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ON THE TRINITY

FROM *DE FIDE* TO *DE TRINITATE*

Carl L. Beckwith

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CARL L. BECKWITH

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For Julie

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Birmingham, Ala.
Advent 2007

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Abbreviations

ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
CaP	A. Feder (ed.), <i>Collectanea Antiariana Parisina (Fragmenta Historica)</i> , of Hilary of Poitiers = CSEL 65: 43–205.
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, <i>series latina</i>
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte
HE	<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>
LXX	The Septuagint
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, second series.
PG	Patrologiae Graeca
PL	Patrologiae Latina
SC	Sources Chrétiennes

Introduction

The most under-studied issue in Hilary scholarship is the structure and chronology of his principal work, *De Trinitate*. The reason stems not from lack of interest in the treatise but from the confusing final form of the text. When you read Hilary's treatise from beginning to end, you are confronted with chronological inconsistencies, editorial mistakes, and significant shifts in both content and argument. Book One begins with what appears to be an 'autobiographical narrative' on Hilary's journey to the faith, continues with a brief description of monarchian and Homoian opponents that Hilary could only have encountered during his period of exile in the East, and ends with a lengthy and detailed synopsis of *De Trinitate*. Books Two and Three discuss the eternal generation of the Son from the Father, the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and engage in an aggressive rebuttal of Photinian and Homoian theologies. Particularly confusing is the vacillating discussion throughout Books Two and Three between homiletical thoughts on the Trinity and detailed theological reflection that is informed by Homoiousian polemical and theological strategies.

Books Four to Six are especially baffling, as the text goes back and forth between identifying Book Four as Book One and Book Five as 'the second book' of the treatise. Book Four also marks a significant change in Hilary's argument. He unexpectedly offers a detailed refutation of the 'Arians' by commenting on Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria: a letter he reproduces at the beginning of Book Four and Book Six. Confusion mounts when Hilary decides to abandon Arius' letter following Book Six. He announces that Book Seven is the most important of the treatise, and declares that he will

now expound the perfect and complete faith in the Father and the Son. The depth of Hilary's theological reflection noticeably improves with Book Seven and, somewhat surprisingly, is reminiscent of certain sections from Books Two and Three. The remaining books of *De Trinitate* continue the high level of theological engagement begun in Book Seven and address Christological issues central to the Nicene–Arian debates of the late 350s.

The numerous chronological and structural problems with Hilary's presentation make it difficult to put a date on the composition of *De Trinitate* in its final form. He displays a detailed understanding of the modalist and subordinationist theologies opposed by the pro-Nicenes in the late 350s in Book One and in parts of Books Two and Three. At the same time, he attempts a refutation of 'Arianism' in Books Four to Six by using Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria. This letter played no significant role for any of the theological groups in the 350s sympathetic to what, for lack of a better word, would be identified as 'Arianism'. Hilary, however, does not just polemically associate all anti-Nicene theologies with Arius but attempts his rebuttal of 'Arianism' by offering a detailed exposition of a letter that no party in the 350s embraced. Since the argument from Books Two and Three had already employed the theological strategy of Basil of Ancyra against the Homoians and Photinus of Sirmium, Hilary's understanding of his opponents appears to have decreased as the reader moves from Books Two and Three to Books Four and Five.

The available scholarship on Hilary's treatise has no clear answer for these chronological inconsistencies and drastic shifts in content. In terms of the work's structure, the editorial mistakes present in Books Four to Six have led scholars to conclude that Hilary combined two separate works to create *De Trinitate*: a treatise on faith (*De Fide*) that comprises Books One to Three and a treatise against the 'Arians' (*Adversus Arianos*) that comprises Books Four to Twelve.¹ What has not been addressed in any detail, however, is

¹ The article that has exercised the most influence on our understanding of Hilary's treatise is M. Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia del "De Trinitate" di Ilario di Poitiers', *Studi Urbinati*, 39 (1965), 274–300. Simonetti's conclusions are restated in the most recent edition of Hilary's treatise. See M. Figura and J. Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers: La Trinité*, SC 443 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1999), 'Introduction', 46–52.

when in the course of writing *Adversus Arianos* Hilary decided to combine it with *De Fide*, why he thought it necessary to recast his efforts, and to what extent he retouched his earlier books.

The following monograph addresses these textual issues by situating Hilary's *De Trinitate* in its historical and theological context and by offering a close reading of the text. What we will see is that Hilary made significant revisions to the early books of his treatise; revisions that he attempted to conceal from his reader in order to give the impression of a unified work on the Trinity. Since these revisions have never been acknowledged in the scholarship on *De Trinitate*, scholars have been reading them as if they were part of the original material written by Hilary, and have been struggling to make sense of what appears to be an inconsistent argument that evades any consistent chronology.

In addition to identifying the added sections of Hilary's text, I will also explain the reasons why Hilary recast his efforts, when he did this, and at what point in composing *Adversus Arianos* he decided to change course. The historical event central to Hilary's new vision was the synod of Sirmium in 357 and its Homoian manifesto; a text that Hilary has dubbed for posterity as the Blasphemy of Sirmium. Early in 358 Basil of Ancyra convened a synod that published a statement of faith rebutting the Homoian theology expressed by the Sirmium manifesto and articulating the Homoiousian theological position. Hilary tells us in *De Synodis* that he collaborated with Basil and his theological circle. A close reading of Hilary's *De Trinitate* demonstrates the influence of Basil on Hilary's mature theology. Following these two events, Hilary recognized the inadequacy of his rebuttal of 'Arianism' and recast his efforts. Based on a close reading of Hilary's text, I argue that Hilary decided to compose *De Trinitate* as he was finishing Book Six. Book Seven, therefore, marks the first book Hilary composed after embarking on his new vision. There are numerous textual parallels between Book Seven and the sections Hilary added to his earlier books (that is, Books Two to Six). Most significantly, these added sections demonstrate Hilary's creative integration of the theological and polemical strategies of the Homoiousians with his own pro-Nicene concerns.

The monograph is divided into three parts. Part I explores the historical and theological context of Hilary's work on the Trinity. The

purpose of these chapters is not to provide a detailed and exhaustive narrative of the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, but rather to acquaint the reader with the theological nuances of the respective parties between Nicaea and Sirmium 357 that would have been known by Hilary when he set about to revise his work in 358 and write *De Trinitate*. The chapters also detail the theological commitments of Photinus of Sirmium and Basil of Ancyra. Although Hilary regarded Photinus as an opponent and Basil as a friend, both of these individuals shaped the presentation of Hilary's pro-Nicene theology. The historical narration in these three chapters seeks to prepare the reader for Hilary's *De Trinitate* and particularly the revisions to *De Fide*.

Part II begins with a detailed chapter on the reasons that led Hilary to stop his rebuttal of anti-Nicene theologies with *Adversus Arianos* and to write *De Trinitate*. A close reading of Hilary's text reveals that he decided to do this as he finished composing Book Six. The terminology used throughout the monograph takes this chronology into consideration. *De Fide* refers to Books Two and Three and *Adversus Arianos* refers to Books Four, Five, and Six of *De Trinitate*. Hilary added Book One, drastically revised *De Fide*, and added new prefaces to Books Two to Six in 358 when he conceived of *De Trinitate*. The final two chapters of Part II offer a close reading of Books Two and Three. Here we see the extent to which Hilary not only revised his original discussion of *De Fide* but also how he recontextualized his discussion of the Trinity in light of his more detailed understanding of the theological and polemical strategies of the various anti-Nicene theologies.

Part III explores the issue of theological method. One of Hilary's chief concerns with his opponents is their approach to the mystery of who God is. In Hilary's estimation, his various opponents, whether Photinian or Homoian, assign too great a value to natural reason apart from faith and therefore distort their respective readings of scripture. The final part of this monograph argues that theological method was Hilary's great concern with Book One. In the first chapter of Part III I argue that Book One should not be read as an autobiographical statement on Hilary's journey to the Christian faith: an issue that has occupied the attention of nearly all of the scholarship on this crucial first book. Rather, Hilary uses the literary

trope of his own troubled soul to articulate a sophisticated theological method. He reflects on such things as the normative role of scripture in theological reflection, the respective roles of faith and reason, and the limitations of human speech and analogy to articulate a divine mystery. By putting the historical question of Hilary's conversion to the side, we are able to see the theological purpose of Book One and why Hilary deliberately placed it at the beginning of *De Trinitate* in 358.

The final two chapters of Part III explore the central aspects of Hilary's theological method. First, what are the respective roles of faith and reason in theological inquiry? Second, how does scripture serve a normative role in theological discourse when both anti-Nicenes and pro-Nicenes claim it as their guiding authority? There is no question that Hilary's comments on theological method are polemically motivated and filled with excessive rhetoric. As we will see in the historical survey in Part I, those opposed to the theology articulated at Nicaea were just as committed to scripture as a normative text in theological discussion and to faith as their guide in theological questions as the pro-Nicenes. Although this is certainly true in general, when we look at Hilary's theological method we find a pro-Nicene who is deeply committed to scripture as God's testimony about himself to us and to the priority of faith in grasping the mystery of who God is. Indeed, it has been said that no theologian in the West had a greater respect for scripture or was more concerned to allow it to shape and direct his understanding of God than Hilary.

Hilary's theological method establishes for him a fundamental difference between his theological enterprise and inquiry into the mystery of God and that of his opponents. For Hilary, all knowledge of God comes from God and is received by grace through scripture. When we attempt to control the act of discovery or enlightenment concerning who God is by relying on our human reason rather than our faith, we assert ourselves as the ultimate authority on who God must be or can be, rather than allowing God to determine who he is. At stake for Hilary is the governing authority or the ultimate source of our theological knowledge. Is it God or is it ourselves? The rhetorical charge of Hilary's opponents is that he advances a simple or unreflective faith, a sort of fideism. Hilary counters this charge with an extended discussion of the proper use of reason in

theological reflection. As we will see in these final chapters on theological method, Hilary's issue is not with the faculty of reason, which, like faith, is also a gift from God, but with what he considers to be an abuse of the faculty by his opponents; an abuse that seeks to displace God alone as the ultimate source of our knowledge about who God is.

HILARY'S LIFE

Before turning to the historical and theological introduction to Hilary's *De Trinitate*, a brief overview of his life seems in order. Just as Hilary's *De Trinitate* has been somewhat neglected in the scholarship on the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, so too his biography is often tainted by misunderstanding or incorrect information. Reconstructing the chronology of his life is a difficult task. We know very little about him before the synod of Béziers in 356, and only slightly more after the synod. Jerome and Venantius Fortunatus, Hilary's sixth-century biographer, tell us that he was born in or near Poitiers.² The exact date of his birth, however, like that of many Church Fathers, is uncertain. Most scholars date his birth to around 310–20 and posit 367 or 368 for his death.³

² For Poitiers or the nearby area being Hilary's place of birth, see Jerome, *Commentarium in Epistolam ad Galatas*, bk. II (PL 26: 427–8); Venantius Fortunatus, *Carmina Miscellanea*, II.19 (PL 88: 109B) and VIII.1 (PL 88: 261C); F. Loofs, 'Hilarius von Poitiers', in J. J. Herzog, A. Hauck, and H. Caselmann (eds.), *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1900), 58; E. W. Watson, 'The Life and Writings of St. Hilary of Poitiers', NPNF, 2nd ser., IX, p. i; C. F. A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 1.

³ Most scholars date Hilary's birth to the beginning of the fourth century, based on the biographical references in *De Synodis* discussed below. See Watson, 'Introduction', p. ii; Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle*, 1–2, gives a brief summary of scholarly opinion, concluding that the majority thinks he was born between 310 and 320.

With regard to Hilary's death, Jerome (*De Viris Illustribus*, 100; PL 23: 701) tells us that Hilary died during the reign of Valentinian (364–75) and Valens (364–78). Gregory of Tours (*Historia Francorum*, I.36; PL 71: 180), citing Jerome, says that Hilary died four years into the reign of Valentinian and Valens. Sulpicius Severus (*Chronica*, II.45; PL 20: 155) says that Hilary died in the sixth year after his return

The most significant comment concerning Hilary's life before his exile is from his *De Synodis*. In this letter to his fellow bishops in Gaul, Hilary mentions that he was baptized as an adult, was a bishop for a short time prior to the synod of Béziers, and learned of the Nicene Creed only shortly before his exile.⁴ From this comment we safely conclude that Hilary was not baptized as an infant. We cannot, as R. P. C. Hanson rightly notes, know whether he came from a pagan or Christian household.⁵ That Hilary was a bishop for a short time (*aliquantisper*) prior to the synod of Béziers in 356 has led scholars to suggest a date for his consecration no earlier than 350 and possibly as late as 355.⁶ At some time during the early 350s Hilary also wrote his first work, the *Commentarium in Mattheum*.⁷

from exile. For a thorough review of the evidence, see A.-J. Goemans, 'La Date de la mort de saint Hilaire', in *Hilaire et son temps* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969), 107–11. Goemans concludes that Hilary died on 1 November 367, which seems a bit too early, given some of the documents concerning Germinius of Sirmium in Hilary's *Against Ursacius and Valens*.

⁴ *De Synodis*, 91 (PL 10: 545A): 'Regeneratus pridem et in episcopate aliquantisper manens fidem Nicaenam numquam nisi exulaturus audivi.'

⁵ See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381 AD* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 460; see also Joseph Emmenegger, *The Functions of Faith and Reason in the Theology of Saint Hilary of Poitiers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 3; Venantius Fortunatus, Hilary's sixth-century biographer, states that Hilary was raised in a Christian household. A number of scholars today, however, use the *De Synodis* comment and their reading of the 'autobiographical section' at the beginning of *De Trinitate* to argue that Hilary did in fact convert to Christianity. See, among others, Loofs, 'Hilarius von Poitiers', p. 58; Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle*, 3, n. 18.

⁶ e.g. Pierre Smulders suggests 350, R. P. C. Hanson 353, and J. Doignon 354 or 355. See Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers* (Rome: Universitatis Gregorianae, 1944), 38; Hanson, *Search*, 459; J. 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^e siècle* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1971), 166–8. For a thorough survey of scholarly opinion prior to 1966, see Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle*, 9–10.

⁷ As D. H. Williams points out, 'there are no indisputable internal or external factors for fixing the date of the commentary'. See his 'Defining Orthodoxy in Hilary of Poitiers' *Commentarium in Matthaëum*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 9: 2 (2001), 160, n. 36. The general scholarly opinion is that Hilary wrote the commentary between 353 and 355. For various opinions, see A. Cassamassa, 'Nota sul "Commentarius in Matthaëum" di S. Ilario di Poitiers', *Scritti Patristici*, 1 (Rome, 1955), 214; Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil*, 166–8; Luis Ladaria, *San Hilario De Poitiers: La Trinidad*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 481 (Madrid: La Editorial Católica,

Although we know very little about his educational training, his life before ordination,⁸ or how he came to be the bishop of Poitiers, we can deduce from his literary corpus that he knew both Greek and Latin and had a solid knowledge of the Latin theological tradition, particularly Tertullian, Cyprian, and Novatian.⁹ In addition to Christian writers, Hilary demonstrates familiarity with Cicero and Quintilian. His use of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* was first observed by Jerome, and has more recently been emphasized by Jean Doignon and E. P. Meijering in their respective readings of Hilary's *De Trinitate*.¹⁰

Following his condemnation at the synod of Béziers for his confession of faith, Hilary was sent into exile somewhere in Phrygia from

1986), 4. For comments on the audience of the commentary, see J. Doignon, *Sur Matthieu*, I, SC 254: 20, 26 f.

⁸ A few scholars accept Venantius Fortunatus' suggestion that Hilary was married and had a daughter. Coustant includes a letter to a certain Abra among Hilary's works, and some suggest that this could have been Hilary's daughter. See Venantius Fortunatus, I.3 (PL 9: 187A) and *Ad Abram filiam* (PL 10: 549–52; CSEL 65: 237–44). See J. Daniélou, 'Saint Hilaire, évêque et docteur', in *Hilaire de Poitiers, évêque et docteur: cinq conférences données à Poitiers à l'occasion du XVI^e centenaire de sa mort* (Paris, Études Augustiniennes, 1968), 10; Paul Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers: le premier docteur de l'Église latine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 9; Ladaría, *San Hilario de Poitiers*, 4; and Hanson, *Search*, 459. For a rejection of this letter and the idea that Abra was Hilary's daughter, see Watson, 'Introduction', p. xlvi.

The notion that Hilary was married gained currency during the Reformation. Martin Chemnitz, in his response to the council of Trent quotes a poem on Hilary's marriage by the Renaissance poet Baptista Mantuanus (1447–1516). See Martin Chemnitz, *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part III (St Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 162.

⁹ Manlio Simonetti, 'Ilario e Novaziano', *Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medievale*, 7 (1965), 1034–47; Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exile*, 170–225, 360–79; Paul Burns, *Christology in Hilary of Poitiers' Commentary on Matthew* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1981), 18–22, 67–82; Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers*, 79–90; Hanson, *Search*, 472–5; Williams, 'Defining Orthodoxy', 151–71.

¹⁰ Jerome wrote, 'Hilarius, meorum temporum confessor et episcopus, duodecim Quintiliani libros et stilo imitatus est et numero' (*Ep.* 70.5). Hilary's use of Quintilian in his *De Trinitate* has been argued by H. Kling, *De Hilario Pectaviensi artis rhetoricae ipsiusque, ut fertur, Institutionis oratoriae Quintilianae studioso* (Freiburg: Buchdruckerei des Pressvereins, 1909), Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil*, and Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*. See also Pierre Smulders, who has observed Quintilian's influence on Hilary's Preface to his historical work *Against Valens and Ursacius*; see Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface to His Opus Historicum* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 43, 55, 64, 71, 74, 79, 82, 85, 87, 142.

357 to 360.¹¹ While in exile Hilary remained in contact with his fellow bishops in Gaul for a short time, but eventually stopped receiving letters from them. The reason was not, as Hilary suspected, that his colleagues had sided with the anti-Nicene party of Saturninus of Arles, but rather—in one of those lighter moments of church history—we are told, they did not have Hilary's correct address.¹² The time in exile, as Manlio Simonetti observes, represented a decisive moment for Hilary's cultural and doctrinal formation.¹³ He came into contact with Greek theological works, gained a more detailed understanding of the Nicene–Arian controversy and its terms, and became acquainted with the theological position of the Homoiousians. During his exile Hilary was able to move freely throughout the eastern empire—a luxury not enjoyed by the other exiled western bishops like Dionysius of Milan, Eusebius of Vercelli, and Lucifer of Cagliari.¹⁴ We know that Hilary spent time with Basil of Ancyra and Eleusius of Cyzicus,¹⁵ attended the council of Seleucia in 359, and later that year requested an audience with Constantius in Constantinople.

While in the East, Hilary completed or wrote his most significant theological works, *De Trinitate* and *De Synodis*. He collected and translated numerous Greek documents dealing with the Trinitarian controversy for his now-fragmentary *Against Ursacius and Valens*. He

¹¹ Jerome is the only ancient historian to say explicitly that Hilary was exiled at the synod of Béziers. Sulpicius Severus mentions both the synod of Milan and that of Béziers, but does not seem to know which bishops were exiled at which synod. The Greek historians show no knowledge of the synod. See Jerome, *De Viris Illustribus* 100 (PL 23: 700B); Prosper of Aquitaine (who follows Jerome), *Epitome Chroniconum* (PL 51: 579C–582A); Rufinus, *HE* I.20 (PL 21: 493AB); Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, II.39 (PL 20: 450D–451A); Socrates, *HE* II.36 (PG 67: 301A); Sozomen, *HE* IV.9 (PG 67: 1130B).

¹² *De Synodis*, 1.

¹³ Manlio Simonetti, 'Chapter II: Hilary of Poitiers and the Arian Crisis in the West', in A. di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology, IV: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1986), 37.

¹⁴ Dionysius was exiled to Cappadocia and soon died (Basil, *Ep.* 197). Eusebius and Lucifer ended up in the Thebaid (Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* III.2; Socrates, *HE* III.5; Sozomen, *HE* V.12). Note that the 'Hilarius' mentioned by Theodoret in connection with Eusebius and Lucifer is not Hilary of Poitiers, despite the suggestion in the NPNF note, but is rather Lucifer's scurrilous colleague Hilary the Deacon, who was with him at Milan and who would later attack Hilary of Poitiers for his conciliatory efforts in *De Synodis*.

¹⁵ *De Synodis*, 63, 90.

also wrote a letter to Constantius in 359 requesting an audience with the emperor to discuss the circumstances of his exile and to explain the true faith regarding the relationship between the Father and the Son. When the emperor denied Hilary's request and endorsed the Homoian faith at the council of Constantinople in 360, Hilary responded with a highly vituperative letter, the *Liber Contra Constantium*, in which he accused the emperor of being an enemy of the catholic and apostolic faith. In the West, Julian had been proclaimed Augustus in February 360, and this, combined with his anger over Constantius' endorsement of the Homoian faith, inclined Hilary to return from exile without the emperor's consent.¹⁶

Hilary returned to the West and maintained his defence of Nicene orthodoxy. Daniel Williams remarks: 'Few historians of early Christianity would dissent from the view that Hilary of Poitiers was the west's most able and articulate anti-"Arian" apologist of the 360s.'¹⁷ Williams traces Hilary's actions in the West after his return, demonstrating his influence at the 360/1 council of Paris, his joint efforts in Italy with Eusebius of Vercelli to restore bishops and churches that had succumbed to the decrees of Ariminum/Rimini, and Hilary's own unsuccessful campaign to depose the 'Arian' Auxentius of Milan. Following his failed attempt to depose Auxentius, Hilary was forced to depart Milan. At this point the historical record becomes silent. We know nothing more about his travels or his pro-Nicene efforts. Based on the other literary works he has left us, we may surmise that he returned to his see and continued his pastoral ministry.¹⁸

¹⁶ According to Sulpicius Severus (*Chronica*, II.45), the emperor ordered Hilary to return because he was 'a sower of discord and a troubler in the east'. For the acceptance of this assertion, see Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers*, 71; Borchartd, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle*, 173. Many scholars, however, question the historical reliability of Sulpicius' assertion, and argue that Hilary most likely left for Gaul without the emperor's permission. See Y.-M. Duval, 'Vrais et faux problèmes concernant le retour d'exil d'Hilaire de Poitiers et son action en Italie en 360-363', *Athenaeum*, 48 (1970), 261; M. Meslin, 'Hilaire et la crise arienne', in *Hilaire et son temps* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1969), 37. For a convincing argument on why Hilary may have departed Constantinople in 360 for Gaul without permission, see D. H. Williams, 'The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers and the "Liber Contra Auxentium"', *Church History*, 61 (1992), 10-14.

¹⁷ Williams, 'The Anti-Arian Campaigns of Hilary of Poitiers', 7.

¹⁸ In addition to the works mentioned above, we have an incomplete commentary on the Psalms, fragments from a commentary on Job, a work entitled *De Mysteriis*,

For the most part, this monograph is concerned with Hilary's efforts during the period immediately after the synod of Béziers and up to and including his decision to compose *De Trinitate*. During the years from 356 to 359 Hilary completely rethought his rebuttal of anti-Nicene theologies, and creatively integrated the theological and polemical strategies of the Homoiousians into his own pro-Nicene theology. To understand how Hilary, a bishop from the western periphery of the Roman empire, found himself not only in the East in the middle of a heated theological debate on God, but also with a decisive role to play in securing the success of what we call Nicene theology, we must begin with our historical survey, and particularly with the spark that kindled this theological fire.

which offers a Christological reading for certain Old Testament figures, and finally some hymns. See Watson, 'Introduction', pp. xii–lvii; Simonetti, 'Hilary of Poitiers and the Arian Crisis in the West', 50–4; Ladaria, *San Hilario de Poitiers*, 22–5.

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Part I

The Historical and Theological Context of *De Trinitate*

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Trinitarian Debates from Nicaea (325) to Sirmium (351)

A few years before the council of Nicaea in 325, Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, delivered a sermon on the mystery of the Holy Trinity. A senior presbyter named Arius, ‘possessed of no inconsiderable logical acumen’, took exception to this sermon. Arius enquired: ‘If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence and from this it is evident that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows that he had his subsistence from nothing.’ The historian Socrates, relating this episode, continues, ‘having drawn this inference from his novel train of reasoning, he [Arius] excited many to a consideration of the question; and thus from a little spark a large fire was kindled’.¹ Alexander excommunicated Arius, and the great dispute over the Trinity and Christ, which would occupy the church well into the next century, had begun.²

Efforts by Eusebius of Caesarea, Eusebius of Nicomedia, Theodotus of Laodicea, and Paulinus of Tyre to persuade Alexander that Arius’ teachings were acceptable proved unsuccessful, and only further revealed the division in the fourth-century church on the Trinity. After his victory over Licinius, Constantine, now emperor of both East and West, learned of the ‘insignificant matter’, as he described

¹ Socrates, *HE* I.5–6; NPNF, 2nd ser., II, p. 3.

² For a detailed analysis of the early pre-Nicene documents surrounding this controversy and a proposed revision to H. G. Opitz’s chronology, see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition*, 2nd edn. (London: SCM, 2001), 48–66. For example, Opitz’s chronology of events begins in 318 and Williams suggests 321. For a convenient chart of their respective chronologies, see *Arius*, 58–9. For Williams’ response to criticisms of his proposed chronology, see *Arius*, 251–6.

it, between Arius and Alexander and dispatched his ecclesiastical advisor, Ossius of Córdoba, to resolve the issue.³

In early 325 Ossius convened a synod at Antioch.⁴ His purpose seems to have been to secure the election of Eustathius as bishop and conduct an initial inquiry into the 'Arian' teachings.⁵ At the synod, Eusebius of Caesarea declared that he believed in two *ousiai*. Narcissus of Neronias was asked if he believed in two *ousiai*, and asserted that he believed in three.⁶ Since Ossius understood *ousia* to mean *substantia*, he thought these bishops were asserting belief in two or three gods, which may not have been far from the truth.⁷ The council adopted a doctrinal statement and provisionally excommunicated Eusebius, Narcissus, and Theodotus of Laodicea.⁸ Since the 'great synod', the council of Ancyra/Nicaea, had already been called, these bishops were given a few months to reconsider their teachings, and

³ The emperor, who developed a habit of underestimating church disputes, thought the issue between Arius and Alexander concerned foolish speculation on an insignificant matter. See his letter written in 324 to Alexander of Alexandria in Socrates, *HE* I.7; NPNF, 2nd ser., II, pp. 6–7.

