

## The Development of Doctrine

### I. The Influence of Scripture

The reader of this long work may have been struck as he has been making his way through it with the refusal of its author on most (though not on all) occasions to take sides. Indeed the reader may have found this attitude exasperating. There is little denunciation or derision, little approval or dissent. The chief reason for this is that in the author's opinion the subject of the Arian controversy has suffered from a great deal too much partisanship at the hands of those who have written about it. Travers Smith, a conventional late-nineteenth-century Anglican, can describe some bishops as 'deeply tainted with Semi-Arianism',<sup>1</sup> an expression which should provoke laughter rather than assent from the modern scholar. Swete, also an Anglican a little later in period than Travers-Smith and much more learned than he, can say, 'Seven years after Lucian's martyrdom, the hint which he dropped was suddenly expanded by Arius into a full-blown heresy',<sup>2</sup> almost as if he wanted to explain the controversy by the principle of spontaneous combustion. Gwatkin, a learned Anglican of a period rather later than Swete, was capable of suggesting that the Arians were morally deficient because most of their extant literature is purely polemical<sup>3</sup> – a remark whose silliness needs no comment. From a quite different point of view, Schwartz, an immensely learned and very pugnacious Lutheran, was able to persuade himself that the Arian controversy was one aspect of the struggle of the bishop to reduce the ancient privileges of the presbyter, and that the pro-Nicene cause was a crusade against education and intelligence,<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>St. Basil the Great 22.

<sup>2</sup>History of the Procession of the Holy Spirit 79.

<sup>3</sup>SA 27 n 4.

<sup>4</sup>Gesamt. Schrift. III, 178, 179.

thus demonstrating that emancipation from any desire to defend traditional orthodoxy is no guarantee of impartiality nor even of common sense. And anyone who has read *L'Hérésie d'Arius et la Foi de Nicée* will realize that a Roman Catholic scholar standing in the splendid French tradition of patristic scholarship, Bouларанд, could even as late as 1972 give a completely conventional account of the controversy which consequently does little to throw light upon the real springs and causes of the thoughts and actions of those who took part in it.

This chapter therefore, which of necessity must sum up in a brief discussion what has gone before, will concern itself with attempting to identify the forces playing upon the actors in this sixty-year-long drama, the influences which were most powerful in shaping their thought and action; and in doing so will draw some conclusions about what was one of the most remarkable instances of the development of doctrine in the history of Christianity.

The first influence to examine is that of the Bible.<sup>5</sup> All parties to the controversy shared very much the same exegetical assumptions.<sup>6</sup> They all expected to find direct prophecies of Christ in all parts of the Old Testament. The key-text, Prov 8:22, for instance, was allowed by everybody to refer to Christ, whereas we to-day would hesitate to regard it as more than, on the most liberal interpretation, a possible faint foreshadowing of him. Addressing the Arians, Hilary can refer to this text and say 'Wisdom, whom you admit to be Christ'.<sup>7</sup> Had it occurred to Athanasius when he was writing the Second Book of his *Orations against the Arians*, most of which is devoted to this single text, to dismiss the whole debate as a storm in a teacup because the text does not refer to Christ, he would have been appalled, but the thought did not occur to him. All parties regarded the Bible as inerrant as far as it was possible to do so; that is to say, they recognised

<sup>5</sup>Simonetti devoted a long paper in *Studi* to the interpretation of Proverbs 8.22 during the controversy (11–87). Pollard has published several studies relevant to this subject, *Johannine Christology and the Early Church*, 'The Exegesis of Scripture and the Arian Controversy' and 'The Exegesis of John X.30 in the early Trinitarian Controversies'. See also J. van Parys 'Exégèse et théologie dans les Livres contre Eunome de Grégoire de Nyssa' and C. Kannengeiser 'Logique et idées motrices dans le recours biblique selon Grégoire de Nyssa'.

<sup>6</sup>Meslin remarks that the norm of faith for the Arians is precisely similar to that of their opponents: 'c'est la même conception d'une Écriture, domaine exclusif de l'autorité clericale et considérée comme critère de ségrégation'. (*Les Ariens* 229).

<sup>7</sup>*De Trinitate* IV.21.

that it contained apparent errors and contradictions but they laboured to explain them away, very often but not invariably by allegorising. For instance, Hilary notices that none of the blessings promised to Jacob in Gn 27:28, 29 actually happened to him, so 'because Scripture is not endangered by falsehood', the blessing must apply to his descendants, not to himself.<sup>8</sup> All sides lack almost completely (with a little exception allowed in the case of Gregory of Nazianzus) a sense of historical perspective. This is as clear in the statement of Hilary that all the apostles taught the eternity of the Son,<sup>9</sup> as in Damasus' fantastic reconstruction of the early history of the church in Alexandria.<sup>10</sup> Consequently all parties tend to read the ideas and doctrine of their own day into the earliest period of Christianity. Gericke remarks that Marcellus was not a Biblicist in the strict sense. Rather he has a ready-made theological scheme and reads it into the Bible.<sup>11</sup> There were very few, if any, Biblicists in the strict sense among the writers of the fourth century. The result is, inevitably, much perverse and some positively grotesque interpretation. We have seen some examples in Ambrose,<sup>12</sup> but this practice is not confined to Ambrose. Cyril can manage to interpret Job 14:17ff, 'For there is hope for a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again', etc., where Job's point is precisely that man does not live again after death, into an argument for resurrection after death.<sup>13</sup> And we have seen several examples of similar exegetical contortions in the work of Athanasius and Hilary when they are dealing with the human limitations of Jesus Christ.

It used to be thought that the Arians were so much interested in metaphysics and the relation of the Father to the Son that they ignored soteriology, whereas the pro-Nicenes because of their concern to prove the divinity of Christ paid more attention to the doctrine of salvation. Simonetti has rightly rejected this theory.<sup>14</sup> The Arians were concerned with soteriology, and their ideas about the relation of the Son to the Father show this. They made a serious effort to meet the evidence of the Bible that God suffers, whereas the

<sup>8</sup> *Tractatus Mysteriorum* ed. A. Feder (CSEL, Part IV) I, 23 (19, 20).

<sup>9</sup> *Coll. Arian* II B 5 (25) (148).

<sup>10</sup> See above, p. 822.

<sup>11</sup> *Marcellus* 170.

<sup>12</sup> See above pp. 672-3.

<sup>13</sup> *Catecheses* XVIII.15 (314).

<sup>14</sup> *Crisi* 565-6.

general impression which the writings of the pro-Nicenes produces is that this is the last admission which they wish to make. It has also been asserted in the past that the Arians clung blindly and woodenly to Scripture whereas the pro-Nicenes were ready to accept Scripture within the context of tradition and a broad philosophical outlook. There is some truth in this assertion, but it must be modified by several exceptions. The pro-Nicenes often remark on the invariable demand of the Arians for Scriptural proof, and how they accuse the champions of Nicaea of introducing the non-Scriptural term *homoousios* into the creed.<sup>15</sup> But the pro-Nicene writers are equally insistent upon the unique position of Scripture as a norm of faith. Epiphanius remarks upon the absence of any appeal to Scripture in Aetius' *Syntagmation*,<sup>16</sup> and Basil at least twice warns against the danger of either adding to or subtracting from Scripture.<sup>17</sup> The insistence of the Arians upon pressing the analogy or metaphor of Father and Son too far drove the pro-Nicenes to examine the nature of language about God and to become markedly more sophisticated than their opponents about using it. They warn against too great rationalism in exegesis.<sup>18</sup> They can even protest against a too wooden and factual acceptance of the words of Scripture, especially when dealing with the first chapters of Genesis: God did not literally walk nor literally speak, and so on.<sup>19</sup> Almost everybody had learnt from Origen the doctrine of 'accommodation', that is the idea that God accommodates his language and ideas when communicating with people to the limitations of their understanding and even of their culture.<sup>20</sup> And the pro-Nicenes are quite often ready to appeal

<sup>15</sup> To give a few examples out of many, Athanasius *De Synodis* 36, Basil *DSS* X 25 (112), Gregory of Nazianzus *Orat.* XXXI. 18, 21; and we have seen above pp. 769-70 how constantly the Macedonians demanded Scriptural proof. The pro-Nicenes could of course hit back by accusing the Arians of the same fault, with their talk of *agennesia*, *gennetos* and *agennetos*, e.g. Athanasius *Or. con. Ar.* I.30, Gregory of Nyssa *Con. Eunom.* II.13 (1016).

