son Seth. . . . This image preserves the unity of nature and substance common to a father and a son.<sup>42</sup>

As this quotation suggests, the concepts of image and “birth” coincide. A father gives birth to a son who receives his image—only, in this case, “image” refers not only to likeness, but nature. Origen does not at this point pursue the sharing of nature between the Father and the Son, choosing instead to concentrate on the Son’s eternal and incorporeal generation. He has shown, however, that he is aware of how the Son’s “name” and “birth” can explain the Son’s relationship of nature to the Father.

#### *Athanasius and the Father of the Son*

The tradition established by Origen of explaining the relationship between the Father and Son on the basis of their “names,” and all that those names imply, continues among his Alexandrian heirs. A notable example of this, and a partial contemporary of Hilary, is Athanasius of Alexandria. In a fairly long section in *Contra Arrianos*, Athanasius replies to an objection by the Arians that it is not appropriate to use human generation to describe the generation of the Son. Of course this is acceptable, argues Athanasius. Leaving aside for the moment the question of time and beginning with regard to human generation, Athanasius maintains that when a parent generates an offspring, “he had him, not as external or as foreign, but as from himself, and proper to his essence and his exact image, so that the former is beheld in the

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<sup>42</sup> *De Principiis* 1.2.6; Koetschau, 34; Butterworth, 19.

latter, and the latter is contemplated in the former.”<sup>43</sup> This is very similar to Origen’s position, in which a Father generates a Son who has his Father’s exact image and shares in his Father’s nature. What is of the greatest significance here, for Athanasius, is the fact that the offspring comes from *within* the parent, not from without. Athanasius is even willing to argue that a human father always has his child within him, but he is only restrained by nature from generating that child.<sup>44</sup> When we talk about God the Father, there is nothing to restrain him from always generating his Son, from always being the Father of the Son.<sup>45</sup> Thus the human analogy can be useful, provided that we remove any consideration of passion or corporeality when we talk about the generation of the Son from the Father.

Having distinguished the generation of the Son from that of passionate humans, Athanasius has next to talk about how the Father generates. To do so, he draws heavily on the Father-Son conceptual-ity he has already established. In *Contra Arianos* 1.29, Athanasius cites the Arian objection to the Son’s eternal generation, that if the Father eternally generates as Father, why should we not say the same thing about the Father as “Maker.” But if the Father is eternally “Creator,” then his creation must also be eternal. Athanasius responds by claiming that these are not parallel circumstances. The act of creation differs from the act of begetting entirely. Most importantly, creation is a work, and as such it is external to the nature of the creator. That is, whatever a creator creates comes from, or at least exists, external to its creator. On the other hand a son is the proper “offspring” of his father’s essence—the son comes from within the father and is proper to his essence.<sup>46</sup> This means, then, that Athanasius believes that creation is an act of the will, and so is not inherent to the Father’s nature. Begetting, which belongs to the Father’s nature, does not belong to will but to essence.<sup>47</sup> This contrasts with Origen, for whom the birth of the son

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<sup>43</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.26; Martin Tetz, *Athanasius Werke: Erster Band, Erster Teil, Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1998): 135–6; NPNF 4, 322.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.27; Tetz, 137.

<sup>46</sup> For ἴδιος in Athanasius, see Andrew Louth, “The Use of the Term ἴδιος in Alexandrian Theology from Alexander to Cyril,” *Studia Patristica* 19 (1989): 198–202. As Louth points out, for Athanasius, “what is ἴδιος to the Father is from his substance . . . and is to be distinguished utterly from the created order . . .” (198).

<sup>47</sup> See E.P. Meijering, “The Doctrine of the Will and of the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus,” in *God, Being History* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co.,

is an act of the will proceeding from the Father's mind. Origen believes, in fact, that this act of the will is sufficient to account for the act of generation.<sup>48</sup> Athanasius cannot accept this, not only because the Arians have appropriated "will" for themselves, but also because calling the Son's generation an act of the will allows for the possibility that it was not eternal.<sup>49</sup>

Given his polemical concerns, therefore, Athanasius cannot apply "will" language to his account of the Son's generation, but eliminating it forces Athanasius to emphasize the importance of the names "Father and Son." The extent to which this is true becomes clear in *Contra Arianos* 1.30–34. In this passage Athanasius considers the Arian use of the word "Unoriginate" as a title for God. According to Athanasius, the Arians choose this term because it offers a convenient means for separating the Son from the Father and assigning the Son to the level of creation. This is clever of the Arians, Athanasius continues, because it means that if the Son shares the Father's nature, then there must be two "Unoriginates," which would seem to be a logical absurdity. Athanasius then offers a spirited defense of the Biblical names "Father" and "Son." The problem with identifying God with terms like "Unoriginate" for God is that it forces us to compare the Father with his creation, since it would be a creation that exists as his image. This is the actual logical absurdity, according to Athanasius, because it makes no sense to call an "originate" the image of the Unoriginate. To do so has the net effect of bringing the Unoriginate down to the level of that which is originate. To identify God as the "Unoriginate" means that we are using his works, which are created and limited, as the basis of that identification; creation becomes the standard by which we say who God is. It is far better to stay with the Biblical names.

Therefore it is more pious and more accurate to signify God from the Son and call Him Father; than to name him from His works only and call him 'Unoriginate.' For the latter title, as I have said, does nothing

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1975), 103: "Free will implies, according to Athanasius, changeability; therefore, the Son cannot be Son because of a decision of the will of the Father, as in that case God would be changeable... Athanasius' view is that whilst free will is the opposite of necessity, it is inferior to essence or 'being by nature', since free will is changeable and ambiguous, and essence and 'being by nature' are unchangeable."

<sup>48</sup> *De Principiis* 1.2.6; Koetschau, 35.

<sup>49</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.29; Tetz, 139. For importance of "will" for Arian theology, see Williams, *Arius*; Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981): 161–192.

more than signify all the works, individually and collectively, which have come to be at the will of God through the Word; but the title Father has its significance and its bearing only from the Son. And, whereas the Word surpasses things originated, by so much and more does calling God Father surpass the calling him Unoriginate.<sup>50</sup>

Athanasius goes on to say that the added advantage of the name “Father” is that it is scriptural, implies the Son, and lends itself to the church’s liturgy and devotion.<sup>51</sup> Thus the names “Father” and “Son” are essential to our understanding of who they are and how they relate.<sup>52</sup>

Thus both Athanasius and Origen use the names Father and Son as theological “raw material” from which they can build an authoritative account of the relationship between the two. In both cases, the name “Father” necessarily implies a Son who shares the Father’s nature but is distinct from him. The correlation between these names and human conception and birth also allows them to suggest a way for the Son to receive the Father’s nature without any loss on the Father’s part. Athanasius’ example is especially important, because his use of the Father/Son conceptuality as a correction to Arian theology suggests that by the fourth century it had become a distinct *topos* with significant polemical implications. This is certainly true by the 350’s, where “name” and “birth” were also key issues in polemical exchanges between the Homoiousian party and the Homoians, especially Eunomius of Cyzicus. We turn then to an exploration of these doctrines in the conflict between the Homoians and the Homoiousians.

### *Name and Birth in the Early Homoian Controversy*

Basil places the names Father and Son at the center of his anti-Homoian polemic.<sup>53</sup> Basil begins the doctrinal section of his Synodical Letter

<sup>50</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.34; Tetz, 144; NPNF 4, 326.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Hanson suggests that Athanasius’ decision to abandon a philosophical word like ἀγέννητος in favor of a Scriptural term is “characteristic of the basic trend of his thought.” Hanson also notes that Athanasius’ difficulty with ἀγέννητος might have been solved had he distinguished between ἀγέννητος and ἀγέννητος, because, “it would have been possible to claim that the Son was eternally begotten (and therefore not ἀγέννητος) and at the same time that he had had no origin of existence (and was therefore ἀγέννητος).” See Hanson, *Search*, 433.

<sup>53</sup> Steenson makes this point also in “Basil,” p. 133. An even earlier clue to the significance of this doctrine for the Homoian controversy is the “Blasphemy” itself, which claims that the Father is greater than the Son “in the very name Father” (*ipso nomine patris*) *De Synodis* 11; PL 10, 489.

by citing Matthew 28.19 (“Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit”). This passage is crucial, Basil argues, because it calls us to reflect on the “conceptions” implied by the names “Father” and “Son.”

For he did not say, ‘Baptizing them in the name of the Incorporeal and the Incarnate,’ or, ‘in the Immortal and the One who has suffered death,’ or, ‘in the Unbegotten and the Begotten,’ but, ‘in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,’ in order that, adhering to the natural meaning of the names . . . we may know the Son to be like the Father, of whom he is the Son.<sup>54</sup>

As Kopecek observes, the alternatives Basil gives to the Biblical names “Father and Son” are mostly likely the terms that the Homoians were using as a way of avoiding the Father/Son conceptuality.<sup>55</sup> For the Homoians, the Biblical names are problematic because they potentially expose the Father to passion. The terms they choose as replacements demonstrate the importance these early Homoians placed on the impassibility of the Father. Emphasizing that the Father was Incorporeal, for example, eliminates the possibility that he came into contact with any part of the created realm.<sup>56</sup> Their contrast between the Father’s immortality and the Son’s identity as the “One who has suffered death” takes this concern even further. The issue of becoming “incarnate” was not just contact with creation, but contact with the passion of death. If it was God who died on the cross, then God himself experienced passion, a possibility that was unacceptable to the Homoians. Finally, the Homoians seem to have used “Unbegotten” and “Begotten” to prevent any notion that the Son’s generation was the result of passion. In fact, Basil immediately moves from this summary of Homoian theology to showing that the names “Father” and “Son” do not necessarily imply passion, a move that apprises us of the importance the Homoians placed on denying the passible generation of the Son.<sup>57</sup>

The most important witness to the “Homoian” side of this debate is the *Liber Apologeticus* by Eunomius of Cyzicus.<sup>58</sup> Eunomius enters into

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<sup>54</sup> Eppiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.2–3; Dummer, 271; Williams, 436.

<sup>55</sup> Kopecek, *History*, 159. Kopecek treats this letter as a point-by-point refutation of Aetian theology.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Eppiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.4.1; Dummer, 272.

<sup>58</sup> Eunomius is not commonly thought of as a representative of Homoian theology. However, the *Liber Apologeticus*, which Eunomius wrote around the same time Hilary was writing *De Trinitate*, was intended to refute the theological position of Basil of Ancyra’s

the “name” debate in *Liber Apologeticus* 12. He believes that calling the Son “offspring” (γέννημα) is sufficient for identifying the Son, because the name “offspring” distinguishes the Son from the Father and proves that the Son’s essence differs from the Father’s. However, because some people have understood the Son’s generation to be a bodily one, it is necessary to explore this in more detail. It is doubtful anyone in the 350’s thought the Son’s generation was bodily, and this is likely an attack on the Homoiousian belief that the Father gives birth to a Son having a similar essence, which Basil himself admitted could have “bodily” connotations. Indeed, Eunomius begins this discussion by dismantling several key Homoiousian arguments. The Homoiousians had defended the names “Father and Son” because they are scriptural, so Eunomius prefers the name “Offspring” for the same reason. He also agrees with the Homoiousians about the natural quality of names. We do not understand his essence to be one thing and the meaning of the word it designates something else, he writes. Rather, the Son’s being can indeed be signified by his name. The real question, according to Eunomius, is which name properly applies to the Son’s essence? Here, then, we find the real difference between Eunomius and Basil. Both agree about the correlation between name and substance, but, unlike Basil, Eunomius believes that “Begotten” is the name that reveals the Son’s essence.<sup>59</sup>

Eunomius then offers several arguments in support of this claim. To their assertion that the Son is eternal, Eunomius points out that to be born suggests that there was nothing prior to that birth. What need would something that already existed have to be born? This is a logical absurdity of the highest order. The only way Eunomius might admit that

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Synodical Letter of 358, and it belongs to the same polemical context as Hilary’s *De Trinitate*. Eunomius is best known as the leading spokesman of the “Neo-Arian” party which flourished after 361, but in his early career he associated closely with leading Homoians, and his early theology reflects many Homoian concerns. For the polemical context of the *Liber Apologeticus*, see Kopecek, *History*, 305. For the dating of this text, see Kopecek, 303ff. Kopecek, building on a reference in Philostorgius, believes that Eunomius prepared the “Apology” for a council held in Constantinople in late 359. For an alternate opinion see Lionel Wickham, “The Date of Eunomius’ Apology: A Re-consideration,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 20 (1969): 231–40 and Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius, the Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 5–9. Vaggione dates the text to the Council of Constantinople in 360. Whether Eunomius wrote in late 359 or 360, he produced the *Liber Apologeticus* within the time frame allowable for Hilary’s *De Trinitate*.

<sup>59</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 12; Vaggione, 48.

this language makes sense is if we understand it to mean that something that was already in existence is in the process of becoming something else, like a seed growing into a plant. However, neither he nor the Homoiousians want to say this about the Son.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, we must conclude that if the Son pre-exists, he is Unbegotten! Thus Homoiousians have totally confused the names of the Son and Father, because they have lost the connection between the name and its object. They have an essence that they call “unbegotten,” yet they also have an essence, which is within the “scope of the definition,” that they say is “begotten.” This is so confused that Eunomius rather sarcastically suggests that the Homoiousians should call the Son, “Son—who-was-not-begotten” and the Father, “Father—who-did-not-beget.” His serious point is that by assigning “natural” status to the names “Father” and “Son,” the Homoiousians create insurmountable logical inconsistencies.<sup>61</sup> Instead, we should prefer the names “Begotten” and “Unbegotten,” using them to help understand the meaning of “Father” and “Son.”<sup>62</sup>

Eunomius follows this with an account of the Son’s role in creation, but in chapter 16 he returns to the question of the names “Father” and “Son.” As in chapter 12, the main issue is whether the name “Father” means that God the Father is exposed to *pathos*, only here Eunomius accuses the Homoiousians of using creation to understand the matterless God. This is a significant problem for Eunomius. If the Homoiousians do not eliminate passion from the Father’s begetting, then they must assume that, on the basis of the human analogy, God needs pre-existent matter to create, for a human who begets from his own nature also needs some pre-existent matter to create.<sup>63</sup> Eunomius may be aware that the Homoiousians have tried to show how the Father’s begetting

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<sup>60</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 13; Vaggione, 48.

<sup>61</sup> It seems possible that the Homoiousians ultimately found no credible response to Eunomius’ criticism here. Latter Pro-Nicenes will abandon Basil and Hilary’s insistence on the natural quality of names in light of Eunomian criticism of what this truly means for the relationship between the Father and Son. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, will respond to this argument by denying that names are natural. As Mortley suggests, by doing so, he can refute Eunomius’s position that the names reveal a distinction between the Father and the Son: “If Eunomius were to accept the view that language is a convention, then he would not be forced into the separation and ranking of Father and Son... Clearly [for Gregory] the view that names were natural (κατὰ φύσιν) had become something to rebut, and Gregory reiterates his position over and over again in this writing, that names are conventional in origin.” See Mortley, *Word*, vol. II, 150.

<sup>62</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 14; Vaggione, 50.

<sup>63</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 16; Vaggione, 52.

had nothing to do with human passion, but he is not persuaded by their argument, because it denies the “verbal utterance of the names.”<sup>64</sup> If they truly want to hold to a meaning that is appropriate to God, they cannot use language that suggests the possibility of passion. What the Homoiousians must acknowledge is that sometimes names have their sound and pronunciation in common, but not their “signification.” The name “eye,” for example, can be used of both human beings and God, but when it is used for humans it means a bodily member, while for God it is merely metaphorical, referring to his protection or something like that. Accordingly, it is not necessary to take the name “Father” in the same sense for humans and God. In the case of humans, “father” invokes an activity that is passionate, but for God it suggests something passionless.<sup>65</sup> By the same token, no Homoiousian should be disturbed to hear the Son called a “thing made,” because here again we are talking about a proportionate relationship. The Son is indeed a “thing made,” but not like the other things that were actually made through him. Thus will Eunomius confess that God has nothing corporeal or passionate associated with him.<sup>66</sup>

In the end, Eunomius believes that the Homoiousians have failed because they have proceeded from the wrong names to the divine substance. This fails not only because it ends up attributing bodily characteristics to the divine, but also because it is methodologically unsound. A better procedure is to begin with the substance itself.