⁴ The historical and theological questions surrounding the synod of Antioch in 325 are complex. For a possible historical reconstruction, a suggestion on Ossius' actions at the synod, and Marcellus' possible role, see Alastair H. B. Logan, 'Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of A.D. 325: Antioch, Ancyra, and Nicaea', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 43 (1992), 428–36; see also R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318–381* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 146–51.

⁵ See Robert Victor Sellers, *Eustathius of Antioch and His Place in the Early History of Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928); Henry Chadwick, 'The Fall of Eustathius of Antioch', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 49 (1948), 27–35; and R. P. C. Hanson, 'The Fate of Eustathius of Antioch', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 95 (1984), 171–9.

⁶ Logan, 'Marcellus of Ancyra', 435–6. Note particularly Logan's speculation that Marcellus was behind Ossius' questioning. For details about Narcissus, see J. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 88–9.

⁷ For example, in a sermon preached by Eusebius in Ancyra prior to the council of Nicaea he censures the Galatians for not believing, as he does, in 'two *οὐσίαι* and *πράγματα* and *δυνάμεις* and *θεοί*'. See Eusebius of Caesarea, *Contra Marcellum*, I.4.45 (GCS 27: 14–25). Similarly, Paulinus of Tyre, who is notably absent from the synod of Antioch, taught a 'two gods' theology: *Contra Marcellum*, I.4.48–50 (GCS 28: 3–12). Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum*, V.39, VI.61, VII.57, and Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, IV.6. Note particularly Lactantius' use of Prov. 8: 22 ff.

⁸ J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman, 1960), 208–11; Hanson, *Search*, 187–8.

would be afforded the opportunity to address the bishops in attendance at Nicaea.⁹

THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA

During the summer of 325 the bishops at Nicaea made three significant declarations regarding the word *ousia*. The Son was ‘from the *ousia*’ of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας), the Son was *homoousios* with the Father,¹⁰ and, in the anathemas attached to the Creed, the council condemned anyone who taught that the Son was ‘of a different *hypostasis* or *ousia* from the Father’.¹¹ Moreover, the bishops adopted

⁹ In 1905 Eduard Schwarz published a letter from the council of Antioch found in a Syriac manuscript in Paris that referred to the upcoming ‘great and priestly synod at Ancyra’. This letter confirmed another Syriac letter found in 1857 from the emperor Constantine announcing the move of the council from Ancyra to Nicaea. For the 1905 letter, see E. Schwartz, *Gesammelte Schriften: Zur Geschichte des Athanasius*, III (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1959), 6, pp. 134–55; a Greek retroversion by Schwartz is found in H. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, iii, I, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des Arianischen Streites 318–328* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1934), 18, pp. 36–41; an English translation is in J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, rev. W. H. C. Frend (London: SPCK, 1987), 334–7. For the 1857 letter with a Greek retroversion by Schwartz, see Opitz, *Urkunden*, 20, pp. 41–2; an English translation is in Stevenson, *Eusebius*, 338. For a discussion of these letters, see Kelly, *Creeeds*, 208, with a translation of the statement of faith from Antioch at pp. 209–10, and Hanson, *Search*, 146–8. For a discussion of why Constantine moved this council from Ancyra to Nicaea, see Logan, ‘Marcellus of Ancyra’, 428–46.

¹⁰ There are a few ideas on how these phrases, especially *homoousios*, were incorporated into the Creed. Logan suggests that Marcellus of Ancyra introduced the phrase ‘from the being’ of the Father and perhaps also the word *homoousios*. See Logan, ‘Marcellus of Ancyra’, 445; similarly see Hanson, *Search*, 235. Another, more disputed account is that Ossius and Alexander of Alexandria met in Nicomedia before the council of Nicaea and agreed to introduce *homoousios* to expose those sympathetic to Arius’ position. See Philostorgius, *HE* 1.7A (GCS 8: 15).

Rowan Williams suggests that these key phrases, especially *homoousios*, were current in theological discussion leading up to 325. At the council, if we follow Ambrose, Eusebius of Nicomedia asserted: ‘If we do indeed call the Son of God “uncreated” as well, we are on the way to confessing that he is *homoousios* with the Father.’ Given the strong dislike of this word by those rallying around the theological position of Arius, the bishops decided to include *homoousios*. For the whole argument and the Ambrose quote, see Williams, *Arius*, 68–70.

¹¹ For the Greek of the Creed and a good discussion of its terms, see T. Herbert Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith*, 4th edn., revised by F. W. Green

the non-scriptural word *homoousios* to describe the relationship between the Father and the Son in a way that expressed the biblical witness and countered Arius' position.¹² Despite the acceptance of this term by nearly all of the bishops present at the council, the Creed received wide interpretation among those who signed it.¹³

Eusebius of Caesarea, who signed the Creed after taking a day to think it over, no doubt to the great consternation of his colleagues, interpreted ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας, 'begotten not made', and 'homoousios with the Father' to agree with his own subordinationist teaching on the Father and the Son.¹⁴ For Eusebius, the Son was generated 'from the Father', made 'like' Him, before creation, as the first-born of all creation (Col. 1: 15). By misconstruing the intention of the council, Eusebius could even assent to its chief 'Arian' anathema. He writes: 'Nor did I think it improper to anathematize the term, "Before he was begotten he was not," since all confess that the Son of God was before [his] generation *according to the flesh*.'¹⁵ Eusebius interprets this anathema for his congregation as addressing the Son's Incarnation, which, of course, it was not.

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 26–49. Bindley also provides the Greek and Latin for a number of the creeds issued between Nicaea and Constantinople. See also Kelly, *Creeds*, 231–62; Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 233–42; and Hanson, *Search*, 181–207.

¹² For Arius' dislike of the word, see his *Letter to Alexander of Alexandria*, in Edward R. Hardy (ed.), *Christology of the Later Fathers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 332–4. Note how Arius associates *homoousios* with the Manicheans. Arius also rejects the term in his *Thalia*. See Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 15.

¹³ Modern scholarship has rightly demonstrated that no unified party of 'Arians' opposed an equally unified party of 'Nicenes' following the council of Nicaea. See, among others, R. C. Gregg (ed.), *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments: Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies*, Patristic Monograph Series, 11 (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985); Williams, *Arius*; Hanson, *Search*; M. R. Barnes and D. H. Williams (eds.), *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993); D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Arian-Nicene Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). An especially helpful discussion on possible categories that would more accurately reflect the theological sympathies of the main participants in these debates is found in Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 28–46.

¹⁴ It should be noted that Eusebius' subordinationist theology is not strictly the teaching embraced by Arius, and more closely resembles the Homoian theology from the late 350s. Nevertheless, Eusebius supported Arius and thought his position accorded sufficiently with his own to write on his behalf to Alexander.

¹⁵ Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 339, my emphasis. For the Greek text of Eusebius' creed, see Bindley, *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith*, 53.

Eusebius of Nicomedia, a close associate of Eusebius of Caesarea and Arius, signed the Creed but refused to acknowledge the anathemas, determining that they misrepresented the teachings of Arius or, more likely, finding nothing in Arius' teaching that offended him.¹⁶ Eusebius, who, like Arius, may have been theologically indebted to Lucian of Antioch,¹⁷ taught that the Son was completely subordinated to the Father, possessing an entirely different nature.¹⁸ In his letter to Paulinus of Tyre a few years before the council,¹⁹ Eusebius rejected ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας as a materialistic expression, which he thought suggested that the Son was a portion or emanation of the Father's substance, and preferred ἐκ τοῦ βουλήματος αὐτοῦ.²⁰ Moreover, he thought it best to say that the Son was originate (γεγονός), not begotten (γεννητόν). It is clear that Eusebius, despite signing the Creed at Nicaea, which, as Constantine astutely observed, must have

¹⁶ Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea both signed the Creed but not the anathemas and were, three months after the council, sent into exile by Constantine. They describe their actions at the synod in a letter to Constantine in 328 requesting readmission to their sees, which they promptly received. Eusebius would years later baptize Constantine on his deathbed. For Constantine's letter to the Nicomedians describing his reasons for banishing Eusebius and Theognis, see Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* I.19; for the letter from Eusebius and Theognis to Constantine in 328, see Socrates, *HE* I.14 and Philostorgius, *HE* II.7.

¹⁷ See *The Letter of Arius to Eusebius of Nicomedia*, in Hardy, *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 329–31. Arius ends his letter: 'So I pray that you may prosper in the Lord, remembering our afflictions, fellow Lucianist, truly Eusebius.' The word used here by Arius is *συλλουκτανιστής*. It is not entirely clear what Arius means by this word.

¹⁸ Eusebius describes his position in a letter to Paulinus of Tyre. See Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* I.5. For a discussion and appraisal of Eusebius' letter and theology, see Christopher Stead, "'Eusebius" and the Council of Nicaea', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 24 (1973), 85–100, and Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 78–82. For an overly sympathetic look at Eusebius and his thought see Colm Luibhéad, 'The Arianism of Eusebius of Nicomedia', *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 43 (1976), 3–23. Luibhéad's defense of Eusebius leads him to conclude, 'it has to be assumed, regardless of mere assertions to the contrary, that Eusebius was not in fact an Arian' (p. 23).

¹⁹ Rowan Williams dates this letter to 323 and Opitz to 320/1. See Williams, *Arius*, 58.

²⁰ Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* I.5; NPNE, 2nd ser., III, p. 42: 'If He had been from Him or of Him, as a portion of Him, or by an emanation of His substance, it could not be said that He was created or established.' Eusebius had cited Prov. 8: 22 immediately preceding this statement. Contrary to the translation here given, it should be noted that Eusebius nearly always uses neuter pronouns for God in this letter.

disturbed his conscience greatly, believes the Son is utterly different from the Father in nature and power.²¹

Marcellus of Ancyra also signed the Creed at Nicaea. In his estimation, *homoousios* implied a strict identity between the Father and Son that excluded any eternal distinction within the Godhead. Marcellus is often characterized as teaching a form of Sabellianism, such that God is a Monad, who at creation expands into a Dyad and at Pentecost into a Triad, but will, at the end of time, return to a Monad. It has recently been argued that this description of Marcellus' theology is more caricature than reality.²² What is clear, however, is that Marcellus sought to preserve a strict Christian monotheism and, at this time in his theological understanding, failed to account for any eternal 'hypostatic' distinction, to use a later understanding of the word, within the Godhead.²³

Just as the Nicenes, like Athanasius of Alexandria and Marcellus of Ancyra, could characterize the Eusebian teaching as ditheism, the Eusebians could just as easily accuse Marcellus, and by default any bishops in communion with him, of teaching Sabellianism. These diverse interpretations among the signers of the Creed, and Constantine's lack of interest in securing doctrinal agreement among the bishops following the council, quickly made the Creed and whatever

²¹ For Constantine's description of Eusebius' actions at Nicaea, see Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History*, I.19. On this issue of 'power' in the Trinitarian disputes, see Michel René Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001). Despite the title of this work, Barnes deals with far more than just Gregory of Nyssa. Note particularly his discussion of Hilary at pp. 157–62.

²² For a very thorough presentation of what we can say about Marcellus' theology, see Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 49–68.

²³ Lienhard argues that Marcellus did eventually embrace 'the eternal coreign of the Son with the Father' in his written profession of faith to Pope Julius at the synod of Rome in 341. Not surprisingly, the eastern bishops gathering at Serdica (Philippopolis) rejected this confession as a deception. Marcellus would a few years later become attracted to some of Photinus of Sirmium's teachings and suffer rebuke from Athanasius and a severing of communion. According to Hilary, however, Marcellus repented and we are left with the impression that he died an orthodox bishop. As Lienhard puts it, 'Marcellus was, perhaps, easily swayed and a little fickle, but not obstinate in his beliefs' (p. 156). See also Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 163–4, 174. For the account in Hilary, see *Collectanea Antiariana Parisina (Fragmenta Historica)* B II.9.1–3 (CSEL 65: 146–7), hereafter cited as *CaP*; Lionel Wickham, *Hilary of Poitiers: Conflicts of Conscience and Law in the Fourth-century Church* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997), 56–8.

consensus existed in 325 irrelevant. Following Nicaea, the bishops were sharply divided, condemning each other and issuing numerous statements of faith. At the centre of this ecclesiastical storm were the Eusebians, Marcellus, and Athanasius. The latter two, rightly or wrongly, became symbols of the *homoousian* party, and were repeatedly condemned by anti-Nicene synods influenced by the Eusebians and their associates.

THE AFTERMATH OF NICAEA TO SIRMIMUM 351

The Creed that exercised the most influence among those opposed to Nicaea between 325 and the mid-350s comes from the so-called Dedication Council of Antioch in 341. It would not be inaccurate to say that the moderate subordinationist theology of the Dedication Council was for many eastern bishops the standard of faith for all professing an orthodox understanding of the Trinity. During the 350s the theological parties were, to some extent, divided between Nicaea and the Dedication Council. It is only when a dispute arose among the eastern bishops over the proper interpretation of the creedal history dating back to Antioch in 341 that the *ousia* language from Nicaea emerged as a rallying point for theologians from different theological camps—a conciliatory position that found its greatest expression in the exilic works of Hilary of Poitiers.

During the summer of 341 the bishops gathered at Antioch, in the presence of Constantius, to dedicate the ‘Golden Church’ begun by Constantine ten years before and completed by his son.²⁴ The dedication ceremony provided the eastern bishops with an opportunity to address the insult, as they saw it, of Julius of Rome readmitting Athanasius and Marcellus to catholic communion in the spring of 341, and to counter the charge that they were ‘Arians’.

There are traditionally four creeds associated with the council of Antioch.²⁵ The first creed seems to have been composed as a response

²⁴ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini*, III.50; NPNF, 2nd ser., I, pp. 532–3.

²⁵ Athanasius preserves them all and Hilary reproduces only the official second creed. See Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 22–5 and Hilary, *De Synodis*, 29. For a discussion of the creeds from Antioch, see Kelly, *Creeds*, 263–74; Hanson, *Search*, 284–92;

to the charges raised by Julius. As such, it is not a formal exposition of faith representing the efforts of the eastern bishops at Antioch as much as it is a brief statement inserted into a letter to Julius that serves to outline the eastern commitment to the traditional faith of the church. The statement begins: ‘We have not been followers of Arius. For how could we, as bishops, follow a presbyter?’²⁶ They continue to insist that their faith is the faith that has been handed down through the tradition, which, they argue, is not opposed to the teachings of Arius. It is typically Eusebian in that it asserts that the Son subsisted and coexisted with the Father before all ages (πρό πάντων αἰώνων ὑπάρχοντα καὶ συνόντα τῷ γεγεννηκότι αὐτὸν πατρὶ), and conveniently avoids comment on the term *homoousios*.²⁷

The official statement of faith from the synod of Antioch, which Joseph Lienhard characterizes as ‘a classic statement of Eusebian theology’, is the second or Lucianic creed.²⁸ The second article of the creed is quite long, and strings together a number of biblical images to highlight the harmony and likeness between the Father and the Son. The Son is described as God from God, King from King, Lord from Lord. He is the living Word, true Light, Shepherd, and Door, unalterable and unchangeable, the exact image of the Godhead and the *ousia* of the Father. The creed ends by quoting St Matthew’s baptismal formula, which means, argues the bishops, that the Father is truly Father, the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit. These names indicate a distinction in order and glory and show that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ‘three in substance and one in agreement’ (τῆ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία, τῆ δὲ συμφωνίᾳ ἓν).²⁹ The theological commitment of the creed is to three distinct *hypostases*,

Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 166–72; and L. Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 117–22.

²⁶ Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 22, and Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, II.10.

²⁷ Kelly, *Creeeds*, 267–8.

²⁸ Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 169. For the creed, see Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 23, and Hilary, *De Synodis*, 29. See also Kelly, *Creeeds*, 268–70, for facing Greek and English.

²⁹ Hilary would argue years later that this creed—particularly this concluding phrase—does not necessarily suggest any ‘dissimilarity of essence’ (*dissimilis essentiae*) between the Father and the Son. Indeed, according to Hilary, it can be read in such a way as to indicate that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three ‘subsistent Persons’ (*subsistentium personas*). Hilary is clearly aware that he is giving an

understood as *substantia* in Latin,³⁰ bound by a harmony of will, possessing, in subordinationist terms, their own order and glory.³¹

The third creed from Antioch is not an official statement of faith but rather the personal confession of Theophronius of Tyana, who, it seems, was suspected of heresy.³² The creed that exercised the most influence among the eastern bishops during the 340s and early 350s, however, is the fourth creed from Antioch. The overt subordinationism of the official second creed is moderated, and the anathemas attached to this creed speak more forcefully against ‘Arianism’. Gone is the excursus on St Matthew’s baptismal formula and the subordinationist distinction between the order and glory of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The bishops also have removed the phrase ‘three in substance’ (τῆ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία) and, echoing Nicaea, anathematize any who say that the Son is ‘from nothing’ (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων) or is ‘from another hypostasis and is not from God’ (ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως καὶ μὴ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ).³³

The fourth creed from Antioch was repeated with slight modification at the eastern synod of Serdica (Philippopolis) in 343, at Antioch in 344 in the Creed of Long Lines, *Ekthesis Makrostichos*, and again at Sirmium in 351. These eastern synods maintained the Eusebian position, rejected Athanasius, Marcellus, and Photinus of Sirmium, and sought to distance themselves from Arius’ teachings by repeating most of the anathemas from the Creed issued at Nicaea in 325. These eastern bishops saw themselves as being equally critical of Arius on the one hand and Athanasius/Marcellus on the other.³⁴

unnatural interpretation to this creed as it was intended by its authors, and asks his readers for patience in reading through his argument. See Hilary, *De Synodis*, 32–3.

³⁰ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis*, 29 (PL 10: 503B).

³¹ J. N. D. Kelly rightly notes that the Eusebian theology expressed in this creed reproduces exactly what Origen had taught concerning the Father and the Son in *Contra Celsum*, 8.12: ὄντα δύο τῆ ὑποστάσει πράγματα, ἓν δὲ τῆ συμφωνία καὶ τῆ ταυτότητι τοῦ βουλήματος. See Kelly, *Creeeds*, 271.

³² Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 24; Kelly, *Creeeds*, 266–8; and Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 171.

³³ Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 25, and Kelly, *Creeeds*, 272.

³⁴ As Rowan Williams has demonstrated, Arius left no school of disciples, and as such ‘there was no such thing in the fourth century as a single, coherent “Arian” party’. Williams rightly further notes that ‘most non-Nicenes would probably have been as little likely to call themselves Arians as Nicenes were to call themselves Athanasians’. See Williams, *Arius*, pp. 233–4.

Moreover, they deliberately avoided the language of *ousia* as extra-biblical, used *hypostasis* only in citing the anathemas from Nicaea,³⁵ and continued to characterize the generation of the Son as ἐκ τοῦ βουλήματος αὐτου.³⁶

The westerners, on the other hand, continued to defend Athanasius and Marcellus and to level attacks against the easterners as 'Arians'. At the synod of Rome in 341, Julius cleared Athanasius of the charges brought against him by the easterners at the synod of Tyre and received Marcellus into communion.³⁷ At the western synod of Serdica, the counterpart to the eastern synod in Philipopolis in 343,³⁸ the westerners once again restated their support for Athanasius and Marcellus and condemned the 'Arian heretics'.³⁹ The bishops condemned by the westerners were, among others, Narcissus of Neronias, Valens of Mursa, and Ursacius of Singidunum.

³⁵ This trend would culminate in the highly offensive creeds, from the perspective of the westerners, in the Homoian creed of Niké in 359, formally promulgated at the synod of Constantinople in 360 as the official creed of the church. This creed ends: 'But as for the name "substance" (*ousia*), which was adopted simply by the fathers, but being unknown to the people occasioned offence, because the Scriptures themselves do not contain it, it has pleased us that it should be abolished and that no mention at all should be made of it henceforth, since indeed the divine Scriptures nowhere have made mention of the substance (*ousia*) of the Father and Son. Nor indeed should the term *hypostasis* be used of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But we say the Son is like (*homoios*) the Father, as the divine Scriptures say and teach. But let all the heresies which have either been condemned previously, or have come about more recently and are in opposition to this creed, be anathema.' See Kelly, *Creeds*, 294.

³⁶ This teaching is not found in the Fourth Antiochene Creed, but is added in the anathemas at the three other synods mentioned.

³⁷ By embracing Marcellus, the West only reinforced the opinion of the eastern bishops that the term *homoousios* carried with it a Sabellian tendency. We see this sensitivity even expressed by the pro-Nicenes. For example, Hilary, around 358, warns his western colleagues that the term *homoousios* does not in itself carry an orthodox meaning because of the interpretations given it by Marcellus and his student Photinus of Sirmium. We see this concern still expressed by Basil of Caesarea in a letter to Athanasius in 371. See Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis*, 67–71; Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 69. For a discussion of Photinus, see Ch. 2 below.

³⁸ The emperors Constans and Constantius convoked the synod of Serdica to settle the dispute between the East and West. When the western bishops arrived with Athanasius and Marcellus, the easterners refused to meet and withdrew to Philipopolis. There they held their rival synod but, in protest and no doubt to add legitimacy to their encyclical, published their materials under the name of Serdica.

³⁹ The synodical letter is preserved by Athanasius and Hilary, and the letter with creed is preserved by Theodoret. See Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos*, 44–9; Hilary, *CaP B* 2.1 (CSEL 65: 103–26); and Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* II.6.

The exposition of faith published by the western bishops at Serdica for the first time shows evidence that they were beginning to understand the nuances of the eastern teaching on the generation of the Son. The westerners condemned any who assert that 'Christ is God but not the true God', that 'He is the Son but not the true Son',⁴⁰ and that 'He is both begotten and made'. On this last point, they continue, 'although the Son of God existed before all ages, they attribute to Him, who exists not in time but before all time, a beginning and an end'.⁴¹ The westerners here expose the subtlety of the Eusebian position. Although they were saying the Son existed before time, they were not asserting his co-eternity with the Father but only that he had a non-temporal beginning.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE CREED FROM NICAEA IN THE WEST

Following the death of Constans in 350, Constantius became the sole ruler in the empire and, like his father, sought to establish ecclesiastical unity throughout the East and the West.⁴² The emperor adopted the theological position of the majority of eastern bishops, who were

⁴⁰ For later Homoian efforts to circumvent this charge by referring to the Father as *verus deus* and the Son *verum (dei) filium*, see D. H. Williams's discussion of Germinius of Sirmium, Auxentius of Milan, and Palladius of Ratiaria: 'Another Exception to Later Fourth-Century "Arian" Typologies: The Case of Germinius of Sirmium', *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 4: 3 (1996), 346–7, n. 42.

⁴¹ Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* II.6; NPNE, 2nd ser., III, p. 71.

⁴² Constantius did not suffer from humility or discretion. According to Ammianus Marcellinus, Constantius referred to himself in letters as 'Our Eternity' and styled himself 'master of the whole world' (XV.1.3). He also delighted in theological debate, but lacked any understanding of the issues or the solemnity of the subject. Marcellinus describes him as 'dull-witted' and expert at 'sport'—two characteristics, it must be acknowledged, that do not lend one to constructive theological discourse (XXI.16.1–8). Along this line, Marcellinus writes: 'The plain and simple religion of the Christians was bedeviled by Constantius with old wives' fancies. Instead of trying to settle matters he raised complicated issues which led to much dissension, and as this spread more widely he fed it with verbal argument' (XXI.16.18). This last quote was made famous by Edward Gibbon and is reproduced in nearly all of the literature on the Nicene–'Arian' debates, as it goes on to complain about the use of the postal carriages by the bishops. Ammianus Marcellinus, *The Later Roman Empire, 354–378*, trans. Walter Hamilton (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1986).

resolutely opposed to Nicaea and to the chief supporter and symbol of that council, Athanasius. Following the synod of Sirmium in 351, the emperor shifted his attention to the West and sought to secure unity in the confession of faith from Sirmium and in the condemnations of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius. In the next chapter we will look more closely at how the Sirmium material may have been used at the synods of Arles, Milan, and perhaps Béziers. Before we do that, however, a few words need to be said regarding the theological climate of the West in the early 350s, and specifically the appearance of the Creed from Nicaea in these debates.

An intriguing proposal has been made by Timothy Barnes regarding the intended audience of Athanasius' *De Decretis*. The treatise seems to have been written in the early 350s, to a bishop whom Athanasius addresses in respectful terms and with whom he had previously corresponded. Barnes suggests that the addressee may be identified with Liberius, bishop of Rome, without much discomfort.⁴³ Barnes's suggestion fits nicely with the theological developments of the 350s and further explains the sudden use of the Creed from Nicaea in the West during this period.

In his *Adversus Valentem et Ursacium*, Hilary preserves a number of letters written by Liberius that shed some light on this question. Following the synod of Sirmium in 351, the eastern bishops sent a letter with their creed and condemnations to Julius of Rome. Julius died in April of 352, and the task of responding to the Sirmium letter fell to Liberius. In a letter to the eastern bishops in 357, Liberius recalls how he handled the issue at the time. He writes:

After I had received your letter, my esteemed colleagues, written to bishop Julius of blessed memory, about the name of Athanasius and the rest, I was eager for peace and harmony among the churches so I observed the tradition of my predecessors and sent Lucius, Paul, and Helianus, presbyters of Rome from my staff, to the aforementioned Athanasius in Alexandria requesting that he come to Rome so that the matter of ecclesiastical discipline that had arisen concerning him might be settled in his presence. I sent him a letter, through the aforesaid presbyters . . . [who] returned with the message that he would not come.⁴⁴

⁴³ T. D. Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 199.

⁴⁴ *CaP* B III.1.7–16 (CSEL 65: 155).

From this brief comment, it is clear that Liberius and Athanasius had corresponded in the early 350s regarding his condemnation at the synod of Sirmium in 351. Furthermore, Liberius pursued the role of mediator between the eastern bishops and Athanasius. Toward that end, he invited Athanasius to Rome to defend himself against the charges raised by the eastern bishops. Athanasius did not come. The reason for his not coming is disclosed by Liberius in another letter.