<sup>16</sup> *Panarion* 76.54.13 (411).

<sup>17</sup> *Adv. Eunom.* II.8 (585) and *De Fide* I (680).

<sup>18</sup> E.g. Basil *Adv. Eunom.* II.24 (628).

<sup>19</sup> Marcellus of Ancyra, Fragment 52 in Eusebius *Ecc. Theol.* III.3 (L57); Gregory of Nyssa *Cat. Orat.* V.71 and Ambrose *Exaemeron* I.9.33, *De Paradiso* 14.69; Epiphanius *Ancoratus* 54-58, Gregory of Nyssa *Con. Eunom.* II 205 (977), 212 (981), 219-220 (984), 226 (984), 395-409 (1044-8). The protest is not so much against literalism as against a wooden and naive way of using the text.

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the most striking example of this occurs in the obscure and not properly investigated *Dialogue of Adamantius* or *On the Right Faith in God* (ed. GCS W. H. van de Sande Bakhuyzen PG X) 18, 20 (810), where the author cheerfully

behind the words of Scripture to their intention or drift (*skopos*).<sup>21</sup>

The pro-Nicenes did indeed appeal to 'the tradition of the Fathers', very often meaning the creed N, but sometimes reaching behind it to earlier times.<sup>22</sup> The appeal of Gregory of Nazianzus to the experience of the church, which we have already examined, is a kind of appeal to tradition, and so is the appeal to the church's practice, especially in administering baptism, which, as we have seen, is quite common. Basil's attempt to appeal to secret tradition in the church is an extension of the same device, but an unusual, indeed unique one, which neither of the other Cappadocian theologians imitated.<sup>23</sup> It must, however, be remembered that the Arians also appealed to tradition. Palladius is appalled by the Nicene faith not only because in his eyes it is unScriptural but because it is a novelty. Gryson reminds us that the Arians could and did appeal to great names in the past, Cyprian, Eusebius of Caesarea, his namesake of Nicomedia and Constantinople, and Theognis of Nicaea (but not Arius!).<sup>24</sup>

We cannot even contrast in any clear-cut way the pro-Nicenes as users of allegory and the Arians as rejecters of it.<sup>25</sup> Almost everybody, with the exception of Didymus the Blind and Ambrose (heirs of Origen and of Philo) rejected the excessive lengths to which Origen had brought the art of allegorizing, and some, e.g. Eustathius of Antioch and Epiphanius, explicitly dissociate themselves from him on this point.<sup>26</sup> 'Origen will not stand along with us on the day of judgment' is the fierce comment of Epiphanius.<sup>27</sup> But nobody

admits that there are contradictory commands in Scripture. There are of course many examples of the writers of the fourth century contrasting the obscurity and enigmatic messages of the OT with the clear words of the NT e.g. Eusebius *Ecc. Theol.* I, 20.96 and Gregory of Nyssa *Ref. Con. Eunom.* 2, 3 (468).

<sup>21</sup>E.g. Athanasius *De Synodis* 41, Basil DSS VII, 16 [93], *Or. con. Ar.* III.35; Hilary *Liber ad Constantium* (Feder) 9 (204), and see examples in Gregory of Nyssa cited by van Parys *op. cit.*

<sup>22</sup>E.g. Athanasius *De Synodis* 41, Basil DSS VII, 16 [93] where, however, he guards himself by declaring that the Fathers are consistent with the Scriptures.

<sup>23</sup>They also, towards the end of the century, realised that to interpret Scripture simply using Scriptural words is not enough; see Gregory of Nyssa *Con Eunom.* II 395-409 (1044-1048) 412 (1048) 419 (1049).

<sup>24</sup>*Scolies Ariennes* 178-9.

<sup>25</sup>As, e.g., Lonergan wishes to do, *The Way to Nicaea* 71.

<sup>26</sup>For Eustathius, see above pp. 211-12, 214-15. But Sellers is unwise (*Eustathius of Antioch* 68) to take a rejection of allegorizing as an invariable criterion of Eustathius' authorship, for Eustathius can on occasion allegorize. For Epiphanius see *Ancoratus* 62-63.

<sup>27</sup>*Ancoratus* 63.1 (75).

rejected allegorization altogether. Both Athanasius of Anazarbus and Asterius used allegory.<sup>28</sup> *The Opus Imperfectum in Matthaicum* can allegorize the details of John the Baptist's dress and diet.<sup>29</sup> The Latin Arian *Commentary on Job* can allegorize the commands of the Lord to put out a little from the shore and to launch out into the deep.<sup>30</sup> The Greek Arian commentator, Julius, on the same book cannot resist allegorizing the Leviathan as the devil and the throne of God as the sky, and knows of no other way of dealing with the otherwise either incomprehensible or indecent Song of Solomon.<sup>31</sup> Eusebius of Emesa in one of his discourses has quite a long passage about allegorizing. He allows that it cannot altogether be rejected but he is very cautious about its use. It tends to read meanings into the text which are good in themselves but are simply not present in the text. It can be an illegitimate short cut. A man who is bound or who is in prison is anxious to be free by any means, but not all means are right.<sup>32</sup> Had all ancient interpreters of the Bible followed this advice, subsequent generations would have been saved the necessity of reading a great deal of nonsense.

Conversely, a number of passages from pro-Nicene writers can be produced which make them seem as devout observers of the text of the Bible as any Arian. At one point Hilary gives a creed representing his own belief which is composed wholly of biblical texts.<sup>33</sup> 'Do not believe me', says Cyril of Jerusalem to the people whom he is catechizing, 'believe the Scriptures'.<sup>34</sup> Earnest but futile attempts are made to prove that the Bible really does use the word *ousia* or *substantia*. Potamius of Lisbon in his pro-Nicene phase does so clumsily,<sup>35</sup> Marius Victorinus in a more sophisticated but no more convincing manner.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup>For Athanasius see above pp. 42-43 and also Bardy *Lucien* 204-5 and Simonetti *Studi* 101. For Asterius see Bardy *op. cit.* 356-59.

<sup>29</sup>*Op. Imp.* III PG 56, 648, 649, 650.

<sup>30</sup>Gryson 5, 2, 4 (214, 215, 216), Mai 201, 202.

<sup>31</sup>36.9-13; 157.13, 14; 283.1-5; 232.17-19. But in every respect this is an outstanding commentary for its learning, its good sense, its careful attention to the text and its refusal to indulge in fantastic speculation. It contrasts very favourably with the commentaries of Didymus and of Gregory the Great on Job. It has a fair claim to be regarded as the best ancient commentary on the book.

<sup>32</sup>*Xi De Arbore Fici* (4-7), 258-260.

<sup>33</sup>*Liber ad Constantium* II 11 (204, 205). Zahn (*Marcellus von Ancyra* 52-56) is only one among several to note how emphatically he appealed to the Bible.

<sup>34</sup>*Catechesis* IV.17 (108).

<sup>35</sup>PL 8:1418.

<sup>36</sup>*Adversus Arium* I.30 (108, 109), 59 (160, II.3 (175), 8 (181-3); *De Homoousio Recipiendio* 2 (279-80).