Once we have shown by these and other arguments that we need not try to conform meaning to words exactly or try to distinguish those of differing expressions, but must rather direct our attention to the concepts inherent in the underlying objects and accommodate our designations accordingly (for the natures of objects are not naturally consequent on

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. In his debate with Gregory, Eunomius will push this principle even further by denying the legitimacy of using analogy in theology. Mortley believes that this may be an additional sign of the influence of Proclus on Eunomius, or at least that Eunomius is aware of a debate on the viability of analogy among neo-platonists, as Proclus was one of the few neo-platonic philosophers to deny that analogies have viability. See Mortley, *Word*, vol. II, 153. Leaving aside the unfortunate anachronism in this claim (Proclus post-dates Eunomius), Eunomius’ position is most likely the result of his debate with Basil of Ancyra. Basil’s argument regarding the names depends on the analogy between the divine names Father and Son and the human experience of fatherhood and sonship; for Basil, the production of the Son by the Father is analogous to the human production of sons by their fathers. By denying the possibility of analogy, Eunomius removed the foundation of Basil’s entire system.

<sup>66</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 17; Vaggione, 54.

the verbal expressions; rather, the force of the words is accommodated to the objects in accordance with their proper status). . . .<sup>67</sup>

This is not to suggest that names are entirely a matter of convention, only that not every name applied to God reveals his nature. Because of this, the Homoiousians should acknowledge God by his true name, “Uncreated” and “Unbegotten,” and not add qualifications to this truth such as the phrase “similarity of essence.” What the Homoiousians should have done is acknowledge what would seem to be a clear and obvious reality, that since the names “Father” and “Son” are different, their essences are different also. By their own logic, the phrase “of the same nature” does not correspond to the reality indicated by the names.<sup>68</sup>

Basil will admit that these names do create a difficulty regarding passion. When we speak of the Father and Son, Basil believes that we must eliminate the possibility of passion. Here, Basil steals a page from the Homoians and emphasizes the value of the creator-creation language regarding the Father and Son. As Steenson suggests, this conception answers the Homoian objections to the Father-Son language in three ways. First, “creation” preserves the impassibility of the Father because creation has nothing to do with passion. Second, creation affirms the “subsistent stability” of the Son. A creation has no need to grow and mature like a human child, so too the Son has no need of growth. Third, since creation is an act of the will, not necessity, the Son’s birth preserves the Father’s freedom.<sup>69</sup> Basil can even summon scriptural evidence to support his claim that the Father’s “fatherhood” is passionless. Borrowing a line from the synod of Antioch in 341, Basil takes Ephesians 3. 14–15 (“For this cause I bow on my knees unto the Father, of whom the whole Family in heaven and earth is named”) to mean that earthly Fatherhood takes its name from the divine Fatherhood, not the other way around. Thus, the passion of human fatherhood and generation are a diminution of something that is proper to the Father’s nature.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, although we need to eliminate the notion of creation in order to explain properly the Father-Son relationship, Basil insists that the names Father and Son are indispensable for understanding their relationship. The debate between Basil and Eunomius, which continues

<sup>67</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 18; Vaggione, 55.

<sup>68</sup> *Liber Apologeticus* 18; Vaggione, 58.

<sup>69</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.6–8; Dummer, 272. Also see Steenson, “Basil,” 138 and Kopecek, *History*, 163.

<sup>70</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.1; Dummer, 271.

in Eunomius' later debates with the Cappadocians, on the value of the names Father and Son demonstrates the extent to which "name" and "birth" had become central theological categories. In all cases, the argument hinges on the appropriateness of "Father" and "Son" for telling us something about the relationship between the Father and Son. For Eunomius and the Homoians, the names tell us that the Father and Son are distinct, each possessing his own substance. But for Hilary and Basil, the names Father and Son are foundational and indispensable, both for a truly pious faith, and for refuting the Homoians. Therefore, when Hilary claims in *De Trinitate* 7 that the concepts of name and birth contain within them everything necessary for understanding how the Son is God, he signals two things about the shape of his mature Trinitarian theology: (1) he has adopted the fundamental insights of Homoiousian theology, and (2) he has used that insight to address a central issue in the contemporary controversy surrounding the rise of Homoian theology.

Despite the connection between Basil and Hilary on naming, however, the priority Hilary gives to "birth" in Book Seven reads as an adaptation of Basil's emphasis on the Scriptural names rather a mere restatement of it. As Ayres suggests, Basil is primarily interested in the names themselves, especially the way in which Scriptural names create appropriate "concepts" (ἔννοιαι) in our minds.<sup>71</sup> Hilary, however, has no equivalent to Basil's concept of ἔννοιαι. For Hilary, the important category is *nativitas*, and he uses Basil's emphasis on the natural quality of the names primarily as means of getting to his own concept of the birth. While Hilary's doctrine of the Son's birth corresponds to Basil's related doctrine and belongs in the wider discussion of the value of the Scriptural names, this emphasis on *nativitas* would seem to be Hilary's contribution to that discussion. Although Hilary never backs away from his emphasis on the birth, in fact, he will begin the process of making adjustments to its underlying epistemology, a process that we will discuss in more detail in Chapter 8.

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<sup>71</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 151. Ayres reads Basil's theology through his epistemology: "Basil frequently links the process of doctrinal formulation with the formation of appropriate 'concepts' (ἔννοιαι—*epinoiai*). We develop appropriate ἔννοιαι when, on the one hand, we know which scriptural terms most closely deserve our attention and, on the other hand, when we know how to grasp those concepts apart from any materialistic or temporal connotations." Thus, for Basil, the names Father and Son are significant for their epistemological (which includes moral categories) benefit, which is a claim Hilary never makes explicitly.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE INCARNATION AND PASSION OF THE SON

How to understand Hilary's Christology remains something of a mystery, especially to modern scholars. Hilary suggests that the Son's humanity was "like" our humanity in substance, but not identical with it. This formulation, despite its clear scriptural antecedents, has not won Hilary many admirers!<sup>1</sup> However, despite this doctrine's deficiencies, at least to modern sensibilities, we can make some positive judgments. It is consistent with the doctrine of God he worked out in *De Trinitate* 7, and like that doctrine, Hilary's Christology exhibits a high degree of theological and philosophical sophistication.<sup>2</sup> So while it is not my purpose here to defend the orthodoxy of Hilary's Christology by contemporary standards, I do want to examine the contours and intent of his Christology to better situate it within the context of his own thought and fourth century Pro-Nicene Christology as a whole. Hilary is certainly not trying to deny the reality of Christ's flesh, and one suspects he would be surprised that anyone thought he had done so. Instead, he is trying to show how the body of Christ remained sinless while being fully human. In this regard, Hilary's language and intent are consistent with the trend of Pro-Nicene Christology in general.

The key to understanding Hilary's Christology is to recognize the weight he gives to Philippians 2.6–7 as the Christological proof-text.

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<sup>1</sup> Hilary's Christology has come under a great deal of negative scrutiny. For example, R.P.C. Hanson has accused Hilary of falling into Docetism. The problem with Hilary's Christology, in Hanson's view, is that it rules out Christ having anything normally regarded as human experience: Christ's humanity, not being "identical" to common human nature, does not truly suffer. If, however, suffering and death represent the most crucial point of contact between humanity and Christ, it is at this very point that Christ is the least human, and the whole force of the incarnation is diminished. See Hanson, *Search*, 501. For a similar opinion, also see Rowan Williams, "Origen on the Soul of Jesus," in *Origeniana Tertia*, ed. Richard Hanson and Henri Crouzel, (Rome: Edizioni Dell'Ateneo, 1981): 131–137.

<sup>2</sup> I have already attempted to trace the Stoic roots of Hilary's Christology in, Mark Weedman, "Martyrdom and Docetism in Hilary's 'De Trinitate,'" *Augustinian Studies* 30.1 (1999): 21–41. For another positive take on Hilary's Christology see, Carl Beckwith, "Suffering without Pain: The Scandal of Hilary of Poitiers' Christology," in *The Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays in honor of Brian E. Daley*, ed. Peter Martens [forthcoming].

Hilary uses the language of *forma servi*—*forma dei* from that passage to explain how the Son can be divine and human at the same time. This language prompts Hilary to articulate a new model for the Incarnation, one that replaces the *logos*—*sarx* model he had used in *In Matthaeum*. His new model has three components: (1) it includes language to describe Christ in his divine and human states, (2) it provides him with a dynamic for describing how and when Christ's suffering occurs, and (3) it gives Hilary a "hermeneutical guide" for interpreting controversial Christological passages in the New Testament. In this chapter, therefore, I will examine Hilary's development of the *forma servi*—*forma dei* model in its historical and polemical context. First, I will show how he develops this model as a way of explaining the Passion of Christ in *De Trinitate* 10. Second, I will consider how this new model both departs from his doctrine of the Incarnation in *In Matthaeum* and may reflect the influence of Basil of Ancyra. Third, I will show how this new model functions in a polemical context by refuting Homoian claims that the Son's suffering makes him less than the Father. Fourth, I will show how for Hilary this account of the Incarnation has significant implications for a Pro-Nicene soteriology. This is, indeed, the reason Hilary is so anxious to refute the Homoians at all. If they are right about who the Son is, then, he believes, the Christian doctrine of salvation simply will not work. In Hilary's mind, there is an integral link between the doctrine of God, the nature of the Incarnation, and the Christian hope of the Resurrection. To get one of these right it is necessary to get them all right.

#### *FORMA SERVI—FORMA DEI IN DE TRINITATE 10*

As we have seen, Hilary first articulated his Philippians 2 model in *De Trinitate* 8 and 9. Hilary develops his model further in *De Trinitate* 10, where he turns to New Testament texts that seem to indicate that the Son suffers. Philippians 2 is especially valuable in this context because it provides him with technical language for describing the Son's human body and how it can suffer. Early in *De Trinitate* 10, Hilary makes it clear that the whole question of the Son's suffering actually has to do with the nature of the Son's human body. We must, he argues, understand that there is a difference between the Son's conception and the way in which humans are normally conceived. If this is so, then we must also understand that the Son also suffers differently, that, "the nature

of his sufferings must be in accordance with the nature of his soul and body.”<sup>3</sup> Hilary then gives an account of the Incarnation that recalls the dynamic he established in *De Trinitate* 9:

When [the Son] emptied himself of the form of God and received the form of a slave, and when the Son of God was also born as the Son of Man, then God the Word, without sacrificing of himself and his own power, assumed the living man.<sup>4</sup>

Thus no-one can say that the Son is anything but fully human, because he did receive what was proper to his humanity from his mother, just as he preserved that which is God’s in the dynamic of the Incarnation. What he did not receive was the “weak soul” that is result of normal human conception.<sup>5</sup> This implies that the Son will not suffer as we do, because his soul and body are construed in such a way as to mitigate the effects of whatever “suffering” he experiences.

As Hilary continues this discussion, he draws more and more heavily on the *forma servi—forma dei* language. In 10.22, for example, Hilary continues with the question of whether the Son had a soul as well as a body. The issue here is not so much the existence of a soul, but whether that soul is extrinsic to what was conceived by the Holy Spirit. If this were so, then that which has a human soul is not that which is conceived by the Holy Spirit, and thus the Son of Man would be one thing, and the Son of God would be another.<sup>6</sup> Hilary believes that because of the Philippians 2 language, we cannot separate the “Son of Man” from the “Son of God.” The way to understand the relationship between Christ’s humanity and divinity is through the *forma servi—forma dei* terminology: the dual of use of *forma* explains this merging of “contradictories” (*contraria*) in the person of Jesus. Because the Son is in

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<sup>3</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.15; CCL 62a, 470: *secundum animae corporisque naturam necesse est et passionum fuisse naturam.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; McKenna, 409: *Euacuans se enim ex Dei forma et formam serui accipiens, et Filius Dei etiam filius hominis nascens, ex se suaque uirtute non deficiens Deus uerbum consummauit hominem uiuentem.*

<sup>5</sup> See *De Trinitate* 10.14; CCL 62a, 469.

<sup>6</sup> See the earlier point Hilary made in 10.21: “In their slyness they wish to smuggle in the teaching that the subsisting Word of God... was not born as Christ the man, so that... it was not God the Word who made Himself man by the birth from the Virgin, but, just as the spirit of prophecy was in the Prophets, so the Word of God was in Jesus.” (McKenna, 412–13) *Argute subripere uolunt, ne subsistens uerbum Deus... Christus homo natus sit: ut... non Deus uerbum hominem se ex partu uirginis efficiens extiterit, sed ut in profetis Spritus profetiae, ita in Iesu uerbum Dei fuerit.* (CCL 62a, 474–5)

the *forma* of both humanity and God, the same truth is proper to him in each case; he is as “true” (*verus*) in the form of God as that of the servant. Furthermore, although the assumption of the *forma servi* does not entail a loss on the part of the *forma dei*, we cannot separate one from the other. He who died is the same as he who rose.<sup>7</sup>

In *De Trinitate* 10.25, Hilary expands on this language by connecting his reading of Philippians 2.6 to Romans 8.3 (“God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”). These two scriptures are linked by the word “likeness,” a term that has a natural affinity to the perspective Hilary established in Book Seven, but here he uses it to explain the nature of the Son’s humanity. According to Hilary, Christ became truly human through the Virgin Birth, but because he was conceived without passion, the Son was born without the imperfections of normal human conception. He had the experience of the flesh without the sin that is its usual counterpart; he was “like” humans, but not identical. In a passage sandwiched between citations of Philippians 2.7 and Romans 8.3, Hilary compares Christ’s humanity to ours using this likeness motif:

The birth is in the likeness of our nature, not in the appropriation of our defects. . . . [The Son] was made in the likeness of man and found in the habit as man in order that we might not imagine that a nature that has been weakened by defects is essential for a true birth.<sup>8</sup>

According to Hilary’s logic, there is nothing inherent in becoming human that requires Christ to assume the infirmities caused by sin, including suffering. There is, in fact, a logical necessity for maintaining this distinction, one that is analogous to the need for maintaining the distinction between the Father and the Son: because the Son was conceived differently and performs acts that other humans do not, he is in some way distinct from humans. Because he was born as a human, however, the Son also shared a fundamental unity with human nature. In becoming human, the Word did not lose its own nature. Nor was the flesh itself the Word. Instead, it is a flesh that is appropriate for the Word, and although it shares the nature of human flesh it nonetheless remains the “Word’s flesh” (*uerbi caro*).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.22; CCL 62a, 475.

<sup>8</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.25; CCL 62a, 480; McKenna, 417: *In similitudine enim naturae, non uitiorum proprietate generatio est. . . . in similitudine hominis constitutum et habitu ut homo repertum: ne natiuitatis ueritas naturae quoque per uitia infirmis proprietates crederetur.*

<sup>9</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.26; CCL 62a, 481.

Because Christ was born without human sin, his body is animated in a way that is proper (*propria*) to its conception and nature. One indication of this peculiar nature is Christ's ability to perform miracles, i.e. walk on water and pass through doors. Another indication is his body's ability to experience pain without feeling it.

The suffering which rushes upon the body of the Lord was a suffering, but it does not manifest the nature of suffering, while on the one hand it rages with the function of pain, on the other hand the power of the body (*virtus corporis*) receives the force of the pain rushing against it, but without feeling pain. That body of the Lord may indeed have had the nature of our pain, if our body were of such a nature that it treads upon the waves, walks upon the waters and does not sink by its movements...and if it penetrates even solid matters, and if it is not hindered by the barriers of a closed house.<sup>10</sup>

The key to Christ's unique body is his equally unique origin and conception, and the manifestation of that uniqueness is psychological or moral. Christ's body does not possess the corruption that normally weakens the soul; his soul is able, instead, to keep in check the nature of human infirmities, including suffering. Having received his humanity from Mary, Christ's body is truly human in the sense that it shares human nature without the corruption inherent through normal human reproduction.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Christ's body and soul are "like" our bodies and souls, but not identical to them.