Following the synod of Arles in 353, Liberius wrote a letter to the emperor Constantius in which he explains more fully how he dealt with Athanasius following his condemnation by the eastern bishops at the synod of Sirmium. The context of Liberius' letter is important to note. The synod of Arles in 353, which will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, endorsed the subordinationist theology from Sirmium 351, which the emperor was advocating in the West, and, to Liberius' own shame, his legate, Vincentius of Capua, had capitulated to the synod's creed and condemnation of Athanasius.⁴⁵ Following the synod, Constantius circulated the materials from Arles to be endorsed by the bishops not in attendance. Failure to sign could result in exile. Liberius did not sign, and Constantius sent a letter to the people of Rome critical of his conduct as their bishop. This is the context in which Liberius writes back to the emperor. He asks that Constantius kindly listen to why he took the course of action he did. He remarks that he is greatly wounded by the emperor's letter to the people of Rome, and finds it out of character that such a forgiving Christian like Constantius would have done such a thing. Liberius then turns to the affair of Athanasius. The eastern bishops charge him with withholding the letters they sent regarding Athanasius' condemnation. He writes:

But it is quite clear to all, and nobody denies it, that we published the letter from the eastern bishops, read it to the church, read it to the council, and accordingly responded to the eastern bishops. We have not given our faith or decision [to the eastern bishops] because at that same time eighty Egyptian bishops disagreed with their decision, which we likewise reported and intimated to the Italian bishops. And so it seemed contrary to divine law to give our consent in any part when the greater number of bishops stood for Athanasius.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ For Liberius' letter discussing the shame he felt from Vincentius' capitulation, see *CaP* B VII.6 (CSEL 65: 167).

⁴⁶ *CaP* A VII.2.13–21 (CSEL 65: 90).

Liberius ends his letter to Constantius by urging him to convene another synod to settle these disputes and achieve the peace in the church that they both desire. Furthermore, Liberius suggests that Constantius should do as his father did and embrace the Creed from Nicaea to secure that peace in the church.⁴⁷

It is Liberius' suggestion that the Creed from Nicaea be used as an appropriate exposition of faith or, put another way, as a standard of orthodoxy securing the peace of the church, that stands out in this letter. What seems to have happened is that Liberius received the letter from the eastern bishops gathered at Sirmium, and responded by sending a letter to Athanasius requesting that he come to Rome and settle this matter in person. Athanasius instead held a synod in Egypt, attended by a greater number of bishops than those gathered at Sirmium, that cleared him of all charges. Instead of travelling to Rome, Athanasius sent the decree from this synod. Liberius and the Italian bishops met together and reviewed the materials from Athanasius. Liberius then wrote to the eastern bishops and explained that he could not give assent to their condemnation of Athanasius, since so many Egyptian bishops have issued a contrary opinion on the matter. Such a move by Liberius would be contrary to divine law.

Athanasius, perhaps sensing that the western bishops were susceptible to an eastern interpretation of this dispute, agreed to a request made by Liberius to compose a work explaining the central theological issue, as he saw it, from the council of Nicaea. Athanasius writes, 'since thy friendliness (*διάθεσις*) has asked to know the transactions of the Council, I have without any delay related at once what then took place, showing in few words, how destitute Arianism is of a religious spirit, and how their one business is to frame evasions.'⁴⁸ Athanasius proceeds in *De Decretis*, not with a discussion of the particulars of the council, but rather with an explanation of the orthodoxy of the non-Scriptural phrases, 'from the essence' (*ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας*) and 'one in essence' (*ὁμοούσιος*), that were forced on the council by the evasive language of the 'Arians'. Moreover, all of the fathers gathered at Nicaea agreed upon these phrases, including—notes Athanasius—Eusebius of Caesarea. Athanasius ends his work with some remarks on how it might best be used. He writes:

⁴⁷ *CaP A VII.6* (CSEL 65: 92–3).

⁴⁸ Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 2 (PG 25: 165A; NPNF, 2nd ser., IV, p. 151).

You, however, dearly beloved, read it by yourself when you receive it, and if you happen to decide that it is good, read it also to the brothers present on that occasion, so that they too, learning these things, may realize the council's devotion to the truth and its precise intentions, and may condemn the audacity of the Arians who fight Christ and their vain excuses, which they have learned among themselves to invent for the sake of their own impious heresy.⁴⁹

If Liberius received Athanasius' account of the council of Nicaea some time in 352/3, as Barnes suggests, then it nicely explains Liberius' request in his letter to Constantius in 354 that he use the Creed from Nicaea to achieve the unity and peace in the church they both seek. Constantius did convene another synod at Milan in 355, but he did not use the Creed from Nicaea. Instead, he continued to advocate the materials approved at Arles. At Milan, however, Eusebius of Vercelli presented the Creed from Nicaea for signatures. When Dionysius of Milan began to put his signature on the Creed, Valens of Mursa, who was presiding over the synod, seized the pen from his hand, and chaos arose.⁵⁰

The presence of the Creed in the West at the beginning of the 350s, and its advocacy by a group of western bishops, albeit a minority, indicates a developing sense of western orthodoxy grounded in the exposition of faith from Nicaea. It is this understanding of western orthodoxy by the bishops exiled at Arles in 353, Milan in 355, and Béziers in 356 that we now need to address.

⁴⁹ Ibid. 32 (PG 25: 187BC; NPNE, 2nd ser., IV, p. 172).

⁵⁰ Hilary of Poitiers, *Liber I Ad Constantium*, 8 (CSEL 65: 187.12–15).

Photinus of Sirmium and the Western Synods of Arles (353), Milan (355), and Béziers (356)

Hilary of Poitiers and Rhodanius of Toulouse were exiled as a result of the synod of Béziers in 356. Since we have no surviving *acta* from this western synod, scholars have debated only generally about the theological or political character of the gathering. A review of Hilary's various comments on Béziers indicates that he was exiled for his confession of faith before the synod. The 'Arian' bishops gathered at Béziers, particularly Saturninus of Arles and the bishops from Gallia Narbonensis, rejected Hilary's confession and condemned him. A report from the synod went to Caesar Julian, and he found no cause in the synod's findings to exile Hilary. At this point, Saturninus of Arles manufactured certain charges that would deceive the emperor Constantius as to Hilary's fitness to be a bishop. After receiving this false report, as Hilary later characterizes it, the emperor exiled Hilary to Phrygia.

A review of the historical situation in the West during the 350s and the emperor Constantius' theological policies suggests that the synod of Béziers closely resembled the synods of Arles and Milan. It seems likely, though certainly inconclusive, that Constantius promoted the theological position articulated in the creed and condemnations from Sirmium 351, which ultimately derived from the Fourth Creed from the Dedication Council of Antioch in 341.¹ When presented with a

¹ Timothy Barnes first suggested that the Sirmium material was used in some form at these western synods. More recently, Lewis Ayres has embraced this argument. Although difficult to demonstrate and somewhat of a challenge, given Hilary's

version of the Sirmium theology at Béziers, Hilary refused to give his assent to its exposition of faith and condemnation of Athanasius. At this point, the historical picture is somewhat unclear. We do not know what may have been said at Béziers in response to Hilary's statement of faith. Was it warmly received, hotly contested, or coldly dismissed? What we know is that Hilary was exiled, and his confession of faith prompted his condemnation and subsequent exile.

Before we address the western synods of the 350s, we need to discuss the western Trinitarian debates in the 340s, and particularly the anti-Nicene construal of Photinus of Sirmium and his theology with any western supporter of Athanasius. A casual reading of the works by supporters of Nicaea, such as Athanasius or Hilary, reveals that they are not very interested in offering a careful and detached assessment of the various critics of Nicaea; rather, if you do not stand for Nicaea, you must be against it and therefore an Arian in the spirit of the heresiarch Arius. The same approach is taken by the anti-Nicene writers. From their perspective, if you stand for Nicaea you must embrace the monarchical theology of Marcellus of Ancyra and Photinus of Sirmium in the spirit of the heresiarch Sabellius. It is precisely this sensitivity of being labelled a Photinian that we find repeatedly expressed by Hilary in his various comments describing the events of the late 340s and early 350s and in the revision to his early books of *De Trinitate* in 358. Indeed, it would be difficult to overstate Hilary's constant concern to distance his pro-Nicene theology from any charge of Photinian adoptionism. Since there is little scholarship on the theology of Photinus and his place in these Trinitarian debates, the following section will begin by discussing his presence in the creedal activity of the 340s and 350s and the polemical use of his name by the eastern bishops. The chapter will

comments on the synod of Sirmium 351 in his *De Synodis*, I think Barnes is correct. My position throughout this chapter is that materials derived from Sirmium 351 were advanced at Arles, Milan, and Béziers. Although these gatherings were highly political, they were not free from a theological agenda. The condemnations and exiles of western bishops were based on theological debates that were motivated by a political agenda. Anyone familiar with church disputes in our own day will easily recognize this unfortunate relationship between theology and politics. See Timothy Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), 109; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 135–6.

end by outlining the western synods of Arles, Milan, and Béziers and the emergence of Hilary of Poitiers in these debates.

PHOTINUS OF SIRMIMUM IN THE FOURTH-CENTURY TRINITARIAN DEBATES

Photinus of Sirmium is first condemned by name at the synod of Antioch in 344. The eastern bishops gathered at this synod issued the *Ekthesis Makrostichos*, the Creed of Long Lines. This creed reproduces the Fourth Antiochene Creed from 341, adds some anathemas, particularly those from Serdica (Philippopolis) in 343, and attaches a lengthy explanation of the creed. Scholars generally regard this statement of faith as the most sympathetic presentation of the Eusebian theological position.² In the appended explanation, the bishops unequivocally distance themselves from the radical teaching associated with Arius, deliberately avoid *ousia* or *hypostasis* language, and positively express their subordinationist theology in the language of three *pragmata* and *prosopa*. After rejecting the teaching associated with Paul of Samosata that Christ, a mere man, became God by advance (*ἐκ προκοπῆς*), the bishops offer a lengthy paragraph on the teachings of Marcellus of Ancyra and Photinus of Sirmium, whom they mockingly refer to as ‘Scotinus’. They begin by anathematizing those who ‘make a pretence of saying that he [the Son] is but the mere word of God and non-existing, having his being in another—now as if pronounced (*λόγος προφορικός*), as some speak, now as mental (*λόγος ἐνδιάθετος*)—holding that he was not Christ or Son of God or mediator or image of God before ages; but that he first became Christ and Son of God, when he took our flesh from the Virgin.’³ The bishops further insist that the Son appeared to the

² J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman, 1960), 279–81. For similar assessments, see Joseph Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 178; R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381 AD* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 309–12; and Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 87–8.

³ Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 26.5 (NPNE, 2nd ser., IV, pp. 463–4).

patriarchs and prophets and, in these latter times, became man. Finally, they assert that the Son is like in all things (*ὅμοιον κατὰ πάντα*) to the Father. The explanation ends with a note of hope that all in the West might know their faith and the false teachings of the heretics; a knowledge, it is implied, that will reveal to the westerners their susceptibility, if not outright espousal, of Sabellian sympathies.

We need not look too far for a possible reason for the emergence of Photinus in these debates. Eufрата of Cologne was charged with delivering the western Serdican encyclical of 343 to Constantius' imperial residence in Antioch. Three years later he would be condemned at the synod of Cologne for espousing Photinian ideas. Although we have no indication that he was present at the synod of Antioch in 344, his presence in Antioch, as an official representative of the western Serdican synod, would have surely elicited interest from the participants in these Trinitarian debates. While it is often presumed that Eufрата must have been committed to the western orthodox position in order to be charged with the task of delivering the materials from Serdica to Constantius, we should exercise some caution in drawing the lines of western orthodoxy in the early 340s too narrowly. It is worth noting that Eufрата delivered the Serdican materials with Vincentius of Capua, who, a few years later, was sent by Liberius of Rome to the synod of Arles in 353. To Liberius' shame, Vincentius accepted the decisions of the council, which condemned Athanasius and endorsed a subordinationist theology.⁴ There is no reason to presume that Eufрата's understanding of orthodoxy was markedly different from Marcellus and Photinus; views the West had not, at this stage, formally condemned.

We gain a sense of Eufрата's theological sympathies from the *acta* of the synod of Cologne in 346.⁵ According to the *acta*, Eufрата was

⁴ For Liberius' letter to Ossius of Córdoba, in which he discusses Vincentius' actions at Arles, see *CaP B VII.6* (CSEL 65: 167). It should be noted that Vincentius was not alone in capitulating to the demands of the 'Arians' at Arles. Fortunatianus of Aquileia also signed the Serdican material and changed course at Arles by signing the condemnation of Athanasius. For the Serdican signatures, see *CaP B II.4* (CSEL 65: 132–9).

⁵ The *acta* survive only in a tenth-century manuscript, but were known in the eighth century. Since the account of Eufрата in these *acta* differs from what we know about him from Athanasius, some scholars have dismissed the *acta* as an eighth-century forgery: a position that is not as easy to maintain as supposed. See L. Duchesne, 'Le Faux Concile de Cologne (346)', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 3 (1902), 16–29. For a continuation

unanimously condemned for denying that Christ is God.⁶ The presiding bishop, Maximinus of Trier, states that Eufrata has ‘blasphemed the Holy Spirit to such an extent that he denies Christ is God.’⁷ All of the bishops charge Eufrata with denying that Christ is God, and a number of them characterize his denial as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.⁸ We also learn from the *acta* that Eufrata had been condemned by an assembly of five bishops prior to the synod of Cologne.⁹ Valerianus of Auxerre, who mentions this earlier gathering, tells us that Eufrata denies the pre-existence of Christ, that he revealed himself to the prophets, and that he was with God the Father (*cum Deo Patre*)¹⁰ before the creation of the world. Finally, Eufrata teaches that Christ was a mere man.¹¹ The charges levelled by Valerianus either present a polemical exaggeration of Eufrata’s position or suggest that his theological sympathies closely resembled those of Photinus of Sirmium. If the latter, then we may have an explanation as to why the bishops gathered at Antioch in 344 were compelled to condemn Photinus by name. Indeed, their rejection of Photinus closely follows the outline of Eufrata’s views given by Valerianus. Moreover, from the perspective of the eastern bishops, if one of the official representatives from the West espoused views similar to Photinus, it would not be unreasonable for them to conclude that the westerners were susceptible to Sabellian theology.

We know that the materials issued by the synod of Antioch were brought to the West and presented one year later at the synod of

of the debate started by Duchesne, see Monchamp, ‘Pour l’authenticité des actes du concile de Cologne de 346’, *Bulletins de l’Académie royale de Belgique*, 5 (1902), 245–88; D. H. Quentin, ‘Le Concile de Cologne des 346 et les adhésions gauloises aux lettres synodales de Sardique’, *Revue Bénédictine*, 23 (1906), 477–86; and Karl Joseph von Hefele–Henri Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, I.2 (Paris, 1907), 830–4.

⁶ ‘Concilium Coloniae Agrippinae’, SC 241, ed. Jean Gaudemet (*Conciles Gaulois de IV Siècle*), preface: ‘Eufrata, qui Christum Deum negat.’

⁷ *Ibid.*, ch. 1: ‘Maximinus episcopus dixit: “. . . [Eufrata] qui in Spiritum sanctum eatenus blasphemavit, quod Christum <Deum> negat . . .”’ It is worth noting that, according to Maximinus’ biographer, he was a native of Poitiers. See Lupus Servatus, *Vita Maximini* (PL 119: 668B).

⁸ For the charge of blasphemy against the Spirit, see ‘Concilium Coloniae Agrippinae’, chs. 4, 5, and 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, chs. 8 and 10.

¹⁰ As will be discussed below, similar phrases are associated with Photinus of Sirmium by Hilary, Epiphanius, and Ambrosiaster.

¹¹ ‘Concilium Coloniae Agrippinae’, ch. 8.

Milan. There are four key pieces of evidence linking these materials to a synod held in Milan in 345. First, Athanasius reports that Eudoxius, Martyrius, and Macedonius of Cilicia, among others, brought the materials from Antioch to Italy soon after the synod.¹² Second, Liberius of Rome, in a letter to the emperor Constantius in 353, reports that Demophilus, Eudoxius, Martyrius, and Macedonius refused to condemn Arius at a synod held in Milan in 345, and walked out of the council in a rage.¹³ Third, Valens and Ursacius, in their signed statement to Julius of Rome at the synod of Rome in 347, refer to materials they presented at the synod of Milan in 345 that condemned Arius and his accomplices.¹⁴ Finally, Hilary reports that the bishops assembled at the synod of Milan in 345 condemned Photinus.¹⁵ A large number of bishops would again gather, reports Hilary, to condemn Photinus at the synod of Rome in 347.

We do not possess a great deal of information about the synod of Milan in 345, but we do know, from repeated statements by Hilary, that the western bishops were familiar with Photinus' teachings and condemned him. Moreover, despite the fact that Athanasius had severed communion with Marcellus of Ancyra prior to the synod, the bishops at Milan issued no statement regarding him.¹⁶ We may also gather from the above evidence that the western bishops were not willing to accept the moderate subordinationist position advanced in the materials from Antioch, and demanded that the four eastern bishops, presumably also Valens and Ursacius, reject various 'Arian' teachings as construed by the western bishops. The eastern delegation refused and, according to Liberius, walked out in a rage. Given the appended explanation to the Antiochene materials in which the bishops attempted to distance themselves from the radical teachings of Arius, we are not surprised to see the eastern delegation storm off in frustration. Finally, since Valens and Ursacius held sees in the jurisdiction of Constans, they soon reconsidered their

¹² Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 26.

¹³ Hilary, *CaP A VII.4* (CSEL 65: 91).

¹⁴ *CaP B II.6–7* (CSEL 65: 143–5). The statement or letter is also preserved in Athanasius, *Apologia Contra Arianos*, 58; and Sozomen, *HE III.24*.

¹⁵ *CaP B II.5.4* (CSEL 65: 142).

¹⁶ Hilary continues in his narrative to report that Marcellus renounced his teachings without any pressure from the synod. See *CaP B II.9.1–3* (CSEL 65: 146–7).

opposition and supported the western bishops at the synod of Rome in 347.¹⁷

From this chronology of events, we begin to see that the western bishops were no longer willing to endure the scandal of Photinus and his radical teachings by the mid-340s. With the condemnation of Photinus at the synod of Milan in 345 and Rome in 347, and perhaps Photinian ideas in the person of Eufрата of Cologne at the synod of Cologne in 346, the western bishops began to sharpen their understanding of what constituted western orthodoxy and to establish acceptable limits to its expression. Furthermore, their efforts in the 340s prepared the way for the western promotion of the Creed from Nicaea as a standard of orthodoxy in the 350s.

THE SYNOD OF SIRMIMUM IN 351 AND THE SYNOD OF ARLES IN 353

The conciliatory creeds of the 340s and the mutual condemnation of Photinus may have given the impression to some bishops that consensus was near. At the same time, the western reluctance to condemn Photinus' teacher, Marcellus of Ancyra, only fomented the polemical spirit of these debates. The western position, as articulated by Julius of Rome, by the western synod of Serdica, and later by Hilary, is that Marcellus was either falsely accused of heresy or recanted his 'Sabellian' tendencies. At some point following the synod of Milan in 345 and the western rejection of the eastern subordinationist position, as articulated in the *Ekthesis Makrostichos* from Antioch, the eastern bishops began to construe western opposition as support for the monarchial theology espoused by Marcellus and the now universally condemned Photinus. When the eastern bishops gathered at the synod of Sirmium in 351, they drafted their anathemas in opposition to Photinian theology. This material, in some form, appears to have been used by the emperor Constantius to

¹⁷ When the political winds shifted in 350 with Constans' death, the inseparable pair of Valens and Ursacius aligned themselves with Constantius and the eastern bishops.

secure unity and peace between the eastern and western bishops at the western synods of Arles, Milan, and Béziers. When a minority group of western bishops refused to give their assent, the eastern bishops falsely construed their opposition as support for Photinus' monarchical theology. This bogus charge is analogous to the western suggestion that anything falling short of the Nicene faith was 'Arian' in the tradition of Arius; a charge the eastern bishops repeatedly deny.

The eastern bishops gathered at Sirmium in 351 to once more condemn Photinus. This gathering is the final eastern synod to reproduce the Fourth Antiochene Creed from 341 and to articulate their subordinationist position in moderate terms.¹⁸ The bishops proceeded to add twenty-six anathemas that rejected the western caricature of Arius' extreme views, proscribed the teachings of Marcellus and Photinus, and condemned Athanasius.¹⁹ R. P. C. Hanson observes that the 'main weight' of the synod was to outline Photinus' theology and condemn it. Moreover, Hanson recognizes the not-so-subtle construal of Photinian ideas with those who support Nicaea. He writes: 'Photinus may have appealed to the Creed from Nicaea in defending his views, and perhaps the authors of this creed may have hoped to persuade the Western bishops that the doctrines such as those of Photinus and Marcellus are the inevitable outcome of the doctrine expressed in the Creed from Nicaea.'²⁰ Toward this end, those gathered at Sirmium placed restrictions on the use of *ousia* language in the anathemas. This construal of Photinian ideas with the supporters of Nicaea is an issue that Hilary addresses in his historical work and the early books of *De Trinitate*.

¹⁸ With the rise of the Anomoians and Homoians in the 350s, the situation changes and the moderate tone of the Fourth Antiochene Creed is replaced by more aggressive creeds.

¹⁹ Although the surviving materials from Sirmium fail to attest to the condemnation of Athanasius, it is acknowledged in a letter sent by the bishops to Julius of Rome explaining their actions and requesting his assent to their findings. Since Julius died in April 352, the task of responding to the eastern bishops fell to his successor, Liberius. A few years later Liberius explains the actions he took in responding to the Sirmium 351 materials, and reports that they had condemned 'Athanasius and the rest'. The 'rest' undoubtedly refers to Marcellus and Photinus. See *CaP* B III.1 = 'Studens paci' (CSEL 65: 155).

²⁰ Hanson, *Search*, 328–9.

Among the bishops present at the synod of Sirmium were Basil of Ancyra, who debated with Photinus about his theological commitments,²¹ and the duo of Valens and Ursacius, who, following Constans' death, had shifted their allegiance back to the eastern bishops. The manoeuvres of the eastern bishops at the synod of Sirmium in 351, their exploitation of the western condemnation of Photinus, and the use of material derived from Sirmium at the western synods of Arles and Milan are all suggested by Sulpicius Severus. His account, however, requires some explanation, as it lacks the names of synods and dates. Sulpicius begins by mentioning that Athanasius had broken communion with Marcellus. This happened, as mentioned above, prior to the synod of Milan in 345 and the first western condemnation of Photinus. Sulpicius then asserts that the eastern bishops associated Photinus' name with Marcellus and Marcellus' name with Athanasius. As such, they exploited the western condemnation of Photinus to make a false association of his theological sympathies with Athanasius by means of their common associate, Marcellus of Ancyra. In this context, the eastern bishops, explains Sulpicius, gathered and issued 'the condemnation of Photinus, Marcellus, and Athanasius', which must be a reference to the synod of Sirmium in 351.²² Sulpicius continues by filling in the chronology of these events between Athanasius' separation from Marcellus prior to the synod of Milan in 345 and the eastern condemnation of Photinus, Marcellus, and Athanasius at the synod of Sirmium in 351. Although this false association was not made explicit until 351, Sulpicius concludes that this was the design of the eastern bishops and those sympathetic to their cause following the 345 synod of Milan. This treachery, however, was concealed when some of the 'Arians', as Sulpicius puts it, professed themselves in communion with the West. This is no doubt a reference to the actions of Valens and Ursacius at the synod of Rome in 347. In their statement of faith to Julius, the two bishops admit to fabricating the charges against Athanasius and confess agreement with the western bishops. When the political winds shifted with the death of Constans, Valens and Ursacius found themselves under the jurisdiction of Constantius and

²¹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 71.1–2.

²² See Sulpicius, *Chronicon*, II.37.5

immediately switched their political and theological allegiance back to the eastern bishops. Sulpicius brings his chapter to a close with the synod of Arles in 353. At this synod Paulinus of Trier was presented a synodical letter that expressed the eastern confession of faith and called for the condemnation of Photinus, Marcellus, and Athanasius. Paulinus consented to the condemnation of Photinus and Marcellus but not Athanasius. He was exiled.

Sulpicius' main source was Hilary's historical work, *Adversus Valentem et Ursacium*.²³ Unfortunately, Hilary's work survives only in fragmented form, making it difficult at times to understand the sequence of events he describes. However, when we bear in mind Sulpicius' narration, Hilary's account corresponds nicely with the one outlined above. After describing Photinus' condemnation at the synod of Milan in 345 and at the synod of Rome in 347, where Valens and Ursacius recanted their allegiance with the eastern bishops, Hilary writes: 'Meanwhile there was an assembly at Sirmium. Photinus, apprehended as a heretic, and a long time earlier pronounced guilty and for some time cut off from united communion, could not even then be brought through a popular faction . . .'²⁴ At this point Hilary's text is interrupted. When the text resumes, Hilary is discussing how Athanasius severed communion with Marcellus prior to the condemnation of Photinus at the synod of Milan in 345. At first glance, Hilary's comment seems to be out of chronological sequence. He had already discussed the condemnation of Photinus at Milan and Rome in the 340s. Why now make a comment about Athanasius' relationship with Marcellus leading up to the synod of Milan in 345? Hilary's point becomes clearer as he continues. He writes:

But this ought to be known to all men: no synod was ever afterwards summoned against Marcellus except the one that was concluded with the

²³ Sulpicius' theological reconstruction of events has long been challenged by scholars. See E. Schwartz, 'Zur Kirchengeschichte des 4. Jahrhunderts', *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*, 34 (1935), 152; M. Meslin, *Les Ariens d'Occident 335–430* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 273; R. Klein, *Constantius II und die christliche Kirche* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), 54–9; and H. C. Brennecke, *Hilarius von Poitiers und die Bischofsopposition gegen Konstantius II* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), 145. As is clear from what follows, I do not share these reservations about Sulpicius' account.

²⁴ *CaP B II.9.1* (CSEL 65: 146.5–8).