But when all is said and done, it must be conceded that the Arians are less inclined to use allegory than the pro-Nicenes. This is not because their respective theologies drove them in that direction, but because the Arians were, with some exceptions such as Palladius and the author of the *Opus Imperfectum*, less intellectual and less sophisticated than the pro-Nicenes. We have seen this already in the case of the Macedonians requiring Scriptural proof.<sup>37</sup> Prestige is near the mark when he says that the Arians had fallen into the pitfall of 'mistaking anthropomorphic or physical metaphors for more than what they purported to be.'<sup>38</sup> The Arians maintain, says Epiphanius, that their opponents ought to give notice when they are about to treat the language of the Bible figuratively, and that 'if it is written about (Christ) that he is a creature, then he must be acknowledged to be a creature'.<sup>39</sup> The Lucianists claimed that because Jn 1:14 said 'The Word became flesh' and not 'flesh and soul', therefore the incarnate *Logos* had no human soul.<sup>40</sup> 'They take refuge again and again in the literal sense of the Holy Scriptures' says Athanasius, 'but they fail, in their usual way, to understand even that.'<sup>41</sup> 'We do not call the Holy Spirit God' says an Arian writer, 'because the Bible does not say so, but subservient to God the Father and obedient in all things to the commands of the Son as the Son is to the Father'<sup>42</sup> God must have left Job on his dung-heap for three and a half months (not three and a half years in imitation of our Lord's ministry of three and a half years), says the Latin Arian commentator on Job, because at Job 7:3 Job says 'I have endured months (not years) of emptiness'.<sup>43</sup> Asterius, a much more sophisticated writer than this one, can on occasion<sup>44</sup> allegorise mildly in a way different from Origen's raging subjectivism, but on the whole he prefers in his *Homilies* to moralize. Yet the Arians did certainly tend to regard themselves as the party who kept to the Bible

<sup>37</sup>I do not think that Pollard is correct in seeing in the Arians a greater 'Biblical realism' than the pro-Nicenes displayed ('Origins of Arianism' 104-06). Meslin (*Ariens* 343-52) discusses this difference usefully. Nor do I think that Barnard ('Antecedents of Arius' 176) is justified in seeing Arius as reacting against Origen's use of allegory.

<sup>38</sup>GPT 279.

<sup>39</sup>*Ancoratus* 45.4 (58), 46.1 (56).

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid* 35.1-6 (44, 45).

<sup>41</sup>*Or con. Ar.* I, 52.

<sup>42</sup>Mai/Gryson fragments II.265 (II.212).

<sup>43</sup>II.474; the Latin is *sustinui menses supervacuos*.

<sup>44</sup>*Homilies* XI.5 (77). XIII.10 (96), 17 (99); XV.3 (109); XXX.5 (240-1) frag.7 (258).

in contrast to the pro-Nicenes who added to it or distorted it. Maximinius in controversy with Augustine, says:

'We believe the Scriptures, and we reverence those divine Scriptures; and we do not desire to pass over a single iota (*apicem*), for we dread the punishment which is to be found in the Scriptures themselves' (Dt 4:2).<sup>45</sup> Later he is more explicit: 'the divine Scripture does not fare badly in our teaching so that it has to receive improvement (*emendationem*) from us.'<sup>46</sup>

At one point in his *De Synodis* Hilary gives a list of places in the Bible which present special difficulty to the expounder. The passages in the Old Testament are Gn 1:2 (darkness appears to be co-aeval with God); Gn 5:26 taken with 1 Peter 3:20 (Methuselah appears to have lived beyond the days of the Flood, yet he is not among the eight people in the ark, the only souls who were saved); Gn 18:21 (God appears to be ignorant of the exact extent of the sin of Sodom and comes down to investigate it); Dt 34:6 (nobody knows where Moses is buried, and yet those who buried him must have known). And in the New Testament the problems are that the Lord who was to send the Holy Spirit on the disciples is himself said to be born of the Spirit; that the Lord who condemned those who use the sword himself ordered a sword to be brought to him (Matt 26:52); that he who descended into hell is apparently in Paradise with the thief (Lk 22:36); and that the apostles are commanded to baptize in the triple Name (Matt 28:19), yet they baptized only in the name of Jesus (Acts 10:48).<sup>47</sup>

These are all passages which presumably would have given trouble to any commentator. We can compile a list of passages which were specially controverted and interpreted in different ways by different sides.<sup>48</sup> One of these was Gn 19:24 'The Lord rained down . . . from the Lord': who were these two Lords? The 17th anathema of the First Creed of Sirmium (351) specially damns people who misinterpret this (and the target of the anathema is clearly Photinus), either to say that this refers to the Father only and not to the Son, or to interpret it as meaning that there are two gods.<sup>49</sup> The Arians used Isa 1:2 ('I

<sup>45</sup>*Collatio Augustini cum Maximino* 13 (730).

<sup>46</sup>20, 21 (736).

<sup>47</sup>*De Syn.* 85 (537, 538).

<sup>48</sup>Simonetti *Crisi* 475-80 gives a long and interesting list of such passages; see also 62-3, 269 and *Studi* 170, 171.

<sup>49</sup>So Simonetti points out *Studi* 149-50. See above pp. 326-8 and Hahn *Symbole* p. 198.

have nourished and brought up children'), Mal 2:10 ('Have we not one Father?'), and Job 38:28 ('Has the rain a father?') to reduce the significance of John 1:14 ('glory as of the only Son from the Father'). In his *Letter to Paulinus of Tyre* Eusebius of Nicomedia used Job 38:28 and Isa 1:2, and Mal. 2:10, and Athanasius in *Or. Con. Ar. II* 59 uses the Job, the Isaiah and the Malachi passages in a counter direction.<sup>50</sup> The First Sirmian Creed also insists that at Gn. 1:26 God is talking to himself and not to his Son.<sup>51</sup> The pro-Nicenes, Hilary tells us, adduced as proof-texts for the Son's origin from the Father Jn 10:30 and 14:7, 9, 10, 11, 12. The Arians explained them all as referring to the moral and voluntary solidarity of the Father and the Son, not to a supposed unity of nature, and counter-adduced to support their case Acts 4:32; 1 Cor 3:8; Jn 17:20 and 21.<sup>52</sup>

These passages, and others like them, were the outer fortifications round which each side skirmished. But there were other texts which were more crucial than these, the key-points or inner citadels of the battle. We shall look briefly at these:

*Proverbs 8:22* and some of the following verses.<sup>53</sup> Did this passage declare plainly that the Son was created, or did the original of the word 'created' only mean 'appointed', or did it refer not to the pre-existent Son but to the human element in the incarnate Son or the faithful who become his Body, or even to some innate power within the Godhead and not to the Son?

*Amos 4:12, 13* We have already seen how sedulously the Macedonians used this text.<sup>54</sup> Does it mean that the Holy Spirit actually is

<sup>50</sup>So Simonetti *Studi* 170-1 and 171 n 53.

<sup>51</sup>See references in n 49.

<sup>52</sup>Hilary *De Trinitate* VIII, 3, 5.

<sup>53</sup>I am not here giving an *Auslegungsgeschichte*; for this text see Simonetti *Studi* and Ricken 'Nikaia als Crisis' 331-3. The reader can consult the Index of Biblical passages at the end of this work. I merely mention the following (not exhaustive) list of writers and works which deal with this passage: Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Eusebius of Caesarea, Eustathius, Marcellus, Athanasius, the 'Macrostick', Basil of Ancyra, George of Laodicea, Epiphanius, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, Secundianus of Singidunum, Hilary, the Latin Commentary on N, Eunomius, Ambrose, the Ps.-Athanasian *Expositio Fidei*, Phoebadius of Agen, Gregory of Elvira, and in the sixth century Thrasamund and Fulgentius are still disputing about it.

<sup>54</sup>But it had been employed before them. Eusebius of Caesarea *Dem. Ev.* IV.16.30-34 used it earlier in a quite uncontroversial way referring to the Holy Spirit; it never occurred to him that the Spirit was not created. Against the Arian and Macedonian use of it we can list Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea, Didymus,

created? Or does it simply refer to the wind as created or to men who have become spirit or who have been renewed by the Spirit, or to the spirit of the Jews; and is 'declaring to men their Christ' a mistranslation of 'declaring to men their discourse' (so Didymus who can appeal to the Hebrew)?

*Isaiah 53:8* The great text for speaking about the generation of the Son ('His generation who shall declare?').<sup>55</sup> The early anti-Arians or pro-Nicenes use it to decry Arian attempts to define how the Son was generated. The Arians use it to deplore attempts to define the Son's generation in terms of *ousia* and cognates. The later pro-Nicenes use it to prove that the Son's generation has had no beginning. The Arians can appeal to it to prove that the Son's generation was later than the Father's being, and accuse the pro-Nicenes of saying that the Son is virtually unknowable; the pro-Nicenes reply, 'incomprehensible but not unknowable'. Ps.-Maximus in *Contra Iudaeos*, in reply to the pro-Nicene use of the text, maintains that the Holy Spirit can inform us about the Son's generation. Eunomius of course avoids using the text because it makes against his conviction that it is perfectly possible to know about the origin of the Son.