#### THE BACKGROUND OF HILARY'S *FORMA SERVI—FORMA DEI* MODEL

##### *Philippians 2 in Latin Trinitarian Theology*

Hilary's understanding of the significance of Philippians 2.5–7 for the doctrine of the Incarnation contrasts sharply with the tradition he inherited from his Latin predecessors. Both Tertullian and Novatian give attention to the text, but an examination of their exegesis suggests that Hilary is not drawing on them in *De Trinitate* 9 and 10. Tertullian, for

<sup>10</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.23; CCL 62a, 477–8; McKenna, 415: *Sed in corpus intruens passio nec non fuit passio, nec tamen naturam passionis exseruit: dum et poenali ministerio desaeuit, et uirtus corporis sine sensu poenae uim poenae in se desaeuentis exceptit. Habuerit sane illud Domini corpus doloris nostri naturam, si corpus nostrum id naturae habet, ut calcet undas, et super fluctus eat, et non degraueatur ingressu...penetret etiam solida, nec clausae domus obstaculis arceatur.*

<sup>11</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.28, 35; CCL 62a, 483, 488.

example, cites the passage only occasionally. In the *Adversus Marcionem* he criticizes Marcion's claim that *effigies*, which Tertullian prefers over *forma*, does not refer to substance and actual flesh. We know that Christ was really human, Tertullian argues, so we know that *effigie servi* refers to the substance of Christ's humanity. By the same token, *effigies dei* means that Christ was substantially God.<sup>12</sup> Tertullian repeats this theme in his *De Resurrectione*, where he adds a few details to his explanation of *effigies*. As the "image of God," Christ existed in the *effigies* of God, and it is as "image" that he put on the flesh. Whereas for Hilary *forma* relates to *natura*, for Tertullian *effigies* relates to *imago* and *substantia*.<sup>13</sup>

Novatian gives Philippians 2 somewhat more attention than Tertullian, though his exegesis is idiosyncratic. Novatian contrasts *forma* and *imago*: if Christ had been merely human, he would have been spoken of as "the image" of God, not "the form" of God. We know that humans were made in God's image, so "image" points to humanity, while "form" is reserved for divinity.<sup>14</sup> To this exegesis Novatian adds an unusual feature by arguing for a "two-stage" *kenosis*. The first stage occurs in the pre-existent Word, the second in the humiliation and fragility of the human condition.<sup>15</sup> Novatian, then, locates the *forma servi* primarily in the "substance of flesh and body" which the Son assumes *after* the first *kenosis*. Traces of Novatian remain in Hilary's exegesis of Philippians 2, most notably their mutual assertion that the incarnation entails a voluntary limitation of Christ's divine power (though they were not alone in this claim). However, Hilary does not retain Novatian's "two-stage" *kenosis*, choosing instead to locating the *kenosis* within the incarnation.

Not only is Hilary's exegesis different than what he inherited from his Latin tradition, the Christology Hilary produced through this reading of Philippians 2 is fundamentally different than what he had articulated prior to his exile. As we have seen, Hilary's Christology in *In Matthaeum*

<sup>12</sup> *Adversus Marcionem* 5.20; Evans II, 638.

<sup>13</sup> This following Henry, "Kénose," 112. Also see Grelot, "Traduction," 903: "Ce mot (= aspect, effigie), pris en lui-même insiste moins sur l'être, la nature, l'essence, que sur la manifestation de l'être par les traits qu'il revêt: L'main ils se divisent sur l'interprétation de sa kénose, qui implique la réalité de l'incarnation.

<sup>14</sup> Novatian, *De Trinitate*, 22.

<sup>15</sup> Henry, 113: "En réalité, Novatien connaît une kénose à deux degrés, le premier qui consiste dans le fait même de l'incarnation et qui suppose donc le Verbe préexistant comme sujet, le second, identique à l'humiliation, et qui consiste dans la 'fragilité de la condition humaine.'" Note that Henry assumes that the first stage occurs in the incarnation, even though Novatian is explicit that some type of *kenosis* occurs beforehand. Also see Grelot, 905–908.

was built around a *logos*—*sarx* motif, using John 1 as the controlling New Testament passage, not Philippians 2. This motif yields its own language by which we can distinguish between the Son's divinity and humanity; as we have seen, Hilary is consistent in his insistence that the Son as Logos shares in the "dignity and communion of the Father's substance."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Burns has shown, in the *In Matthaeum*, Hilary is equally consistent in his use of *spiritus* to designate what is divine in the Son, contrasting it with *caro* as what belongs to the human Jesus.<sup>17</sup> Although this *spiritus*—*caro* language functions in the same way as *forma servi*—*forma dei*, it is of a different character. *Spiritus*—*caro* forced Hilary to account for the dynamic of the Incarnation without the resources to show how the pre-existent, divine Son could also be fully human. At best, he could show that the Son assumed a body, but not that this body contained all the aspects pertaining to human nature (except suffering); the Incarnation was the movement of the divine "spirit" into a body, not the assumption of an entirely new nature.<sup>18</sup> The *forma* language, however, allows Hilary to speak of the correspondence between the Son's humanity and ours in ways that he could not—or would not—in *In Matthaeum*. It is not entirely clear the Hilary capitalizes on this advance in *De Trinitate*, but as we will see, he does show a great concern for the nature of Christ's humanity in the later work that was not possible in the earlier Commentary.

### *Basil of Ancyra on Philippians 2*

Applying some statements to Christ's humanity and others to his divinity was common among Pro-Nicenes throughout the fourth century. Hilary applies it with uncommon explicitness as an application of Philippians 2.6–7, however, and is even more unusual in how he develops this hermeneutic into an actual model for the Incarnation.<sup>19</sup> A more likely

<sup>16</sup> *In Matthaeum* 12.18; SC 254, 284: *Dignitatem et communionem paternae substantiae Domino detrahentes.*

<sup>17</sup> Burns, *Christology*, 69–70.

<sup>18</sup> Scholars have noted a certain imprecision in Hilary's language in the Commentary on precisely this point. Most of this discussion concerns the remnants of Novatian's "two-stage" incarnation in Hilary's thought, which may itself be left over from the inherent subordinationism in classical *logos* Christology. See Burns, *Christology*, 77–78.

<sup>19</sup> Compare, for example, Athanasius, *Epistulae IV ad Serapionem* 2.8 (c. 359): "It remains that he who reads Scripture should examine and judge when it speaks of the Godhead of the Word, and when it speaks of his human life unless, by understanding the one when the other is intended, we become victims of the same derangement as

and immediate source for Hilary's exegesis is the Homoiousians. Basil is attracted to Philippians 2.7 for its "likeness" language, and he is quick to associate it with other "likeness" texts such as Romans 8.3.<sup>20</sup> They also use the passage for its "form" language, and it is here that we find at least two important similarities to Hilary's interpretation. First, in both the Synodical Letter and the Manifesto, Basil equates "form" (μόρφη) with "nature" (οὐσία) far more explicitly than any Latin theologian prior to Hilary. For Basil, being in the "form of God" means that the Son possessed the attributes of the Godhead. The Son thus shared the Father's incorporeality and was "like" the Father in divinity and activity.<sup>21</sup> In the manifesto, he is even more explicit: here Philippians 2.6–7 teaches that the hypostasis of the Son is like the hypostasis of the Father.<sup>22</sup> In other words, as the form of God, the Son is like the Father in all respects, including being and subsistence. Second, Basil applies the "form of God" logic to the "form of a servant." The words, "took upon him the form of a servant and was made in likeness of men" demonstrate that the Son was born as human—and that his humanity was "like" our humanity in every way except for sin. Just as the Son, who is spirit, is the same as the Father who is also spirit, the Son is the same as all humans by virtue of his "flesh;" just he is "like" the Father but remaining distinct, he is "like" humans without their sin. The Homoiousian catch-phrase "like according to all things" applies equally to the Son's divine and human natures.<sup>23</sup>

As we have seen, the Homoiousians described the relationship between the Father and the Son as "like according to nature." This emphasis on "likeness" was primarily concerned with the relationship between the Father and Son because Basil believes that a relationship

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has befallen the Arians" (PG 26, 620C–621A). Although this is the basic procedure employed by Hilary, Athanasius makes no attempt to link it explicitly to Philippians 2. Also see Gregory Nazianzen's *Oration* 29.18. For the use of this text in the "Arian" controversy see Henry, "Kénose," 65–72.

<sup>20</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.8, 17.1; Dummer, 279, 289. Compare with Hilary, *de Trinitate*, 10.25. Steenson notes that one change in the manifesto is that Basil uses Romans 8.3 for the similarity of will and Philippians 2.6 for similarity of being, whereas in the earlier letter he simply uses both texts to cover everything. At the very least, this change indicates a growing precision in Basil's exegesis. See Steenson, "Basil," 236.

<sup>21</sup> *Panarion*, 73.9.4; Dummer, 179.

<sup>22</sup> *Panarion*, 73.18.1; Dummer, 290.

<sup>23</sup> *Panarion*, 73.17.4, 5; Dummer, 290. Also see Henry, "Kénose," 76: "On voit que ces textes sont censés prouver contre l'homousios la doctrine de l'homousios et l'appliquer non seulement à la divinité, mais à l'humanité du Christ."

of similarity is appropriate only to spiritual substances—"identity" has to do with material substances that are related by participation and origination.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, Basil does not hesitate to apply "likeness" to the apparently material relationship between Christ's humanity and common humanity. Beginning with Philippians 2.7 and Romans 8.3, both of which refer to Christ being made "in likeness" with human flesh, Basil asserts that the Son was made without the passions which are the cause of sin. So the Son experienced hunger, thirst, sleep, etc., "like" other humans. He did not succumb, however, to the sin that these passions often produce; his likeness to human flesh extends only to the flesh itself but not to its sin.<sup>25</sup> The manifesto clarifies an additional point by claiming that the Son's flesh is identical with human flesh. It is only called "similar" because it was "not generated by seed...or by commerce with a man."<sup>26</sup> The Son's humanity is thus distinct from common human flesh because he was conceived without passion and remained sinless. This Christology is consistent with Homoiousian emphasis on the genetic relationship between the Son and the Father. A biological father does not produce an exact copy of himself, but someone who is similar in essence or nature. In the same way, the divine Father produces a Son who is similar in essence, but not completely identical with him. And just as the Son is "like" but not identical to God, he is "like" but not identical to humans. He shares a similar essence, but Basil will not bring this essence into a relationship of identity.

Basil does not engage in an extended examination of controversial scripture passages along the lines of what Hilary does in *De Trinitate* 9–10, so they do not provide much help in identifying the background to Hilary's hermeneutic. However, this analysis suggests that Hilary's at least reflect the Homoiousians' concerns in at least two ways. First, like Basil, Hilary uses "likeness" in Philippians 2.5 to describe how the Son's humanity relates to our humanity.<sup>27</sup> In both cases, the language

<sup>24</sup> For discussion of this point, see Steenson, "Meaning," 273.

<sup>25</sup> *Panarion*, 73.8.8; Dummer, 278.

<sup>26</sup> *Panarion*, 73.17.4; Dummer 3, 290.

<sup>27</sup> *Panarion* 73.9.7; Dummer, 280. It should be noted that while Hilary's use of "likeness" in a Christological context reflects the influence of Basil of Ancyra, this language may not have been incongruent with his Latin heritage. The concept of "similarity" is not at the forefront of Tertullian's thought, but it is a theme that does occasionally surface. In *De carne Christi*, for example, Tertullian interprets Romans 8.3 to emphasize that Christ's flesh resembled sinful flesh—not that in being similar Christ's flesh was different from human flesh as the Gnostics believed (16.2). Also see *Adversus Marcionem* 5.20 where Tertullian affirms "likeness" is a category of substance. In each case,

is an extension of prior conclusions about the relationship between the Son and the Father: just as the Father and Son are “like in substance,” but not identical, so too with the Son’s humanity and ours. For both Basil and Hilary, Philippians 2 is especially important because it provides a justification for extending the likeness analogy to the humanity. Not only does Philippians 2 use “likeness” for the Incarnation, but by using *forma* for both the Son’s divinity and humanity, it allows Hilary and Basil to extend motifs about the Son’s divinity to his humanity. Second, also like Basil Hilary uses this language to develop a dynamic to describe the Incarnation. Hilary takes from Basil this emphasis on the sinlessness of the Son’s conception, and thus his “likeness—without—identity” to our human nature.

#### THE PASSION OF THE SON IN *DE TRINITATE* 10

The value of this new approach to the Incarnation is its utility in refuting Homoian doctrine. As we have seen, the Homoians were concerned not only with a formal doctrine of God, but also with the Incarnation. One of the most radical claims in the “The Blasphemy” has to do with the Incarnation, namely its assertion that, “He took of Mary the Virgin, a man, through whom He suffered.”<sup>28</sup> Hilary understood that the Homoians used the Son’s suffering as a sign of his subordination to the Father. Accordingly, he devotes the bulk of *De Trinitate* 10 to a detailed examination of selected Gospel “Passion Texts” that describe the Son feeling pain or otherwise suffering. These texts are important for Hilary’s purposes, because the Homoians might have used them to defend their account of the Incarnation.<sup>29</sup> Hilary had already exam-

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Tertullian’s terminology seems to reflect the immediate influence of the language in the Biblical passage he is discussing and is not a deliberate theological construction. But while the centrality Hilary gives to this language derives more from the Homoiousians than Tertullian, Hilary has not entirely left Tertullian behind.

<sup>28</sup> *De Synodis* 11; PG 10, 489.

<sup>29</sup> These passages include Matthew 26.38, 39; 27.46 and Luke 23.46. It is difficult to determine from *De Trinitate* 10 the specific opponent Hilary has in mind because no Homoian text exists that reproduces that list of scriptures. It is possible that Hilary’s opponents argued on the basis of the general existence of such sayings—one such statement by Christ would be as effective as any other to prove inferiority. See Athanasius, *Oratio Contra Arianos* III.26, for example, where he lists a number of similar scriptures having to do with the “passion” of the Son, including those used by Hilary (PG 26, 377, 380). Pseudo-Athanasius, on the other hand, does not name any “Arian”

ined many of these texts in *In Matthaëum*, and while his exegesis in *De Trinitate* contains many similarities with the earlier commentary, it differs precisely in the account of the Incarnation that Hilary derived from the Homoiousians. I turn now, then, to Hilary's appropriation of the Philippians 2 themes in his exegesis of the Gospel Passion texts.

Early in Book Ten Hilary announces that he is going to explain four sayings by Jesus that pertain to his passion: "My soul is sad unto death" (Matthew 26.38), "Let this cup pass from me" (Matthew 26.39), "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Matthew 27.46), "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23.46).<sup>30</sup> He feels, however, that no explanation of these texts is possible unless we understand the nature of Christ's body as "like" ours in nature. So, as we have seen, Hilary spends the first part of the book explaining the nature of this body, and it is not until 10.36 that he begins to examine the sayings themselves. In this examination, Hilary makes no attempt to deny the Homoian assertion that fear and pain prove the Son's inferiority to the Father—like them, Hilary believes that the experience of fear or pain would result from a nature that is inferior to God's. Instead, Hilary denies the first part of the charge, that Christ experienced pain and fear, which puts a great deal of pressure on the need to re-interpret the scriptural texts that show the Son feeling pain or fear

The first of these scriptural sayings is "My soul is sad unto death" (Matthew 26.38). Hilary initially draws a distinction between the phrases "on account of" (*propter*) death and sadness "unto" (*usque*) death. Christ was sad *usque* death, which means that death was not the cause of his sadness, but its end; whatever sadness Jesus experienced was removed by his death.<sup>31</sup> This leads Hilary to consider why Jesus prayed that the cup pass from him. When Jesus prayed for this, Hilary believes, he did so to demonstrate that he had a share in human anxiety.<sup>32</sup> In Hilary's mind, however, the key to this passage is Jesus' conclusion to his prayer: "not my will, but yours." For Hilary, these words demonstrate that the Son's will is perfectly aligned to the Father's. As a man speaking to men,

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exegesis in his treatment of Christ's suffering, but instead identifies certain generic qualities—hunger, for example—by which his opponents call Christ's equality with the Father into question. *Oratio Contra Arianos IV*. 7–8; PG 26, 477–480.