Sardican decrees [i.e. 343]—not even then, when a judgement against Photinus was made by the westerners and conveyed to the easterners [i.e. synod of Milan in 345]. But men crafty in mind, subtle in intellect, and determined in evil sought an occasion to reopen the case that was closed by the acquittal of Athanasius [i.e. at Serdica in 343]. When they wrote an answer about Photinus they added a reference to Marcellus as the source of his doctrines [synod of Sirmium in 351]. They wanted this new element of the case to stir up in the public memory a question about Athanasius himself that had for some time already died down and been buried by a declaration of the truth [i.e. eight years ago at Serdica]. And they subtly drew in Marcellus' name through the condemnation of Photinus [at Sirmium in 351].²⁵

Hilary continues by explaining how the eastern bishops at the synod of Sirmium in 351 exploited the association of the now-condemned Photinus and the western acceptance of Marcellus. Hilary labours the point that Athanasius had severed communion with Marcellus because the eastern bishops do not accept this as the case. As such, they move easily from the condemnation of Photinus to Athanasius and assert a false creed, argues Hilary, that overturns the catholic faith as espoused by the western bishops. Hilary writes:

Let me point out the creed that their letters established at the outset. It is fraudulent, heretical, and, though its words are beguiling, I will show it to be full of poison within. [Their creed reads:] 'For we declare: that there is one unbegotten God the Father, and his one unique Son, God from God, light from light, first-born of all creation; and we add as third the Holy Ghost the Paraclete.'²⁶ And so, when unsuspecting readers or simple untutored souls have been taken in by such soothing beginnings, *they pass over from the common and unified assent of the subscription elicited in censure of Photinus to Athanasius' guilt and the condemnation of the Catholic faith.*²⁷

This is the proper context of Hilary's Sirmium fragment above. Again, it reads: 'Meanwhile there was an assembly at Sirmium. Photinus, apprehended as a heretic, and a long time earlier pronounced guilty and for some time cut off from united communion,

²⁵ *CaP B II.9.2* (CSEL 65: 146–7). This is Lienhard's translation in *Contra Marcellum*, 153, n. 63. The bracketed notes are inserted by me to assist the reader with Hilary's narrative.

²⁶ This paraphrase is most reminiscent of the eastern Serdican (Philippopolis) creed from 343 which was repeated at Sirmium in 351. Given the mention of Marcellus and Photinus, the evidence strongly points to Sirmium 351.

²⁷ *CaP B II.9.4* (CSEL 65: 147–8; Wickham, 58–9). Italics added.

could not even then be brought through a popular faction . . .²⁸ The preceding context of this fragment is Hilary's discussion of the synod of Milan in 345 and Rome in 347. These synods both condemned Photinus and the Roman synod received Valens and Ursacius into catholic communion. Based on this context, scholars have concluded that Hilary's fragment refers to a gathering of eastern bishops at Sirmium around 347 or 348. Hilary's fragment is, in fact, the only source for this alleged gathering. T. D. Barnes, however, has rightly noted that at this time Pannonia was under the rule of Constans, and therefore any gathering of bishops at Sirmium in the late 340s could not have been eastern but western.²⁹ The context of Hilary's comment and the corroborating narrative offered by Sulpicius make it clear that the bishops gathered at Sirmium were eastern. The overall point is that the western bishops condemned Photinus, and the eastern bishops wrongly exploited that condemnation to attack Athanasius and Nicaea by establishing a false association between the two by means of Marcellus of Ancyra. This is what happened at the synod of Sirmium in 351. Hilary's allusion, then, to a gathering in Sirmium which passed from the censure of Photinus to the guilt of Athanasius and the condemnation of the Nicene faith should be understood as the eastern gathering in 351. There is no reason to allege a gathering of eastern bishops in the western-controlled city of Sirmium in the late 340s. The context of Hilary's discussion neither demands it nor does the historical situation allow it.

The lacuna between Hilary's fragment mentioning the synod of Sirmium in 351 and Athanasius' separation from Marcellus before the synod of Milan in 345 would have presumably stated what Hilary concludes: 'they [the eastern bishops] pass over from the common and unified assent of the subscription elicited in censure of Photinus to Athanasius' guilt and the condemnation of the Catholic faith.' They do this by making a false association between Athanasius and Photinus by means of Marcellus of Ancyra. Hilary therefore continues, after the lacuna, by outlining Athanasius' separation from

²⁸ *CaP* B II.9.1 (CSEL 65: 146.5–8): 'verum inter haec Sirmium convenitur. Fotinus haereticus deprehensus, olim reus pronuntiatus et a communione iam pridem unitatis abscisus, ne tum quidem per factionem populi potuit amoveri.'

²⁹ For the scholarly assumption that this synod occurred, see Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 318, nn. 8 and 11.

Marcellus before the synod of Milan in 345 and exposing their polemical efforts to exploit the mutual condemnation of Photinus in an effort to overturn the Nicene faith.

From the above narrative, a number of points should be emphasized. First, the eastern bishops were no doubt puzzled that the western bishops would condemn Photinus but not his presumed teacher, Marcellus of Ancyra.³⁰ The western insistence that Athanasius had severed communion with Marcellus would have been a meaningless gesture. After all, if Athanasius felt so strongly about Marcellus' false teaching, why not condemn his teachings at an official gathering of bishops? In fact, Athanasius' friendship with Marcellus seems to be what instigated his separation from him before the synod of Milan in 345 so as to protect Marcellus from being condemned as a Photinian.³¹

Second, rather than pressing the western bishops to condemn Marcellus, as they had with Photinus, the eastern bishops insisted on Athanasius' condemnation. As noted above, while wintering at Arles, Constantius summoned a gathering of bishops toward the end of 353. Materials demanding the condemnation of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius were presented to these bishops. Paulinus of Trier agreed to sign the condemnation of Marcellus and Photinus, but not Athanasius. He was promptly sent into exile. Constantius then ordered the material presented at Arles to be taken to bishops not in attendance for their assent and signature. If the bishop refused, he forfeited his see.³² Liberius of Rome was not forthcoming with his assent, and the emperor Constantius sent a letter to the people of Rome critical of their bishop's conduct.³³ Liberius responded with a letter of his own to the emperor in 354. He requested that the emperor convene another synod to settle the matter of Athanasius

³⁰ The relationship between Marcellus and Photinus is often characterized as a teacher–student one. According to Hilary, however, Photinus radically altered Marcellus' views, and Marcellus, for a time, was intrigued by Photinus' theology. If Photinus began as student, in Hilary's estimation he quickly emerged as teacher. See *CaP B II.9.1–3* (CSEL 65: 146–7).

³¹ For this conclusion, see Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 153, n. 63.

³² For a description of this procedure in addition to what follows, see Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum*, 31.2–3.

³³ *CaP B IV.1* = 'Imperitiae culpam' (CSEL 65: 89).

and ratify the Creed from Nicaea.³⁴ The emperor agreed to the first part of Liberius' request and summoned a synod at Milan in 355.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Liberius' response to Constantius is important. He requests that the emperor ratify the Creed from Nicaea. A year later Eusebius of Vercelli presents the Creed for signatures to the bishops gathered at the synod of Milan. His presentation of the Creed marks its first official use at a synod of both 'Nicenes' and 'Arians' since the council of Nicaea in 325. What is clear from the use of the Creed by Liberius and Eusebius is that a minority party in the West, opposed to the theological programme of the emperor, was emerging and rallying around the Creed as a standard of orthodoxy.

THE SYNOD OF MILAN IN 355

The gathering at Milan was, like Arles before it, relatively small.³⁵ Following the synod, Constantius had the materials from Milan circulated for signatures to bishops not in attendance. One such bishop was Eusebius of Vercelli. He received a letter requesting his signature to the condemnation of the 'sacrilegious' Athanasius and the 'heretics' Marcellus and Photinus.³⁶ In addition to the letter from the bishops at Milan, Eusebius received a letter from Constantius as well.³⁷ Both of these letters urged Eusebius to give his assent to the decisions made at Milan. When Eusebius reviewed the materials, he

³⁴ *CaP B IV.6* (CSEL 65: 93).

³⁵ Pierre Smulders reproduces the list of Milan signatures that Cardinal Baronius published in his *Annales Ecclesiastici*, which he had gathered from the archives at Vercelli. The manuscript unfortunately has since been lost, and we have only Baronius' record of it. See Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface to His Opus Historicum* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 109–12; and also Barnes, *Athanasius and Constantius*, 117 and 275, n. 47. Lewis Ayres has argued that Hilary of Poitiers was present at the synod of Milan and heard the Nicene Creed recited at the gathering in 355. There is no historical foundation for this assertion. Hilary did not emerge in these debates until the synod of Béziers in 356. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 137.

³⁶ *Epistola Synodica*, 2.13–14 (CCSL 9: 119).

³⁷ For Constantius' letter to Eusebius, see CCSL 9: 120–1, and for Eusebius' response to the emperor, CCSL 9: 103.

decided to travel directly to the synod itself.³⁸ The reason for his actions seems to have been that Dionysius of Milan had, for some reason, assented to the demands of the 'Arian' bishops gathered at Milan and put his signature on the materials. According to ps.-Maximus, Eusebius set out to rescue Dionysius from this association with the 'Arians'. When he arrived at Milan, Eusebius gave the appearance to the 'Arians' that he would put his signature on their materials, but he was upset that Dionysius, a junior bishop, had been given precedence over him in signing the document. Therefore, he insisted that Dionysius' name be erased and placed under his own. The bishops at Milan, somewhat bewildered by Eusebius' request, nonetheless agreed and erased Dionysius' name.³⁹ Once Dionysius' signature had been removed, Eusebius revealed his deception by producing the Creed from Nicaea and insisting that his opponents sign it in exchange for his condemnation of Athanasius.⁴⁰ At this point Dionysius of Milan began to write down his profession of the Creed, when Valens of Mursa 'violently seized the pen and paper from his hands'.⁴¹ Chaos arose and, according to Sulpicius, the bishops reassembled at the palace. From there the emperor's desire

³⁸ Another letter that we possess is from Lucifer of Cagliari, the presbyter Pancratius, and Hilary the Deacon that seems to be written in anticipation of Eusebius' arrival in Milan (CCSL 9: 120). This letter is normally placed third in the sequence of letters to Eusebius from the synod of Milan. Daniel Williams has suggested that it should be placed first in the sequence, and argues that Eusebius attended the opening of the synod at Milan but soon left when agreement could not be achieved over the Nicene Creed. He then received the letters from the synod and Constantius. At this point Eusebius decided to return to the synod, only to be exiled. Williams does not discuss the presence of Dionysius' name on the list of signatures from Milan, nor does he provide an explanation for ps.-Maximus' suggestion that Eusebius deceived the 'Arians' in order to have Dionysius' name removed. See D. H. Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the End of the Nicene-Arian Conflicts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 55–8.

³⁹ For the above, see ps.-Maximus, *Sermo VII.3* (CCSL 23: 25), and Lydia Speller, 'A Note on Eusebius of Vercelli and the Council of Milan', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 36: 1 (1985), 162–5.

⁴⁰ Lewis Ayres suggests that Eusebius produced the Creed from Nicaea in order to divert the council from condemning Athanasius, Marcellus, and Photinus. Ayres gives no reason for this suggestion, and it seems highly unlikely that there would have been any resistance to the condemnation of Photinus at Milan. From the mid-340s on, the westerners continuously condemn Photinus, and at Arles Paulinus was even willing to condemn Marcellus. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 136.

⁴¹ Hilary of Poitiers, *Liber I Ad Constantium*, 8 (CSEL 65: 187.12–15): 'Dionisius Mediolanensis episcopus cartam primus accepit. Ubi profitenda scribere coepit,

for unanimity on the condemnation of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius was reinforced, and Eusebius, Dionysius, and Lucifer of Cagliari, among others, were exiled.⁴²

THE SYNOD OF BÉZIERS IN 356

Although there is not an abundance of historical evidence on the synods of Arles and Milan, it is clear, from what does survive, that materials were presented which demanded the condemnation of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius. When we turn to the synod of Béziers in 356, we encounter two bishops who figure prominently at the synod and who were also in attendance at the synod of Milan. The first is Saturninus of Arles, whose name appears directly under Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum on the Milan list of signatures. Saturninus seems to have been the emperor's chief supporter in the West, and would have come to Béziers intent on promoting the emperor's theological agenda; an agenda, as we have seen, that sought agreement on a creed presumably derived from Sirmium and insisted on the condemnations of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius. The second bishop who attended Milan and Béziers is Rhodanius of Toulouse, whose name appears on the Milan list of signatures, indicating that, for whatever reason, he did not resist Valens' efforts at the synod and signed the condemnations and theological statement presented to him.⁴³ A year later, at the synod of Béziers, under Hilary's influence, Rhodanius takes a stand against his earlier position and suffers exile.⁴⁴ We should not underestimate

Valens calamum et cartam e manibus eius violenter extorsit, clamans non posse fieri, ut aliquid inde gereretur.⁷

⁴² Athanasius' reconstruction of these events is unlikely (*Historia Arianorum*, 33–4). He reports that Constantius asserted to the bishops (Eusebius, Dionysius, and Lucifer) that what he declares is doctrine and the bishops responded by threatening the emperor with eternal damnation. One wonders if Athanasius did not rely a bit too much on the colourful Lucifer of Cagliari in recounting this episode.

⁴³ For the list of bishops, see Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface*, 111: Saturninus is no. 4 and Rhodanius is no. 24.

⁴⁴ Sulpicius, *Chronicon*, II.39. See also Hilary, *Contra Constantium*, 11, and Barnes 'Exile', 134–5.

the importance of Rhodanius as a source for Hilary about Milan and the emperor's theological programme in the West.

Hilary consistently claims in his writings that he was condemned for making a confession of faith at Béziers that opposed the party headed by Saturninus of Arles. This is most clearly seen in Hilary's *De Synodis*, which was written in exile as a response to a letter he received from a number of his colleagues in Gaul requesting eastern creedal statements and his commentary on them.⁴⁵ Hilary addresses *De Synodis* to the bishops of Germania Prima and Secunda, Belgica Prima and Secunda, Lugdunensis Prima and Secunda, Aquitania, and Britain. He deliberately excludes the bishops from Narbonensis Prima and Secunda, which is where Béziers (Baeterrae or Beterrae) is located, and sends greetings instead to the laity and clergy of Toulouse, Rhodanius' see. The list also excludes the province of Viennensis of Saturninus of Arles.⁴⁶

At the beginning of *De Synodis* Hilary explains that he had been corresponding with his fellow bishops in Gaul, but communication had ceased by 358. He feared that his colleagues had fallen into error, and he stopped sending letters to Gaul. Toward the end of 358, however, Hilary received a letter from them and rejoiced to learn that a number of Gallic bishops had remained steadfast in the faith and refused communion with Saturninus of Arles. Hilary writes: 'I rejoiced in the Lord that you had remained undefiled and unharmed from any contamination of that abominable heresy, and that you were participants of my exile—into which Saturninus, fearing his own conscience, drove me after deceiving the emperor—by denying him communion for the three years since.' Hilary proceeds to praise God for the purity of the common faith shared between these bishops and himself. He then reminds his fellow bishops of the proceedings at Béziers. He continues: 'For indeed, after my confession at the synod of Béziers, where I denounced the advocates of this pressing heresy, with some of you as my witnesses, it has remained and even now continues pure, inviolate, and orthodox.'⁴⁷ From these brief comments, we learn that Saturninus played a significant role in Hilary's

⁴⁵ *De Synodis*, 5.

⁴⁶ Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface*, 22, n. 86; Barnes, 'Exile', 135.

⁴⁷ *De Synodis*, 2; PL 10: 481A–482A.

exile, that he deceived, in some sense, the emperor, and was denied communion by a majority of bishops in Gaul after the synod of Béziers. Moreover, Hilary insists that he made a confession of faith at Béziers, denounced the heretical ringleaders, and did this in the presence of some of the bishops to whom he now writes.

In 1978 Pierre Smulders identified a marginal comment inserted into a manuscript of *De Synodis* that Hilary sent to Lucifer of Cagliari.⁴⁸ Hilary placed the comment between chapters 83 and 84 with the intention of countering the accusations made against him by Hilary the Deacon, who had been condemned and exiled at the synod of Milan in 355 and was a radical supporter of Lucifer's theological programme. The comment follows a discussion in chapter 83 on the term *homoousios*, its misuse by Paul of Samosata, and its rejection by the 'Arians'. In chapter 84 Hilary reproduces the Creed from Nicaea and discusses the proper use of *homoousios* by the council. As we will see, Hilary seems to have been accused of rejecting the use of *homoousios* and capitulating to the 'Arians' with his conciliatory efforts in *De Synodis*. Hilary expresses a certain amount of bewilderment as to how he could be accused by Lucifer's deacon of compromising the Nicene confession, when he is in exile for defending that very confession and Lucifer himself. Hilary writes:

Had the entire chapter [i.e. *De Synodis*, 83] been carefully read or understood by Hilary [the Deacon], he would have known that I fought for *homoousios* and condemned the Arians; nor would he, as a deacon, have condemned me, a bishop—exiled for defending the faith of the Lord and tearing up your [Lucifer of Cagliari] impious condemnation—in *absentia* and without a hearing.⁴⁹

Hilary's brief comment to Lucifer unambiguously asserts that he was condemned for defending his faith and rejecting the anti-Nicene

⁴⁸ Smulders found this comment in his review of *De Synodis* manuscripts, and follows the numbering established by Coustant in identifying the various marginal comments present in these manuscripts. This particular comment is referenced, therefore, as *Responsum Apologeticum Vbis*. See Pierre Smulders, 'Two Passages of Hilary's *Apologetica Responsa* Rediscovered', *Bijdragen*, 39 (1978), 234–43. See also Barnes, 'Exile', 137.

⁴⁹ *Responsum Apologeticum Vbis*: 'Caput omne hoc si diligentius lectum ab Hilario esset vel intellectum, scisset quid esset pro omousion pugnare et arrianos damnare, neque me diaconus inauditum episcopum absentem rescissae impiae damnationis vestrae et defensae dominicae causa fidei exultantem damnasset.'

efforts of those gathered at Béziers. He somewhat dramatically insists that he publicly, and perhaps before the synod itself, tore up (*rescis-sae*) the document from Milan, which condemned Lucifer, among others, and presumably advocated the subordinationist theology of Sirmium 351.⁵⁰

These brief comments from *De Synodis* clearly indicate that Hilary is in exile for making a confession of faith before the synod of Béziers, and thereby rejecting whatever statement of faith was put before him. Following his condemnation, and before a sentence of exile was issued by the emperor Constantius, Hilary began to compile a dossier of historical documents dealing with the Trinitarian debates in the West. The Preface to this historical work sheds considerable light on what may have been debated at the synod itself.

THE PREFACE TO *ADVERSUS VALENTEM ET URSACIUM*

In the Preface to his historical work, Hilary makes a number of interesting comments on the synod itself. He tells us that it was a chaotic and disorganized gathering that dealt with far more than the condemnation of Athanasius. Hilary's purpose in the Preface is to give an account of what really happened at Béziers and explain why his actions were correct. His audience appears to be his colleagues who chose not to stand with him, and presumably also those bishops not in attendance who might be solicited to sign the materials from the synod. For Hilary, the issues at Béziers were theological and could not be reduced, as some of his colleagues seem to have done, to mere church politicking over the condemnation of Athanasius. Rather, the issue debated at Béziers concerned the hope of eternal life placed in Christ as the true Son of God.

Hilary begins his Preface with a brief reflection on faith, hope, and love. He explains that all the things we occupy ourselves with will be abolished when the fullness of God's plan is achieved with the return

⁵⁰ For similar comments on this passage, see Smulders, 'Hilary's *Apologetica Responsa*', 242, and Barnes, 'Exile', 137.

of Christ. He writes: 'That which is esteemed to be something will cease even to be, when our perishable existence is transformed into the glory of eternity, and [God] begins to grant that which, once it comes to be, is forever eternal.'⁵¹ Hilary contrasts the fleeting existence of human possessions with the everlasting treasure of faith, hope, and love. Those who by faith confess that Christ is God will receive righteousness, health, and eternal life from God.⁵² Hilary continues, '[hope] disdains all things present as null and uncertain, but embraces those of the future as eternal and present.'⁵³ Finally, insists Hilary, 'our will becomes inseparable from Him, once instilled with devout love for His name, from which no sword, no famine, no nakedness shall divide us, and by which anger, envy, ambition, iniquity, debauchery, and greed are stifled'. Those united to God by this kind of love, 'no force of worldly passion can loosen or separate'.⁵⁴

The eschatological emphasis of Hilary's Preface prepares the reader for his conclusion. What is at stake in this struggle with the 'Arians' is nothing less than our 'hope of eternity'—a theme that will dominate Hilary's *De Trinitate*.⁵⁵ Not everyone present at the synod grasped the magnitude of this doctrinal controversy. As Hilary turns to section two of the Preface, we begin to see the sharp contrast between his own perceived actions at the synod and everyone else. At the synod he cleaved to the name of God and confessed Jesus Christ as Lord, refusing fellowship with the unjust and the unbelievers.⁵⁶ If he had compromised his faith, he would have been offered worldly honours and status. The heretics, as he describes them, made such overtures to him, but he could not accept them. He writes:

With these, the possibility was offered me, as it was offered to others, of flourishing in the good things of this world, of enjoying domestic ease, of

⁵¹ Preface, I.1; trans. Pierre Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface*, 31; cf. *De Trinitate*, I.1. Smulders provides an English translation of the Preface with Latin on the facing page. Unless otherwise noted, I am using Smulders's translation of the Preface.

⁵² Preface, I.2; Smulders, 33.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* IV.7; Smulders, 39.

⁵⁶ As Pierre Smulders points out, Hilary regards his opponents as 'unbelievers' because they oppose scripture's witness to Christ's divinity, and they are therefore 'unjust' because 'only faith justifies'. See Smulders, *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface*, 59.

abounding in all sorts of advantages, of vaunting the emperor's familiarity, of living under the spurious title of bishop, of becoming, both publicly and in private, to all and sundry, formidable in lording over the church. On this condition, however, that I corrupt the Gospel-truth by falsehood, that I placate my guilty conscience by the pretence of ignorance, that I uphold a corrupt judgment under the excuse that the sentence was passed by others, that I evade guilt for the crime of heresy in the eyes of the ingenuous and ignorant—if not in my own faith, which certainly would be liable—that I simulate honesty under the pretext of the official matter being too difficult to understand. This the love of Christ, which through faith and hope abides in a sincere heart, could not countenance.⁵⁷

If subscription to the synod's statement of faith would secure familiarity with the emperor, it presumably must have been a statement consistent with Constantius' theological agenda in the West as seen at Arles and Milan. It was precisely this agenda that Hilary's love of Christ and hope for eternal life would not allow him to accept at the synod. At stake was the confession of Christ as true God. He ends the section, saying: 'So I could not remain silent about the offence, putting an ambitious mind before the acceptance of indignities suffered for the sake of confessing God.'⁵⁸ We must remember that Hilary is writing this Preface to some of his colleagues who were present at the synod, and who, for whatever reason, did not stand with him. The stark contrast between fleeting imperial favour and the everlasting love of Christ can only be viewed as a stern rebuke of their actions.

Hilary continues in the Preface to explain that the theological crisis faced by him at Béziers was not an isolated event. These matters harassed the entire empire, vexed the emperor, and roused a considerable commotion among the bishops. Although many bishops were involved in these disputes, few, asserts Hilary, understood the magnitude of the events at Béziers. Many thought the matter concerned only Athanasius, and whether or not to condemn him. These bishops did not consider a defense of Athanasius' name a worthy cause for exile and, as a result, failed, in Hilary's opinion, to defend a faithful confession concerning Christ.⁵⁹ Indeed, the real issue was far more

⁵⁷ Preface, II.3; Smulders, 35.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Hilary quotes here Matt. 10: 32 and 5: 10–12.

⁵⁹ Preface, III.4; Smulders, 37.

serious than Athanasius. At Béziers, argues Hilary, the Gospels were corrupted, the faith distorted, and Christ's name blasphemed.⁶⁰ In a gracious gesture to his fellow bishops who did not stand with him, Hilary acknowledges that the chaotic and confused nature of the gathering may have contributed to their failure to grasp the threat to the faith.⁶¹

Hilary ends the Preface by mentioning Paulinus of Trier, whom he calls 'my brother and colleague in the ministry'.⁶² Paulinus was exiled at the synod of Arles in 353, and Hilary suggests that the events at Arles and Paulinus' treatment mirror his own at Béziers. He writes: 'From that occasion [i.e. the synod of Arles], for the first time, emerges the insight that it was the confession of faith [that was at issue] rather than one's support for the man [Athanasius]; there began the indignity inflicted upon him [Paulinus] who refused them his assent.'⁶³ Those bishops wishing not to understand the controversy, or fearing the imperial repercussions of a faithful confession, could not, argues Hilary, hide behind the false notion that this concerned only Athanasius' name. Serious attention, he insists, must be given to these controversies, since our 'hope of eternity' is what is at stake.⁶⁴ Hilary's Preface breaks off with him issuing a stern warning to his readers: 'This is so weighty a matter that it now behooves everyone to devote such care to the understanding of these things that he may henceforth stand firm by his own judgment, and not follow the opinion of others.'⁶⁵

Hilary's Preface to his historical work is perhaps the best surviving document we possess explaining the general character of the events at Béziers. It was written soon after the synod but before Constantius' judgement that Hilary should be sent into exile. In the Preface, Hilary seeks to win over the colleagues that were sympathetic to his confession concerning Christ but refused to stand with him at the synod. His efforts, therefore, needed to be accurate. Any exaggeration of his

⁶⁰ Ibid. III.5; Smulders, 39.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid. III.6; Smulders, 39.

⁶³ Ibid.: 'atque hoc ita fieri non rerum ordo, sed ratio ex praesentibus petita demonstrat, ut ex his primum confessio potius fidei quam favor in hominem intellegatur, ex quibus in eum, qui adsensus his non est, coepit iniuria.' For Smulders's explanation of his translation, see pp. 79–84.