*Ps 45 (44):7 (7, 8)* ('You love righteousness and hate wickedness, therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows') The Arians seized on this passage as a proof that God the Father was the God of God the Son: this was one of their favourite doctrines. They pointed to the inferiority of Christ in that he was anointed by God the Father, and exalted in this way because of his righteousness and good life. Their opponents found this hard to answer. They adduced texts from the Fourth Gospel apparently contradicting this view or they said that Christ went no further than acknowledging the Father's paternal authority, or they argued that it was only his human nature that was anointed and it was only as man that he called God the Father his God.<sup>56</sup>

Epiphanius and Pseudo-Didymus. Shapland, op. cit. 66-7, gives a list of authors who treat of this text.

<sup>55</sup>Simonetti refers again and again to the use of this text, *Studi* 128-32, 175 n 79; 'Osservazioni' sull' "Altercazio" 56; *Crisi* 62, 231-2. The authors who treat of this text are Alexander of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, the Second Sirmian Creed, the Ps.-Athanasian *Expositio Fidei*, Eusebius of Emesa (in a non-Arian sense!), Hilary, Marius Victorinus, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ps.-Didymus, Ps.-Maximus of Turin (Arian), Phoebadius, Ambrose, Thrasamund and Fulgentius.

<sup>56</sup>Opponents quoted by Athanasius, Alexander and Hilary use this text, and they

*Ps 110 (109):1 and 3* gave material for speculative interpretation because v. 1 ran 'The Lord said to my Lord', and thereby provided a chance of showing that the Father and the Son were two distinct *hypostases*. Both pro-Nicenes and Arians used it for this purpose. But v. 3 was even more employed because though the modern English translation of the Hebrew (RSV) runs 'From the womb of the morning like dew your youth will come to you', the LXX here plunged into a wild but prolific mistranslation, 'from the belly before the morning star I have begotten thee'.<sup>57</sup> The Arians unanimously applied the sentence to the production of the pre-existent Son, because it seemed to hint at a beginning with some relation to time for the Son. The pro-Nicenes usually applied it to the incarnation (but not Hilary). Eusebius of Caesarea (*Comm. on Psalms*) refers it to the generation of the pre-existent Son, even though he knows and quotes other versions of the Hebrew which produce a quite different sense from the LXX version. One Arian writer (Mai/Gryson frags.) sees v. 1 as the Holy Spirit acknowledging the Lordship of the Son.

*The Gospel According to St. John* was the major battlefield in the New Testament during the Arian controversy. It was the chief resource of the pro-Nicenes but was by no means free of difficulties and pitfalls even for them. It is generally true that the Arians scored heavily in using the Synoptic gospels. We have seen into what exegetical mazes Athanasius and Hilary were led to dealing with those texts which indicate Jesus Christ as weak or fearful or ignorant.<sup>58</sup> On the whole they recouped themselves in St. John's Gospel, but not without the necessity of exercising at times extreme ingenuity. Only a very few of the most controverted texts can be dealt with here.

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try to reply: the Mai/Gryson fragments also use it in their cause. *Ps. 45 (44)* was a much discussed one because its first verse ('my heart overflows with (literally "has belched out" LXX ἐξηρπούγατο) a goodly theme') brought up the manner of the generation of the Son, and the description of the queen standing at the King's right hand in v. 9 (10) provided an opportunity for the Arians to point out that though the church (allegorization of the queen) stands at Christ's right hand nobody would conclude from this that it was equal to Christ, yet the pro-Nicenes inconsistently claim that the Son, who stands at God's right hand, is equal to him.

<sup>57</sup>ἐκ γαστρὸς πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐξεγέννησά σε. Eusebius of Caesarea, Asterius, Marcellus, Hilary, Ps.-Maximus of Turin, Thrasamund, Fulgentius and Viglius of Thapsee dealt with this psalm.

<sup>58</sup>See above pp. 447-50, 496-501.

*John 1:1* is naturally the great resort of the pro-Nicenes, but it is used by Eusebius of Caesarea to express his doctrine of the *Logos* before the outbreak of the dispute, and Marcellus and even Photinus (who held that here the evangelist was simply calling God the *Logos*, there being no Son before the Incarnation) can use it for their own purposes. Arians known to Epiphanius argued ingeniously that the *Logos* could not represent ultimate metaphysical reality ('He who is') because 'He who is' cannot be 'with' Him who is; they cannot both represent ultimate reality. Epiphanius simply protests against pushing human analogies too far.<sup>59</sup>

*John 10:30* ('I and the Father are One'), at first sight this looks like a straight-forward pro-Nicene text, but closer investigation shows a rather different picture. Alexander used it before Nicaea to show that Christ here 'is neither calling himself the Father nor indicating that natures which are two in *hypostases* were one'.<sup>60</sup> Asterius and the Second ('Dedication') Creed of 341, which may have been influenced by Asterius, interpret the text as indicating a purely moral unity of consent and will. Marcellus contested this strongly and applied it to the ontological unity, indeed identity, of the Father and his *Logos* (the Son not appearing till the Incarnation), and to deny the existence of two *hypostases*. The statement of the Western bishops after Serdica in 343 enthusiastically supports this view; the text is there 'because of the unity of the *hypostasis* which is one, both of the Father and of the Son'.<sup>61</sup> Hilary can show uneasiness at this text, insisting that the Two being One does not preclude their being distinct, but usually he interprets it in what might be called the conventional pro-Nicene way as indicating their ontological unity, and this is how Athanasius takes it again and again.

*John 14:9, 10* ('He who has seen me has seen the Father' and 'I am in the Father and the Father in me'). Those two texts were crucial and capital to Athanasius because behind the ontological unity of the Father and the Son he saw the unity of revelation, and they tended

<sup>59</sup>Alexander, Athanasius and Hilary appeal to this text as well as the others. Simonetti *Studi* 146 deals with it.

<sup>60</sup>Opitz *Urk III* no. 14 38 (25); probably Alexander means, one in *hypostasis* not one in nature, though the Greek is so worded that we cannot be quite sure. For comment on this passage see Simonetti *Studi* 127 n 25 (who points out that Origen, the source of the doctrine of the moral unity of Father and Son, never uses this text to prove their unity of nature nor *ousia*) and Kopecek *History* 30-31, 55-57.

<sup>61</sup>See Hahn *Symbole* 189.

not to figure in Arian discussions because this was where Arian theology was weakest. It could envisage that God suffered but could not allow that the God who suffered was the full revelation of the higher God. It is significant that the *Latin Commentary on the Nicene Creed* preserved in *EOMIA* quotes Jn 14:9.

*John 14:28* ('The Father is greater than I'). This was an easy text for the Arians to use in their interest. Alexander before Nicaea already has to deal with it; he does so by explaining that though the Father is greater as the ingenerate is greater than the generate, still as the image of the Father the Son is still in the same incomparable class or rank with the Father. Simonetti says that the text was only used by the Arians rather late in the controversy,<sup>62</sup> but in fact Eusebius of Caesarea uses it (conflated with Jn 6:44) in his *Letter to Euphratation of Balanea*.<sup>63</sup> This curiously conflated text ('My Father who sent me is greater than I') is also found in Eunomius, and at the Council of Aquileia Palladius used the text in this form and when Ambrose specially stressed 'who sent me' made no objection.<sup>64</sup> Marcellus was apparently the first pro-Nicene to apply Jn 14:28 to the incarnate rather than the pre-existent *Logos*. Athanasius and Hilary follow his example, but they also suggest that there is a certain superiority in the Father because he is the Father, but not one that affects the identity of nature of Father and Son. Gregory of Nyssa, dealing with the text, says that the Father is greater as cause of the Son, but equal in nature. Epiphanius suggests that Christ uttered these words only out of filial respect, not making a statement about the ontological status of either. Arians of course use the text to show the inferiority of the Son. It is used for this purpose in the Second Sirmian Creed. Basil, answering Jn 10:45 with Phil 2:6, refers the verse to the incarnate Word.

*John 17:3* ('This is eternal life, that they should know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent'). This is one of the texts most strongly exploited by the Arians. The *Logos* was

<sup>62</sup>Simonetti comments on this verse *Studi* 128 and *Crisi* 52, 232 n 43, 259, and 478. See also Gryson *Scolies Ariennes* 193, Kopecek *History* 14 and Tetz 'Zur Theologie des Markell von Ancyra I', 270.