<sup>30</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.9; CCL 62a 466.

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.36; CCL 62a, 489. Hilary makes the same distinction in *In Matthaëum* 31.5; SC 258, 230.

<sup>32</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.37; CCL 62a, 490.

Jesus prays that the cup pass from him, but as God from God his will is united to what the Father wants done.<sup>33</sup> So then, if Jesus ends the prayer by affirming his allegiance to the Father's will, why does he pray that cup pass from him? If part of the answer is to demonstrate Jesus' solidarity with humanity, the rest of the answer has to do with Jesus' concern for his Apostles. Jesus knew that his passion would unleash trials on his disciples, and when he prays that God's will be done, he is also consigning his Apostles to the terror of the passion. For Hilary, therefore, Jesus' sadness is for the terror and pain the disciples will experience, but Jesus also knows that unless he drinks of the cup, this sadness cannot pass away and the Apostles will never experience the glory of the resurrection.<sup>34</sup>

Hilary's exegesis here draws heavily from his earlier *In Matthaëum*. There he had discussed two of the same sayings of Christ: "My soul is fearful unto death," and "Father, if it is possible allow this cup to pass from me."<sup>35</sup> As in *De Trinitate*, Hilary admits that if Christ truly were tormented by fear or afflicted by agony, then he must have had a substance (*substantia*) that was corruptible. Because God exists as he is eternally, and because God is eternally incorruptible, the Son could not be corruptible and still be God; God experiences no change. So if Christ did experience fear and passion, then his substance is corruptible and he does not proceed from the Father's eternity.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Hilary asserts, it is clear that Christ did not fear for himself but for his apostles. So when Christ exclaimed that his soul is troubled unto death, he did not mean that his soul was troubled because of his own death. Instead, Christ was troubled up to the point of his death because his disciples might stumble. Once he completed his passion his followers would have the hope of the Resurrection and there would be no reason for worry.<sup>37</sup> The same motivation applies to the other statements. Christ asks for the cup to pass from him because he anticipates his disciples' suffering and he wants them to suffer as he does, without fear of death

<sup>33</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.38; CCL 62a, 492.

<sup>34</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.39; CCL 62a, 492. Also see *De Trinitate* 10.43.

<sup>35</sup> In *In Matthaëum* 31, Hilary also examines two additional sayings, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," and "If this cup cannot pass without my drinking it, may your will be done," both of which he will treat as part of the context of Matthew 26 in *De Trinitate* 10.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *In Matthaëum* 31.5; SC 258, 232.

or a sense of the pain.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, when he says that the “spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” Christ is not talking about himself, but he is again referring to the weakness of the apostles.<sup>39</sup>

Up to this point, it is as if Hilary has simply lifted his exegesis from *In Matthaem* to *De Trinitate*. The passage in *De Trinitate* 10 is longer and more detailed, but in its overall approach, and in many of the particulars, the two treatments are identical. Ultimately, however, the two descriptions of the Son’s passion are substantially different, not in the exegesis itself, but the way Hilary integrates that exegesis into his account of the Incarnation. The clue to this change is what Hilary does after this initial exegesis of the first two sayings: In *De Trinitate* 10.44, Hilary concludes his treatment of these sayings by abandoning his exegetical procedure and returning again to the nature of Christ’s body. “Therefore,” he writes, “the anxiety of human fear is not found in that nature which is above man, and a body that does not trace its origin back to the elements of the earth is not subject to the misfortunes of an earthly body.”<sup>40</sup> This is not, in other words, so much an exegetical debate as an argument over the nature of Christ’s body. Hilary then begins a lengthy development of the theological model he had established earlier in the book. In this development, Hilary makes two important advances. First, he provides the polemical application of this model by specifically identifying the kind of theologies the model is intended to refute. Second, he shows how the language necessary to describe the dynamic of the Incarnation is also necessary to fill out his exegesis and so meet the polemical challenge.<sup>41</sup>

Hilary never explicitly named his opponents in *In Matthaem* 31, but in *De Trinitate* 10.49–52 he offers a multi faceted description of the kinds of theologies his doctrine and exegesis will refute. According to Hilary, some heretics say that the Word completely absorbed the soul and performed the soul’s vivifying function. Or, in the second place,

<sup>38</sup> *In Matthaem* 31.7; SC 258, 234.

<sup>39</sup> *In Matthaem* 31.9–10; SC 258, 236.

<sup>40</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.44; CCL 62a, 497; McKenna, 431–32: *Non est itaque in ea natura, quae supra hominem est, humanae trepidationis anxietas. Et extra terreni est corporis mala non terrenis inchoatum corpus elementis.*

<sup>41</sup> This section runs from 10.43–59. In addition to the polemical and theological themes, Hilary also expands on his understanding of Christ’s psychology. Hilary’s treatment of Christ’s soul owes to Stoic psychology and traditional Latin reflections on martyrdom, and for this reason I have not treated it in this chapter. For discussion of how Hilary relates Christ’s psychology to the experience of martyrdom, see my “Martyrdom and Docetism,” 21–41.

they claim that the man was not born as Christ. Instead, the Word dwelt in him in the same way that the Spirit inspired prophets.<sup>42</sup> Hilary further explains these positions at 10.51:

Hence, through this subtle and pernicious doctrine they are led into the error either that God the Word exists as the soul of the body through a change in His nature that weakens Him and the Word ceases to be God, or, again, by means of an external and separated nature, that man was animated only by the life of the soul that moves Him in whom there dwelt the Word of God, that is, a certain power, as it were, of an extended voice.<sup>43</sup>

We can identify both of these doctrines with some certainty. The first refers to the same Homoian theology that Hilary encountered in the Sirmium 357 and would eventually triumph at Rimini and Seleucia in 359. A *regula* of an early Homoian leader, Eudoxius of Constantinople, for example, confirms that the Word “became flesh, not human, because he did not take a human soul. . . .”<sup>44</sup> By absorbing the human soul, the Homoians believed that the Word itself underwent both a change and a weakening, which results in a reduction in divinity. The second doctrine is Photinian. Hilary attributes to this group the belief that “Christ did not exist at all before the birth from Mary, because Jesus Christ as a man with a merely ordinary soul and body had no other origin. . . .” He has already called a similar doctrine Photinian in Book Seven, a conclusion that is confirmed when Hilary further describes how they believe that the Logos extended into the human in order to strengthen him *ad virtutem operationum*.<sup>45</sup> As Simonetti suggests, this reference to the extension of God’s power is characteristic of Photinus’ theology.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.50; CCL 62a, 504.

<sup>43</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.51; CCL 62a, 504–5; McKenna, 438: *Per hanc subtilem persiferamque doctrinam deducuntur in uitium, ut aut Deus uerbum anima corporis per demutationem naturae se infirmantis extiterit et uerbum Deus esse defecerit; aut rursus per exteriorem nudamque naturam hominem illum sola uita animae mouentis animatum, in quo uerbum Dei, id est quaedam quasi potestas extensae uocis habitauerit.*

<sup>44</sup> The text of Eudoxius’ *Rule* is in Hahn, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der Alten Kirche* (Breslau, 1897): 261–262. This line is cited in Hanson, *Search*, 190.

<sup>45</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.3: “If I shall say that the Son of God was born from Mary, then Ebion, that is Photinus, will derive prestige for his lie. . . .” (CCL 62, 261). For Hilary’s conflation of Ebion and Photinus see Simonetti, *Studi*, 141 n. 39. Hanson, *Search*, believes that Hilary’s remarks at 10.20 also refer to Photinus (236 n. 143). This is less certain, but the theology that Hilary refutes in this passage is broadly consistent with Photinian thought.

<sup>46</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.51; CCL 62a, 505; Simonetti, *Studi*, 143. Hilary is an important

Hilary's discussion of the various heretical positions in *De Trinitate* 10.49–52 occurs within a larger discussion of Jesus' cry on the cross, "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" This wider context allows Hilary to apply his theological principles to the questions raised by his opponents:

[The Faith of the Church] does not separate Christ Jesus so that Jesus Himself is not Christ, nor does it differentiate the Son of Man from the Son of God, lest, perhaps, the Son of God may not also be recognized as the Son of Man. Nor does it sever Christ by a threefold faith, whose garment woven from the top in one piece was not torn, so that it divides Jesus Christ into the Word, the soul and the body. And, again, it does not absorb God the Word into the soul and the body. In Him is the whole God the word, and in Him is the whole man Christ, while it holds fast to this one thing in the mystery of its confession: not to believe that Christ is anything else than Jesus and not to proclaim that Jesus is anything else than Christ.<sup>47</sup>

This is the dynamic Hilary established in Book Nine and the in early part of Book Ten, and he believes that its affirmation of the unity of the humanity and divinity of Christ is crucial. The movement of the *forma dei* to the *forma servi*, in which the divine Son takes on human nature without divesting himself of divinity, now offers an answer to both the Homoians and the Modalists. Against Photinus, this dynamic does not allow us to separate the divinity from the humanity, while against the Homoians it does not allow us to subsume the divinity into the humanity. Later in Book Ten, Hilary will reiterate this point in the context of explaining 2 Corinthians 13.4 ("For though he was crucified though weakness, yet he lives through the power of God"), this time explicitly using Philippians 2 language: "So that, since the weakness was from the form of the slave and the nature from the form of God... He

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source for Photinian theology. In addition to the texts already cited also see *de Synodis* 39–40, 50–51, 85. Notable secondary treatments include Simonetti, *op. cit.*, 135–159 and Hanson, *Search*, 235–238.

<sup>47</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.52; CCL 62a, 505–6; McKenna, 439: *Non patitur Iesum Christum, ut Iesus non ipse sit Christus. Nec filium hominis discernit a Dei Filio, ne Filius Dei forte non et filius hominis intellegatur. Non absumit Filium Dei in filium hominis. Neque tripertita Christum fide scindit, cuius desuper texta uestis incissa est: ut Iesum Christum et in uerbum et in animam et in corpus absumat. Totum ei Deus uerbum est, totum ei homo Christus est: retinens hoc in sacramento confessionis suae unum, nec Christum aliud credere quam Iesum, nec Iesum aliud praedicare quam Christum.* Hilary does not bother to explain exactly what Jesus meant by his cry on the cross, perhaps because once he has shown that it did not mean what his opponents claimed, he has no need to say anything further.

who suffered as well as lived would not be a different person and one separated from Himself.”<sup>48</sup> Hilary’s key theological insight, therefore, is that the Philippians 2 language and dynamic affirm the unity of Christ’s divinity and humanity, and that this insight is crucial for refuting his opponents.

That Hilary would apply his insight into Philippians 2 towards an exegesis of, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” is significant because in doing so he departs fundamentally from his position in *In Matthaeum*. As Burns observes, unlike *De Trinitate* 10, and even *In Matthaeum* 31, Hilary’s remarks on the “my God, my God” question in *In Matthaeum* 33 do not appear to be polemically motivated. He simply explains the passage without reference to any erroneous interpretation and betrays no awareness of polemical pressure on the passage.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, in *In Matthaeum*, Hilary is vague about the relationship between Christ’s humanity and divinity, perhaps to the point of separating the divinity from the humanity. He writes, for example, “In fact, [the Son] wonders why he is abandoned as he cries, ‘God my God, why have you abandoned me?’ But he is abandoned, because his humanity had to be completed by his very death.”<sup>50</sup> Later in this section, Hilary will speak of the *communio* between the Son’s immortality and body (*corpus*), but he is not clear what he means by this, and the overall sense of this passage is that the humanity and divinity are on some level separated.<sup>51</sup> Burns finds a parallel between Hilary’s language here and an earlier passage in *In Matthaeum* 3 that may shed light on what Hilary thinks happened when Christ died. Commenting on the temptation in the desert, Hilary says that when the Son knew hunger, “this was not the result of a surreptitious operation, but his divinity (*virtus*), which had not been touched by the fasts of forty days, abandoned (*relinquo*) the man to his nature.”<sup>52</sup> As Burns suggests, Hilary’s use of *relinquo* in this passage strongly suggests that the divinity and humanity were for

<sup>48</sup> *De Trinitate* 10.66; CCL 62a, 521; McKenna, 451: *ut cum infirmitas esset ex forma serui et natura maneret ex Dei forma... non alius ac diuisus a se esset, qui et pateretur et uiueret.*

<sup>49</sup> Burns, *Christology*, 92.

<sup>50</sup> *In Matthaeum* 33.6; SC 258, 254. *Denique cur relinquatur exclamat dicens: Deus Deus meus quare me dereliquisti? Sed relinquitur, quia erat homo etiam morte peragendus.*

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* Doignon translates *immortalitatis communionem* here as “l’union à son immortalité,” which could be misleading in light of Hilary’s subsequent emphasis on the unity between the divinity and humanity in *De Trinitate*—an emphasis that may not be present in the earlier *In Matthaeum*.

<sup>52</sup> *In Matthaeum* 3.2; SC 254, 115: *Igitur cum esuriit Dominus, non inediae subrepsit operatio, sed virtus illa quadraginta dierum non mota ieiunio naturae suae hominem dereliquit.*

a time separated, which may indicate that this is what Hilary has in mind when he uses that term in 33.6. In any case, the unity of the Son's divinity and humanity are not an issue for Hilary in *In Matthaëum* as they will be in *De Trinitate* 10.<sup>53</sup>

The difference between these two passages is the difference between a *logos*—*sarx* Christology and one informed by Philippians 2 and *forma servi*—*forma dei*. The old *logos*—*sarx* model cannot serve Hilary against the Homoians, because it cannot adequately account for the union between the Father and the Son. And so, Hilary has to find a new model, which he does both through his growing engagement with the particularities of Homoian—as well as modalist—polemical concerns along with influence Basil of Ancyra. In this regard, the development of Hilary's Christology mirrors the development of his doctrine of God. Unlike his doctrine of God, however, the development of Hilary's Christology is a true development, instead of a radical change, in the sense that he builds on and deepens his initial formulations without wholly abandoning them. Indeed, Hilary is so confident in his early exegesis that he can reproduce much of it without significant alteration, and what he does change builds on themes that were, perhaps, present but underdeveloped. This is not to say that Hilary represents the final word in Pro-Nicene Christology. Both the Cappadocians and Augustine would produce more sophisticated accounts of the Incarnation.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, Hilary represents a transition point, attempting to bridge the gap between his old theological heritage and the new intellectual and polemical currents.

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<sup>53</sup> See Burns, *Christology*, 92. Burns' remarks on this point are worth quoting in full: "[The passage at 3.2] is not intended to suggest any substantial rupture of the union between the divine and the human in Christ. Yet Hilary does expressly say that the divinity (*virtus*) left the humanity to its own nature (*naturae suae hominem derelinquit*). In view of Hilary's concern about the Arian use of theopaschite expressions to undermine the divinity of Christ it is surprising that he does not make use of the possibilities inherent here in his own language in order to resolve the challenge. But he does not, in fact, exploit the functional distinction between the divine and human in Christ when dealing with the sufferings of Christ, even though in his treatment of the death of Christ he asserts a shaper separation in Christ than does either Tertullian or Novatian."

<sup>54</sup> For the development of Christology in the fourth century, see Frances M. Young, "A Reconsideration of Alexandrian Christology," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 22 (1971): 103–114; M.F. Wiles, "The Nature of the Early Debate about Christ's Human Soul," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 16 (1965): 139–51; A. Geshé, "L'âme humaine de Jésus dans la christologie du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 54 (1959): 385–425; Henry Chadwick, "Eucharist and Christology in the Nestorian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1951): 145–164.

ESCHATOLOGY AND CHRISTOLOGY IN *DE TRINITATE* 11

The problem of the Son's passion in *De Trinitate* 10 is only the backdrop to a much broader issue which runs throughout Books 9–11, the correlation between the Son's equality with the Father and God's plan for salvation. For Hilary, as for most Pro-Nicene authors, Christ must have been fully human and fully divine because otherwise he could not have enacted God's plan. If the Son were not human, he could not have authentically mediated between God and humanity. If he were not divine then his body could not have retained the sinlessness that made that meditation possible. The challenge of Homoian theology, therefore, is ultimately soteriological, because the Homoians deny a crucial component in this dynamic, the Son's equality with the Father. The purpose for all of this Christological material finally appears in Book Eleven. When Hilary takes up the question of the Son's *subjection* in *De Trinitate* 11, he does so in a way that specifically accounts for the body he described in Books 9–10.