⁶⁴ Ibid. IV.7; Smulders, 39.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

own role at Béziers, or misrepresentation of the matters at hand, would have necessarily discredited Hilary with his colleagues. It is worth noting, moreover, that, as seen above in the material from *De Synodis*, Hilary's efforts in this Preface were successful, as his colleagues did sever communion with Saturninus of Arles following his exile to Phrygia.⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

The emperor Constantius sought to advance a theological agenda in the West during the 350s that would further the unity and peace of the church. He promoted the moderate Eusebian theology as expressed in the Fourth Creed from Antioch, which was repeated with slight variation at Serdica (Philippopolis) in 343, at Antioch in 344 in the *Ekthesis Makrostichos*, and at Sirmium in 351, and demanded the eastern condemnations of Marcellus, Photinus, and Athanasius. The emperor presented this agenda at the synod of Arles in 353, and met little resistance. Paulinus of Trier agreed to condemn Marcellus and Photinus, who had been repeatedly condemned in the West since the synod of Milan in 345, but refused to condemn Athanasius. He was exiled. Following Arles, the emperor sent the materials ratified by the synod to any bishops not in attendance. The bishops were to put their signature on its theological statement and condemnations, or risk being exiled like Paulinus. Liberius of Rome refused, and the emperor sent a harsh letter to the people of Rome critical of their bishop's conduct. Liberius responded to the emperor with a letter explaining his reasons for not signing the material from Arles and the condemnation of Athanasius. Furthermore, Liberius requested that the emperor call another synod and promote the Creed from Nicaea to achieve the peace and unity in the church that he seeks. Constantius called another synod, but did not embrace the Creed from Nicaea. At the synod of Milan in 355 the Creed did, however, make an unexpected and unwelcomed appearance. When Eusebius of Vercelli presented it for signatures, and Dionysius of Milan began

⁶⁶ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis*, 2.

to put his name on the Creed, Valens of Mursa seized the pen and paper from his hands and chaos arose. Constantius intervened, and those bishops promoting the Creed from Nicaea were exiled. The emergence of the Creed into these debates, and its function as a standard of orthodoxy for a minority party of western bishops, seems to be the result of Athanasius' *De Decretis*, which he sent to Liberius of Rome in 352/3.

Following the synod of Milan, we encounter, for the first time in these debates, Hilary of Poitiers at the synod of Béziers. It seems as if Béziers was yet another western synod promoting the theological agenda of the emperor. Saturninus of Arles, who had attended Milan and seems to have been Constantius' chief western supporter, played a leading role at Béziers. Given Hilary's insistence in the Preface to *Adversus Valentem et Ursacium* that the issue of whether or not to condemn Athanasius played an important role at the synod, Béziers seems to have been concerned with the same theological issues as Arles and Milan. Moreover, the Creed from Nicaea, which Hilary indicates he learned of shortly before Béziers and most likely from Rhodanius of Toulouse, seems to have played a decisive role in theological definition for an emerging minority party in the West.

It is against this historical and theological backdrop that Hilary of Poitiers sets out to write a treatise on the Trinity. Hilary begins with a short work entitled *De Fide*, that sought to defend the orthodoxy of his baptismal faith, which he understood to be under attack by those bishops opposing him at Béziers. After finishing this work, Hilary began to write a new treatise against the 'Arians' that was loosely structured around Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria. At some point during his exile, however, Hilary combined these two works to produce what we refer to as *De Trinitate*. In the following chapters we will look more closely at the structure and chronology of *De Trinitate*, Hilary's revision of *De Fide* to more accurately reflect his mature Trinitarian theology, and his theological method for discussing the mystery of God.

The Blasphemy of Sirmium (357) and Basil of Ancyra

Immediately following his condemnation at the synod of Béziers in 356, and before a sentence of exile was issued by the emperor Constantius, Hilary began writing a small treatise on his faith, *De Fide*. Two short years later, Hilary returned to *De Fide* and found his discussion of the Trinity to be unsatisfactory. Rather than dismissing the treatise as an early attempt at articulating an orthodox understanding of the Triune God, Hilary revised it and nearly doubled its original length. His revisions to *De Fide* in 358 produced what we call Books Two and Three of *De Trinitate*. Although a number of theological reasons prompted Hilary to revise his earlier attempts at articulating the doctrine of the Trinity, the pivotal historical event that moved him to make these changes was the synod of Sirmium in 357 and its creedal statement, which Hilary has designated for posterity as the Blasphemy of Sirmium. Reaction to the Homoian theology articulated at the synod of Sirmium was quick in coming. Early in the spring of 358, Basil of Ancyra summoned a small group of bishops to Ancyra to respond to the Sirmium manifesto. They issued a letter, which was likely written by Basil, that not only rejected the Homoian theology from Sirmium but also articulated their own Homoiousian theological position. As we will see throughout the rest of this monograph, Hilary's collaboration with the Homoiousian theologians, particularly Basil of Ancyra, sharpened his understanding of the polemical strategies employed by the Homoians, introduced him to successful theological arguments against their shared opponents, clarified his understanding of Photinus of Sirmium's adoptionism, and altered the manner of his pro-Nicene presentation of western orthodoxy.

THE SYNOD OF SIRMIMUM IN 357

A small gathering of bishops, headed by Valens of Mursa and Ursacius of Singidunum, gathered in 357 at the synod of Sirmium. Hilary preserves the creedal statement from this gathering and offers a commentary on it in his *De Synodis*: a treatise that chronologically coincides with his new vision for *De Trinitate* and revision of such works as *De Fide*. The statement issued by this synod asserts that there is one God, the Father Almighty, and his only Son, Jesus Christ, begotten before the ages. There are not, however, ‘two gods.’¹ The bishops make clear that ‘the Father is greater’ and ‘the Son is subordinated to the Father.’² The Father is described as ‘invisible, immortal, and impassible.’ By implication, notes Hilary, the Son lacked those things that constituted the Father’s superiority.³ As such, the Son is visible, created, and passible. Although those gathered at Sirmium avoid such language, Hilary argues that the force of their statements is that the Son is either created from nothing (*ex nihilo*) or from another essence (*ex alia essentia*) than God the Father.⁴ Finally, these bishops ardently reject the use of *ousia* language on scriptural grounds. They write:

Since some or many persons were disturbed concerning the word *substantia*, which is called *ousia* in Greek, that is, to make it understood more clearly, *homoousios* or what is called *homoiousios*, there should be no mention of these words at all nor any exposition of them by anyone for the purpose and reason that they are not contained in the divine Scriptures . . .⁵

The difference between the subordinationist theology of the synod of Sirmium in 357 and the creed from Sirmium 351 or the Fourth Antiochene Creed of 341 is the uncompromising terms of the creedal statement. At Antioch in 341 the bishops demonstrated concern for

¹ Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis*, 11 (PL 10: 487B).

² *Ibid.* (PL 10: 489A).

³ *Ibid.* 10 (PL 10: 487B).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* (PL 10: 488A): ‘Quod vero quosdam aut multos movebat de substantia, quae graece *usia* appellatur, id est (ut expressius intelligatur), *homoousion*, aut quod dicitur *homoousion*, nullam omnino fieri oportere mentionem; nec quemquam praedicare ea de causa et ratione quod nec in divinis Scripturis contineatur . . .’

their western colleagues, and warned them against any susceptibility to Photinian adoptionism or Marcellus' monarchial theology. No such conciliatory efforts are made with this statement from 357. Indeed, sharp lines are drawn between the theology expressed in this statement and both those aligning themselves with the Creed from Nicaea and those embracing the moderate subordinationist language of Antioch 341. The restrictions on *ousia* language articulated in the anathemas attached to the Sirmium 351 material are now made total and complete. No one is to use such language or offer any exposition of their possible meaning and fittingness for conveying the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Scholars have described the synod of Sirmium in 357 as a 'landmark' and 'significant turning point' in the Trinitarian debates of the late 350s.⁶ The uncompromising character of its creedal statement made it clear to everyone where they stood on the debate over the Trinity. R. P. C. Hanson describes their creed as a manifesto. He writes:

It is the manifesto of a party, of the party that stood in the tradition of Arius though it did not precisely reproduce his doctrine. And as a manifesto it was also a catalyst. It enabled everybody to see where they stood. At last the confusion which caused Westerners to regard Easterners as Arians can be cleared up. This is an Arian creed. Those who support it are Arians. Those who are repelled by it are not.⁷

Reaction to this Sirmium manifesto was quick in coming. Letters were written in 358 and 359 by Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea articulating the Homoiousian position.⁸ Hilary followed with his own work rebutting the Homoian theology of Sirmium and demonstrating the shared theological concerns of the Homoiousians and the pro-Nicenes in his *De Synodis*, written in late 358 or early

⁶ See R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381 AD* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 347; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 137.

⁷ Hanson, *Search*, 347.

⁸ I use the term 'Homoiousian' to describe the theological position of Basil and George and their influence on Hilary. This term can be misleading if it is understood to mean that Basil promoted a compromise term between the 'Homoian' party and the 'Homoousian' party. On this point, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 150. At the same time, the term 'Homoiousian' is to be preferred to Epiphanius' characterization of Basil and George as semi-Arians. See Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.1.1 and 73.23.2.

359. Hilary also recast his efforts at articulating and defending his Trinitarian theology in *De Trinitate* in 358.

BASIL OF ANCYRA AND THE HOMOIOUSIANS

Despite the hindrance of a lingering winter and the approach of Easter, a number of bishops gathered in Ancyra in early 358 to respond to the 'profane new babblings' (1 Tim. 6: 20) uttered in the Sirmium manifesto.⁹ Basil of Ancyra issued a letter following the synod that outlined the Homoiousian position, demonstrated how they rejected both Homoians and those associated with Marcellus and Photinus, and invited all like-minded bishops to append their signature to it.¹⁰ The letter begins by identifying the Dedication Creed of 341 as the basis of the Homoiousian position. Basil proceeds to mention by name Serdica (Philippopolis) 343 and Sirmium 351 as continuing the position articulated at Antioch in 341. In the first chapter we noted that there were four creedal statements associated with the Dedication Council of Antioch in 341. It is not clear if Basil's reference is to the Second or Fourth Creed.¹¹ Either creed would

⁹ For Basil of Ancyra's letter outlining the findings of those gathered at Ancyra and articulating the Homoiousian position, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.2.1–11.11. For the dating of the gathering, see 73.2.1 and 73.2.7. Throughout this section I am using Frank Williams's translation: *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, trans. Frank Williams, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1987).

¹⁰ The group identified as 'Homoians' in this monograph is for the most part limited to the expression of faith found at Sirmium 357. The reason for this artificial restriction is that I am only interested in Hilary's understanding of his anti-Nicene opponents. Although Homoianism develops along different lines in the East and West, Hilary does not have this sophisticated understanding. Moreover, the revision to *De Trinitate* occurs in 358, which limits his experience of the Homoians to Sirmium 357 and Valens and Ursacius. On the diversity of the Homoians, see Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 133–40, esp. 138–40. Cf. Hanson, *Search*, 557–97.

¹¹ See Hanson, *Search*, 351; Joseph Lienhard, 'The Epistle of the Synod of Ancyra 358: A Reconsideration', in Robert C. Gregg (ed.), *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments, Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 5–10, 1983, Oxford, England*, Patristic Monograph Series, No. 11 (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 313–20; J. N. Steenson, 'Basil of Ancyra and the Course of Nicene Orthodoxy', D.Phil. diss., Oxford University (1983), 39–40.

serve his purpose. The Second Creed argued that the Son is the exact image of the Godhead and the *ousia* of the Father.¹² The creed ends by quoting St Matthew's baptismal formula and asserting that the Father is truly Father, the Son truly Son, and the Holy Spirit truly Holy Spirit. These names indicate a distinction in order and glory and show that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are 'three in substance and one in agreement' (τῆ μὲν ὑποστάσει τρία, τῆ δὲ συμφωνίᾳ ἓν).¹³ The theological commitment of the creed is to three distinct *hypostases*, understood as *substantia* in Latin,¹⁴ bound by a harmony of will, possessing, in subordinationist terms, their own order and glory. On the other hand, the Fourth Creed was repeated with slight modification at Serdica (Philippopolis) in 343, at Antioch in 344 in the *Ekthesis Makrostichos*, and again at Sirmium in 351. A reference to the Fourth Creed would highlight the continuity of eastern creedal statements from Antioch to Sirmium: a point that Basil is certainly making at the opening of his letter. That Basil's reference is to the Second Creed, however, seems apparent when we turn to the beginning of his own argument.

Basil begins his exposition of faith, and hence the Homoiousian theological position, by quoting St Matthew's baptismal formula and highlighting the importance of the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He writes:

Our faith is in a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit. For so our Lord Jesus Christ taught his disciples, 'Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Therefore we who are born again into this faith should have a godly understanding of the meanings of the names. He did not say, 'Baptize them in the name of the Incorporeal and the Incarnate,' or, 'of the Immortal and of Him who

¹² For the creed, see Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 23, and Hilary, *De Synodis*, 29. See also J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longman, 1960), 268–70, for facing Greek and English.

¹³ Following his encounter with Basil of Ancyra, Hilary unconvincingly argues that this creed—particularly this concluding phrase—does not necessarily suggest any 'dissimilarity of essence' (*dissimilis essentiae*) between the Father and the Son. Indeed, according to Hilary, it can be read in such a way as to indicate that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three 'subsistent Persons' (*subsistentium personas*). Hilary is clearly aware that he is giving an unnatural interpretation to this creed, and asks his readers for patience in reading through his argument. See Hilary, *De Synodis*, 32–3.

¹⁴ Hilary, *De Synodis*, 29 (PL 10: 503B).

knew death,' or, 'of the Ingenerate and the Generate.' He said, 'Baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' And thus, since we also hear <the> names in nature, and <a father> there <always begets a son like himself>, we may understand the 'Father' to be the cause of an essence like his. And when we hear the name, 'Son,' we may understand that the Son is like the Father whose Son he is. We have therefore believed in a Father, a Son, and Holy Spirit, not in a creator and a creature.¹⁵

In effect, Basil begins where the Dedication Creed, the Second Creed from Antioch, ended. A great emphasis is placed on the scriptural and epistemological significance of the names Father and Son for expressing their nature and proper relationship. Basil proceeds to argue that an analogy exists between the divine relationship of Father and Son and the physical relationship between human fathers and sons. In the case of human relationships, when we say son, we imply the existence of father. Basil is quick to acknowledge that problems exist with the analogy. Although a likeness does exist between a father and son, the full likeness of the son to the father is not appreciated until the son grows and matures. As this is happening, however, their physical likeness is obscured as the father ages. If we exclude these material things from the analogy, then, argues Basil, 'only the notion of likeness will be left'.¹⁶ Moreover, when the effects of physical paternity and sonship, such as passibility and flux, are removed from the analogy as unfitting for God, impassibility and stability remain, and 'only the generation of a living being of like essence will be left'.¹⁷

Basil's concern to protect a pious understanding of this analogy suggests a larger polemical context on the use and fittingness of these analogies in theological discourse. Criticism of Basil's use of analogy does surface in 360 with Eunomius of Cyzicus. Throughout his *Liber Apologeticus*, Eunomius denounces the use of analogy or comparison in discussing God, particularly the father/son analogy employed by Basil.¹⁸ Given the strained analogies that fill Basil's letter, it is likely

¹⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.3.1–4; Williams, 436.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 73.4.1; Williams, 437.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 73.4.2; Williams, 437.

¹⁸ Eunomius of Cyzicus, *Liber Apologeticus*, 9, 11, 16–18. See *Eunomius: The Extant Works*, ed. and trans., Richard Paul Vaggione (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 34–75.

that such criticism was already being voiced in 358. Indeed, Basil pauses in his extended discussion of the analogy to emphasize the soteriological consequence of rejecting his understanding of the essential likeness of the Son to the Father as expressed by the analogy. He writes:

But suppose that, from the incapacity of his reasoning powers, someone refuses to accept this line of reasoning on the grounds that the Father must be subject to some passion, division or effluence if he is to be conceived as this sort of father—and has [thus] mutilated the godly conception of the Father and the Son, and requires reasons for it. He must be required to provide reasons why God is crucified, and why ‘the foolishness’ of the proclamation of the Gospel—[called ‘foolishness’] because of its unreasonableness in the eyes of those whom the world counts as wise—‘is wiser than men.’¹⁹

Basil continues by drawing a distinction between the wisdom and reasoning of the world and the faithful who in their foolishness receive the Gospel and salvation by ‘faith alone.’²⁰ These analogies are limited just as our reasoning powers are limited. When we discuss the mystery of the Son’s relationship to the Father, we must acknowledge the limit of our worldly wisdom and remember the soteriological consequences of our discussion. If we fail to humble ourselves in our theological reflections on the Trinity, and allow our worldly wisdom to undermine the divinity of the Son and his essential likeness to the Father, then, Basil asserts, we risk making the source of our salvation, the ‘cross of Christ’, of no effect.²¹

The discussion of wisdom leads Basil to reflect on the disputed text of Proverbs 8: 22. He begins by showing the word-and-phrase equivalents between Proverbs 8 and Paul’s discussion of Christ in Colossians 1: 15–16. Basil’s concern is to demonstrate that when Paul says that the Son is ‘the image of the invisible God’, he is not undermining the essential likeness of the Son to the Father. The polemical context behind Basil’s comment is Marcellus of Ancyra’s insistence that an ‘image’ must be visible and distinct from its archetype. Marcellus writes: ‘An image of God is one thing, and God is another. If he is an image he is not Lord or God, but an

¹⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.6.1–2; Williams, 439.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 73.6.4; Williams, 439.

²¹ *Ibid.* 73.6.3; Williams, 439.

image of a Lord and God. But if he is really Lord and really God, the Lord and God cannot be the image of a Lord and God.²² By correlating Proverbs and Colossians, and trading on his discussion at the beginning of the letter, Basil insists on the essential likeness of the Son to the Father by arguing that the term ‘image’ corresponds to ‘Wisdom’ and is free of passion. Basil concludes: ‘Wisdom is the Son of the Wise, an essence which is the Son of an essence, so the image is like the essence.’²³

Basil next introduces the prologue to the Gospel of John in order to associate Word with Image and Wisdom. Again Marcellus is in the background. Marcellus’ understanding of ‘image’ as something that must be visible and distinct from God leads to the inevitable conclusion that the ‘image’ is not the eternal Word of God but the visible Christ.²⁴ Basil writes:

Because Wisdom had said, ‘He created me the beginning of his ways,’ John used the phrase, ‘in the beginning,’ in his ‘In the beginning was the Word.’ And for ‘He created me’ John substituted ‘And the Word was God,’ so that we would not take this to mean the spoken word, but the divine Word <begotten> of the Father without passion, as a stable entity. And for ‘I was by him’ John substituted ‘And <the Word> was God.’²⁵

The preferred text against the understanding of the Word articulated by Marcellus and Photinus of Sirmium is the prologue to the Gospel of John.²⁶ Basil uses the prologue to emphasize that the Word discussed by John is not a spoken word, the mere utterance of a voice, or an interior word (*λόγος ἐνδιάθετος*), but the divine Word. He concludes this exegetical section by drawing together his discussion of Proverbs, Colossians, and the prologue to the Gospel of John, and writes: ‘Thus it is proclaimed by all that the Word, Wisdom and

²² Ibid. 72.6.4; Williams, 427. The surviving fragments from Acacius’ *Contra Marcellum* address this issue at length. For the fragments, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 72.6–10. For a discussion of Marcellus and Acacius, see J. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 182–6.

²³ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.7.6; Williams, 441.

²⁴ Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum*, 183.

²⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.2; Williams, 441–2.

²⁶ To list a few names related to the present discussion where the prologue is used to refute Photinian theology, see Hilary, *In Matthaëum*, 31.3; *De Trinitate*, I.16; II.4, 15, 23; *De Synodis*, 46 and 70; Basil of Ancyra, Acacius of Caesarea, and George of Laodicea at Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 71.4, 72.9, 73.12, respectively.

Image of God is in all respects like him, as we have said, and that he is the essential Son of his God and Father.²⁷

Basil proceeds to introduce another complicated and somewhat unsuccessful analogy between the generation of the Son and his assumption of flesh during the Incarnation. He begins by asserting that 'like' can never be 'the same' in a modalist sense as the thing it is like.²⁸ He continues:

For as he was made in the likeness of man and was man, yet not entirely—was man in his assumption of human flesh, for 'The Word was made flesh,' but not man in that he was not begotten of human seed and sexual commerce—just so, in that he was the Son of God, he was the Son of God before all ages, just as, in that he was a son of man, he was man. But he is not the same thing as the God and Father who begot him, just as he is not the same thing as man, since [he was begotten] without emission of seed and passion, <just as> [he was made man] without human seed and sexual enjoyment. . . .

. . . even so the Son, who was <Son> of God, 'in the form of God,' and is 'equal' to God, possessed the attributes of the Godhead in being by nature incorporeal, and like the Father in divinity, incorporeality and activities (*energeias*). As he was 'like' the flesh in being flesh and subject to the passions of the flesh, and yet was not the same, <so he is 'like' God> in the sense that, as God, he is not 'the form' of 'the God' (*ὁ θεός*) but the form of 'God' (*θεός*), and 'equal,' not to 'the God' (*ὁ θεός*) but to 'God' (*θεός*). Nor does he <have the Godhead> with full sovereignty like the Father.²⁹

To this point in the letter Basil has consistently argued that the proper nature of the Son and his essential likeness to the Father is revealed through the names Father and Son. The Son is like the Father in terms of his divinity and incorporeality. He now suggests that the essential likeness of the Son is also seen in their shared activities (*energeiai*). For Basil, you cannot observe the proper relationship between the names Father and Son and not also conclude that they share an essential likeness. Similarly, you cannot observe their likeness of activity and not also perceive their essential likeness.³⁰

Although Basil's analogy undermines the true humanity of the Incarnate Son, posits an abstracted 'Godhead' distinct from the Son,

²⁷ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.5; Williams, 442.

²⁸ Ibid. 73.8.8; Williams, 442.

²⁹ Ibid. 73.9.1–5; Williams, 443.

³⁰ Ibid. 73.11.2; Williams, 445.

and expresses in unambiguous language the essential subordination of the Son ($\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$) to the Father ($\delta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$),³¹ his language does demonstrate continuity with the moderate subordinationism of the eastern creeds from the Dedication Council at Antioch in 341 to the synod of Sirmium in 351. As such, the Homoiousian theology articulated by Basil remains faithful to the moderate Eusebian theology of the 340s and early 350s: a theology that cannot assert both the true humanity and true divinity of the Son in any real sense.

Following the pattern set by the *Ekthesis Makrostichos* and continued at Sirmium 351, those gathered at Ancyra articulate their theological position in opposition to the 'Arians', here understood as the Homoians gathered at Sirmium in 357, and the 'Sabellians'. Moreover, like the authors of the *Ekthesis Makrostichos*, Basil's letter ends with the suggestion that those advocating the Nicene *homoousios* are susceptible to the modalism associated with Basil's predecessor at Ancyra, Marcellus. Basil writes: 'For, I say again, as he was not made identical with men <by being made> in the likeness of men and of sinful flesh, but for the reasons given, became like the essence of the flesh, so, by being made like in essence to the Father who begot him, the Son will not make his essence identical with the Father, but like [him].'³² Basil wishes to distance his understanding of likeness from both modalism and the adherents of Nicaea. He begins the analogy of the Son's generation and his incarnation by arguing that 'like' can never mean 'the same' in a modalist sense and ends that discussion by arguing that 'like' in essence does not mean 'identical' as those favouring *homoousios* would understand the relationship of the Father and the Son. Basil makes his point clear in the final anathema attached to the letter. He writes, if anyone says that 'the Son is co-essential ($\delta\mu\omicron\upsilon\acute{o}\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$) or of identical essence ($\tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon\acute{o}\upsilon\sigma\iota\omicron\nu$) with the Father, let him be anathema.'³³ This explicit rejection of

³¹ By using the language from the prologue to the Gospel of John, Basil does advance a distinction between the person of the Father ($\delta\ \theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$) and the Son ($\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$) by arguing that they do not share the same 'form', but proceeds to apply this distinction also to their nature by asserting their lack of equality. It is the moderate subordinationism of this final claim that Hilary and the other pro-Nicenes will not follow.

³² Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.9.7; Williams, 443–4.

³³ *Ibid.* 73.11.10; Williams, 446. The pro-Nicene Hilary will not follow Basil on this point. Indeed, he excludes this anathema from his discussion of Basil's letter in *De Synodis*. It is also worth noting that Basil's anathema would condemn Hilary's own

homoousios causes Hilary a great deal of anxiety in his own reading of the material from Ancyra.³⁴

Basil's letter unequivocally demonstrates the indebtedness of Homoiousian theology to *ousia* language. Such language is not only appropriate but also necessary in order to secure a proper understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son. If *ousia* language is avoided, then the father/son analogy will lead to a creator/created relationship of dissimilar entities. As Basil puts it, if you deny that the Son is 'like in essence' (*ὁμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν*) to the Father, you make him only a creature and the Father a creator.³⁵

Basil's insistence on *ousia* language marks a significant development in the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century. His preference for *ousia* language when speaking about the relationship between the Father and the Son reflects both a special indebtedness to the Second Creed of the Dedication Council and a slight departure from the creedal statements derived from the Fourth Antiochene Creed. The Second Creed explicitly described the Son as the exact image of the Godhead and *ousia* of the Father. This *ousia* language, however, is avoided in the Fourth Creed from Antioch, which was repeated with slight modification at Serdica (Philippopolis) in 343, in the *Ekthesis Makrostichos* of Antioch in 344, and again at Sirmium in 351.³⁶ The bishops at these eastern councils continued to characterize the generation of the Son as *ἐκ τοῦ βουλήματος αὐτοῦ*.³⁷ By locating the generation of the Son at the level of God's will or activity (*energeia*), the eastern bishops avoided any suggestion that the relationship between the Son and the Father occurred at the level of God's *ousia*. As such, it was only a small step for the bishops gathered at

argument in Book Seven of *De Trinitate*—the very book where Basil's insights are most creatively incorporated by Hilary. See e.g. *De Trinitate*, VII.15, *et passim*.

³⁴ See esp. Hilary, *De Synodis*, 90–1 (PL 10: 542A–545B).

³⁵ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.9.6; Williams, 443.

³⁶ It is worth noting that *ousia* language only appears in the anathemas attached to the creed from Sirmium 351. When we recall that the focus of this gathering was to condemn Photinus, we once again see the not-so-subtle association of *ousia* language with Nicaea and Photinus.

³⁷ This teaching is not found in the Fourth Antiochene Creed, but is added in the anathemas at the other three synods mentioned. Cf. Eusebius of Nicomedia, who rejected *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας* as a materialistic expression and preferred *ἐκ τοῦ βουλήματος αὐτοῦ*. See Theodoret of Cyrrus, *HE* I.5.

Sirmium in 357 to prohibit all *ousia* language. Basil challenges not only the appropriateness of such language, but demonstrates that the relationship between the Son and the Father must be expressed at the level of God's *ousia*. By recovering the language of the Dedication Creed, Basil has exploited the polemical utility of *ousia* language in his debate with the Homoians and established a point of agreement with those embracing Nicaea and its language as a standard of orthodoxy.