<sup>63</sup>Opitz *Urk.* No. 3, 2(5) Meslin notes the use of this conflated text in *Les Ariens* 396-9; Potamius of Lisbon also uses it in a Latin form, see Moreira *Potamius de Lisbonne* 222.

<sup>64</sup>Gryson *Scolies Ariennes* 118(294). An orthodox interpolation in the *Opus Imperfectum* also uses this conflation (xliv.33 (PG 56:882)). Marius Victorinus takes the conventional pro-Nicene line here.

certainly God (*theos*) but not true God. Arius had used this concept again and again in his surviving work.<sup>65</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea had used it for just this purpose in his *Letter to Euphratation*:<sup>66</sup> the Son is 'the image of the true God' and 'God' (*theos*) but not true God. Palladius uses the text twice and Maximinius cites it also. Aetius took it as a proof of his doctrine that we can know God perfectly<sup>67</sup>, which is a quite different use from the normal Arian interpretation. Against this Athanasius and Hilary and Epiphanius produce an array of texts showing that in other places and in other ways the Bible witnesses to Christ being true God (e.g. 'I am the way the truth and the life' (Jn 14:6) and 'this is the true God and life eternal' (1 John 5:20)). Hilary asks how we can be saved by him who is not true God; Gregory of Nyssa points to all the places in the New Testament in which (as he thinks) Christ is called God (Rom 16:27; 1 Tim 1:17 and 6:16), and declares that to accept the Arian view of Jn 17:3 would be to deprive these texts of meaning.

*John 20:17* ('I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'). The Second Sirmian creed, which includes several texts which the Arians thought capital, cites this also. God the Father is the God of the Son; this was a constantly-repeated doctrine of the Arians, though not perhaps in the early stages of their history, for Athanasius does not pay much attention to it. Hilary, Epiphanius, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa all reply in the same way to this argument. God the Father was the Father and the God of Jesus Christ as man; but of Jesus Christ as God he was Father in a different and pre-eminent way, by divine generation.

*1 Cor 15:28* ('When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to everyone'). This is a text which appears to provide good ground for Arian doctrine. Simonetti observes<sup>68</sup> that Hilary and the Ps-Athanasian *Sermo Maior de Fide* interpret it of the human nature of Christ, which will of course be

<sup>65</sup>See Stead 'The "Thalia" of Arius' 36-38; he points out that Origen had made this distinction, *Comm. on John II.2.16*. See also Kopecek *History* 296-7 who observes that this text Jn 17:3 occurs in both the *Euchologion of Serapion* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*; and Gryson *Scolies Ariennes* 179-84.

<sup>66</sup>Opitz *Urk.* III No. 3.3(5).

<sup>67</sup>See above, p. 606.

<sup>68</sup>*Crisi* 480.

subordinated to the Father, and that Gregory of Nyssa borrows from Origen an ingenious explanation which refers the text to Christ as the church, for of course in the end the church will be subjected to God. Ambrose follows Hilary in the conventional line of applying the verse to Christ as Son of Man. Marius Victorinus characteristically plunges into an esoteric philosophical explanation.<sup>69</sup> Epiphanius refuses to admit that this subjection affects equality or unity with the Father or honour, the Son's inferiority simply consisting in the fact that he is only-begotten Son and the Father is his Father. The pro-Nicenes were on particularly delicate ground here because on the one side they must avoid appearing to favour the idea of Marcellus that the Son's humanity would disappear at the rendering up of the Kingdom and the *Logos*, revert to original unity in the Father, and on the other side they must not give in to Arian insistence, based on this very promising text, that the Son is permanently and by constitution inferior to the Father. It is no wonder that their interpretations here are sometimes far-fetched.

A characteristic exegetical ploy of the Arians was to invoke texts in the interests of what might be called 'reductionism', that is to say they would try to reduce the value of the titles given (or thought to be given) to Christ in the Bible by showing that they were also applied in the Bible to quite ordinary people or things. Asterius played this game extensively in a well-known passage:

"Like" (the Son to the Father): well, it is written about us that "man is the image and is the glory of God" (1 Cor 11:7); as for (the Son existing) "always", it is written "while we live we are always ..." (2 Cor 4:11); as for (the Son being) "in him", (it is written) that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28); as for (the Son being) "unchanging", it is written "nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ" (Rom 8:35). On the subject of (the Son being) the power (of God), (it is written) that the caterpillar and the locust are called the "power" even the "great power" of God (Joel 2:25 LXX), and the same is often said about the people, for instance, "all the power of the Lord went out from the land of Egypt" (Ex. 12:44 LXX), and there are other heavenly powers for it says "the Lord

<sup>69</sup>When everything else has been cleared out, active potency rests, and in it God will exist according to what it is to exist and what it is to be at rest, but in all other things spiritually according to both his potency and substance', *Adv. Arium* I.39 (126).

of the powers is with us, the God of Jacob is our champion" (Ps 46 (45):8).<sup>70</sup>

Greg and Groh give a list of texts used by Arians to reduce the significance of the Son's partaking in God.<sup>71</sup> Kopecek gives a similar list of texts employed by the Neo-Arians to reduce the significance of the title 'Son'.<sup>72</sup> Eusebius of Nicomedia in his *Letter to Paulinus of Tyre* remarks that if the Son is to be described as 'from the *ousia*' of the Father (which Eusebius dislikes) because he is begotten, then he can produce several instances in Scripture where things are said to be begotten which yet have no connection with the nature of him who begat them; he instances Isa 1:2 ('I have begotten and exalted sons' LXX), Dt 32:18 ('you were unmindful of the Rock that begot you') and Job 38:28 ('Who has begotten the drops of dew?' i.e. God has).<sup>73</sup> Another 'reductive' move was to argue that where God is named along with Christ and the word 'through' is applied to Christ, as at 1 Cor 8:6 and 2 Cor 15:18, the Person to whom 'through' is applied must be inferior. Another was to reduce the significance of the Son being 'in the Father' by making it equivalent to the same relationship as all Christians have when they are 'in' Christ, e.g. Jn 4:30; 14:30; 17:11.<sup>74</sup>

Arian exegesis also emphasised strongly the uniqueness and incomparability of God the Father by way of contrast to the status of God the Son. Meslin notes the use of Baruch 3:35 (36), 'This is our God, and there shall none other be accounted of in comparison of him',<sup>75</sup> by Germinius in the *Altercatio*. Hilary at one point gives a long list of passages used thus to establish the uniqueness of the Father: Rom 16:25, Isa 65:16, Jn 17:3, Ex 3:14, and many others,<sup>76</sup> and later a shorter list thought to manifest the inferior condition of the Son's divinity:<sup>77</sup> Jn 17:3, 14:28 and Mk 13:32. There were also lists of texts

<sup>70</sup>Fragment XVI, Bardy *Lucien* 347, from Athanasius *De Decret.* 20. A very similar argument is attributed to the Arians in *Ep. ad Afros* 5. Athanasius can play the same game against the Arians when they call the Son 'like' the Father, *Or. con. Ar.* III.10.

<sup>71</sup>*Early Arianism* 107-8.

<sup>72</sup>*History* 171-2. At 502-3 he gives a list of proof-texts used by the Neo-Arians for the Son's subordination to the Father.

<sup>73</sup>Opitz *Urk.* III No. 8, 6, 7 (17).

<sup>74</sup>So Athanasius *Or. con. Ar.* III.17 quoting his opponents.

<sup>75</sup>*Les Ariens* 294-9. The Baruch text wrongly attributed to Jeremiah is used elsewhere by Arian writers for the same purpose. Meslin gives an interesting list of Arian proof texts, *Les Ariens* 230-5.