Early in Book Nine Hilary signals his intention to link his remarks about the Son's equality with the Father to soteriology. The incarnation, he asserts, was ordained from the beginning of time and is crucial for God's plan of salvation; the Son's humanity is the means by which God overcomes the infirmities of human weakness.

But these secrets of the heavenly mysteries were already ordained before the creation of the world, so that the only-begotten God willed to be born as man and humans would remain eternally in God, so that God willed to suffer in order that the Devil in his rage might not retain the law of sin in us through the passions of human weakness. . . . Therefore, God is born for the sake of our adoption, suffers for the sake of our innocence, and finally dies for the sake of our revenge, while our humanity remains in God, while the passions of our infirmities are allied with God, while the Spiritual powers of wickedness and malice are conquered by the triumph of the flesh, when God dies through the flesh.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *De Trinitate* 9.7; CCL 62a, 377; McKenna, 328: *Haec autem iam ante conditionem mundi sacramenta sunt caelestium mysteriorum constituta, ut unigenitus Deus homo nasci uellet, mansuro in aeternum in Deo homine; ut Deus pati uellet, ne passionibus humanae infirmitatis diabolus desaeuens legem in nobis peccati. . . . Nascitur itaque Deus adsumptioni nostrae, patitur uero innocentiae, postremo moritur ultioni: dum et homo noster in Deo permanet, et infirmitatum nostrarum passiones Deo sociae sunt, et spirituales nequitiae ac malitiae potestates triumpho carnis Deo per carnem moriente subduntur.*

Hilary returns to this theme in greater detail in Book Eleven. The Homoians had taken 1 Corinthians 15.26–28 as a sign of the Son's inferiority to the Father. The Son's *subjectio* indicates that he has a weaker nature than the Father, and that the Father's more powerful nature "subjects" the Son's to his own.<sup>56</sup> Hilary regards this exegesis as a denial of the Christian faith's very core. "The assumption of the flesh," he counters, "is the *sacramentum* of great piety, because by the assumption of the flesh there is the manifestation of the *sacramenti* in the flesh."<sup>57</sup> Hilary is somewhat obscure here, but his point is that the incarnation reveals God's entire plan of salvation, that God not only appeared in flesh but was justified in the Spirit and assumed in glory. What the incarnation reveals, therefore, encompasses more than just the Son's taking of a body, but also his assumption in glory. By looking at the entire dispensation we recognize that the incarnation is not a weakness in God but a true *sacramentum*—a hidden reality that was revealed to us in the Son's flesh and which, by being assumed in glory signals the perfection of everything.

Hilary then tackles 1 Corinthians 15 and the *subjectio* itself. He identifies within the Pauline text three problem areas: the *finis* and whether this results in a destruction, the *traditio* and whether this "delivery" results in a loss, and the *subjectio* and whether this indicates weakness.<sup>58</sup> The first two can be dealt with straightforwardly. For the *finis* Hilary observes that Christ himself is the "end" of the Law, though in this sense "end" refers to "completion." The same applies in the case of the *finis*, which is the "unchangeable state of continuing toward the goal for which we are striving." Far from being a destruction, it is the "perpetual perfection of an unchanging state."<sup>59</sup> The *traditio*, likewise, resolves itself

<sup>56</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.8; CCL 62a, 536.

<sup>57</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.9; CCL 62a, 538; McKenna, 466: *Magnae igitur pietatis sacramentum est carnis adsumptio, quia per adsumptionem carnis manifestatio sacramenti in carne est. Sacramentum* is Hilary's favorite word in Books 8–11 for describing the incarnation, especially its character as hidden/revealed in the Law, Gospel or *dispensatio*. Compare 9.24, 26, 62, *et al.* McKenna's preferred translation of "mystery" is appropriate if this is taken in the Pauline sense of "hidden reality" (Ephesians 3.2–6). Hilary does occasionally use *mysterium*, though it normally occurs as a synonym of *sacramentum*. See 5.32, 11.19 or 7.6.

<sup>58</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.25, 27; CCL 62a, 555, 556. Also see Gilles Pelland, "La 'subjectio' du Christ de Saint Hilaire," *Gregorianum* 64 (1991): 424–25 and Michael Durst, *Die Eschatologie des Hilarius von Poitiers* (Bonn: Borengässer, 1987), 326–330.

<sup>59</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.28; CCL 62a, 557. For Hilary's doctrine of *progressus in infinitum* see McDermott, "Infinite Nature," 172–202 and below, Chapter 8. McDermott deals with *De Trinitate* 11 on 184–85.

easily. Just as the Father delivered “all power in heaven and on earth” (Mt. 28.18) without loss, so too can the Son “deliver” without himself experiencing loss.<sup>60</sup>

The *subjectio*, however, proves to be more of a problem, and to solve it Hilary breaks the “subjection” into three stages. In the first stage, Christ subjects all of his enemies, specifically the “authorities” and “powers.” When the Son has destroyed these, as the text indicates, he will accordingly subject all of his enemies to himself. This leads naturally to the second stage, in which the human body moves from a state of corruption and death into perfection and life. The final enemy is “death,” and the Son’s victory over death results in the formation of a “living and heavenly nature.” As a result of this transition the former nature becomes subject to the new nature. The new, transformed nature now takes precedence so that the former nature ceases to exist as its own nature. Thus this transformation occurs as an act of progression, but it is also an act of submission.<sup>61</sup> In the third stage, however, it is Christ who undergoes subjection. Just as, in the second stage, we subject ourselves to the glory of his body, the Son subjects his own body to the Father, or “Him who subjects all things to Himself.”<sup>62</sup> All things are subject to the Son, who in turn subjects all things to Himself.

The *subjectio*, therefore, has primarily to do with Christ’s body. Immediately after the resurrection, Hilary argues, Christ reigns in the same body that belonged to his “fleshly” dispensation; Christ still has that which belongs to the body. By subjecting himself to God, however, Christ becomes “only God.” This does not mean that he gets rid of his human body, but that he transforms it into a new state.

Therefore, there is no other reason for the subjection than that God may be all in all, since no part of the nature of an earthly body remains in him, so that He who previously had two natures is now only God, not by casting the body aside, but by transforming it through the subjection, not by its destruction through death but by its change through glorification, while he gains our human nature for God rather than loses God as a

<sup>60</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.29; CCL 62a, 558.

<sup>61</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.35; CCL 62a, 564. Pelland helpfully points out a distinction in Hilary’s terminology between *evacuatio* and *subjectio*. The first term implies an elimination, but the second signifies “un changement de condition, ou mieux un passage à un ‘plus être’” (426).

<sup>62</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.36; CCL 62a, 564.

result of our human nature. He becomes subject, therefore... that God may be all in all.<sup>63</sup>

Hilary, thus, proposes two bodies for Christ. The first is the body that “borrows its glory from its association with the divine nature.” This is the incarnate body which, though similar to human bodies, nevertheless borrows its glory by containing within it two natures. This would also seem to be the body Hilary describes in Book Ten. The second body is the one that has advanced “to a more complete glory, which is to be secured by an increase of the glory that has already been granted to the body.”<sup>64</sup> The end result of human transformation is that God will raise our body to a state of glory similar to Christ’s human body, but that his body will itself be glorified and transformed. Christ grants us the form of his body, but through his subjection increases his own glory.<sup>65</sup>

Certain elements of this account of Christ’s body are already present in the earlier *In Matthaeum*. In his comments on the transfiguration, for example, Hilary suggests that Moses was visible in order to show that the glory of the resurrection is also destined for our bodies.<sup>66</sup> Here Hilary is defending what he assumes in *De Trinitate*, that the resurrected body will be a body; and his theology in *De Trinitate* is motivated by different polemical and exegetical concerns. But the “glory” language is similar, and in the commentary Hilary seems to distinguish between the resurrected body and Christ. Whereas Moses and Elijah are visible, the Son is “greater than we can imagine with conspicuous splendor of the heavenly light.”<sup>67</sup> The soteriology of Book Eleven departs from Hilary’s earlier works, however, in one crucial feature. In the *In Matthaeum* Hilary usually insists that our resurrected bodies will be “angelic,” or like the angels. The “lilies of the field” in Matthew 6.28, for example, are

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<sup>63</sup> *De Trinitate*, 11.40; CCL 62a, 568; McKenna, 492: *Non alia itaque subiectionis causa est, quam ut omnia in omnibus Deus sit, nulla ex parte terreni in eo corporis residente natura, ut ante in se duos continens nunc Deus tantum sit: non abiecto corpore, sed ex subiectione translato, neque per defectionem abolito, sed ex clarificatione mutato; adquirens sibi Deo potius hominem, quam Deum per hominem amittens; subiectus uero ob id... sed ut omnia in omnibus Deus sit.*

<sup>64</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.42; CCL 62a, 569: *gloriae plenioris profectus ex incremento indultae iam corpori gloriae capessendus.*

<sup>65</sup> *De Trinitate* 11.43; CCL 62a, 571.

<sup>66</sup> *In Matthaeum* 17.2; SC 258, 63. This is, as Doignon notes, a clear allusion to Tertullian, *De Resurrectione* 55: *Eandem tamen habitudinem corporis etiam in gloria perseverare docuerant*, Evans, 164.

<sup>67</sup> *In Matthaeum* 17.2; SC 258, 63–64: *Supra opinionem scilicet nostram caelestis luminis splendore conspicuus.*

for Hilary an illustration of the angelic spiritual body that humans will receive in the resurrection.<sup>68</sup> As Burns suggests, there are hints that Hilary relates Christ's body to the human resurrected body, as when he describes the faithful servant who *in honorem gloriae Christi recipitur*.<sup>69</sup> Most of this evidence is vague, however, and whatever the role Christ plays in our salvation in *In Matthaeum*, the model for the resurrected body remains angelic.

This situation is significantly altered in Hilary's later writings where, with one exception the "angelic body" motif entirely disappears.<sup>70</sup> Several factors contributed to this change, but for now it is enough to see that in *De Trinitate* Christ fulfills the role given to angels in the earlier work.<sup>71</sup> Christ's body is the model for our post-resurrected body, and it is the means by which Christ draws human nature into God; our resurrected bodies will conform to Christ's. For this scheme to work Christ's human body must have been fully human, otherwise there is no basis from which Christ can draw us to himself. Christ's body also had to have had its own unique characteristics, or its own "glory." From Hilary's theological perspective, the difference between Christ's body and our bodies is important not only to explain Christ's suffering, but it also has an eschatological function. Christ's sinless body retains its distinction from our bodies because it anticipates the nature of our bodies after the Resurrection. Christ's body is the human body in its ideal state. So when Hilary describes how Christ can be fully human

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<sup>68</sup> *In Matthaeum* 5.11. Also see 23.4. This image has Biblical roots, based on Matthew 22.30 and Luke 20.36, and was common among both eastern and Latin theologians. For discussion and background see Burns, *Christology*, 127–131 and Durst, *Eschatologie*, 307–8. In Hilary's case its roots may also lie in the martyr theologies, especially given his emphasis on martyrdom. See, for example, Cyprian who declares that the martyrs in heaven will be "equal with angels" (*angelis adaequari*). *Ad Fortunatus*, 13; G.F. Diercks, *Sancti Cypriani episcopi opera*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 3 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1972), 215.

<sup>69</sup> *In Matthaeum* 27.7; SC 258, 210. See Burns, 129–30. Burns is right to insist that Hilary allows for the continuity of the body before and after the resurrection. But there is no evidence that the resurrected body corresponds in any way to Christ's body.

<sup>70</sup> The one occurrence is in *Tractatus super psalmos* CXXI. 1: *et similem angelis ex resurrectione renouandum*. In the very same sentence, however, Hilary also suggests that our body will *ac domini nostri Iesu Christi corporis conformandum*..., a move which points to his "mature" understanding of Christ's body. A. Zingerle, ed., *Tractatus super Psalmos*, Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum 22 (Vindobonae: Prague, F. Tempsky; Lipsiae: G. Freytag 1891): 570.

<sup>71</sup> A. Fierro, *Sobre la gloria en San Hilario: Una sintesis doctrinal sobre la noción bíblica de "doxa"* (Roma: Libreria editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, 1964), 281, locates Hilary's development in his use of Philippians 3.21. Also see Burns, *Christology*, 28.

while retaining his divinity, as he does in Book Ten, he has to do so in such a way as to protect the “glory” of the Son’s human body. Only then can he explain how Christ is fully divine while retaining his human body, as he does in Book Eleven. The roots of his eschatology in Book Eleven, therefore, lie in the Christology he establishes in Book Ten.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Hilary’s theology of the transformation of Christ’s human body anticipates a similar exegetical strategy and theological approach of Gregory of Nyssa. See Brian Daley, “Divine Transcendence and Human Transformation: Gregory of Nyssa’s Anti-Apollinarian Christology,” *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997): 87–95.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE GENERATION OF THE SON

Sometime between the writing of *De Trinitate* 7 and *De Trinitate* 12, Hilary had come to grips with a potential problem with the central claim of his doctrine of God, that the “name reveals the nature.” The Homoians had grasped that this claim about the natural qualities of the names could be as effective in disproving the divinity of the Son as it was in proving it. One apparently successful line of attack was to use the notion of the Son’s birth in order to disprove the Son’s eternity: if the Son was “born” of the Father, then he must have had a beginning. And if the Son had a beginning in time, then he must also be subordinate to the Father in nature. Hilary responds to this attack in an extended exegesis of Proverbs 8. This was a natural choice. Although debate over Proverbs 8:22 had not yet played an important role in the Homoian stage of the controversy, it had a long history in the Trinitarian controversies as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Working through it gives Hilary an opportunity to reflect on the generation of the Son in light of his fundamental doctrine and Homoian criticisms of it.

The result is tantalizing, especially when viewed from the perspective of the Cappadocian contribution to this debate. Hilary retains his commitment to the *nativitas* for understanding the relationship of the Father to the Son. He also, however, intertwines his exegesis of the Proverbs text with a discussion of God’s infinity that has no apparent precedent in any of his sources, but which may, on a polemical level at least, anticipate Gregory.<sup>2</sup> For Hilary, a proper understanding of God’s

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<sup>1</sup> For a history of the interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 see especially, Manlio Simonetti, “Sull’interpretazione Patristica di *Proverbi* 8:22,” in *Studi sull’Arianesimo* (Rome: Editrice Studium, 1965): 9–87.

<sup>2</sup> Hilary’s use of the divine infinity here has struck at least one scholar as an early appearance of a similar doctrine employed by Gregory of Nyssa. See John M. McDermott, “Hilary of Poitiers: The Infinite Nature of God,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 27 (1973): 172–202. McDermott’s thesis, which he articulates against Mühlenberg’s assertion that Gregory of Nyssa was the first to “discover” the concept of God’s infinity, is that Hilary had “already made the concept of infinity his main philosophical weapon against the Arians” (173). McDermott’s essay is generally very helpful, with two significant caveats. First, McDermott reads Hilary’s emphasis on divine infinity in *De Trinitate*

infinite eternity helps explain how the birth could be a true birth— and distinguish the Father from the Son—without having to be bound by a beginning in time. Hilary's thought in *De Trinitate* 12 is not completely worked out, and does not approach the sophistication of, say, Gregory, which may explain why his doctrine of the Son's generation has received relatively little attention.<sup>3</sup> It is, however, one of his most original and creative moments as a theologian, and it deserves attention if only as a first look at the direction that Pro-Nicene theology will eventually take.<sup>4</sup> In this chapter, then, we will look first at how Hilary defends his emphasis on *nativitas* and introduces the concept of infinity. We will then turn to how he uses that concept to interpret Proverbs 8:22 and so defend the eternal generation of the Son in a new way.