In a letter written by George of Laodicea during the summer or autumn of 359, the Homoiousian position is restated with greater clarity.³⁸ Although this letter dates too late for it to have exercised any significant influence on Hilary, it is worth mentioning the continuation of the Homoiousian position that the likeness of the Son to the Father occurs at the level of *ousia* and not merely at the level of will as the Homoians are arguing. George puts this quite plainly. He writes:

This current faction declares that the Son is like the Father in will and activity, but that the Son is unlike the Father in <being>. Thus it is the contention of these new sectarians that the will of the Son and the activity of the Son are like the will of the Father and the activity of the Father, but that the Son himself is unlike the Father. . . . He is merely a creature, and differs from the other creatures in that he surpasses them in greatness and came into being before them all, and that God availed himself of his assistance in the creation of the rest. . . . For they supposed that, if the word, 'being,' were rejected, they could say that the Son is like the Father only in will and activity, and gain the right to say, finally, that since 'being' was not mentioned, the Son is unlike the Father in being and existence.³⁹

George correctly sees that the rejection of *ousia* language and the restriction of likeness to will or *energeia* is nothing less than the assertion that the Son is dissimilar in being and existence from the Father.

George also makes use of the father/son analogy as found in Basil's letter. When we say that the Son is like *in all respects* to the Father and when we recall the analogy between fathers and sons, we rightly say that 'he [the Son] is like, not just in will and operation—the distinction

³⁸ On the authorship of the letter, see Hanson, *Search*, 365–6. On the dating, see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 158.

³⁹ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.13.1 and 15.1; Williams, 448–9.

they [the Homoians] draw—but in existence, subsistence and being, as a son should be'.⁴⁰ Based on George's argument and exploitation of like 'in all respects', it comes as no surprise that the Homoians quickly drop this qualification and assert the ambiguous phrase like 'according to the scriptures'.⁴¹ More significantly, however, it is easier to see why Hilary saw the Homoiousian insistence that the Son is like in existence, subsistence, and being as only a short step from his pro-Nicene position that the Son is co-eternal and co-essential with the Father.

PHOTINUS OF SIRMIMUM

A consistent theme that runs throughout the Homoiousian literature is their refutation of Photinus of Sirmium and his adoptionist theology. In the following chapters I will discuss Hilary's refutation of Photinus in Book One of *De Trinitate* and in the revised sections of *De Fide*. Although Hilary had a limited awareness of Photinian ideas as early as 353, his detailed understanding of Photinus' thought as expressed in *De Trinitate* was gained only during his time in exile. Hilary could have encountered the particulars of Photinus' theology in any number of places during his time in the East, and likely did. At the same time, Hilary's relationship with the Homoiousians, and particularly Basil of Ancyra, would have provided significant exposure to the particulars of Photinus' theology. Moreover, given the

⁴⁰ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.15.5; Williams, 449.

⁴¹ See the council of Niké and Constantinople, Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 30. The Homoian appeal to scripture alone in these debates should not be misconstrued as resembling the same appeal made by the Reformers. For example, Martin Luther expresses the need for extra-biblical words or phrases in such disputes as the Trinitarian debates. Note Luther's appeal to Hilary's understanding of scripture. He writes: 'It is certainly true that one should teach nothing outside of Scripture pertaining to divine matters, as St. Hilary writes in *On the Trinity*, Book I, which means only that one should teach nothing that is at variance with Scripture. But that one should not use more or other words than those contained in Scripture—this cannot be adhered to, especially in a controversy and when heretics want to falsify things with trickery and distort the words of Scripture.' See 'On the Councils and the Church', *Luther's Works*, general editors Helmut Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan (St Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1957–), 41: 83.

eastern construal of Photinian thought with the theology of Nicaea, as embraced by the pro-Nicenes, and remembering that Basil was also guilty of this construal, their discussions must have touched on this issue repeatedly.

The main source for the Homoiousian understanding of Photinus' theology was Basil of Ancyra. At the synod of Sirmium in 351 Basil debated Photinus and exposed a number of his theological emphases. A record of the debate is preserved for us by Epiphanius. Although his summary is somewhat awkward and filled with rather colourful editorial comments, we are able to glean some important characteristics of Photinus' position and Basil's strategy for rebutting him. According to Epiphanius' report, Photinus would make a distinction between Christ as the Incarnate Son of God and the eternal Word of God which dwelled from all eternity *in* God.⁴² Properly speaking, continues Photinus, we may only speak of a Son after the Incarnation.⁴³ Basil responds to Photinus' argument by asserting that the eternal Word is the Son and if Photinus denies this he denies 'his devotion, hope and purpose'.⁴⁴ Basil immediately places the discussion in a soteriological context; a move very similar to the one he makes above in his rebuttal of the Sirmium manifesto. Basil continues with a scriptural argument from the prologue to the Gospel of John. He writes:

The Gospel does not say of him, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was *in* God (ἐν τῷ θεῷ),' but, 'the Word was *with* God (πρὸς τὸν θεόν).' And it does not say only that ['The Word] was in God,' but that 'The Word was (ἦν) God.' The immanent word (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος) which is always in man and is man's spoken word (προφορικὸς) cannot be called, 'man,' but must be called, 'man's word.' <But> if, as Photinus says, there was no Offspring yet [when the Word was 'with God'], and if the divine Word was not yet God's Son, through whom were all things made? For the Gospel says, 'All things were made *through him*, and without him was not anything made.'⁴⁵

Photinus asserts the eternity of the Word as the interior thought of God the Father but not the eternal self-subsistence of the Word. The

⁴² Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 71.2.1–2; Williams, 419.

⁴³ *Ibid.* 71.2.3; Williams, 419–20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 71.4.1; Williams, 421.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 71.4.2–4; Williams, 421.

prologue to the Gospel of John successfully demonstrates for Basil that the Word was not ἐν τῷ θεῷ but was πρὸς τὸν θεόν. George of Laodicaea also exploits this point at the beginning of his letter. He reports that the prologue to the Gospel of John was used to undermine the Son of God as ‘a true Son’ by exploiting the term ‘Word’ to mean a ‘verbal expression and utterance’.⁴⁶ George continues to argue that *ousia* language is necessary in order to refute the argument that the Son is a mere word ἐν τῷ θεῷ and to secure the confession that ‘the Son has reality, subsists, and is’. Moreover, *ousia* language has the advantage of distinguishing between a thing that ‘has no existence of its own, and a thing which does’.⁴⁷

The manner of the argument put forward by Basil and George against Photinus presumably represents a common Homoiousian response to Photinian adoptionism; a response that is indebted to Basil’s first-hand encounter with Photinus. As we have seen above with Basil’s letter from the synod at Ancyra, he does not hesitate to construe Photinian and Marcellan tendencies with the term *homoiousios*. Although Hilary will embrace the exegetical strategy of using the prologue to the Gospel of John in refuting Photinus, he will not accept their construal of Nicaea and Photinus. Instead, he will embrace their polemical strategy and articulate his pro-Nicene theological position between the two extremes of Homoian Arianism and Photinian/Marcellan monarchianism.

⁴⁶ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.12.2; Williams, 447.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 73.12.3; Williams, 447.

Part II

From *De Fide* to *De Trinitate*

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4

The Structure and Chronology of *De Trinitate*

As I noted in the Introduction, the most under-studied issue in Hilary scholarship is the structure and chronology of his principal work, *De Trinitate*. In the previous chapter I argued that the historical event that prompted Hilary to compose *De Trinitate* was the synod of Sirmium in 357. At some point following Basil of Ancyra's response to the Sirmium manifesto in the spring of 358, Hilary recast his own refutation of anti-Nicene theologies by putting together *De Trinitate*. Rather than writing a new work that would integrate his own pro-Nicene concerns with the polemical and theological strategies articulated by Basil and the Homoiousians, Hilary chose to use two of his earlier works, *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, as Books Two to Six of *De Trinitate*. He attempted to conceal his use of these earlier works by adding new prefaces and, at times, drastically altering the argument and content of the material. These moves by Hilary have left a confusing final text whose early books (Books Two to Six) are filled with editorial mistakes, chronological inconsistencies, and, at times, abrupt shifts in content.

Although it is widely acknowledged that Hilary combined *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos* to create *De Trinitate*, the scholarship on the structure and chronology of his treatise has struggled to say more than this.¹ The problem is the perplexing final form of *De Trinitate*.

¹ For a survey of the literature on these issues before 1965, see C. F. A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 39–43. The article that has exercised the most influence on our understanding of Hilary's treatise is M. Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia del "De Trinitate" di Ilario di Poitiers', *Studi Urbinati*, 39 (1965), 274–300. Simonetti's conclusions are restated

When Hilary decided to combine *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, he prefaced them with a book that addresses the proper theological method to use in a discussion on God, added new prefaces to Books Two to Six to give the appearance of an orderly and unified treatise, and drastically revised the text of *De Fide* to reflect his mature understanding of the Trinitarian debates. Because Hilary has succeeded in concealing these new prefaces and revisions of his earlier works from his readers, it has proved difficult for scholars to assess accurately the structure, chronology, and argument of *De Trinitate*.

The difficulty faced by scholars begins with Hilary's Book One of *De Trinitate* and *De Fide*. The first problem is that nearly all scholars argue that Books One to Three of *De Trinitate* are from Hilary's *De Fide*.² Indeed, it is only when Book One is freed from *De Fide* that one begins to understand the complex reworking of Books Two and Three (*De Fide*) by Hilary in 358, and to see the various reasons that led him to recast his efforts in articulating his pro-Nicene theology. The second problem hindering the scholarship on the chronology and structure of *De Trinitate* deals with *De Fide*. When Hilary decided to recast his efforts in 358, he returned to Books Two and Three and added lengthy sections that reflected his mature understanding of Photinian and Homoian theology. These added sections have all gone undetected in the scholarship on Hilary's treatise. By incorrectly placing Book One with *De Fide*, and by not observing Hilary's additions to Books Two and Three, scholars have been left

in the most recent edition of Hilary's treatise. See M. Figura and J. Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers: La Trinité*, SC 443 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1999): 'Introduction', pp. 46–52.

Even here, however, there is dissent: E. P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers: On the Trinity, De Trinitate 1, 1–19, 2, 3* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 1–2. Meijering argues that Hilary envisioned a twelve-book treatise from the very beginning, and therefore challenges the prevailing scholarly opinion that two treatises were fused together. Although Meijering's conclusion is what Hilary would like all readers to conclude, it is wrong.

² M. Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia', 278, 286–94; Figura and Doignon, 'Introduction', 50–2. An alternative take on Book One is found with E. W. Watson, who follows Erasmus and argues that Book One was the final book of the treatise written by Hilary. Given the references to Book One in Books Four and Six, Watson's position is unsustainable. See E. W. Watson, 'Introduction', NPNE, 2nd ser., IX, p. xxxiii.

with a chronologically confusing text that, for no apparent reason, vacillates between homiletical reflections on the Trinity and detailed pro-Nicene theological arguments. By not observing these alterations to Hilary's text, the reader moves unexpectedly from pious thought to polemical argument, from issues that seem unrelated to the Trinitarian debates of the 350s to issues of great concern for the pro-Nicenes and Homoiousians.³

Soon after his arrival in Phrygia in late 356 or early 357 Hilary began writing a treatise against the 'Arians', *Adversus Arianos*. This work comprises Books Four to Six of *De Trinitate*, and is loosely structured around Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria. Before Hilary finished *Adversus Arianos*, he decided to recast his efforts against his anti-Nicene opponents and compose *De Trinitate* as we have it today. The final part of *De Trinitate*, Books Seven to Twelve, are the books Hilary added to *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos* to complete his treatise on the Trinity.⁴ The argument in these final books reflects Hilary's mature Trinitarian theology, and further develops many of the thoughts expressed in the added sections of the first six books.

In the following few chapters I will attempt to unfold the many layers of Hilary's treatise and identify the material he added to his earlier works to create *De Trinitate*. The focus of the present chapter, however, is more foundational and aims to explore two basic questions. First, at what point in writing *Adversus Arianos* did Hilary decide to recast his efforts and compose *De Trinitate*? Second, what

³ Given the polemical nature of the material Hilary added to *De Fide*, it is surprising that scholars have consistently considered this treatise a catechetical work that positively expresses the church's teaching on the Trinity. Although this characterization may have been appropriate for the original *De Fide*, it is very misleading given the present state of the text. See e.g. P. Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers, le premier docteur de l'église latine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 36–42; M. Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia', 278; C. Kannengiesser, 'Hilaire de Poitiers', *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, VII/1 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969), col. 479; P. Smulders, 'A Bold Move of Hilary of Poitiers: *Est ergo erans*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 42 (1988), 121; and, more recently, Figura and Doignon, 'Introduction', SC 443: 50.

⁴ On the title of Hilary's work, see Pierre Smulders, 'Praefatio', CCL 62: 6–8; 'Introduction', SC 443: 53–4. *De Fide* has been used to describe the entire work by Rufinus, John Cassian, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Leo the Great. Jerome simply says that Hilary 'duodecim adversus Arianos confecit libros'. Our present title of *De Trinitate* is attested by Cassiodorus and Venantius Fortunatus.

are the reasons that led Hilary to combine *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos* to produce *De Trinitate*? As has already been suggested in the previous paragraph, a clear vision of a single treatise emerges by the time we reach Book Seven. Its more deliberate preface, and, as we will see, its correspondence with the introductory paragraph to the synopsis of books in Book One strongly suggests that Hilary made his decision at this point to combine *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos* to form *De Trinitate*. By looking closely at the preface to Book Seven, the first-composed book of his newly envisioned treatise, the introductory paragraph to the synopsis of *De Trinitate* found toward the end of Book One, and the added material in Books Two to Six, we discover a number of reasons that led Hilary to recast his literary efforts and produce what we know today as *De Trinitate*. In the sections that were added after he decided to combine *De Fide* with *Adversus Arianos* Hilary displays a strong sensitivity to the organization of his treatise, to questions concerning theological method, and to any polemical association of his theology with either modalism or subordinationism.

Reference is made throughout this chapter to Hilary's prefaces. These prefaces have not been adequately discussed in the scholarship on his treatise, nor even identified in the available translations of *De Trinitate*, including the most recent Sources Chr tiennes edition. It is crucial for the study of the structure and chronology of Hilary's work to identify a book's original preface and the preface added by him when he combined *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*. By the time we reach Book Seven we no longer encounter multiple prefaces to a book. The reason for this is that Hilary is now fully committed to *De Trinitate*. The added prefaces to Books Two to Six are Hilary's attempt to give the reader the impression that these books have always belonged together, and that he has always had a sophisticated understanding of the exegetical and theological issues involved in the Trinitarian debates of the late 350s. These prefaces reveal Hilary's most pressing concerns in recasting his efforts against the 'Arians' in Books Four to Six, and indicate some of the criticism he encountered in articulating the scriptural witness to the Triune God—criticism that ultimately led him to rethink his refutation of the various anti-Nicene theologies and produce *De Trinitate*.

PRESENCE OF TWO TREATISES

Hilary offers a Latin translation of Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria in Book Four and again in Book Six of *De Trinitate*. It seems odd that Hilary found it necessary to reproduce this letter twice in the span of only three books. In Books Four and Five he refutes the letter in broad terms by appealing to the Old Testament. In Book Six Hilary directs his attention to the New Testament, and how the Gospels refute the theological position advanced in Arius' letter. Given this shift in emphasis from the Old Testament to the New, it is not altogether inappropriate for Hilary to produce the letter a second time. Another reason for repeating Arius' letter, which cannot be demonstrated but would contribute to our understanding of why Hilary found it necessary to attach *De Fide*, is that Books Four to Six were circulating independently of one another and received, for reasons explored below, criticism.⁵

Book Six would have originally begun with what is currently chapter four. The first three chapters are the preface added to Book Six after Hilary decided to attach *De Fide*. He begins chapter four by stating that the 'Arian' heresy, under the guise of true piety, denies the mystery of the true faith in this letter from Arius to Bishop Alexander, 'as indicated in the preceding Books'.⁶ Hilary continues by reminding the reader how Arius mingles pious phrases with impious ones. This had been shown by Hilary in Books Four and Five, the so-called 'preceding Books'. He next writes a very confusing sentence regarding the second translation of Arius' letter: 'we have decided to insert the complete text of this heresy here in Book Six, although we have produced it in Book One.'⁷ Book One refers to the

⁵ The independent circulation of some of the books from *De Trinitate* has already been suggested by Pierre Smulders in *Hilary of Poitiers' Preface to his Opus Historicum* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 141.

⁶ *De Trinitate*, VI.4.1–4: 'Negat enim, negat furens heresis sacramentum verae fidei, ad impietatis suae doctrinam religionis usa principii, cum infidelitatis suae expositionem, ut superioribus libris continetur, ita coepit.'

⁷ *Ibid.* IV.4.26–30: 'Et quia nobis ex integro adversum hanc impiissimae doctrinae expositionem evangelicus nunc erit sermo, consequens existimavimus omnem iam, in primo licet libro editionem huius hereseos conscribam, nunc quoque huic sexto inserere ...'

translation of the letter in Book Four of *De Trinitate*. Hilary seems to have in mind that Book Four, at one time, was the first book of a treatise that aimed to refute Arius' letter or, more broadly, those whom Hilary polemically associated with the theology of Arius. His statement is made even more confusing by the identification of Book Six as Book Six rather than Book Three of a treatise against the Arians.

A similar mistake occurs in Book Five. Hilary opens by reminding the reader of what he has accomplished 'in the previous Books'.⁸ Since only Book Four would have preceded Book Five in the treatise against the Arians, Hilary's use of the plural, *libros*, suggests the inclusion of such books as *De Fide* and Book One. A few paragraphs later Hilary refers the reader to Arius' letter which he produced in Book Four. He continues, explaining that he will devote 'the entire contents of this second Book' to the question of whether the Son of God is the true God.⁹ In the space of a few paragraphs Hilary refers to Book Five as 'the second Book' of the treatise, but also acknowledges that he has replied to the heretics in his 'previous Books'. It is much easier to account for the discrepancy here. The reference to 'previous Books' appears in the preface to Book Five (V.1–2) which would have been added after Hilary decided to attach *De Fide*. The reference to Book Five as the second book of the treatise occurs in what would have been the original introduction to the book when Hilary thought of this treatise against the 'Arians' as an independent work.

In the added preface to Book Four Hilary refers to his earlier books written some time ago (*iam pridem*). He then has a brief discussion of human analogies, and reminds the reader that he touched on these matters in 'Book One'. The reference to Book One is to the actual Book One of *De Trinitate* as we now have the text. The earlier books written 'some time ago' refers to *De Fide*, Books Two and Three of *De Trinitate*. Hilary's brief comment in the added preface to Book Four further indicates the presence of two works written at different times.

⁸ *De Trinitate*, V.1.1.

⁹ *Ibid.* V.3.

A NEW VISION: BOOK SEVEN

Arduum and Scandere

Book Seven demonstrates the unity of nature shared by the Father and the Son as indicated in the Gospel of John. This book is Hilary's most sophisticated exposition of his pro-Nicene theology. Moreover, we find him creatively integrating the theological and polemical insights gained from his collaboration with the Homoiousians in articulating his Trinitarian theology. Before proceeding to the argument of the book, Hilary opens with a short preface discussing the organization of his treatise (VII.1–2) and a brief discourse on his opponents (VII.3–8). Hilary's preface begins: 'This seventh book (*septimus liber*) is written by us against the insane temerity of the new heresy. In number, it is true, this book comes after the others that have preceded, but for the understanding of the mystery of the perfect faith it is the first or most important.'¹⁰ Hilary deliberately marks this book's position, as the seventh book of his treatise, something he does not tend to do in the following books of the work.¹¹ He also underlines the importance of Book Seven and his new vision; although in number it follows his earlier writings, it is with this book, and the subsequent edits to his earlier books, that the complete faith in the Triune God is now being presented and defended by Hilary. He continues in the preface with an explanation as to why this greatest of books, Book Seven, must be preceded by six books. It is at this point that we begin to see some of the reasons that prompted Hilary to embark on his new vision. In discussing such a sublime mystery, we must realize, insists Hilary, 'how difficult and arduous (*arduum*) is the journey of the evangelical doctrine we are ascending (*scandamus*)'.¹² What is striking about this comment is how closely it parallels the beginning of Hilary's synopsis of *De Trinitate* at the end of Book One: a section of Book One that was

¹⁰ Ibid. VII.1.1–4.

¹¹ Hilary does identify Book Twelve by number, but this is probably because it is the final book of his treatise.

¹² *De Trinitate*, VII.1.4–6: 'In quo non ignoramus quam difficile adque arduum iter doctrinae evangelicae scandamus.'

certainly written after Hilary decided to recast his efforts and compose *De Trinitate*. Hilary tells the reader at the beginning of this summary that he has arranged his treatise in an orderly way that is best adapted to the reader's progress. His plan of twelve books will alleviate the arduous (*arduuum*) journey for readers, so they will be ascending (*scandentium*) great heights without realizing it.¹³

If Hilary had a clear vision of a single treatise by the time he wrote Book Seven, then he would have also written at this time Book One and the synopsis of books at the end of Book One describing this new treatise, *De Trinitate*. Indeed, the combination of *arduuum* and *scandere* seems to bear this out. Hilary only uses these two words together four times in *De Trinitate*; three of those four occurrences are found in the preface to Book Seven and the introductory paragraph to the synopsis of books in Book One.¹⁴ The fourth occurrence is found at the beginning of Book Two, in the preface added by Hilary after he attached *De Fide*. As such, two occurrences of these words appear in the material added by Hilary and the other two occur in the first book written by Hilary after he decided to recast his efforts with *Adversus Arianos*. Although perhaps a minor observation, the combination of these two words and their appearance only in new material strongly indicates that Book Seven is the point at which Hilary embarked on his new vision and began *De Trinitate*.

Organization of his Treatise

Hilary's repeated insistence in these added materials that the discussion of the Triune God is an arduous task that must be gradually worked out suggests that he was receiving criticism for his presentation of the faith and refutation of his opponents. As mentioned above, the original material from *De Fide* was mostly homiletical reflection on the Trinity that addressed only secondary issues of

¹³ *De Trinitate*, I.20.6–12: 'Sed quia nullus per praeupta consensus est, nisi subsratis paulatim gradibus feratur gressus ad summa, nos quoque quaedam gradiendi initia ordinantes arduum hoc intellegentiae iter cliuo quasi molliore lenivimus, non iam gradibus incisum, sed planitie subrepente devexum, ut prope sine scandentium sensu euntium proficeret consensus.'

¹⁴ The four uses of *arduuum* and *scandere* are found at I.20, II.2, VII.1, and VII.3.

importance for the various parties of the 350s. Moreover, *Adversus Arianos* followed Arius' letter in rebutting a generic 'Arianism' that defined no anti-Nicene party in the 350s. When we recall that Hilary was condemned and exiled at Béziers for his confession of faith, and was therefore associated by all parties as a supporter of Nicaea, his readers had good cause to expect much from his theological writings. The anachronistic discussion in both *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, and the lack of theological engagement with the relevant issues causing division and disagreement among the various theological parties of the 350s, must have produced criticism and possibly raised suspicions about his own Trinitarian theology. In an effort to address these concerns, Hilary discusses the presentation of his faith in both the preface to Book Seven and in the introductory paragraph to the synopsis of books in Book One.

After articulating his theological method for a proper discussion of the Triune God and identifying his anti-Nicene opponents, Hilary writes at the beginning of his synopsis in Book One that he will publish nothing that is 'disorganized and confused' (*inconpositum indigestumque*).¹⁵ His comment at first glance seems harmless and a genuine statement of purpose to proceed with clarity and good order. However, when we recall that Hilary is composing this synopsis of books to give the appearance of a unified treatise, his comment displays a heightened sensitivity to the arrangement of his work and his intention to proceed in a gradual way that makes the ascent of the reader easier. Pierre Smulders long ago observed the oddity of Hilary's synopsis in all of Patristic literature.¹⁶ Given the reasons already suggested for why Hilary decided to recast his efforts and compose *De Trinitate*, the primary purpose of the synopsis was probably not to summarize the subsequent books of the treatise for the reader, but rather to make an apologetic move addressing directly the arrangement of his discussion of the Triune God. By laying out for the reader exactly what he will discuss, which, from Hilary's perspective, now includes the

¹⁵ *De Trinitate*, I.20.1–6: 'Ac primum ita totius operis modum temperabimus, ut aptissimus legentium profectibus conexorum sibi libellorum ordo succederet. Nihil enim inconpositum indigestumque placuit adferre, ne operis inordinate congeries rusticum quendam tumultum perturbata vociferatione praeberet.'

¹⁶ Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers*, *Analecta Gregoriana*, 32 (Rome: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1944), 41.

added material to his earlier works, he pre-empts any further criticism about the structure of his treatise and the gradual ordering of his discussion. In a sense, the synopsis is a call for patience. The reader must patiently read the entire treatise in order to understand Hilary's articulation of the faith and the errors of his opponents.¹⁷

When we return to Book Seven, we find Hilary expressing this same sensitivity about the arrangement of his work. After a number of metaphors indicating his awareness of the difficulty that lies ahead of him in discussing such a sublime mystery as the nature of God, he writes: 'I speak under the watchful eyes of all the heretics who hang on every word from my mouth, and the entire journey of my treatise is either difficult to ascend because of the narrow passages, or is filled with pitfalls, or covered with traps.'¹⁸ This concern echoes not only his comment from Book One, but also a statement Hilary included in his *De Synodis*, which was written at about the same time as he decided to embark on his new vision and compose *De Trinitate*.¹⁹ In the introduction to *De Synodis*, Hilary writes: 'Now I implore you by the mercy of the Lord that because I will write in this letter, as you wish, about divine things and about the pure understanding of our faith, no one will determine to judge me by the beginning of my letter before reading the end of my discourse.'²⁰ What we have here is

¹⁷ Hilary also alludes to his careful arrangement of the treatise, and how it prevents his opponents from attacking him, in the preface to Book Ten. See *De Trinitate*, X.5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* VII.3.9–12.

¹⁹ For the correspondence between *De Synodis* and *De Trinitate*, VII, see Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire*, 42, 280–2; Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia', 297–9; and Figura and Doignon, 'Introduction', 48–9.