<sup>76</sup>*De Trinitate* IV.5. <sup>77</sup>*Ibid.* IX.2.

witnessing to the creatureliness of the Son. We have seen Prov 8:22 brought up again and again, along with Acts 2:36 ('God has made him both Lord and Christ'); most of Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Eunomium* Book III is devoted to refuting the argument based on this text from Proverbs. Another curious piece of exegesis was made to serve this end also, a fantastic interpretation of Jn 8:25, which the Revised Standard Version translates: "They said to him: "Who are you?" Jesus said to them "Even what I have told you from the beginning" (alternative translation in footnote 'Why do I talk to you at all?'). The words 'in the beginning' which can also be translated 'at all' were seized on by the Arian exegetes and they rendered the last sentence 'I am the Beginning who am talking to you' and concluded that the Son certainly had a beginning.<sup>78</sup> Gross misunderstanding of the text was not the exclusive prerogative of the pro-Nicenes. A favourite text for proving that the Holy Spirit was not divine and was a creature was 1 Cor 8:6, where he is not mentioned (the significance lying in his absence, like the bark of Sherlock Holmes' dog), and another was Jn 1:3 (he was made with everything else). By the time of Vigilius of Thapse in the sixth century this list had been enlarged by Jn 16:14, 15:26, 14:26, and Ezek 37:5.<sup>79</sup> One of the oddest proof texts adduced for the creatureliness of the Son was Ezek 37:1 ('The hand of the Lord was upon me'); the Latin, or a Latin, version of this ran *facta est super me manus Domini* which could by a far-fetched rendering be made to mean 'and the hand of the Lord was made above me', the hand of the Lord being taken as the Word of God.<sup>80</sup>

We have already had plenty of opportunity of seeing the Arians dealing with the Synoptic Gospels so as to bring out the imperfections and limitations of the incarnate *Logos*, which they attributed to his divine nature, a nature fitted, as they saw it, for becoming incarnate by its very limitations. One of the capital texts

<sup>78</sup> τὴν ἀρχὴν ὁ θεὸς καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν, Latin *Principium quod et loquor vobis* which, to be sure, allows no alternative but mistranslation. See Maximinus' exegesis (Gryson *Scolies Ariennes* 19 (220, 222)), connecting it with Gn 1:1 and Jn 1:1. The text crops up again in Ambrose *De Fide* III.7.49 (125). My brother (see Preface) suggests that this interpretation was actually intended by the author of the Fourth Gospel, and therefore that the ancients were not perverse in following it. But no English version of the N.T., whether AV, R.V, RSV, NEB, or Jr. Bible, even hints at this rendering either in text or margin.

<sup>79</sup> Vigilius of Thapse *Contra Arianos* etc. II.32 (PL 62:218).

<sup>80</sup> So the opponents cited in the Latin *Commentary on the Creed of Nicaea*, Turner *EOIMA* I, 336(2).

here was Mk 10:18 ('There is none good save God') and another Mk 13:32 where Jesus says that the Son does not know the hour when heaven and earth are to pass away, and another Matt 20:23 where Jesus confesses his inability to determine who are to occupy the positions of honour near him when his Kingdom comes. Ambrose, who has to face this difficulty, can only suppose that Jesus dissimulated out of a kindly feeling towards the mother of the sons of Zebedee, for he must in fact have possessed this power.<sup>81</sup>

Greg and Groh<sup>82</sup> make the interesting conjecture that the Arians were responsible for the origin in the ancient and mediaeval church of the cult of Job as a kind of pre-Christian martyr. Certainly it is remarkable that no fewer than two Arian commentaries on that book should have come into our hands. They also observe<sup>83</sup> the strong penchant which Arian writers and disputants had for the Epistle to the Hebrews. This is understandable, because this book represents Jesus as in a sense working out his own salvation and learning obedience through suffering (5:8), and this was peculiarly congenial to the Arian concept of the character and mission of Christ. In spite of their insistence upon confining evidence for doctrine to the Scriptures, Arian writers do not eschew appealing to writings outside the canon of Scripture on occasion. They had a particular liking for the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Potamius of Lisbon is probably dependent on it in his sensational account of Isaiah's end,<sup>84</sup> and some very fragmentary sentences preserved by Mai from an Arian document appear to be indebted to this book also.<sup>85</sup> Meslin, noting this penchant for the book, said that the *Ascension of Isaiah* appealed to Arians because it presented a subordinate Christ and a Holy Spirit who was not divine, and this suited their doctrine admirably.<sup>86</sup> Another favourite was the pseudo-Clementine literature. Maximinus, says Meslin,<sup>87</sup> cites the *Clementine Recognitions* five times. Rufinus, who translated this work, says (Prologue) that he found in it some heretical interpolations 'about the ingenerate and

<sup>81</sup> Ambrose *De Fide* V.5, 64 (241).

<sup>82</sup> *Early Arianism* 394-8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* 160-8.

<sup>84</sup> So Moreira *Potamius* 281-91; whether this was Potamius in his pro-Nicene or his Arian phase we cannot tell.

<sup>85</sup> Mai *Script vet. Nova Coll. III frags* XX (238) and XXI (238, 239).

<sup>86</sup> *Les Ariens* 243.

<sup>87</sup> Or rather Meslin's attribution to Maximinus, whom he is inclined to see everywhere, but the author is certainly Arian (*Les Ariens* 244-5).

generated God' (*de ingenito deo genitoque*), which he omitted. They may have been Arian interpolations, or the whole may have been reworked by an Arian hand. It is interesting to note that the author of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, whose Arian proclivities are notorious, counts among the books of the New Testament the two *Epistles of Clement* and the Clementine 'Ordinances' (*διαταγαι*), whatever exact document he meant by that.<sup>88</sup> Athanasius reproaches his Arian opponents for using an appropriate sentiment from *Hermas' Shepherd*, which runs thus:

'First of all, believe that there is one God who created and ordered everything and brought everything out of non-existence (*ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος*) into existence.'

The Arians, he says, accuse the pro-Nicenes of using 'non-Scriptural expressions' (*ἄγραφοι λέξεις*), but they are themselves using a non-Scriptural book.<sup>89</sup> Pseudo-Maximus of Turin can appeal to *Hermes Trismegistus* and to the *Sibylline Oracles*.<sup>90</sup>

It is not easy to epitomise the exegetical practice of the pro-Nicenes, though readers of this book will perforce have seen something of it already. We shall glance at some examples taken from the works of a few great names. Athanasius produces as proof text for the divinity of the Son *Romans* 9:5, where to modern readers it is uncertain whether the expression 'God who is over all' refers to Christ or not, and as proofs for the eternal pre-existence of the *Logos* *Jn* 1:1, *Rev* 1:8, *Rom* 9:5 again and 1:20, with *1 Cor* 1:24 and he adds *Isa* 40:28 and *Ps* 90 (89):17, 36 (35):10 and 145 (144):13.<sup>91</sup> Elsewhere he produces a list of testimonies to Christ's Godhead culled from the Old Testament, *Gn* 19:24 (two Lords in heaven), *Ps* 110 (109):1; 45 (44):6, and again 145 (144):13.<sup>92</sup> In the New Testament for the same doctrine he appeals to *Jn* 6:15, 17:10, 1:1, *Rev* 1:8 and again *Jn* 8:12, 1:3, 5:19, *Rom* 1:20, *Jn* 1:1, 9, *1 Cor* 8:6 (compared with *Amos* 3:13), *Heb* 1:6, *Mk* 4:11, *Mtt* 24:31, *Jn* 5:23, *Phil* 2:6.<sup>93</sup> A little later he sets

<sup>88</sup>*Apostolic Constitutions* (Funk) VIII, xlvi.85 (592).

<sup>89</sup>*De Decretis* 18.3-5 (15). The passage quoted is Mandates 1.1 of *Hermas' Shepherd*.

<sup>90</sup>Turner 'Maximus of Turin against the Pagans' p. 331 lines 319-23 and p. 332 lines 352-9.

<sup>91</sup>*Or. con. Ar.* I 10, 11; at 12 he adds *Jn* 1:3, *Col* 1:17, *Jn* 14:9, *Heb* 1:2, *Daniel* (LXX) 13:42 (*Susanna* 42) and *Baruch* 4:20, 22.

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.* II.13.

<sup>93</sup>*De Syn.* 49:1-5 (273, 274).

out another list designed to show that the Bible says that Christ is worthy of worship: *Ps* 2:7 (eked out by *Mtt* 3:17 and 4:11), 96(97):7; *Heb* 1:6; *Isa* 45:14; *Jn* 13:13, 20:28 and *Ps* 24:10.<sup>94</sup> Pollard in an article dealing with the hermeneutical principles of Athanasius singles out five: sufficiency of Scripture, scope (i.e. ultimate intention) of Scripture, custom of Scripture, style of Scripture and context of Scripture.<sup>95</sup> We may grant all this, and allow that Athanasius had a firm grasp of the ultimate drive or burden of the New Testament at least. But we cannot but observe the great gulf which divides him, and virtually all his contemporaries of whatever ecclesiastical complexion, from the moderns in his methods of handling and presuppositions in approaching the text of the Bible.

