

it justice, and it is thus briefly sketched here simply in order to highlight what is, in contrast, characteristic of Arius' mode of proceeding. We have observed how Arius deals with the variegated scriptural material about the Son's relationship to the Father, and how his conclusions are supported by allusion to the metaphorical nature of sonship-language elsewhere in Scripture. This leaves the third point noted above as a major theme of Arian exegesis to be investigated – the question of the Son's status, his 'promotion' at God's will. We have already remarked that it is very difficult to harmonize what Athanasius and Alexander say about Arius' views on this subject with what we have of Arius' own writings; and what, if anything, in the *Thalia* corresponded to Athanasius' summary in A(v) cannot be determined. However, the problem is somewhat illuminated by the fact that both Alexander and Athanasius associate the crypto-adoptionist views they ascribe to Arius with the heretic's exegesis of Psalm 45:7–8. Athanasius reports¹⁰⁸ that the Arians, in interpreting both this passage and Philippians 2:9, laid much stress on the *dia touto* and *dio*, 'therefore', in the texts. They did not, apparently, use these expressions directly in support of a simple exaltation-theology (Christ as a creature promoted because of virtue); despite the persuasive arguments of Gregg and Groh,¹⁰⁹ we have to be cautious in ascribing to Arius the exemplarist doctrine of salvation that might be implied in such a scheme, and to be mindful of the fact that Arius himself is *not* speaking of Christ as a human being rewarded for his probity.¹¹⁰ According to Athanasius, the points made in the Arian exegesis of the psalm were (i) that the *dia touto* implies a reward, and a reward implies voluntary choice (*proairesis*) and thus mutability; and (ii) that exaltation *para tous metochous sou*, 'above your kindred' or 'fellows' implies that the Son is a member of the class of things created¹¹¹ (that is, *metochos* is being taken in the common classical and Septuagintal sense of 'colleague' or 'partner' or 'joint possessor').¹¹² Thus Arius' reading of this psalm was closely connected with some fairly central themes in his theology – the createdness of the Son, and the fact that he does not by nature possess any of the divine attributes.

If Arius really restricted himself to raising only these two points in commenting on Psalm 45 and Philippians 2, it may well be that he was as uneasy with the rhetoric of exaltation and apotheosis as were his critics. Arius' scheme depends upon the fact that God bestows power and glory upon the Son from the beginning, so that

de facto the Son is *atreptos kai analloiōtos*; if this were not so, the Son would not have the role he has as *archē tōn genētōn*, as *sophia*, as the manifester of God's glory. There can be no chronological element in the virtue-and-reward scheme implied in Psalm 45. Again, it seems as if Arius is attempting to sort out a set of confusing and apparently contradictory data in Scripture; and again Proverbs 8:22 represents the central controlling principle. There are passages, like those in Psalm 45 and Philippians 2, which might superficially be read as suggesting a change of status for the Son (just as there are those which, at the other extreme, might imply that the Son is 'part' of God); yet to read them in this way is to overlook those more fundamental witnesses that depict the Son as creative Word and Wisdom and the image of the Father's glory from before the world was made. Arius is, in fact, faced with a considerable dilemma: the Son cannot have his godlike glory and stability by nature, and so must be given them; but if he is given them, the implication must be avoided that there is some sort of change in his status – that there is a time when he is not Wisdom and Word (cf. S 29–30). On the other hand: as a creature the Son is mutable, and as a rational creature he is mutable according to his choice (*proairesis*); and what is to be avoided here is the suggestion that God overrules the Son's freedom by his premundane gifts and graces. It is a peculiarly acute form of the classical dilemma about grace and freedom, and Arius' solution is no better or worse than most efforts that have been made by theologians through the ages. Reconstructing Arius' views from Athanasius' condensed and hostile summaries, we can conclude that Arius argued (i) that the Son, in his pre-incarnate state and in his life on earth *voluntarily* 'loved righteousness and hated iniquity'; that is, he fully and properly exercised his creaturely freedom according to God's purpose in creating rational beings, by contemplation, virtue, and praise of God; (ii) that such an exercise of rational freedom is normally what fits us for transfiguring grace, the 'glory' of familiarity with God, so far as any creature can be familiar with the unapproachable mystery of the Father; (iii) that God, in endowing the Son with this dignity of heavenly intimacy from the very beginning of his existence, is therefore acting not arbitrarily but rationally, knowing that his firstborn among creatures is and will always be worthy of the highest degree of grace, a perfect channel for creative and redemp-

tive action, and so a perfect 'image' of the divine, wholly transparent to the Father.¹¹³

This may sound rather tortuous: it is understandable that Athanasius¹¹⁴ should relentlessly press his opponents to admit that a disjunction between nature and grace must amount to a belief that the state of grace represents an *advance* from the state of nature, and thus a change; or that some of Arius' presumably less sophisticated or less cautious supporters were persuaded to say that the Son was capable of falling away from his state of virtue and glory.¹¹⁵ However, it makes as much sense (in its theological context) as Athanasius' exegesis of these awkward passages – awkward for Arius as well as for Athanasius, if we take the theology of the *Thalia* at face value.

It is possible that Arius engaged with these 'adoptionist' texts quite deliberately because of their actual use by other theologians (of a Sabellian or Paulinian cast of mind), or because of dissatisfaction with a tradition of partial, evasive or ambiguous interpretation which encouraged such exploitation of the passages by heretics. If so, Arius cannot be seen as advancing, on his own initiative, a provocatively adoptionist doctrine; rather he is attempting to 'capture' the imagery of adoption or exaltation for orthodox theology (as he conceives it), once again by a rigorous reading of certain texts in the light of a central controlling principle. And, here as elsewhere,¹¹⁶ part of Athanasius' polemical technique is to show that Arius' 'solution' to a theological *aporia* leads him inexorably towards the position he most wants to avoid – in this instance, the Christological doctrines associated with Paul of Samosata.

However, a fuller elucidation of this demands a fuller discussion of Arius' relationship to earlier Christian theology. We have seen so far that Arius is anxious to present himself as a defender of traditional orthodoxies, a teacher in a reputable succession, and that he is likely to be deliberately in dispute with other writers in his exegesis. A great many attempts have been made to locate him in one sort of tradition or another; but it is perhaps a mistake to look for one self-contained and exclusive 'theological school' to which to assign him, even the elusive 'school of Lucian of Antioch'. It is more helpful to look at his intellectual context, not to discover a set of sources for his ideas, but to understand better his theological agenda: what made *these* particular questions, terms or texts

important for such a man at that particular time? His enemies first¹¹⁷ associated him with Paul of Samosata and with Judaizing tendencies in Christology; later on, after the reputation of Origen had been virtually ruined in the Church, Arius was regarded by some as an Origen *redivivus*.¹¹⁸ Some more modern scholars¹¹⁹ have been much preoccupied with the question of whether Antioch or Alexandria should be seen as his spiritual and intellectual home, assuming that the alternatives of Paul of Samosata or Origen represent a reasonably accurate statement of the options. Others¹²⁰ have been rightly sceptical of this rather facile antithesis. Nevertheless, it is convenient to divide the study of Arius' antecedents into – broadly speaking – examination of Alexandrian and non-Alexandrian traditions – granted that there will be overlap between the two, and that neither is systematic or homogeneous. There should at least be no danger of seeing Arius as a slavish follower of theological convention, Alexandrian or otherwise, if the analysis of his thinking in this section makes any sense of our texts. His claim to be a traditionalist must be examined and assessed, but we should not forget that he is a thinker and exegete of resourcefulness, sharpness and originality.¹²¹