²⁰ *De Synodis*, 6 (PL 10: 483C–484AB): 'Oro autem vos per Domini misericordiam, ut quia mihi ad vos de divinis, ut voluistis, rebus et de fidei nostrae intemerata conscientia erit per has litteras sermo, ne quisquam de me ante sermonis consummationem per litterarum exordia existimet iudicandum.' Hilary continues insisting that the reader judge him only after reading the entire work. Anything less than that is unjust. He writes: 'Iniquum est enim, non comperta usque ad finem ratione dictorum, praepudicatum sententiam ex initiis quorum causa adhuc ignoretur afferre: cum non de inchoatis ad cognoscendum, sed de absolutis ad cognitionem sit iudicandum.' Midway through *De Synodis* Hilary reminds readers of his request that they patiently read through the entire letter before passing judgement. See *De Synodis*, 32 (PL 10: 504B): 'Memini enim me in exordio sermonis patientiam et aequanimitatem legentium atque audientium usque ad absolutionem omnium dictorum meorum poposcisse; ne temerarius quisquam in me iudex ante cognitionem perfecti sermonis existeret.'

a concern by Hilary for the presentation of his faith expressed in two works written at about the same time. In both works, he requests that his readers exercise patience with him and reserve their judgment on his work until they have finished reading it. Although Hilary's sensitivity to the ordering of his work in *De Trinitate* is motivated for different reasons than his comment in *De Synodis*, a significant point is being made here. In 358 Hilary's vision of the theological issues surrounding the Trinitarian debates in the 350s came into focus, and he now invites his reader to indulge him with patience as he retells the story of these debates in light of his mature understanding. Moreover, Hilary insists that the reader acknowledge the precision required to refute one heresy without succumbing to another. It is in this context that Hilary says in Book Seven that he is writing under the watchful eyes of the heretics who are hanging on his every word.

Modalism and Subordinationism

Hilary's polemical insistence that his Trinitarian theology avoids modalism and subordinationism is something we find throughout the material added to create *De Trinitate*, and points to a further correspondence between Book One and Book Seven. Hilary deliberately composed Book One in 358 to serve as the introduction to his treatise on the Trinity. This book contains an extended reflection on sources of knowledge about God, the relationship between faith and reason in theological inquiry, and the proper way to approach and interpret scripture. These methodological considerations seek to demonstrate how Hilary's opponents rely solely on their natural reason in acquiring knowledge about God. They place a limit on the acceptable content of their faith by determining what is and what is not agreeable to their natural reason. As we will see in the final chapters of this monograph, Hilary develops this theological method throughout *De Trinitate*. What interests us here, however, is the sensitivity expressed by Hilary to unacceptable theological formulations of God. In Book One, Hilary offers the following brief description of his opponents. He writes:

To pass over in silence the other extremely ridiculous beliefs of the heretics—but which we shall discuss when the opportunity presents itself in the course of our treatise—there are certain individuals who so distort the mystery of the evangelical faith that they deny the birth of the only-begotten God, while piously professing that there is only one God, that there is an extension rather than a descent into man, that he who became the Son of Man from the moment he assumed our flesh never existed previously and is not the Son of God, that in him there is not a birth from God but the same one comes from the same one, in order that this unbroken, unweakened continuity, as they believe, may preserve intact our faith in the one God, while the Father, who has extended himself even to the Virgin, is born as the Son.

There are others, on the contrary—since there is no salvation without Christ who in the beginning was God the Word (*erat Deus Verbum*) with God (*apud Deum*)—while denying the birth, have acknowledged creation alone, so that the birth does not admit the true nature of God, and creation teaches that he is a false god, and, while this would misrepresent the faith in the nature of the one God, it would not exclude it in the mystery. In place of the true birth they substitute the name and faith of creation, and separate him from the true nature of the one God in order that a creature may not usurp the perfection of the Godhead, which had not been given by the birth of a true nature.²¹

Hilary first identifies Marcellus of Ancyra's theology, that the Father extends himself into the Son. Marcellus' concerns are to preserve a strict Christian monotheism—which Hilary does acknowledge, amidst a caricature of Marcellus' theological sympathies.²² In the next paragraph Hilary turns to 'others' who are his 'Arian' opponents, and probably those espousing the Homoian position of Sirmium 357. According to Hilary, these opponents argue that creation signifies that the Son is of a separate nature than God the Father, and therefore not true God in the same sense that the Father is God. Hilary's paraphrase of the opening verses of John's prologue indicate, as we will see in detail in the next chapter, that he has Photinus of Sirmium in mind. His introduction of these verses in the description of his 'Arian' opponents seems to be an attempt to turn the tables on them by associating their theological position with the universally

²¹ *De Trinitate*, I.16.

²² For a very thorough presentation of what we can say about Marcellus' theology, see J. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth Century Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 49–68.

condemned Photinus. Hilary's polemical construal aside, it is noteworthy that he opens his treatise by identifying modalism and subordinationism as the two extremes to the right and left of his own pro-Nicene position.

By the time Hilary sits down to write Book Seven, he would have already decided to compose *De Trinitate*, written Book One, and made the necessary changes and additions to Books Two to Six. In that short span of time, the polemical situation seems to have escalated. Following the comments on the organization of his treatise in the preface to Book Seven (VII.1–2), Hilary offers an uncharacteristic digression on the different opponents he is refuting (VII.3–9). His purpose in offering this digression strikes the reader as particularly odd. He is seeking to dispel any notion that he succumbs to one heretical error when refuting another. For the first time in his treatise, he stops using the pseudonym of Ebion and openly identifies his opponent as Photinus of Sirmium.²³ Hilary proceeds in these first few paragraphs to oppose the teachings of Sabellius, Arius, and Photinus to each other, and concludes that 'the faith of the church' overthrows them all.²⁴ He ends this section by insisting that his refutation does not lead him into the 'Arian' or Sabellian error. He writes: '... when I oppose the assertions of these men of the present day by proclaiming God the Father and the Son of God as both God, and next by confessing that the Father and Son, possessing an identical kind of divinity, are one in name and nature, no one may think that I held to either the error of two gods or the contrary error of a unique and isolated God.'²⁵

Hilary's language reveals his collaboration with Basil of Ancyra. He not only employs the Homoiousian theological strategy of exploiting the relation between name and nature, but also follows their polemical strategy of navigating the twin errors of modalism and subordi-

²³ *De Trinitate*, VII.3.23; VII.7.1–2: '... Hebion, qui Fotinus est...'

²⁴ *Ibid.* VII.7.13–24.

²⁵ *Ibid.* VII.8.1–9. The characterization of the 'Arian' position as embracing two gods is not necessarily a polemical exaggeration on Hilary's part. For example, in a sermon preached by Eusebius of Caesarea in Ancyra prior to the council of Nicaea, he censures the Galatians for not believing, as he does, in 'two οὐσίαι and πράγματα and δυνάμεις and θεοί'. See Eusebius of Caesarea, *Contra Marcellum*, I.4.45 (GCS 27: 14–25).

nationism in expounding his own pro-Nicene theology. At the same time, Hilary's insistence that he succumbs to neither error should not be seen as a mere polemical gesture. In terms of subordinationism, we have already seen in Chapter 2 that the radical Nicenes in the circle of Lucifer of Cagliari charged Hilary with succumbing to the 'Arians' because of his conciliatory work with Basil of Ancyra. In terms of modalism, Hilary's insistence that Nicaea safeguarded an orthodox understanding of God led him to embrace the term *homoousios*. Such a position required him to demonstrate how such language was free of the materialist and monarchian connotations associated with it by both the Homoians and Homoiousians. It is only when we bear in mind the criticism that led Hilary to recast his efforts and compose *De Trinitate*, and his incorporation of the Homoiousian polemical strategy of navigating both modalism and subordinationism, that the uncharacteristic section in Book Seven on the different heretics he opposes and the outing of Ebion as Photinus makes sense.

THE PREFACE TO BOOK FOUR AND THE USE OF 'HUMAN ANALOGIES'

The preface added to Book Four serves to transition the reader from the newly revised discussion in *De Fide* to the approach taken by Hilary in *Adversus Arianos*. Hilary also introduces the reader to the importance of theological method in articulating a proper understanding of the Triune God. He begins by alerting the reader to his 'earlier books, written some time ago' (*iam pridem*), in which he expounded the orthodox faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Hilary then tells the reader that 'in the following books' he will expose the errors of his opponents, the dangers of these errors, and, finally, how their 'method of interpretation' distorts the apostolic faith.²⁶ He proceeds by reminding the reader of our human limitations, not only in apprehending the nature of God but also in expressing our faith by means of human language and analogy.

²⁶ *De Trinitate*, IV.1.14–16.

Although such language is unworthy of the majesty of God, it is, notes Hilary, the only means available to us. He writes:

As we have already demonstrated these matters in Book One, they are now for this reason recalled by us so that when we express something according to human analogies (*ex humanis comparationibus*), we are not believed to think of God according to corporeal natures or to compare spiritual beings to our corruptible selves but rather believed to have brought forth an understanding of the invisible by the outward appearance of visible things.²⁷

Although God has adapted his revelation to the words best understood by us, his words point to a reality not grasped by human language. It is appropriate, indeed necessary, argues Hilary, to make use of analogies as a way of *suggesting* the meaning of the divine word, though by no means *exhausting* that meaning.

Hilary's reference to his discussion of analogy in Book One is found immediately before the synopsis of books. This is Hilary's most extensive comment on analogies in *De Trinitate* and, as we will see, is repeatedly referred to by him throughout the treatise.²⁸ Hilary writes:

If, indeed, in our discussion of the nature and the birth of God, we shall bring forward certain examples of comparison, let no one think that they contain in themselves the perfection of an absolute relation. There is no comparison between God and material things. But the weakness of our understanding forces us to find certain images from lower things as signs of the higher, in order that we might, being reminded by the experience of familiar things, be led from the knowledge of our normal understanding to an opinion of what we do not know.

Therefore any analogy (*comparatio*) must be held as more useful to humans than becoming to God, since it more suggests than exhausts understanding. Furthermore, it should not be thought that these analogies presume some sort of equality between carnal and spiritual or invisible and palpable natures, since it is made known that these are necessary because of the weakness of the human understanding and that these are free from ill-will because of any unsatisfactory example. So we proceed speaking about

²⁷ Ibid. IV.2.12–17.

²⁸ On the use of analogies in the fourth-century Trinitarian debates, see Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 284–8.

God with the words God, nevertheless instructing our understanding with images from our own created world.²⁹

Not only is this Hilary's most exhaustive comment concerning human analogies, but it also indicates exactly when the issue of analogy will become important; namely, in discussions on the nature and generation of God. In Hilary's original writings there is a discussion of the nature and generation of the Son in both books from *De Fide* and in Book Six of *Adversus Arianos*. It is precisely in the revisions to these discussions that Hilary displays a sensitivity to criticism concerning his use of analogy.

The original contents of Book Three continued Hilary's reflection on the generation of the Son from the Father begun in the original sections of Book Two. Hilary began the book with a discussion of Jesus's miracles of turning water into wine at Cana and the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves of bread. These miracles demonstrated for him two things: they revealed the shared power between the Father and Son, shared power indicating shared nature; and they offered an analogy of the Son's generation from the Father. This latter position proved very troubling for the mature Hilary, and, in the added preface to Book Three, he retreats from the usefulness of these analogies. He writes: 'The human mind will not grasp this and a comparison from human affairs will not manifest an analogy with divine things. But what is not understood by humans is possible for God.'³⁰ Hilary uses the preface added to Book Three not only to retreat from his use of analogy in the original contents of the book, but also to recontextualize the book's argument so that the discussion

²⁹ *De Trinitate*, I.19.1–16: 'Si qua vero nos de natura Dei et nativitate tractantes comparationum exempla adferemus, nemo ea existimet absolutae in se rationis perfectionem continere. Comparatio enim terrenorum ad Deum nulla est. Sed intelligentiae nostrae infirmitas cogit species quasdam ex inferioribus tamquam superiorum indices quaerere, ut rerum familiarium consuetudine admonente ex sensus nostri conscientia ad insoliti sensus opinionem educeremur.

Omnis igitur comparatio homini potius utilis habeatur quam Deo apta, quia intelligentiam magis significet quam expleat; neque naturis carnis et spiritus et invisibilium ac tractabilium coaequandis praesumpta reputetur, protestans et infirmitati se humanae intelligentiae necessariam, et ab invidia esse liberam non satisfaciens exempli. Pergimus itaque de Deo locuturi Dei verbis, sensum tamen nostrum rerum nostrarum specie inbuentes.'

³⁰ *De Trinitate*, III.1.11–14.

of analogy makes only a methodological point. The analogy between Christ's miracles and the Son's generation is that both are incomprehensible. Water does not turn into wine. Five loaves of bread will not feed five thousand men. The human mind blushes when faced with such seemingly impossible events. Yet, argues Hilary, these miracles are beyond dispute because they were performed by God. Therefore, just as we are unable to grasp these miracles with our human reason but are bound to accept them in faith, we acknowledge in humility that we are unable to comprehend the ineffable birth of the Son from the Father, and profess in faith that all things are possible with God.

The second discussion of the nature and generation of the Son from the Father occurs in Book Six, the third and final book of Hilary's *Adversus Arianos*. As mentioned above, Hilary unexpectedly provides a second translation of Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria in Book Six—a letter he had already produced in Book Four. Following the letter, Hilary discusses the heretics mentioned by Arius, and shows how Arius deceitfully uses words or phrases associated with these heretics to reject their proper use by the church. Hilary briefly describes the errors of Valentinus, Manichaeus, Sabellius, and Hieracas. At first glance, nothing seems to be out of the ordinary in this section. However, when we look at Hilary's response concerning Valentinus at the beginning of this section, we notice a revision to the text that could only have been made by Hilary *after* he decided to recast his efforts with *Adversus Arianos* and had written Book One.

Hilary briefly mentions the 'absurdities' of Valentinus' system: Bythos, Silence, the thirty aeons, and the emanation of Christ from the aeons.³¹ The faith of the church, insists Hilary, knows nothing about these teachings. From scripture, we learn that there is one God the Father from whom are all things and one Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things; God born from God (*natum ex Deo Deum*).³² According to our human way of thinking, *natum* suggests that something that did not exist has come into existence. Because of this, Arius, argues Hilary, has connected *natum* with *prolatio* (emanation) and the Valentinian heresy. Since the church rejects the

³¹ Ibid. VI.9.10–16.

³² Ibid. VI.9.17–19.

Valentinian understanding of *prolatio*, so too, Arius argues, it rejects *natum* as a proper way of talking about God. At this point, in the original draft of Book Six, Hilary's discussion of Valentinus ends and he moves to Manichaeus. He does not offer a rebuttal of Arius' construal of *prolatio* and *natum*, because that is reserved for its proper place: namely, following his presentation of all the heretics in Arius' letter.³³

Following Hilary's discussion of Valentinus, and before his discussion of Manichaeus, we encounter two paragraphs that could only have been written by Hilary after he had decided to compose *De Trinitate*. The discussion concerns the use of analogies, and specifically the use of *natum* by the church to describe the eternal generation of the Son. Hilary's first paragraph reads:

The understanding of human nature, slow and difficult to grasp the things of God, must frequently be reminded of *what we have formerly stated*: human analogies are not considered satisfactory examples for the mysteries of the divine power but are used only as images, drawn from the material realm, to impart to our mind a spiritual understanding of heavenly things so that we may advance our nature along this step to an understanding of the divine majesty.³⁴

Hilary proceeds in the next paragraph with a brief explanation of why the analogy of human birth fails to grasp the eternal generation of the Son from the Father. What interests us here, however, is Hilary's first paragraph and his reference to 'what we have formerly stressed'. The only other comments on the limitations of human analogies up to this point in the text are in the added prefaces to Book Four (IV.2) and Book Three (III.1) and at the end of Book One (I.19). In Hilary's original draft of this chapter none of those sections had been written. What we have, then, is a deliberate emphasis on the value and limitations of human analogy stressed by Hilary in the added preface to Book Three and Book Four, and now an addition to the original draft of Book Six that further clarifies the use of analogy in theological

³³ Hilary begins his rebuttal at VI.23.

³⁴ Ibid. VI.9.29–46: 'Naturae humanae tarda ac difficilis ad res divinas intelligentia exigit, de his quae semel dicta a nobis sunt frequentius admoneri, ne satisfacere sacramentis divinae virtutis humanae conparationis exempla credantur, sed tantum ad inveniendum spiritualiter de caelestibus sensum speciem terreni generis adferri, ut per hunc naturae nostrae gradum ad intelligentiam divinae magnificentiae provehamur.'

inquiry. Moreover, we should note Hilary's final remark here. Analogies are helpful in the gradual ascent of the believer toward understanding: a concern already stressed by Hilary in the preface to Book Seven and the introductory paragraph of the synopsis of books at the end of Book One.

The question remains, however: why is Hilary so concerned with human analogies? The answer is found in Book Seven. Toward the end of the book Hilary discusses the generation of the Son from the Father and the notion of birth. He writes: 'We bear in mind the warning given at the beginning of our treatise: human analogies are not satisfactory examples of divine things; nevertheless through these material images our mind achieves a partial understanding [of divine things].'³⁵ Hilary's reference to the beginning of his treatise is a clear reference to his discussion of human analogies in Book One: what is now the beginning of his treatise. Hilary continues with an explanation of why he uses these material analogies in his discussion of the Son's generation from the Father. He writes:

These analogies, as I have said, are only used to impart an understanding of the faith and not as things becoming of the dignity of God. They are used so that we might gain some understanding of the invisible from material things and by no means that the example of analogy might satisfactorily express some aspect of the divine nature, since it is fitting and just to believe God when he testifies about himself.³⁶

Hilary continues by explaining that these analogies are necessary to convey to simple believers the truth of God's word. Hilary alludes here twice to the end of his discussion on analogy in Book One. In that

³⁵ Ibid. VII.28.1–4: 'Admonuisse nos in exordio sermonis nostri meminimus, humanas comparationes divinis non satisfacere exemplis, tamen pro parte intelligentiae nostrae sensum formis corporalibus erudiri.'

³⁶ Ibid. VII.30.1–15: 'Et haec, ut dixi, ad intelligentiam fidei tantum comparata sint, non etiam ad Dei dignitatem: ut nos potius intelligentiam invisibilium ex corporalibus sumeremus, non utique ut aliquod naturae Dei satisfaceret comparationis exemplum, cum dignum et iustum esset testanti de se Deo credere. Sed quia simpliciorum fidem furor hereticus turbaret, ut id de Deo credi non oporteret quod difficile nisi per corpoream comparationem, posset intelligi, idcirco, secundum illud iam etiam superius memoratum a nobis Domini dictum: *Quod de carne nascitur caro est, quod autem de Spiritu spiritus est*, quia *Deus Spiritus est*, utile existimavimus haec pro parte inserere comparationis exempla, ne mentiri de professione sua existimaretur, cum divinae nobis professionis intelligentiam ex aliquo naturalia creaturarum exempla praestarent.'

discussion Hilary concluded: ‘We proceed speaking about God with the words of God, nevertheless instructing our understanding with images from our own created world.’³⁷ We must believe what God testifies to us about himself in scripture. Our faith in those words will guide us in our understanding of who God is. To assist that understanding, Hilary will appeal to certain analogies drawn from the material world to illustrate, in a small way, the spiritual truth revealed by God.

Hilary’s apologetic rejoinder on the use of analogies in theological discourse accomplishes two things. First, and perhaps most important for Hilary, it responds to the criticism and ‘ill-will’ (*invidia*) he likely received for his use of analogy in Book Three.³⁸ Second, Hilary’s comments are partly motivated because of his association with Basil of Ancyra. We noted in the previous chapter that Basil advanced an analogy between the names ‘father’ and ‘son’ to demonstrate the essential likeness and shared activity of God the Father and God the Son. Basil anchored his analogy in St Matthew’s baptismal formula. When Hilary revised his works in 358, he incorporated many of the exegetical and theological insights articulated by Basil, particularly the polemical utility of the baptismal formula and the father/son analogy. In the next chapter I will address in detail the revisions Hilary made to Book Two, and we will see his limited and cautious use of the father/son analogy. He basically exploits the analogy without providing its messy particulars. Hilary’s hesitancy with the analogy is related to his own unsuccessful use of analogy in the original presentation of Book Three. With all of this in mind, we can see that a chief reason why Hilary recast his efforts with *De Trinitate* has to do with the use of human analogy and the proper theological method to use in articulating the mystery of God.

PREFACE TO BOOK FIVE AND BOOK SIX

In the prefaces to Books Five and Six Hilary continues to display a heightened sensitivity to his presentation of the church’s faith. In the

³⁷ *De Trinitate*, I.19.15–16: ‘Pergimus itaque de Deo locuturi Dei verbis, sensum tamen nostrum rerum nostrarum specie inbuentes.’

³⁸ *Ibid.* I.19.14–15.

prefaces to Books Four and Seven, and throughout Book One, Hilary emphasized how his opponents go against the faith of the church in their teachings. The preface to Book Six not only continues that concern, but also suggests that Hilary was receiving criticism for his efforts.

In the preface to Book Six (VI.1–3) Hilary begins by reviewing the state of affairs in the empire. He bemoans the spread of ‘Arianism’ and the false security these heretics have because of their large numbers.³⁹ The heretics have the support of public opinion, and many are deceived into thinking that they are teaching the true faith of the church. Hilary then explains why he has assumed the burden of refuting their errors. He writes: ‘For me, in addition to the necessity of my vocation and office, in which, as a bishop of the church, I must devote myself to the ministry of preaching the Gospel, I was even more inclined to the task of writing the more I saw people detained by the danger of this heretical understanding.’⁴⁰ Hilary’s concern for the salvation of those being misled by his opponents, and for the opponents themselves, has inclined him to take on this burden of defending the truth. He assumes this burden as part of his calling as a bishop; a point emphasized by Hilary in Book One.⁴¹ Hilary’s insistence that he is defending the truth against his opponents further indicates that he was receiving criticism for his efforts.

In the preface to Book Five Hilary, to a certain extent, summarizes his comments on wisdom and folly from the end of Book Three. He then explains that he has the wisdom of God, which is folly to the world, and he will use that wisdom to expose the errors of his opponents. He again reminds the reader that he will proceed in an orderly manner to demonstrate the faith. This time, however, he adds that this approach will escape ‘the danger of an impious profession of faith.’⁴² Hilary will avoid falling into a heretical profession of faith by maintaining a middle course. The articulation of his pro-Nicene faith

³⁹ Given that Hilary makes this comment in 358, cf. Jerome, *Chronicon* (AD 359), in GCS 47: 241: ‘Omnes paene toto orbe ecclesiae sub nomine pacis et regis Arrianorum consortio polluuntur.’

⁴⁰ *De Trinitate*, VI.2.1–5.

⁴¹ See *ibid.* I.14.9–12.

⁴² *Ibid.* V.2.4–6.

will avoid both the errors of the ‘Arians’ and the ‘Sabellians’; a point Hilary repeats in nearly all of the prefaces added in 358.

PREFACE TO BOOK FOUR

Now that we have identified the chief reasons that led Hilary to recast his rebuttal of the various anti-Nicene theologies, we can return to the added preface to Book Four and read Hilary’s comments with greater clarity. He writes:

Although we think our earlier books, written some time ago, make known with certainty that our faith and confession of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is derived from the teachings of the Gospels and the Apostles *and* that we hold nothing in common with the heretics—inasmuch as they deny without limit, reason, and fear the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ—nevertheless certain points remain that are necessary for us to understand in these following books so that the knowledge of the truth may become more certain after we have put forth all their fallacious and impious teachings.⁴³

The careful wording of this lengthy first sentence reveals a great deal to us about Hilary’s purpose in combining *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*. The original contents of *De Fide* are the books written some time ago, where Hilary presented his baptismal faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He composed these books following his condemnation at the synod of Béziers, in order to articulate the orthodoxy of his faith; a faith derived from the Gospels and the Apostles. Moreover, given his considerable revisions to Books Two and Three, which we will explore in the next two chapters, and his integration of the theological and polemical strategies of the Homoiousians with his own pro-Nicene concerns, Hilary may now say that these books

⁴³ *De Trinitate*, IV.1.1–9: ‘Quamquam anterioribus libellis quos iam pridem conscripsimus absolute cognitum existimemus, fidem nos et confessionem Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti ex evangelicis atque apostolicis institutis obtinere, neque quicquam nobis cum hereticis posse esse commune, quippe illis divinitatem Domini nostri Jesu Christi sine modo et ratione et metu abnegantibus, tamen etiam his libellis quaedam necessario fuerunt comprehendenda, ut omnibus fallaciis eorum et impietatibus editis absolutior fieret cognitio veritatis.’ Emphasis added.

clearly demonstrate that he holds nothing in common with the heretics.

Hilary finishes the above comment from Book Four with a call for patience; a call that is reminiscent of his synopsis of books at the end of Book One and at the beginning of *De Synodis*. The knowledge of the truth will become *clearer* in the following books, after he points out *all* the blasphemous teachings of his opponents. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, Hilary's use of Arius' letter to refute 'Arianism' in Books Four to Six is perplexing for the reader. The letter played no significant role in theological definition for any group in the 350s. To move from the insightful and detailed rebuttal of Photinian and Homoian theological positions in the revised versions of Books Two and Three to Arius' letter is a disappointment. It is only with the second half of Book Six and Book Seven that the reader is once again in the arena of contemporary theological debate. Hilary's final comment in the preface to Book Four, then, is a call for patience; readers must labour through the whole of *De Trinitate* if they wish to understand the complete and perfect faith in the Triune God.

FROM *DE FIDE* TO *DE TRINITATE*

Based on the text of Books Four to Six, it is clear that Hilary intended at one time for these books to form the beginning of a separate treatise. The textual errors present in these books indicate that at some point Hilary attached *De Fide* to them and attempted to conceal that they were ever independent works. Given the coherence of the preface to Book Seven and its correspondence with the first paragraph of the synopsis of books at the end of Book One, Hilary seems to have made the decision to recast his efforts against his anti-Nicene opponents by the time he wrote Book Seven. With this in mind, Hilary's reference in Book Four to earlier books written some time ago (*iam pridem*) refers not to the time between the completion of Book Three and the beginning of Book Four, but to the intervening period between the completion of *De Fide* and the beginning of Book Seven, which marks the beginning of Hilary's vision of a single treatise, *De Trinitate*. The historical impetus for Hilary's move, as

indicated in the previous chapter and as will be further argued in the next, was the synod of Sirmium in 357. Since his revisions bear the marks of collaboration with Basil of Ancyra, and especially the synodical letter written by Basil in early 358, Hilary's revisions were likely to have been made in the autumn of 358.