Marcellus of Ancyra solved the difficulties presented to his generation by *Prov* 8:22 and *1 Cor* 15:28 by applying the first to the incarnate Word and the second by his peculiar doctrine of the re-absorption after the rendering up of the kingdom of the *Logos* into God and the disappearance of the Son (i.e. of the human nature of the *Logos* when incarnate). In the first he was paid the flattery of imitation by almost all the pro-Nicenes thereafter, for the second he was execrated and deposed by the anti-Nicenes and finally condemned, though with reluctance, by those who had been his friends. He perceived as virtually nobody else did how very unsatisfactory was the universal habit of reading into the Old Testament the presence of the pre-existent Son and tried to remedy it. He declared that at *Gn* 1:26 ('Let us make man') God was as it were exhorting himself, like a sculptor before beginning a piece of statuary.<sup>96</sup> The pro-Nicenes of course interpreted it as God addressing his Son, and the Jews alleged that he was talking to angels. Marcellus' favourite texts, after *1 Cor* 15:24-28, were *Jn* 10:30 and 38, 16:15 and *Col* 1:15, 16.<sup>97</sup>

Hilary can produce cogent and effective exegesis. Combatting the Ebionite doctrine that the pre-existence of the Word was only as a word (*sonus*) not as the distinctly existing *Logos*, he explains that John wrote that the Word was with (*apud*) God, not simply in God, and that 'the Word was God'. This means that 'the Word is proclaimed to be not in somebody else but alongside (*cum*) somebody else ... 'Let

<sup>94</sup>*Or. con. Ar.* II.23.

<sup>95</sup>'Exegesis of Scripture' 419-29.

<sup>96</sup>See above p. 225.

<sup>97</sup>So the Commentator on the Nicene Creed *EOMIA* 337(2), and for Marcellus' favourite texts see Gericke *Marcell von Ancyra* 178.

the sound of a vocable and talk about a thought cease. This Word is fact (*res*), not a sound, nature, not speech, God not vacuity'.<sup>98</sup> The proof texts which he throws at Sabellianism (refusal to acknowledge the distinct existence of the Persons) are Mtt 17:5, Jn 14:28, 12, 11:41, 17:5, Mtt 16:16.<sup>99</sup> To prove that the distinct existence of the Son is known in the Old Testament he musters Ps 45 (44):7 (8), Isa 43:10, Hosea 1:6, 7, Ps 2:8, Isa 45:11ff (this last a trump card, to which much exposition is devoted) and Baruch 3:36f.<sup>100</sup> The proof texts for the Son's birth from the Father are Jn 10:30 and 14:7-12.<sup>101</sup> Elsewhere he uses the traditional very unconvincing proofs of the existence of more than one Person in God: God apparently addresses a command to another at creation (Gn 1:6, 7); 'Let us make man' (Gn 1:26) implies more than one Person ('he removed the assumption of his solitariness by declaring that he has a partner'). His final statement is a fine one: 'And for us too neither a solitary nor a diverse God is to be confessed', but his proofs for this sentiment from the Old Testament are fragile in the extreme.<sup>102</sup> He reproduces also all the traditional epiphanies of Christ under the old dispensation: the figure with whom Jacob wrestled, the figure who stood at the top of Jacob's ladder, he whom Moses saw in the Burning Bush, he who gave Moses the law on Mount Sinai,<sup>103</sup> and then ranges through the prophets on the same principle.<sup>104</sup> The Arians would of course have accepted all this fallacious evidence as valid, but would simply have applied it to witness to their reduced and inferior Son. The reader gains the impression that as long as the two opposed parties are on the ground of Scripture they seldom come seriously to grips with the real issue.

Basil, facing an opponent who is at once more specific and more sophisticated than those against whom Athanasius and Hilary were

<sup>98</sup>*De Trinitate* II.11.

<sup>99</sup>*Ibid.* II.23 (59). Notice that no ancient exegete ever troubles to give texts in order as they occur in a particular chapter or passage: it is their 'atomic' attitude to the Bible that is responsible for this, the assumption that almost any passage can be pulled clean out of its context and directly applied to the subject in hand.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.* IV.45-31. But in the *Tractatus de Mysteriis* II.14 (37) he refers to Gn 19:24 (the Lord sending down rain from the Lord) to God giving orders apparently to the Son ('Let us make man'), to God creating (through the Son), and to God (one God) making man in his own image. The passage is rhetorical and obscure.

<sup>101</sup>VIII.4.

<sup>102</sup>IV.16, 17, 18: the Latin for the quoted words is *nobis quoque nec solitarius tantum nec diversus est confitendus*.

<sup>103</sup>V.19-23 (169-75).

<sup>104</sup>V.25 (177ff).

writing, though he accepts and where necessary deploys the traditional proof texts, is compelled to be more careful and more cogent in his appeal to Scripture. For the consubstantiality of the Son he produces Jn 6:27, 1:15, Phil 2:6, 7, Jn 14:19, 17:10, 5:26, Heb 1:3. In particular he says of the text from Philipians:

'I say that the text "to be in the form of God" is equivalent to being in the *ousia* of God. For just as the text "to assume the form of a slave" means that our Lord came into existence in the *ousia* of humanity, so also to be "in the form of God" suggests certainly the particular nature (*ιδιότητα*) of the divine *ousia*.'<sup>105</sup>

Again, he can say

'He was and he was begotten. But "I have begotten" (Ps 110 (109):3) denotes the cause from which he has the beginning of his existence; "was" (Jn 1:1) denotes the timeless and primaeval (*πρωτότωνον*) existence'.<sup>106</sup>

Later he produces a shower of proof-texts designed to display at once the function and the divinity of the Holy Spirit: Ps 33:6; Job 33:4; Isa 48:16; Ps 139:7; Jn 1:12; Rom 8:15; Mtt 23:10; Jn 14:26, 1 Cor 12:4-6, 11; Acts 21:11; 1 Cor 2:10, 11; 1 Tim 6:13; Jn 10:27; Rom 8:11.<sup>107</sup> But even after all this documentation he is honest enough to realize that it is not wholly convincing, and that on this point he must round off or complement Scripture with the experience of the Church.<sup>108</sup>

In his third theological Oration Gregory of Nazianzus gives a succinct list of passages from the Bible calculated to supply a pro-Nicene controversialist with a handy arsenal of prefabricated arguments, thus:

*That the Son is God:* Jn 1:1; Ps 110 (109):2 (3) ('With thee is government' is Gregory's version (he does not appeal to 'this day have I begotten thee')); Isa 41:4 ('he who calls him Beginning from the generations' is his version)

*That he is the only begotten Son:* Jn 1:18 (where he reads 'only-begotten Son' not 'only begotten God').

*That he is the Way, the Life and the Truth:* Jn 14:6; 18:12 and various other passages conferring titles, 1 Cor 1:24; Heb 1:3; Wisd 7:26; Jn 6:27.

<sup>105</sup>*Adv. Eunomium* I.18 (552-3).

<sup>106</sup>*Ibid.* II.17 (608).

<sup>107</sup>III.4 (661-665).

<sup>108</sup>See above pp. 777-9.

That He is Lord, King and He Who Is: Gn 19:24; Ps 45 (44):7; Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5.<sup>109</sup>

On the difficulty presented by the fact that the New Testament appears to witness undeniably to the subordination of the Son to the Father, Gregory is both ingenious and honest. Christ is subordinated, he says, or is yet to be subordinated, in us who are subordinate or to be subordinate, as he is said to be a curse and sin (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21), because we are so; and the cry of dereliction on the Cross (Mtt 27:46) means that we are abandoned for our sins and that Christ is thus far abandoned in us. But he is not really abandoned and does not really dread suffering.<sup>110</sup> And, as we have seen, Gregory, like Basil, also admitted that the witness of Scripture to the Godhead of the Holy Spirit needed supplementing.<sup>111</sup> Among all the biblical expositors of the fourth century Gregory brings to bear on the text the greatest force of ordinary common sense.