#### ANALOGY AND THE INFINITE NATURE OF GOD IN *DE TRINITATE* 12

About midway through *De Trinitate* 12, Hilary lays out the theological presuppositions necessary for interpreting Proverbs 8:22: "Hence the conclusion of our faith, language and thought is that the Lord Jesus has been born and has always been."<sup>5</sup> The tension between these two assertions is crucial, he believes, because, as he had argued in *De Trinitate* 7, Son's *nativitas* is necessary to distinguish the Father from the Son, while the Son's "eternity" is a necessary indicator that the Son

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12 as the end result in a process of development that began as early as *In Matthaeum*. As I will argue in this chapter, however, it is much more likely that Hilary developed this doctrine in response to Homoian attacks on the formulations he established in *De Trinitate* 7. Second, as we have seen in this study, Hilary employed a number of "weapons" against his opponents, and in the context of the entire work, his treatment of divine infinity later development; it is certainly not central to Hilary's anti-Homoian polemic in the same way name and birth are.

<sup>3</sup> The one exception is Smulders, who devotes the better part of two chapters to it. See *Doctrine trinitaire*, pp. 140–207. Smulders' account does not treat *De Trinitate* 12 as a whole, and so suffers from a general lack precision about Hilary's polemical and exegetical context, though see pp. 192–5.

<sup>4</sup> For Divine Infinity in Gregory of Nyssa, see E. Mühlenberg, *Die Unendlichkeit Gottes bei Gregor von Nyssa* (Göttingen, 1966); Charles Kannengiesser, "L'Infinité Divine chez Grégoire de Nysse," *Recherches de Science Religieuses* 55 (1967): 55–65; Paul Plass, "Transcendent Time and Eternity in Gregory of Nyssa," *Vigiliae Christianae* 34 (1980): 180–192. For Gregory's "mystical" doctrine see Ronald E. Heine, *Perfection in the Virtuous Life: a Study in the Relationship between Edification and Polemical Theology in Gregory of Nyssa's De vita Moysis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.32; CCL 62a, 603; McKenna, 522: *Finis igitur et fidei et sermonis et sensus est, Dominum Iesum et natum esse et semper esse.*

shares in the divine nature. If this tension presents a logical problem, since something cannot be eternal if it was born, once we strip away the material connotations associated with human birth that tension becomes comprehensible. As he showed in Book Seven, this argument about the *natiuitas* derives from a related assertion about the divine names, and in 12.32, Hilary reaffirms what we can establish on the basis of the names.

The birth will announce nothing else than the Father, and the Father will announce nothing else than the birth. These names or nature permit nothing else to be between them. Either He is not always the Father if He is not always the Son, or if He is always the Father He too is always the Son.<sup>6</sup>

This could have been lifted directly from *De Trinitate* 7. What follows, however, introduces something new to his argument:

Just as much time as you will deny to the Son so that he may be the Son, so much time is wanting to the Father so that He is not always the Father, so that, while He is always God, he is not always the Father in that infinity in which he is God.<sup>7</sup>

Hilary's mention of God's *infinitas* is striking, because the word had played no role at all in Book Seven or, as a developed concept, in any Hilary's writings prior to Book Twelve.<sup>8</sup> Its appearance in 12.32 is tentative, but it suggests a subtle if significant shift in the direction of Hilary's thinking.

Hilary's defense of eternal generation is consistent with the general trend of his theology after his exile. As we have seen, Hilary had recognized the need to defend eternal generation early in his exile.<sup>9</sup> In his later works, including *De Synodis* and *De Trinitate*, eternal generation as

<sup>6</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.32; CCL 62a, 603–4; McKenna, 523: *Natiuitas autem nihil aliud quam Patrem, neque Pater aliud quam natiuitatem enuntiabit. Medium enim nihil quicquam nomen istud aut natura permittit. Aut enim non semper Pater, si non semper et Filius; aut si semper Pater, semper et Filius.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*: *quia quantum Filio temporis, ne semper Filius fuerit, abnegabitur, tantum Patri deest, ne Pater semper sit: ut licet semper Deus, non tamen et Pater in ea fuerit infinitate qua Deus est.*

<sup>8</sup> The preponderance of occurrences of *infinitas* and cognates in Hilary's writings are in *De Trinitate* 12 and in the prologue of Book One, which adds credence to the supposition that Book One was written after the entire work was completed. See McDermott, p. 185ff. McDermott does show that Hilary seems to be working with an incipient notion of divine infinity even in the early books of *De Trinitate* (179–185), but it is not developed, nor does it play a role in his anti-Homoian polemic. McDermott's attempts to find a developed notion of infinity in *In Matthaem* are unconvincing (177).

<sup>9</sup> See above, Chapter 3, pp. 87–88.

a formal doctrine takes a secondary role to concepts such as “name” and “birth,” but Hilary continues to affirm that his conclusions about the Son’s *nativitas* do support the belief that the Son’s generation was eternal. Early in *De Trinitate* 7, for example, he contrasts “birth” with “creation.” After making his case that a birth only comes from the essence of the nature, Hilary then asserts that if this is so, we must believe that the Son has always existed.

Hence, the purpose of all that heat and fury [from the Homoians] is that there may not be a birth, but a creation in the Son of God, and the He who subsists may not preserve the origin of his nature . . . Consequently, the birth of God perfects God, so that we realize that God is not one who has begun to be but one who has been born, for that which has begun cannot be the same as that which has been born, since that which has a beginning either begins to exist from nothing into something or it develops from one thing into something else and ceases to be.<sup>10</sup>

Hilary’s point in this section is that, by analogy to what obtains between human Fathers and Sons, if the Son is truly “born” of the Father, then the Son has by nature everything the Father has, including eternity. So, by virtue of the birth, we cannot assert that the Son “began” to be God, any more than we can assert God himself had a beginning; to believe in the birth is to believe in the eternity of the Son.

As a defense of the Son’s eternal generation, however, this argument ultimately proved ineffective, and Hilary was forced to alter his thinking. The reasons for this shift are the attacks made by the Homoians on what Hilary understands to be foundational doctrines. Hilary is particularly troubled by three Homoian syllogisms that appear to be directed precisely at his (or Basil’s) doctrine of the Son’s birth. First, the Homoians claim that, “Everything that was born has not been, because it was born for this purpose that it might be.”<sup>11</sup> A similar idea is at

<sup>10</sup> *De Trinitate* 7.14; CCL 62, 274–5. McKenna, 238: *Hinc ille omnis aestus et furor est, ut in Filio Dei non natiuitas sit sed creatio, ut non naturae suae originem subsistens teneat . . . Natiuitas igitur Dei Deum perficit, ut Deus non coeptus intellegatur esse, sed natus. Quia coeptum esse potest non idipsum esse quod nasci, dum omne coeptum aut ex nihilo in aliquid existit, aut ex alio in aliud proficit et desinit.*

<sup>11</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.22; CCL 62a, 596; McKenna, 516: *Sed, inquiet quisquam diuini huius incapax sacramenti, omne quod natum est, non fuit: quia in id natum est ut esset.* There is no extant Homoian text that reproduces these arguments in the form Hilary presents them. However, the degree to which they focus on the birth analogy as used by Basil of Ancyra and Hilary suggests that Hilary is either refuting an actual anti-Homoiousian polemical device or that he is recreating the kinds of arguments used by the Homoians against Basil and his party. They also reflect the basic thrust of Eunomius’ attack on

work in the second Homoian argument: “If, they say, it is beyond our power to conceive that He was not before he was born, then this only remains within our power to conceive that He who was, was born.”<sup>12</sup> Each of these devices offer a genuine challenge to Hilary’s thought because they purport to accept Hilary’s fundamental claim about the Son’s birth without accepting the implications Hilary draws from that claim. According to the Homoians, human experience dictates that everything that experiences birth also has a beginning in time. This is, in a sense, the reason for a birth, to bring about the beginning of the one who was born. If we accept that the Son was “born” of the Father, then we must, on the basis of the Father/Son analogy, also believe that this birth necessarily occurred in time. Thus, according to the Homoians, Hilary’s claim that the birth of the Son indicates his eternal generation does not stand the test of human logic.

The Homoians push the logic of these arguments further in their third objection. Not only does the notion of birth bind the generation of the Son to time, but it limits the Fatherhood of God to that time of generation. If the Son did not always exist but was born, runs the Homoian argument, then the Father was not always Father, but only became a Father when he generated the Son. Here again the human analogy is decisive to Homoian logic: just as every human father only becomes a father at a point in time, so too with the Father of the Son.<sup>13</sup>

Hilary’s initial response to this challenge is to explore the implications of using an analogy, such as the relationship between a father and a son, for understanding something about the divine nature.<sup>14</sup> Hilary maintains that analogies like these function only as an aid to our understanding:

Because he taught us the birth of the Spirit from the Spirit, He enlightened our understanding by citing our own causes as an illustration, not in order to show how the birth took place, but to inform us of the generation, so that that illustration does not lead to anything necessary, but is an aid to

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Homoiousian theology, which is what ultimately led Gregory of Nyssa and Basil of Caesarea to reject the notion that names are natural. See above, Chapter 6, 150ff.

<sup>12</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.29; CCL 62a, 602; McKenna, 521. *Sed argutae huius interrogationis calumnia antefertur: ‘Si, inquit, in sensum non cadit non fuisse antequam nascitur, reliquum hoc sensui est, ut qui erat natus sit.’*

<sup>13</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.33; CCL 62a, 604.

<sup>14</sup> Hilary’s defense of analogies, however limited, may also reflect his awareness of Eunomius’ denial of them. See above, Chapter 6, p. 154.

our understanding. If the only-begotten God is a creature, what is the meaning of an idea that reveals the idea of a divine birth through the ordinary process of a human birth?<sup>15</sup>

What the Homoians fail to recognize is that information to be gleaned from an analogy is limited. The analogy helps us understand certain aspects of the divine nature, but it does not reveal to us anything *necessary* about that relationship. Because we know that neither the Father nor the Son are creatures, we cannot assume that the ordinary experience of a human birth applies to the divine birth. Thus Hilary believes that the human analogy is useful, but when using it, we must keep in mind what we already know about the natures of the divine Father and Son, i.e. that they are Spirit, uncreated, etc. The problem with claiming that the name Son reveals the Son's nature is that this claim can be exploited in precisely the way the Homoians appear to have done here, by taking the analogy as proof that the Son was a creature: to be born is to have a beginning. Hilary wants to retain his emphasis on the natural quality of the names, and on the priority of the names Father and Son, but he realizes that in order to do so he limits their scope. The analogies can tell us some things about how the divine Father and Son relate, but not everything that has to do with human generation applies to God simply on the basis of the names.

This is not the first time Hilary has addressed the problem of using analogies in *De Trinitate*. In 1.19, for example, Hilary asserted that there was “no comparison between earthly things and God,” but that analogies could be useful in order to draw us from “our conscious manner of reasoning to think in a fashion to which we are not accustomed.” In this regard, an analogy only provides clues about its subject, not complete explanations, and above all, we cannot on the basis of an analogy confuse “the natures of flesh and spirit.”<sup>16</sup> Hilary follows a similar line of thought in 6.19, where he claims that the frailty of the human condition forces us to use analogies with caution. As a result, we should:

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<sup>15</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.8; CCL 62a, 585; McKenna, 506–7: *Sed quia nobis Spiritus de Spiritu natiuitatem praedicabat, sensum nostrum causarum instituit exemplo, non in exemplum natiuitatis sed ad intellegentiam generationis: ut exemplum illud non ad necessitatem proficiat sed ad sensum. Si igitur creatio est unigenitus Deus, etquid sibi uult significatio intellegentiae, quae per consuetudinem natiuitatis humanae intellegentiam diuinæ generationis ostendit?*

<sup>16</sup> *De Trinitate* 1.19; CCL 62, 19. Also see *De Trinitate* 4.2; CCL 62, 101–02.

... not look upon human analogies as completely satisfactory in explaining the mysteries of the divine power, but that the illustrations of an earthly nature are only employed in order to direct our mind in a spiritual way to heavenly things, in order that we may move forward along this step of our nature to the contemplation of the divine majesty.<sup>17</sup>

These two passages suggest that Hilary has more in mind than just theological discourse, and some commentators have helpfully recognized the beginnings of a spiritual doctrine here.<sup>18</sup> If Beckwith is right, however, that Hilary added both 1.19 and 6.9 to his original text, perhaps as late as 361, then this confirms the anti-Homoian character of these remarks.<sup>19</sup> Part of the way Hilary defends his emphasis on *nativitas* is by carefully defining how the analogy can be used.

The possibility that Hilary added this material on analogies late, in response to Homoian polemics, may suggest a shift in his thinking on the whole Trinitarian problem. Most importantly, Hilary's position on analogies is not entirely consistent with his blanket assertion in *De Trinitate* 7 that "the name reveals the nature." If the name does give access to the divine nature, the only way to understand that name, and so understand the divine nature, is by way of the common (i.e. "human") understanding of that name. To grasp what the name "Father" tells us about the divine Father, we must look at what it means to be a human father. This is a point that the Homoians certainly grasped, and Hilary shows signs of coming to terms with its potentially negative implications for his way of thinking as well. However, by limiting the scope of analogies he effectively mitigates against the possibility that the name can provide direct access to the divine nature. Taken to its logical conclusion, Hilary's theory of analogies does not permit the name "Father" to tell us anything about the Father's nature. Careful reflection on that name can eventually lead to the divine nature, but this is not the scenario he proposed in *De Trinitate* 7, where the name revealed the nature itself.

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<sup>17</sup> *De Trinitate* 6.9; CCL 62, 205; McKenna, 176: ...*ne satisfacere sacramentis diuinae uirtutis humanae comparationis exempla credantur, sed tantum ad inuendum spiritaliter de caelestibus sensum speciem terreni generis adferri, ut per hunc naturae nostrae gradum ad intellegentiam diuinae magnificentiae proueamur.*

<sup>18</sup> For Hilary's theology of the ascent to the divine nature, see Jean Doignon, "Ordre du monde, connaissance de Dieu et ignorance de soi chez Hilaire de Poitiers," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 60 (1976): 565–578.

<sup>19</sup> See Beckwith, 179.

Hilary does not take his thought to that extreme, and he consistently reiterates the importance of the divine names in *De Trinitate* 12. What he also does, however, is apply his theory of analogies in order to shift the discussion away from the character of the Son's generation to the nature of God himself. For example, in *De Trinitate* 12.16, Hilary admits that when speaking of humans, it is true that the birth indicates a beginning in time. This is true, he asserts, for two reasons. First, there is a beginning in time, since whatever was born did not exist prior to its birth. Second, all things derive their cause from things that at one point did not exist. In other words, there is no eternal chain of causation by which eternity or some similar attribute is passed from generation to generation. Humanity was created by God, which means that successive generations of humans inherit the inherent createdness—and beginning in time—of the first human.<sup>20</sup> When speaking of the Son, however, we must affirm that “he who is [the Father] is the cause of him [the Son] being what he is.” As a result, the Son's generation does not belong in time.<sup>21</sup> A little later, Hilary will reiterate the same point by saying that, “what is born of from the eternal possesses the attribute that what has been born is eternal, but what is unborn is unborn with eternity.”<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, if God is infinite, then that which God begets shares in that infinity.<sup>23</sup>

This is a different argument for eternal generation than the one we saw in Book Seven. There, the name Father itself provided the basis for defending the eternal generation of the Son. Here, however, the primary justification for defending eternal generation is the eternity of the Father. The Son inherits his eternity in the same way a human son inherits createdness from his father. To be sure, both name and birth remain important in this argument, as they are the means by which Hilary establishes the causal link between the Father and Son. At the same time, however, Hilary places a great deal of emphasis on the Father's eternity to provide a logical justification for the Son's eternity: because the Father is eternal, whatever he generates must necessarily share in that eternity. In this way, then, the eternal birth of the Son is contained

<sup>20</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.16; CCL 62a, 590.

<sup>21</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.17; CCL 62a, 591.

<sup>22</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.21; CCL 62a, 595; McKenna, 515: *quia quod al aeterno nascitur, habet aeternum esse quod natum est; quod autem non natum est, id cum aeternitate non natum est.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

in our understanding of the eternity of the Father.<sup>24</sup> This is the first time Hilary uses *infinitus* or *infinitas* in Book Twelve, and while he does not develop the concept in any depth or sophistication, its appearance here hints at a new direction for his thought. Along with the name and birth, reflection on the relationship between the Father and the Son must also consider the eternal, infinite nature of God.