The pro-Nicenes are at their worst, their most grotesque, when they try to show that the new terms borrowed from the pagan philosophy of the day were really to be found in Scripture. The Greek speakers cannot pretend that *ousia* appears in either Septuagint or New Testament, but they rack the Bible to find examples of *hypostasis*, and when they find it do their best to make the context appear relevant. With one doubtful exception, Heb 1:3 where it means 'substance', whereas they want to make it mean 'person', this is an impossible task; but the impossibility does not deter them. (The Latin speakers were a little better off because all that they had to do was to find *substantia* somewhere, though it was embarrassing that the word could mean both 'substance' and 'Person'). The favourite text was Jer 23:22<sup>112</sup> 'If they had stood in my council' ('if they had stood

<sup>109</sup>Orat. XXIX.17.

<sup>110</sup>Orat. XXX.5.

<sup>111</sup>See above pp. 782-3.

<sup>112</sup>Athanasius, Marius Victorinus, Phoebadius and Gregory of Elvira use it. Potamius of Lisbon (in his pro-Nicene mood) found four examples of *substantia* in Scripture (not three, as Moreira (*Potamius* 235) who has failed to recognise one not italicised in the Migne text) in his work *De Substantia*: Jer 23:22 read *si stetissent in substantia mea* in Potamius' Bible (Jerome's Vulgate corrected this to *in consilio meo*), and 9:10 *non audierunt vocem substantiae*, which is a Latin translation of the LXX (9:9) οὐκ ἤκουσαν φωνὴν ἀπάρεως. The original (believe it or not!) means 'they did not hear the lowing of cattle' (Vulg *vocem possidentis*). But clearly Potamius, a man by all appearances of no great learning nor sophistication, was merely reproducing an earlier source.

in my *hypostasis*' LXX), which had no remote connection with the Christian doctrine of God as understood in the fourth century, but which undoubtedly provided in the Greek mistranslation the word *hypostasis*. The best that can be said for this kind of juggling is that it showed the almost desperate desire of the theologians to base their doctrine on Scripture. Ambrose similarly gives the impression that his proof texts for pro-Nicene doctrine were learnt by rote.<sup>113</sup> And he falls into the trap, though he certainly knew Greek, of translating Jn 8:25 as 'the Beginning which I am who speak to you'.<sup>114</sup>

Simonetti in an illuminating discussion of the handling of Scripture by the pro-Nicene writers<sup>115</sup> remarks that these authors when they took over the traditional interpretations of the epiphanies of God in the Old Testament as appearances of the Son were embarrassed to find the Arian writers seizing on these and using them as examples of inferiority of the Son to the Father, and that the pro-Nicenes before the appearance of the Cappadocian theologians, at least in the West, could not exclude something of the notion that incarnation implies inferiority.<sup>116</sup> Gryson goes further, and declares that the pro-Nicenes were always a little apprehensive of entering the ground of Scripture in encounter with the Arians:

'because the sacred authors were not acquainted with the philosophic idea of consubstantiality, and their language tended to support the archaising theology of the Arians'.

The pro-Nicenes were in consequence much readier to appeal to tradition.<sup>117</sup> It is indeed noticeable that the texts adduced by Athanasius to support the *homoousion* in his *De Synodis* come very largely from the Fourth Gospel and the Psalms; a few are from the prophets; not many come from Paul, and almost none from the Synoptic Gospels. We have already had occasion to remark on many occasions how confident and embarrassing is the Arian exegesis of the first three Gospels and how uncertain and strained that of the pro-Nicenes.

<sup>113</sup>E.g. *De Fide* I 3.23 (12); 27(14).

<sup>114</sup>Ibid. III.7.49 (125); *principium quod loquor vobis*, see above n 78. Even Jerome translated *principium quia loquor vobis*.

<sup>115</sup>*Crisi* 505-510.

<sup>116</sup>Op. cit. 507-8. He instances particularly Phoebadius, Gregory of Elvira and Hilary.

<sup>117</sup>*Scolies Ariennes* 178 n 2; but Gryson goes on to point out that the Arians could appeal to the Council of Ariminum as tradition also.

The reason for this is clear. The defenders of the creed of Nicaea were in fact fighting on behalf of tradition, not in the sense that they were defending what had been already determined to be the doctrine of the church, but in the sense that they were themselves engaged in forming dogma, in working out a form of one of the most capital and crucial doctrines not only of the Bible but of the very spirit and genius of Christianity itself. They only came gradually to realize this. It was in fact only the Cappadocian fathers who faced fully the fact that they were contributing to the formation of dogma, and they did so only reluctantly. It was only very slowly, for instance, that any pro-Nicenes recognized that in forming their doctrine of God they could not possibly confine themselves to the words of Scripture, because the debate was about the meaning of the Bible, and any attempt to answer this problem in purely Scriptural terms inevitably leaves still unanswered the question 'But what does the Bible mean?' Hence the frantic attempts to find the words *ousia* and *hypostasis* in Scripture. The Arians and the Macedonians never realized this truth. This ultimately explains their failure to establish themselves permanently.

The last word on the appeal to the Bible during this crucial period in the history of Christian doctrine, however, must be of the impression made on a student of the period that the expounders of the text of the Bible are incompetent and ill-prepared to expound it. This applies as much to the wooden and unimaginative approach of the Arians as it does to the fixed determination of their opponents to read their doctrine into the Bible by hook or by crook. This impression emerges strongly in the fact that time and time again both sides produce diametrically different meanings from the same text, sometimes neither of them convincing. We must make allowance, of course, that nobody, except perhaps Didymus, knew the original Hebrew of the Old Testament, and indeed nobody gave it a thought. We must realize that the Latin speakers were labouring under a double disadvantage in that their Bible came to them in the form of a not particularly good translation of the Greek which itself as far as concerns the Old Testament was a very uneven translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic. But it is not so much the errors arising out of mistranslation that impeded a full understanding of the Bible by the theologians of the fourth century. It was much more the presuppositions with which they approached the Biblical text that clouded their perceptions, the tendency to treat the Bible in an

'atomic' way as if each verse or set of verses was capable of giving direct information about Christian doctrine apart from its context, the 'oracular' concept of the nature of the Bible, the incapacity with a few exceptions to take serious account of the background and circumstances and period of the writers. The very reverence with which they honoured the Bible as a sacred book stood in the way of their understanding it. In this matter they were of course only reproducing the presuppositions of all Christians before them, of the writers of the New Testament itself, of the tradition of Jewish rabbinic piety and scholarship. If the long and involved dispute resulted in leading figures like Athanasius to some extent standing back from the Bible and asking what was its intention, its drift (or *skopos*), instead of plunging into a discussion of its details based on an imperfect understanding of them, this was a gain and not an unworthy attempt to evade the strict meaning of Scripture.

## 2. The Influence of the Emperor

If we ask the question, what was considered to constitute the ultimate authority in doctrine during the period reviewed in these pages, there can be only one answer. The will of the Emperor was the final authority. When Constantius is represented by Athanasius as saying brusquely to the pro-Nicenes at Milan who alleged that he was transgressing ecclesiastical law, 'But what I wish, that must be regarded as the canon'<sup>118</sup> he summarizes in a sentence the situation which did in fact prevail over most of this time. Simonetti remarks that the Emperor was in fact the head of the church.<sup>119</sup> Epiphanius tells us that the Arians of his day not only argued against the pro-Nicenes on theological grounds, but also objected: 'You are opposing the imperial orders and the attitude of the Emperor Valens.'<sup>120</sup> It is clear that at the Council of Aquileia neither side wished to blame Gratian directly for the misunderstanding about the intention and composition of the council, though at one point Palladius comes close to doing so.<sup>121</sup> Everybody recognised the right of an Emperor

<sup>118</sup> *Historia Arianorum* 33; on this point, see Zeiller *Les Origines* 586-7 (the attitude of the Arians), Klein *Constantius II* 271-96 and Brennecke *Hilarius von Poitiers* 368-71.

<sup>119</sup> *Crisi* 213.

<sup>120</sup> *Panarion* 69.31.1 (180).

<sup>121</sup> *Gryson Scolies Ariennes* 84 (270).