PROVERBS 8.22 AND THE ETERNAL  
GENERATION OF THE SON

To see how Hilary works out this insight in his polemical exegesis, we turn to his analysis of Proverbs 8.22. In many ways, Hilary's exegesis of this controversial text follows the standard Pro-Nicene model: in the line "the Lord created me in the beginning of his ways," the "me" refers to the Son, but "created" does not refer to the Son's generation from the Father, but to his Incarnation. Hilary had a number of potential sources for this exegesis, including Basil of Ancyra, although the amount of attention Hilary gives to the text is unusual for this stage of the controversy.<sup>25</sup> Beyond just its length, however, Hilary's exegesis of Proverbs 8 is unusual for the way in which he intertwines his insight

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<sup>24</sup> See *De Trinitate* 12.21; CCL 62a, 595–6; McKenna, 516; "Neither our reason nor our understanding allows anything to be between the birth of the Son of God and the generation of God the Father, because the birth is in the generation and the generation is in the birth. Thus, each takes place without any interval between them, because neither takes place without the other." (*Medium enim quid inter natiuitatem Dei Fili et generationem Dei Patris nec ratio nec sensus admittit: quia et in generatione natiuitas est et in natiuitate generatio est. Quod utrumque sine interuallo sui est, quia sine utroque nec neutrum est.*)

McDermott makes much of this passage, seeing it as Hilary's "principal argument" (187). McDermott is looking for signs of a doctrine of the *progressus in infinitum*, which he finds even more clearly in 12.24. This search yields an important insight that for Hilary, "eternity is explained in terms of infinity, for eternity is previous to every *aliquando*—not removed from time, but previous to it! A horizontal time-embracing infinity, the never attainable termination of an infinite *progressus*" (187). The value of McDermott's conclusions for understanding Hilary's doctrine of eternal generation is that it places that generation not so much in the birth or the name, but in the nature of God himself, a point that becomes clearer in Hilary's exegesis of Proverbs 8. Nevertheless, I am not convinced Hilary's thought in these passages is well enough developed to support the philosophical complexity that McDermott thinks it has.

<sup>25</sup> Interpretation of Proverbs 8 had played an important role in the Arian Controversy, but in the 350's and 60's no-one seems to have offered an extended exegesis of it. In his *Contra Eunomium*, Basil of Caesarea promises to treat it in greater length at some later date, but he never seems to have fulfilled that promise. See *Contra Eunomium* II. 20. Athanasius also mentions it briefly at *De Decretis* 14.2, taking "created me" to indicate the Incarnation, but makes very little of the passage otherwise.

about the infinity of God into his interpretation of the text. For Hilary, understanding the “creation of the Son,” and thus the generation of the Son, requires us to meditate on the infinity of God.

Hilary divides his treatment of Proverbs 8 into three parts, each of which treats a different issue related to that passage’s interpretation. In the first section, Hilary identifies two reasons why the phrase, “the Lord created me for the beginning of his ways” uses the language it does. In the first place, Hilary says, the Proverb emphasizes the ‘beginning of his ways’ in order to ensure that no-one would imagine that Wisdom did not exist before the Son’s birth from Mary. In the second place, “beginning of his ways” also ensures that no-one take the word “created” literally. As is his exegetical practice, Hilary turns to the context in order to resolve an exegetical issue about a specific verse. In this case, Hilary believes that “beginning of his ways” must be read in light of the lines that immediately follow verse 22, which conclude with, “before all the hills he begot me.” These lines are significant, Hilary asserts, because they indicate that the establishment of the Son happened before creation itself, which is to say, it took place before time. In other words, Proverbs is describing two events, the establishment before time and the creation for the beginning of the ways, which takes place after (or within) time.<sup>26</sup> Both of these events refer to the Son as Wisdom, but it is a significant mistake, in Hilary’s mind, to confuse them, because that merges the Son’s generation with the “creation.”

By approaching the text in this way, Hilary has obviously cleared the way for reading “creation” as “incarnation,” but he does not immediately pursue that line of thinking. Instead, he turns to a discussion of divine infinity. Hilary believes that the Proverb’s words about the Son being begotten “before the hills” imply the “idea of infinity” (*infinitatis intellegentiam*). This notion is important because one cannot simply say that the Son was born before everything else that was created.<sup>27</sup> To speak in this way is to use the things of creation as the point of reference for understanding the generation of the Son. Once we start thinking about the Son using temporal categories, however, we are then forced to assign a beginning in time to the Son as well; even to place the Son before temporal things is to bring him into a relationship with time.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.36; CCL 62a, 606.

<sup>27</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.37; CCL 62a, 607.

<sup>28</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.38; CCL 62a, 608; McKenna, 527.

A better way to approach the Son's begetting, therefore, is to teach that Wisdom is prior even to infinite things: "[Wisdom] is prior not to temporal but to infinite things. It was present with God when the heaven were prepared."<sup>29</sup>

The rationale for this assertion lies in the nature of the creative act. For Hilary, although creation is not eternal, the "preparation" of the things to be created is eternal. We cannot imagine that God planned the process of creation in a sequence, as though he first decided to create the heavens, then planned and created the earth, and so forth. Instead, we have to conceive of this process as single, simple, unified act.

Since everything which is under the heavens were being formed and he comes before the eternity itself of the heavens that had been prepared, we are not allowed to suppose that there were individual thoughts in God about these minute matters, because the entire preparation of these things is co-eternal with God. . . there is not even a moment of time discernable in the work of creating the heavens, the earth, and the other elements, because their preparation has been brought about as the result of a like infinity of eternity with God.<sup>30</sup>

This claim about the nature of creation is important because if it is true, as Hilary has argued from Proverbs 8, that the Son was present prior to this "preparation," then we must acknowledge that the Son is eternal with the Father's infinity. And this means, in turn, that the Son's generation is eternal. It is worth noting again here the degree to which "name" and "birth" have slipped into the background. Hilary's key insight, which is both exegetical and logical, concerns God's infinity and what that implies about the character of creation. Name and birth no longer play a formal role.

Hilary's treatment of the next two issues surrounding the interpretation of Proverbs 8 proceeds more or less along traditional Pro-Nicene lines, but even here he continues to build on his insight about God's infinite nature. The second issue concerns the term creation itself. Hilary asserts that the word should cause no problem as long as we remember

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<sup>29</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.39; CCL 62a, 608–9; McKenna, 527: *docens se non temporalibus esse anteriorem sed infinitis. Cum enim praepararetur caelum, aderat Deo.*

<sup>30</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.40; CCL 62a, 611; McKenna, 529: *Sed cum omnia per Deum quae sub caelo sunt facta sint et componendo caelo Christus adfuerit et ipsam praeparati caeli praeueniat aeternitatem, non patitur hoc existimari in Deo minutarum rerum particulatas cogitationes, quia omnis horum praeparatio Deo est coaeterna. . . sed caeli et terrae ceterorumque elementorum creatio ne leui saltim momento operationis discernitur, quia eorum praeparatio aequabili paenes Deum infinitatis aeternitate constiterat.*

that the Son is eternal. He also admits, however, that the term is potentially provocative. It could be taken, for example, to demonstrate that the Son was created for the sake of the works that are about to be performed. This would have the effect of making the Son a slave whom God created to then create the world. Hilary has two problems with this argument. In the first place, although Scripture does speak of the Son as creator of the world, the Proverbs passage names the Father in that role, which Hilary takes as proof that the Son is eternal with the Father.<sup>31</sup> In the second place, the verses that precede Proverbs 8.22 teach that Wisdom establishes kingdoms, participates in deeds of equity and justice, and reveals the things that are done every day. All of these actions take place before time, which in turn requires that the creation of the Son be timeless.<sup>32</sup>

We must still ask what the proverb means when it says that Wisdom was created. It is here that Hilary invokes the traditional Pro-Nicene response: the “creation” of Wisdom refers to the incarnation.

Hence, He is created as the beginning of the ways for the works of God, because He is the way (*cf.* John 14.6) and also leads to the Father. We must ascertain the reason for this creation, which is in time, for it is the mystery of the final dispensation in which He was also created in the body and referred to Himself as the way for the works of God.<sup>33</sup>

Hilary recognizes that there is an act of the Son’s that does take place in time, i.e. the *dispensatio*, and he concludes that “created me” must refer to that act. Hilary’s connection of “way” in Proverbs 8.22 with John 14.6 (“I am the way”) allows him to offer a rationale for the “creation” of the Son: to reveal the “works” of God. The next logical question, then, is what constitutes these works. To answer this question, Hilary turns first to the Genesis theophanies as appearances of the Son and then to the Incarnation itself, in which the Son of God was born as a human man into the “creation of flesh” (*creatura carnis*). Through these appearances the Son reveals the Father and re-unites the creator to his creation.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.43; CCL 62a, 613.

<sup>32</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.44; CCL 62a, 615; McKenna, 532.

<sup>33</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.45; CCL 62a, 616–7; McKenna, 533: *Ergo in uiarum initium in opera Dei creatur, quia et uia est et deducit ad Patrem. Sed creationis huius, quae a saeculis est, ratio quaerenda est. Nam ultimae dispensationis sacramentum est, quo etiam creatus in corpore uiam se Dei operum est professus.*

<sup>34</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.48; CCL 62a, 618.

By connecting “created me” to the Incarnation, Hilary has adapted a standard Pro-Nicene exegesis of the passage. On this point, in fact, Hilary has many similarities to Athanasius in *Contra Arianos*.<sup>35</sup> Athanasius begins with Arius’ quote from the *Thalia*, that the Son is a “creature, but not as one of the creatures.”<sup>36</sup> This formulation makes no sense to Athanasius, who argues that the Son is either a part of creation or is not, and to try to create a middle state between creation and the divine nature only confuses the issue.<sup>37</sup> Athanasius obviously prefers to conceive of the Son as being divine, and he spends a great deal of time trying to demonstrate the superiority of the Son to created things.<sup>38</sup> When he explains what the proverb means by “created,” however, Athanasius is adamant that “created” does not refer to essence.

So, if it is said in the Proverbs ‘he created,’ we must not conceive that the whole Word is in nature a creature, but that He put on the created body and that God created Him for our sakes, preparing for him the created body, as it is written, for us, that in Him we might be capable of being renewed and deified.<sup>39</sup>

As with Hilary, then, the “created me” phrase is linked to the incarnation and, ultimately, to salvation. Athanasius is not so much interested in eternal generation here, preferring instead to focus on relationship of the Son’s nature to created natures, but his take on the basic meaning of the phrase “created me” closely mirrors Hilary’s.

Despite these similarities Athanasius ultimately offers a different

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<sup>35</sup> Athanasius’ exegesis of Proverbs 8.22 is quite long, running from *Contra Arianos* II.18–82. Although Athanasius covers a lot of ground in these pages, much of it defending the superiority of the Son to creatures, his most recurrent theme is that “created me” refers to the Incarnation. See Simonetti, “Interpretazione,” 56–67; Anthony Meredith, “Proverbes 8:22 chez Origène, Athanase, Basile et Grégoire de Nysse,” in *Politique et théologie chez Athanase d’Alexandrie*, ed. Charles Kannengiesser (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1974): 349–357. Charles Kannengiesser, “Lady Wisdom’s Final Call: The Patristic Recovery of Proverbs 8,” in *Nova Doctrina Vetusque: Essays on Early Christianity in Honor of Fredric W. Schlatter, S.J.*, ed. Douglas Kries and Catherine Brown (New York: Peter Lang Publishers, 1999): 65–77.

<sup>36</sup> *Contra Arianos* II.19; PG 26, 183. For the significance of the motif in Arius’ thought, see Williams, *Arius*, pp. 181–198.

<sup>37</sup> *Contra Arianos* II. 20; PG 26, 187.

<sup>38</sup> One of Athanasius’ arguments for the superiority of the Son concerns the Son’s name. He points out the Arian theology denies the sanctity of the baptismal names, so that instead of baptizing in the name of the Father and Son, they baptize into the name of the Creator and creature. In this way, they do not confess a true Father, nor do they confess a true Son (*Contra Arianos* II.42; PG 26, 236f.). This is not precisely Hilary’s name theology, but its similarities are evident.

<sup>39</sup> *Contra Arianos* II.47; PG 26, 248; NPNF II.4, 374.

rationale for the eternal generation of the Son, and a comparison of these differences helps illustrate the degree to which Hilary's interpretation relies on his new insight about God's infinity. One dissimilarity between the two is that Athanasius does not devote much of his exegesis of Proverbs 8 to the eternal generation of the Son. Unlike Hilary, Athanasius can find no passage in Proverbs 8 that supports the eternal generation, and so while he denies that "created me" refers to the Son's generation, he does not build a positive doctrine of eternal generation from the proverb. Again, his emphasis in the exegesis is the exalted nature of the Son, not eternal generation. What he does say about eternal generation in this section relies heavily on criteria he had established earlier in *Contra Arianos*. In *Contra Arianos* II. 32, for example, Athanasius runs through a list of texts that demonstrate the superiority of the Son's nature. At the end of this list, he claims that these passages prove two things, that the Word is eternal, and that the Word is not foreign but "proper" (ἴδιος) to the Father's nature.<sup>40</sup> This reference to ἴδιος is suggestive, because Athanasius had already established it as the basis for his arguments in favor of eternal generation. According to Athanasius, it is necessary to confess the eternal generation of the Son in order to preserve the integrity of God's nature. The Son, as son, is ἴδιος to the Father's essence. There was never a moment when the Father's essence was imperfect, as would be the case if the Father did not for any period of time have his Son; in order to be wholly and truly Father, there must also be a Son. If Son is proper to the Father's nature, therefore, he must be eternal in the same way that the Father is eternal.<sup>41</sup>

This is a different account of the Son's eternal generation than that offered by Hilary. Although both theologians ground their doctrine in the divine nature, for Athanasius the key category is ἴδιος, whereas for Hilary the key category is infinity. Athanasius is arguing about what it

<sup>40</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.31; PG 26, 70.

<sup>41</sup> *Contra Arianos* 1.14; PG 26, 41. Also see Hanson, 430; For further discussion of Athanasius' use of ἴδιος see Andrew Louth, *op. cit.*, and above, Chapter 5, pp. 165ff. This is very similar to Hilary's argument about the name Father indicating an eternal Son (see above, p. 183), and Athanasius will also use the name argument to defend eternal generation, arguing that the name Father necessarily indicates a Son. Like Hilary he insists that we cannot measure what it means for the Son to be the Son of the Father from a human perspective in order to distinguish the Son's generation from creation. However, Athanasius' use of the Father/Son analogy is an aspect of his discussion about what is ἴδιος to God; it is ἴδιος to the Father's nature to have an eternal Son. See *Contra Arianos* I.33; PG 26, 80.

means to be God. Hilary is arguing about what it means for God to be infinite. Some of the reason for these differences has to do with different polemical contexts. Athanasius is refuting a theology that subordinates the Son on the basis of the Son's inferior nature. By emphasizing that the Son is "proper" to the Father's nature, therefore, Athanasius provides a basis for understanding how the Son shares in the Father's nature. Hilary's problem is slightly different. The Homoians have found a flaw in his version of the "name" argument, and they are, in a sense, suggesting that it is more proper to the Father's nature to have a Son who had a beginning and is thus inferior to the Father. By grounding his doctrine in the Father's infinite nature, accordingly, Hilary moves the debate outside of the created experience of time. This move, in turn, permits Hilary to forbid the Homoians from tainting the discussion of the Son's eternal birth with material, created considerations.

For the third and final issue, Hilary turns briefly to what the word creation tells us positively about the Son's generation. His point of reference is a line from Galatians 4, where Paul says that the human Jesus was "made of a woman." There is no doubt that Jesus was "born" of Mary, so when Paul describes the Incarnation as a "creation" (i.e. a "thing made"), he is doing so to ensure that no-one believe the Incarnation was the result of human passion. Creation is, by definition, a passionless act. So we can recognize that the Son was born and still apply creation language to that birth.<sup>42</sup> However, Hilary is reluctant to press this logic, going so far as to call it the sign of a "feeble intelligence" (*inopis ingenii*), if not irreligious. He admits the same logic pertains to the eternal birth: we can call the Son a creation to indicate that he was born impassibly from the eternal Father, but he does not pursue this any further.<sup>43</sup>

Hilary's less than wholehearted endorsement of this interpretation is somewhat surprising given that this is how the Homoiousians take this passage. In the manifesto, for example, Basil interprets the passage along these lines

And when the Son likewise said "The Lord created me," to keep us from supposing that his nature is in the same category as the other created things, he added, "Before the hills he begets me," providing us with the notion of his sonship to God the Father that is a godly one and implies no passion.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.50; CCL 62a, 620.

<sup>43</sup> *De Trinitate* 12.50; CCL 62a, 621.

<sup>44</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.21.6; Dummer, 293–4; Williams, 455.

Something similar appears in the anathemas attached to the end of Basil's letter. The anathema condemns anyone who confuses "begets" with "created," because such a person would also deny the perfect Son who was born without passion.<sup>45</sup> This emphasis on the passionlessness of the Son's birth is, of course, crucial to the Homoiousian insistence on the natural quality of the names Father and Son, just as it is for Hilary. There are two reasons, however, why Hilary is unwilling to go this direction. First, from an exegetical perspective, not interpreting "created me" as the Incarnation, which the Homoiousians do not appear to have done, makes it difficult to then apply the "beginning of his ways" phrase to the eternal birth. Hilary has worked too hard to separate the two to risk confusing them again. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Hilary's thought is going in a different direction. Although he is not backing away from his insistence on the importance of the *nativitas*, it is no longer central in such a way that it has to be defended above every other consideration.

It is worth reiterating that we should avoid the temptation to compare Hilary's doctrine of divine infinity with Gregory of Nyssa's. The one exception to this rule is the question of sources. It is difficult to trace a common line of influence between Gregory and Hilary. Basil of Ancyra might be someone both theologians have in common, except that there is no evidence of Basil employing this doctrine. Nevertheless, the presence of a similar doctrine in a similar polemical context does suggest that reflection on divine infinity became part of Pro-Nicene Trinitarian discourse. The exigencies of the Homoian/Eunomian controversy forced Pro-Nicene theology to reconsider the fundamental character of God and to explore categories not addressed by their predecessors. Hilary's genius is not that he provided the solution, but that he anticipated the way that Pro-Nicene theology would have to go.

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<sup>45</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.11.1; Dummer, 282.

## CONCLUSION

### HILARY AND THE COURSE OF PRO-NICENE THEOLOGY

Hilary's thought developed. The theologian who returned from exile in 361 was not the same theologian who went into exile in 356. While in exile Hilary attained a level of clarity about what was at stake in the Homoian—Pro-Nicene debates that is unmatched in his contemporaries (including, one might argue, Athanasius). I have not developed this point in this book, but if it proves to be the case, then Hilary's greatest legacy may well be that clarity. To read Hilary is to gain insight into exactly what Pro-Nicenes wanted to accomplish. If his thought does not attain the sophistication of later Pro-Nicenes, such as the Cappadocians, Hilary does understand what the problems are, and he has an idea of how to solve them.

The point that I have pursued the most closely in this book is the idea that Hilary also took on a number of new theological categories from his exile, and that these categories form the basis for his mature thought. I have argued that Hilary's thought developed in large part through his association with Basil of Ancyra. Although there is significant circumstantial evidence to make such a claim, the absence of direct proof, e.g. an example of Hilary explicitly drawing on one of Basil's writings to develop a theological point, makes final identification of Basil as Hilary's source tentative. Nevertheless, it is helpful—even necessary—to read Basil and Hilary together, in their polemical context, in order to better recognize exactly what categories are in play in Hilary's thought.

When we read Hilary in this context, two categories stand out as being especially important. The first is Hilary's doctrine that the names "Father" and "Son" reveal something about the nature of the Godhead and so help us to understand that the relationship between the two is one of substance. Hilary and Basil both share this concern, but Hilary actually expands on Basil's doctrine by emphasizing the category of "birth" to a degree that Basil does not. For Hilary, it is the "birth" of the Son that demonstrates his substantial connection to the Father, while for Basil the names themselves are sufficient to indicate a relationship of substance. As we saw in Chapter 5, Hilary's doctrine of the names

demonstrates the extent to which he was conversant with the fundamental issues of the Homoian controversy. Although discussion about the value of the Scriptural names predates the rise of Homoian theology, it was one of the central issues of this debate. This is evidenced not only by the prominence of “name” language in the theologies of leading Homoian or Anti Homoian theologians such as Eunomius of Cyzicus and Basil of Ancyra (and Hilary), but also by its endurance in the subsequent debate between Eunomius and the Cappadocians. Hilary’s fluency with this language in his later writing places him within the context of that ongoing debate.

Second, the proper context allows us to recognize the importance of Christological issues, especially the theological method of using the relationship between the Son and the Father to describe the relationship between the Son and Humanity. In the case of Basil, the names “Father” and “Son” indicate that the Father and Son are “like according to substance,” as opposed to having the same substance or different substances. For Basil, this doctrine is important because it mediates between the dual dangers of modalism (Photinus) and subordinationism (the Homoians). By asserting that the Father and Son have the same substance, one could conclude that they were identical, so Basil maintains that the Father and Son have a similar substance. This is, however, a relationship of substance, which allows us to understand that the Father and Son are equal. In the same way, the Son’s humanity is “like” the substance of our humanity. It is not identical in the sense that it does not share our infirmities, but it is the substance of authentic humanity. Thus the foundation of Basil’s Trinitarian theology is also the foundation of his Christology.

Hilary never formally adopts Basil’s position that the Father and Son are “like” according to nature. As we saw in Chapter 4, however, although Hilary remains a “Pro-Nicene” to the extent that he defends *homoousios*, he also asserts that we must interpret *homoousios* in way that avoids overly identifying the Father and Son. For Hilary, the Father and Son are more “like” than the “same.” Still, the clearest example of Hilary’s appropriation of this theme from Basil is the set of Christological formulations we examined in Chapter 6. Building on Basil’s exegesis of Romans 8.3 and Philippians 2.7 (and this may be one place where we can see direct evidence of Hilary drawing from Basil), Hilary suggests that the Son’s humanity is only “like” our humanity, but not identical to it. This is an important distinction for Hilary because it allows us to properly understand how the Son experienced the Passion.

Because the Son's body did not have the corruption inherent in normal human bodies, it was able to experience the causes of pain, i.e. "the blow," without actually feeling pain itself. Hilary's belief that the Son does not experience pain carries over from the earlier *In Matthaeum*. What has changed in *De Trinitate* 10 is that Hilary has expressed this doctrine with different language in a different context and for different reasons. By emphasizing the "likeness" of the Son's humanity, Hilary attempts to avoid a Homoian critique that Pro-Nicene theology ultimately leads to patripassionism.

It is worth reiterating that this aspect of Hilary's Christology has drawn the most criticism from his commentators. As Hanson and others have pointed out, subsequent Christological formulations will emphasize the importance of the Son's humanity being identical with our humanity, and Hilary clearly falls short of that standard. Nevertheless, one aspect of Hilary's thought in *De Trinitate* 10, which he develops using some of Basil's categories, represents a significant change in his understanding of the Incarnation. This is Hilary's use of the *forma—dei*, *forma—servi* model of the Incarnation to replace his old *logos—sarx* model. For Hilary's purposes, the new model is a significant advance, because it allows him to affirm the unity of Christ's divinity and humanity in the Incarnation. Both the Photinians and the Homoians, in slightly different ways, attempted to separate the divine part of Jesus from the human part, which created a problem for Hilary because the *logos—sarx* model tended towards the same conclusions. By developing this new model to emphasize the unity of the humanity and the divinity, Hilary can offer a more effective counter to his opponents' teaching.

Even in this brief summary we can see the importance of Basil as the source of, or foil for, Hilary's mature thought. At no point, however, should the influence of Basil on Hilary be taken as though Hilary is simply a Latin Homoiousian. In some areas he departs significantly from Basil. Hilary does not repeat, for example, Basil's emphasis on divine incorporeality, perhaps because he has a more nuanced understanding of essence and substance than Basil. Nor does he carry over Basil's hermeneutical claim that Old Testament passages must be interpreted by New Testament passages.<sup>1</sup> In this regard, Hilary is more like Athanasius and the Alexandrian's insistence on determining the *skopos* of Scripture;

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<sup>1</sup> I owe the insight that Hilary and Basil differ in these areas to the anonymous reader of an earlier draft of this book.

both look for a single passage to unify the whole of Scripture. Here again, Hilary may well exhibit a greater degree of theological and philosophical sophistication, which is not surprising given Hilary's rhetorical training. But the most important sign of Hilary's independence from Basil is Hilary's willingness to modify, if not abandon, the centerpiece of Homoiousian thought when it became untenable due to the changing course of Pro-Nicene polemics (see Chapter 8). Unlike Basil, who, as far as we know, always remained a "Homoiousian," Hilary responded nimbly and with insight to Homoian attacks on his "name" theology. What this may suggest is that Hilary took from Basil not so much a set of categories as a theological sensibility, e.g. the sense that catholic theology must avoid both modalism and subordinationism. In the final analysis, we may learn more about how Pro-Nicene thought developed by attending to this sensibility even more than the categories.

By identifying how Hilary used these new categories, we can gain a better sense of how his theology developed. Along with his Christology, this development is most evident in Hilary's changing polemical sensitivity. Hilary begins his literary career with relatively little impulse to engage theological opponents, and what opponents he did have most likely represented some type of modalism or adoptionism. This changes when Hilary is exiled in 356. The first works he produced during this time are markedly more polemical in character than *In Matthaëum*. In these early polemical works, however, Hilary is not particularly focused or sophisticated in his attacks on his opponents. Indeed, he sometimes appears to be arguing against a generic form of "Arianism" rather than the contemporary (if incipient) Homoianism he actually faced (cf. Chapter 3). This "second stage" of polemical awareness changes when Hilary encounters and begins to take over the theological and polemical concerns of Basil and the Homoiousians. In *De Synodis*, the first work where Basil's theology plays a significant role in Hilary's thought, Hilary demonstrates a much more nuanced awareness of the particularities of the controversy (cf. Chapter 4). To be sure, some of this new awareness was driven by the publication of "The Blasphemy" in 357. However, Hilary's perspective on that creed, especially his sense of how to refute its theology, derives heavily from Basil.

None of this is to say that by adapting his theology to meet the new polemical challenges, Hilary has completely abandoned his Latin heritage. In at least two fundamental ways, Hilary's new theology remains consistent with his old. First, both Hilary's new and old theologies assume that the logic behind the doctrine of God also applies to the

doctrine of the Incarnation; for Hilary, there is always a fundamental connection between how we understand the relationship between the Father and Son, and how we understand the relationship between the Son and Humanity. As a result of this approach, Hilary moves quickly from his “Trinitarian” formulations in *De Trinitate* 7 to Christological considerations in *De Trinitate* 9–12. In *De Trinitate*, in fact, Hilary seems to assume that the point of doing Trinitarian theology is to explore its implications for our understanding of the Incarnation. One leads naturally to the other. In the mature works, Hilary takes the formal content for this procedure from Basil of Ancyra. Nevertheless, the procedure itself was already present in the earlier *In Matthaeum*, where Trinitarian theology provided the logic and means for talking about Christology.

Second, Hilary’s mature thought retains the anti-modalism of his early theology. This may be the reason Hilary was attracted to Basil of Ancyra in the first place: though from considerably different perspectives, they shared a common antipathy towards the various forms of modalism. Hilary’s sensitivity to the danger of modalism was significant because it forced him to avoid both modalism and subordinationism. For both Basil and Hilary, it was not enough simply to refute the Homoians. The Homoians had to be refuted in a way that did not allow for possible Photinian or Sabellian interpretations. This is why Basil rejected *homoousios* and Hilary attempted to modulate its meaning. By the same token, Hilary’s Latin anti-modalism may also be a sign of Latin preparedness for the Homoian controversy in general. In both Phoebadius and Marius Victorinus, for example, we find Latin theologians struggling to accomplish the same thing as Hilary in his mature works, i.e. making a bridge between modalism and subordinationism (cf. Chapter 2). Although in each case their Latin categories sometimes proved inadequate to that task, all of the Latin theologians had a common sense of what the solution to the Homoian crisis should look like. In no case do we find a Latin theologian rejecting Homoianism in favor of a thinly veiled modalism.

Here again, however, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which Hilary is unique among his Latin contemporaries. The combination of meeting Basil and dealing with the Homoians seems to have forced Hilary to recognize that his old ways of refuting modalism were no longer effective, and it is the changes Hilary makes to this aspect of Latin theology that may be the most drastic. Prior to his exile, Hilary was content to use concepts such as “community of divinity” to describe what is common to the Father and Son. By the standards of

his later theology, however, this formulation was prone to subordinating the Son to the Father, and it may well have been too materialistic as well. The presence of the formulation in fourth century Latins such as Phoebadius suggests that it was a staple of Latin theology well into Hilary's time, and Hilary's abandoning of it marks a significant change in that tradition. Another problem with Classical Latin theology was its willingness to distinguish between divinity and humanity and the Son, which the Latins did in part because the "community of divinity" motif allowed them to. Here again, Hilary's Christology marks a significant break with his tradition.

I conclude by noting that this reading of Hilary's theological development, along with adding to our understanding of Hilary's thought in itself, also provides insight into the development of fourth century Trinitarian theology. In the first place, the role of "name" and "birth" as a distinct theological *topos* in the Trinitarian controversy has received almost no attention in scholarly literature. Yet Hilary singles out "name and birth" as perhaps the two most important concepts he discusses, and their prominence in subsequent stages of the controversy suggests that they warrant attention. If name and birth are not on par with central (and widely studied) categories such as "substance," they nonetheless played a significant role in the development of fourth century Trinitarian theology. Second, the significance of Basil of Ancyra for Hilary's development suggests that Basil and the Homoiousians were more important to the course of late fourth century Trinitarian theology than is commonly allowed. Regardless of the extent to which Basil influenced preeminent Eastern theologians such as the Cappadocians, he did influence Hilary, and through Hilary the subsequent development of Latin Trinitarian theology as a whole.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, however, Hilary's subsequent backing away from Basil's insights in *De Trinitate* 12 may help us understand why Basil was not more influential for Pro-Nicene theology.

One other way that Hilary helps us understand the fourth century is that his thought resists the easy systematization into traditional categories such as "Trinity," "Christology" and "Soteriology." For Hilary, these subjects are indistinguishable from one another, and they need to be explained together. To exegete Scripture is to articulate a doctrine

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<sup>2</sup> For the importance of Hilary for later Latin theologians, see Charles Kannengiesser, "L'héritage d'Hilaire de Poitiers," *Recherches de Science Religieuses* 56 (1968): 435–456.

of God, which is to claim something foundational about the Incarnation, and so forth. What is true for Hilary, in this case, is true for the fourth century as a whole. It no longer makes sense to speak of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology as though it were separable from his Christology or exegesis. This flies in the face of much of traditional scholarship on this time period, but recent attempts by scholars to move beyond an overly rigid reading of these texts would seem to find much resonance in Hilary.<sup>3</sup>

Insights such as these must remain tentative, and I offer them here merely as suggestions that await further study. Nevertheless, they do help us understand the value of continued study of Hilary the theologian. If Hilary is truly the "Athanasius of the West," it is not because he adopted Athanasius' theological system or had the kind of political impact that in any way rivals that of the Alexandrian. Instead, like Athanasius, Hilary provides a window into his phase of the controversy. Hilary never attains the sophistication of, say, Augustine or Gregory of Nyssa, but he does understand what is at stake for Pro-Nicenes, and he does have an understanding of what Pro-Nicene theology will have to do to counter the Homoians. The development of Hilary's thought, therefore, is in some ways a microcosm of the development of Pro-Nicene thinking in general, and the study of Hilary could make a positive contribution to the continuing reevaluation of the Trinitarian Controversy itself.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In addition to Ayres' recent but seminal work on this issue, also see John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: Formation of Christian Theology* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimimir's Seminary Press, 2004). For Augustine, see Basil Studer, *Augustinus De Trinitate: Eine Einführung* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> For examples of this reevaluation, see Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams, eds., *Arianism after Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).

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