A review of the material Hilary added to his earlier works reveals three main reasons that led him to recast his efforts and compose *De Trinitate*. First, Hilary's presentation of his opponents appeared to some as disorganized and chronologically inconsistent. He responds by emphasizing in a number of places that he is proceeding in a gradual and orderly way, so as to make the ascent of the reader easier. Furthermore, Hilary added a synopsis of books to Book One, indicating precisely how he will proceed in an orderly and gradual way. Second, Hilary demonstrates a profound concern for a proper theological method in discussing God, and specifically the use of human analogies to convey the truth about the Son's nature and generation. He opens the preface to Book Four with a brief comment on the limitations of human analogy, and refers the reader to his explanation of analogy in Book One. He does the same in his discussions of analogy in Books Six and Seven. His sensitivity is in part a result of his own careless use of analogy in Book Three, but also because of his use of the father/son analogy advocated by Basil of Ancyra. Finally, Hilary's demonstration of the faith was polemically construed by his anti-Nicene opponents as embracing Photinian theology, and by the radical supporters of Lucifer of Cagliari as embracing 'Arian' theology. Hilary rejects these characterizations by articulating his faith against both the 'Arians' and 'Sabellians'. He revises his discussion in Books Two and Three to explicitly reject Photinian and Homoian theology. Moreover, in the prefaces to Books Five and Six Hilary emphasizes that he holds nothing in common with the two extremes of the 'Arians' and 'Sabellians'. He further attempts to dispel any suspicions to the contrary by repeatedly stating in his prefaces that he embraces and teaches only the faith of the church.

Book Two of *De Trinitate*

When Hilary decided to recast his efforts with *De Trinitate*, he attached his two books on faith written after the synod of Béziers in 356. He was not, however, content to leave these books in the form in which they originally appeared. Although less than two years had elapsed between the time he wrote *De Fide* and when he decided to attach it to *De Trinitate*, Hilary clearly found his discussion of the Trinity to be unsatisfactory. He chose not to dismiss the work as an early attempt at articulating his understanding of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; rather, he decided to revise and update it in order to reflect his more sophisticated understanding of the issues involved in the Trinitarian debates of the 350s. The new sections added to Books Two and Three of *De Trinitate* reveal Hilary's mature understanding of the nuances of these debates, and a level of engagement with the polemical strategies of the Homoiousians that would have been unavailable to him prior to his exile. In short, these books have benefited tremendously from the reflection that time and confrontation have afforded Hilary. Although indebted to Homoiousian theological insights, these two books demonstrate Hilary's creativity in integrating the lessons he learned from the circle of Basil of Ancyra with his own pro-Nicene commitments.

Book Two is the most Trinitarian book in *De Trinitate*. It originally began with a discussion of the Father (II.6–7) and proceeded to examine the Son (II.9, 11, 22.1–18, 24–28) and Holy Spirit (II.29–35). When Hilary returned to Book Two, he maintained its Trinitarian character, but added a preface (II.1–5) that better contextualized his discussion of the Trinity by incorporating the chief scriptural and theological strategies of the Homoiousians, and greatly expanded his

discussion of the Son by distinguishing his pro-Nicene advocacy from any construal with modalist or subordinationist theologies.

ADDED PREFACE (II.1–5)

St Matthew's Baptismal Formula

Hilary begins his preface to Book Two in the same manner that Basil of Ancyra began his letter describing the theological commitments of those bishops gathered at the synod of Ancyra in 358. We recall that the impetus for Basil's letter and the synodical gathering at Ancyra was the Sirmium manifesto of 357—what Hilary has characterized as the Blasphemy of Sirmium.¹ Hilary starts by insisting that the word of God (*sermo Dei*) is sufficient for disclosing the truth for all who believe. He proceeds to quote St Matthew's baptismal formula, to baptize 'in the *name* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit', and then asks: 'What is not contained in these words concerning the mystery of human salvation?'² We must place our faith in God's word in order to understand the Son's relationship to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these words convey to us the relationship between the Triune Persons and reveal to us the mystery of our salvation. Put another way, by reading these words within a soteriological context, we discover the truth about the Trinitarian nature of God.

Hilary's use of the baptismal formula allows him to make both a pastoral and a theological point. On the pastoral level, Hilary is able to emphasize that these truths are rehearsed within the liturgical life of the church. It is the worshipping community that understands without obscurity the truths conveyed by this formula, and it is this community that takes refuge in the comfort and certainty of their

¹ *De Synodis*, 10–11 (PL 10: 487A).

² *De Trinitate*, II.1.1–9: 'Sufficiebat credentibus Dei sermo, qui in aures nostras evangelistae testimonio cum ipsa veritatis suae virtute transfusus est, cum dicit Dominus: *Euntes nunc docete omnes gentes, baptizantes eos in nomine Patres et Fili et Spiritus sancti, docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mando vobis. Ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque in consummationem saeculi.* Quid enim in eo de sacramento salutis humanae non continetur?'

baptismal faith during times of trial.³ For Hilary, these discussions concerning the Triune God are not about abstract theological categories and language, but about the soteriological claims being made by the church concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ.⁴ As Basil had put it at the beginning of his letter, those born again by faith are not baptized into the philosophical categories of Ingenerate/Generate or Incorporeal/Incarnate, but into the name of the Father and Son. Hilary follows that line of argument in order to contextualize his own discussion. His reflections on the Trinity and Christ are not philosophical musings about God, but are pastorally driven concerns over the saving work of God in the person of Jesus Christ, true God and true man.

On the theological level, Hilary begins his work on the Trinity in the same manner that Basil began his letter, which, as discussed in Chapter Three, was a continuation of how the Dedication Creed from Antioch 341 ended. For Basil, the baptismal formula was scripturally and epistemologically significant. It emphasized the normative use of scripture in theological reflection: a point that was not disputed. More significantly, Basil argued that a proper understanding of the names revealed the nature of the Son and his essential likeness to the Father. That essential likeness was seen not only in their names, but also in their shared activities (*energeiai*). In a similar manner, Hilary exploits the polemical utility of the baptismal formula and its names by arguing that it ‘reveals the meaning of the words, the efficacy of actions, the order of works, and the understanding of nature’.⁵ Hilary proceeds to describe the relationship implied by these names. The Father is the Source (*auctor*), the Son is the only-begotten (*unigenitus*), and the Spirit is the Gift (*donum*). He writes: ‘There is one Source of all things, for *there is one God the Father from whom are all things and one only-begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ through whom are all things* (1 Cor. 8: 6), and one Spirit who is

³ Cf. Hilary’s discussion of his baptismal faith in his letter to the emperor Constantius. See *Liber II Ad Constantium*, vi; Wickham, 107.

⁴ For a similar reading, see Christopher Kaiser, ‘The Development of Johannine Motifs in Hilary’s Doctrine of the Trinity’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 29: 3 (1976), 237–47.

⁵ *De Trinitate*, II.1.10–12.

the Gift in all things.⁶ Put another way, there is one Power from whom are all things, one Offspring (*progenies*) through whom are all things, and one Gift of perfect hope (cf. Eph. 4: 4–6). Here Hilary correlates, as Basil had, the creative and generative activity of God. Hilary will resume this line of argument in the section on the Son below.

Hilary next alerts the reader to his opponents. He writes: ‘The guilt of the heretics and blasphemers (*blasfemantium*) compels us to undertake what is unlawful, to scale arduous heights (*ardua scandere*), to speak of the ineffable, and to trespass upon forbidden places.’⁷ At first it seems as if Hilary has concealed the identity of his opponents, but the addition of the term *blasfemantium* may suggest otherwise. We have already noted Hilary’s combination of *scandere* and *arduum* in Book One and Book Seven, and argued that this textual correspondence, among other things, suggested that Book Seven was the first book composed by Hilary after he decided to attach *De Fide* to his books against the ‘Arians’. The only use of the words *scandere* and *arduum* in combination outside of Book One and Book Seven occurs here in the added preface to Book Two. There may be a further correspondence between the added preface to Book Two and Book Seven with Hilary’s use of *blasfemantium*. Hilary only uses this word twice in *De Trinitate*: here in the preface to Book Two, and in a discussion of the equality of the nature possessed by the Father and the Son in Book Seven.

Book Seven was the first book composed by Hilary after he decided to recast his efforts to produce *De Trinitate*. As has been discussed in previous chapters, the historical impetus for Hilary’s new vision was the synod of Sirmium in 357. The bishops attending this synod issued a manifesto that prohibited the use and exposition of all *ousia* language: a manifesto that Hilary dubbed the Blasphemy of Sirmium in his *De Synodis*. Early in 358 Basil of Ancyra convened a synod to respond to the Sirmium manifesto. Following the gathering, he issued a letter that outlined the Homoiousian theological position and the necessity of *ousia* language. In light of the Sirmium manifesto and Basil’s response to it, Hilary recast his own efforts with *De Trinitate*.

⁶ *De Trinitate*, II.1.14–17.

⁷ *Ibid.* II.2.1–3.

As would be expected, then, Hilary's most creative integration of the theological insights of the Homoiousian position with his own pro-Nicene commitment is found in Book Seven of *De Trinitate*: a book that he acknowledges to be the seventh of his treatise but, he emphasizes, is the first or greatest (*primus aut maximus*) when it comes to expressing the mystery of the Triune God.⁸ It is the first or greatest because it is the first full exposition of Hilary's mature Trinitarian theology.

When Hilary says that the guilt of the heretics and blasphemers (*blasfemantium*) compels him to write a refutation of their position in the added preface to Book Two, I believe he is making a subtle reference to the Sirmium manifesto of 357. The only other use of *blasfemantium* in his treatise occurs in a discussion of the generation of the Son and his relationship to the Father in Book Seven. The question is whether that relationship occurs at the level of God's will, in the sense of a moral union between the Father and the Son, or at the level of nature. Just as Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea had argued against the moral union articulated by the Sirmium manifesto by underlining the necessity of *ousia* language, Hilary makes a similar argument by means of *natura* language. Hilary writes:

Hence, the excuse of an inadequate knowledge no longer holds for the godless blphemers (*blasfemantium*), since, according to the testimony of the Apostle, the true meaning of his nature is revealed when his birth is indicated, 'he was calling God his own Father, making himself equal (*aequallem*) to God' (John 5: 18). Is there not a natural birth (*naturalis nativitas*) where the equality of the nature is manifested by the name of his own father? There is no question regarding the fact that they do not differ in equality (*aequalitas*). Besides, will anyone deny that a birth gives rise to an undifferentiated nature (*indifferentem naturam*)? From this alone can come that which is true equality, because only birth can bestow an equality of nature (*naturae aequalitatem*). But, we shall never believe that equality is present where there is a union (*unio*); on the other hand, it will not be found where there is a distinction. Thus, the equality of likeness (*similitudinis aequalitas*) does not admit either of solitude (*solitudinem*) or of diversity (*diversitatem*), because in every case of equality there is neither a difference nor is it by itself.⁹

⁸ Ibid. VII.1.1–4.

⁹ Ibid. VII.15.10–23.

This paragraph is an excellent example of Hilary's creative integration of Homoiousian theology into his own pro-Nicene argument against the Homoians. Hilary uses the Homoiousian language of likeness, but in a sense that demands the full equality between the Father and the Son. When he insists that the nature between the Father and the Son is *indifferens*, he shows his own independence from Basil and distances himself from the inherent subordinationism of the Homoiousian position. Basil is clear that the Son's essence is not 'identical' with, but only 'like' the Father.¹⁰ Moreover, Basil condemns all who say the Son is co-essential (*ὁμοούσιον*) or of identical essence (*ταυτούσιον*) with the Father.¹¹ Hilary ends his comment in typical Homoiousian fashion: he draws a distinct line between his theological position and the two extremes of monarchian (*solitudinem*) and subordinationist (*diversitatem*) theologies.

The context for Hilary's discussion in Book Seven seems to be indicated, as it is in the preface to Book Two, by the reference to his opponents as the blasphemers (*blasphemantium*). The argument of this section in Book Seven is certainly directed at those who would argue that the equality between the Father and the Son occurs at the level of union (*unio*) and not nature, which is the argument of the bishops gathered at Sirmium in 357. When we return to the added preface to Book Two and see Hilary exploiting the polemical utility of the baptismal formula along Homoiousian lines, and we remember that he recast his treatise in part because of the 'Blasphemy of Sirmium', the characterization of his opponents as 'heretics and blasphemers' seems to suggest that he is making a veiled reference to this synod. The significance of this observation is not simply to reinforce the chronological argument of Chapter Four and its indication that Book Seven marks the point at which Hilary recast his efforts, but rather that it indicates Hilary's common cause with the Homoiousians against the Sirmium manifesto, and shows the significance of the manifesto's theological assertions in Hilary's own historical and theological consciousness.

¹⁰ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.9.7; *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, trans. Frank Williams, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 443–4.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 73.11.10; Williams, 446.

The Father/Son Analogy

Basil followed the introduction of the baptismal formula in his letter with an extended analogy between the relationship of human fathers and sons and the divine Father and Son. If we exclude all material things associated with this analogy, such as the effects of physical paternity and sonship, then, argued Basil, the essential likeness of the Father to the Son would remain. In Chapter 3 we noted Basil's concern to protect a pious understanding of this analogy amidst the presence of criticism against the use of these analogies for expressing the relationship between the Father and the Son. Hilary only occasionally uses this analogy in *De Trinitate*, and is always quick to note the limitation of human language for expressing the mystery of God. His continued insistence that analogies are limited but useful in suggesting a divine truth is in part an apologetic rejoinder to the criticism levelled against Basil's strained analogies. In the next chapter we will encounter one further reason for his reluctance to use analogies when discussing the relationship between the Father and the Son. It comes as no surprise, then, that Hilary only sparingly makes use of Basil's father/son analogy in his discussion of the baptismal formula.

Before commenting on the analogy, Hilary predictably begins with a number of comments on the limitation of human speech. Although we should by 'faith alone' (*sola fide*) adore the Father, venerate the Son, and abound in the Holy Spirit, conflict and dispute over the Trinity has forced Hilary to address a subject that cannot be described by human words.¹² Although human speech is limited in what it is able to communicate about an infinite God, the distortion of the scriptural witness to the Triune God and the consequent threat to the faithful force Hilary to enter the discussion. He writes: 'Many have appeared who received the simplicity of the heavenly words in an arbitrary manner and not according to the certain meaning of truth itself, interpreting them in a sense which the force of the words did not demand.'¹³ Hilary repeatedly charges his opponents with

¹² *De Trinitate*, II.2.3–9.

¹³ *Ibid.* II.3.1–4: 'Extiterunt enim plures, qui caelestium verborum simplicitatem pro voluntatis suae sensu, non pro veritatis ipsius absoluteione susciperent, aliter interpretaentes quam dictorum virtus postulare.' On Hilary's use of simplicity, see SC 443, p. 278, n. 2.

interpreting the words of scripture in an arbitrary manner because they ignore the unity of God's revelation, the progressive disclosure of Christ's person and work, and the context of the heavenly words. He continues: 'Heresy comes not from scripture, but from the understanding of it; the fault is in the mind [of the interpreter], not in the word.'¹⁴ At this point, he makes reference to Basil's analogy. He asks:

Is it possible to falsify the truth? When the name Father is heard, is not the nature of the Son contained in the name? Will he not be the Holy Spirit who has been so designated? For, there cannot but be in the Father what a Father is, nor can the Son be wanting in what a Son is, nor can there not be in the Holy Spirit what is received. Iniquitous men confuse and complicate everything and in their distorted minds even seek to effect a change in the nature so that they deprive the Father of what the Father is and take away from the Son what the Son is. They despoil him, however, since according to them he is not a Son by nature. He does not possess the nature if the one born and the begetter do not have the same properties in themselves. He is not a Son whose being (*substantia*) is different from and unlike (*dissimilis*) that of the Father. In fact, how will he be a Father if he does not recognize in the Son the substance and nature (*substantiae adque naturae*) that belong to him?¹⁵

Although it is unclear how the Holy Spirit fits into the analogy, Hilary includes him in order to reflect more clearly the Trinitarian character of the baptismal formula and of Book Two. Absent are the uncomfortable details of Basil's analogy and, at the same time, the argument for the fittingness of the analogy itself. Hilary is content to reference the names and imply that the relationship between those names indicate a common nature. The reader is left piously to contemplate the analogy and provide whatever justification seems fitting or necessary for its success.

Hilary's Opponents

At this point Hilary offers a fuller description of his opponents. Pierre Smulders long ago noted Hilary's penchant for concealing

¹⁴ *De Trinitate*, II.3.4–5: 'De intelligentia enim heresies, non de scribtura est; et sensus, non sermo fit crimen.'

¹⁵ *Ibid.* II.3.5–19.

the identity of his opponents and using general slogans to express their teaching.¹⁶ Hilary follows this pattern in his preface. He mentions Sabellius, who represents the extreme views associated with Marcellus of Ancyra, a certain Ebion, which is the pseudonym used by Hilary in the first six books of *De Trinitate* for Photinus of Sirmium,¹⁷ and finally ‘some in this present age’ who are the ‘Arians’ opposed by Hilary. He briefly identifies the teaching of these opponents and notes their differences. Marcellus teaches that the Father extends into the Son in such a manner that the Son is the Father. As such, the Son is acknowledged in name only and not in reality. Photinus teaches that the Son is entirely from Mary and only later becomes God through adoption. Moreover, for Photinus, the Word was in God in the beginning as the utterance of a voice, not as the only-begotten God. Hilary then offers a description of his ‘Arian’ opponents. He writes:

Likewise some teachers in this present age, who advance that the form, wisdom, and power of God come forth *ex nihilo* and in time—lest if the Son were from the Father, God would be diminished—are very disturbed that the Son’s birth from the Father may weaken him, and for this reason come to the assistance of God in the creation of the Son, making him from non-existent things, so that the Father, since nothing is born from him, may continue within the perfection of his own nature.¹⁸

By introducing his opponents in this manner, Hilary follows closely the polemical strategy of the Homoiousians. He identifies the two extreme theological positions on the right and left of his own. On the one hand, Hilary draws a clear line between his own pro-Nicene theology and the monarchian theology of Marcellus and Photinus. Any construal of their theology with the supporters of Nicaea is false: a construal promoted by both the eastern Homoian and Homoiousian

¹⁶ Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers*, Analecta Gregoriana, 32 (Rome: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1944), 91–3.

¹⁷ See *De Trinitate*, VII.3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* II.4.11–17: ‘ut aliqui huius nunc temporis praedicatores, qui ex nihilo adque a tempore formam et sapientiam et virtutem Dei provehunt, ne si ex Patre sit Filius, Deus sit inminutus in Filium, solliciti nimium ne Patrem Filius ab eo natus evacuet: adque idcirco Deo in Fili creatione subveniant, eum ex non extantibus comparando, ut intra naturae suae perfectionem Pater, quia nihil ex eo sit genitum, perseveret.’

theologians. On the other hand, Hilary distinguishes his theology from the 'Arians'. In *De Trinitate* Hilary shows little interest in discriminating between a generic 'Arianism' associated with Arius and the Homoian theology expressed at the synod of Sirmium in 357. We recall that Hilary has already written *Adversus Arianos*. This unfinished treatise, structured around Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria, now comprises Books Four to Six of *De Trinitate*. In fact, Hilary continues in the preface to Book Two by informing the reader that he will pass over the names of other heretics, like the Marcionites, Valentinians, and Manichaeans.¹⁹ These latter two groups of heretics are discussed by Hilary in Book Six because they appear with Sabellius and Hieracas in Arius' letter. By the time Hilary writes the added preface to Book Two in 358, however, he has a more precise understanding of his opponents, and no longer sees the usefulness of continuing the discussion of these other heretical groups.

These monarchian and Arian opponents in their own way have arbitrarily interpreted scripture in order to establish new doctrines about the Son. Is it any wonder then, asks Hilary, that these men think differently about the Holy Spirit? When they deny the Son, they deny, he argues, both the Father and the Spirit. They destroy the perfect mystery of the Holy Trinity by dividing the nature that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have in common.²⁰ Hilary ends by insisting that a proper understanding of the Trinity always revolves around the Son. To know the Father is to know the Son and to know the Son is to be led by the Holy Spirit through faith.

The Conclusion of the Preface

Hilary brings the preface to a conclusion by reminding the reader of the main points discussed so far. He has emphasized the importance of faith in God's own words, the soteriological context of Matthew's baptismal formula, and the presence of heretics who undermine Christ's saving work by interpreting scripture in an arbitrary manner.

¹⁹ *De Trinitate*, II.4.28–30: 'Praetermitto reliqua humani periculi nomina, Valentinus Marcionitas Manicheos pestesque ceteras, quae interdum inperitorum mentes occupant et ipso contagio conversationis inficiunt.'

²⁰ *Ibid.* II.4.

He has also introduced the reader to the polemical and theological strategy he intends to follow; a strategy, as we have noted, that is indebted to his collaboration with the Homoiousians. Hilary next offers an explanation for why he must proceed in what follows with a refutation of these opponents. He writes:

The unbelief of these men, therefore, draws us into a critical and dangerous situation, so that it becomes necessary to utter words about such great and mysterious things that go beyond the heavenly command. The Lord said that all people were to be baptized *in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit*. The formula of faith is certain (*certa*) but, insofar as the heretics are concerned, its meaning is wholly uncertain (*incertus*).²¹

The contrast between *certa* and *incerta* echoes the beginning of the preface and Hilary's emphasis on the certainty of scripture and the soteriological context of the baptismal formula. We will see in subsequent chapters that Hilary consistently contrasts the certainty of faith in scripture with the uncertainty of natural reason guided by philosophy. The meaning of scripture is *incerta* to the heretics because they read it according to their natural reason. They refuse to allow their faith to guide their understanding of God as he is revealed in scripture, and proceed instead, insists Hilary, 'to fix a law for omnipotence and to limit the infinite'.²² Finally, since these names clearly demonstrate the true nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and his opponents obscure God's true nature 'by the names of the nature', Hilary will 'emphasize the nature of the names' in his argument. These names do not 'deceive us about the properties of the nature', but reveal instead the proper meaning of the nature by means of the name.²³

Hilary ends by lamenting the task before him. The idea of engaging in a debate on the mystery of God creates a great deal of anxiety for him.²⁴ He explains:

And certainly to want this [debate] is forced on me since it means opposing audacity, deliberating on error, and giving attention to ignorance. What is demanded is immense, what is ventured is incomprehensible—to speak about God by going beyond what God determined beforehand. He has

²¹ Ibid. II.5.1–6.

²² Ibid. II.5.18.

²³ Ibid. II.5.6–13.

²⁴ Ibid. II.5.19–21.

established the nature of names: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Whatever is sought over this is beyond the meaning of words, beyond the potential of the mind, and beyond the grasp of intelligence. It can not be expressed, approached, or grasped. The nature of this subject itself destroys the meaning of words, an incomprehensible light darkens the understanding of the mind, and whatever is contained by no limit exceeds the capacity of the intellect. But, for our necessity in doing this, we pray for forgiveness from him who is all of this. We will venture, we will seek, and we will speak, and we promise only that in such a discussion of things we will believe what is made known [in scripture].²⁵

These themes are stressed by Hilary throughout his treatise and, as we will see in Chapter 6, this paragraph is a summary of the theological method articulated by Hilary in Book One of *De Trinitate*. Hilary argues that we are by nature incapable of comprehending and expressing the profound mystery of the Trinity. It is not within the power of our nature to undertake such a lofty task. We do, however, know God through his revelation in scripture. We must proceed by believing what God has made known to us, not according to what natural reason thinks appropriate for God.

THE FATHER (II.6–7)

Following the preface, Hilary briefly discusses the Father. This discussion of the Father appears to be unchanged by Hilary, and presumably reflects the original contents of *De Fide*. Hilary wrote *De Fide* as a response to his condemnation at the synod of Béziers in 356.

²⁵ *De Trinitate*, II.5.21–36: ‘Et certe mihi extorquetur hoc velle, dum et audaciae resistitur et errori consulitur et ignorantiae providetur. Immensum est autem quod exigitur, incomprehensibile est quod audetur, ut ultra praefinitionem Dei sermo de Deo sit. Posuit naturae nomina Patrem Filium Spiritum sanctum. Extra significantiam sermonis est, extra sensus intentionem, extra intelligentiae conceptionem, quidquid ultra quaeritur. Non enuntiat, non adtingitur, non tenetur. Verborum significantiam rei ipsius natura consumit, sensus contemplationem inperspicabile lumen obcaecat, intelligentiae capacitatem quidquid fine nullo continetur excedit. Sed nos necessitatis huius ab eo qui haec omnia est veniam depraecantes, audebimus quaeremus loquemur, et quod solum in tanta rerum quaestione promittimus, ea quae erunt significata credemus.’

His task was to articulate his baptismal faith. There is a sharp contrast in the tone and depth of Hilary's reflection between the original material from *De Fide*, which reads mostly like a homiletical reflection on the mystery of God, and the polemical arguments added to the treatise in 358.

Hilary's discussion of the Father is brief. The reader gets the sense that Hilary either has little to say about the Father or, as he suggested in the preface, is unable to find the proper words to express the greatness of God the Father. Our journey to understand the Father, comments Hilary, is never-ending, and language grows weary in trying to express his magnitude. He is outside of space because he is not restricted. He is before time because time comes from him. He is infinite because he is not in anything but all things are within him. Appreciate his infinity, explains Hilary, by counting as high as you can. When you reach your limit, realize that God's eternal being extends infinitely beyond the limit you have reached. Imagine the 'something' (*reliquum*) that lies beyond that limit of your understanding. That immense 'something' does not even begin to grasp God's infinity in a small measure. Hilary continues: 'God is invisible, ineffable, and infinite; in speaking about him, speech is silent; in investigating him, the mind becomes weary; and in comprehending him, the understanding is limited.'²⁶

Since the Father is unbegotten (*ingenitus*), eternal, and known only to the Son, we must, insists Hilary, always keep before our minds the Son who reveals the Father and makes him known to whom he wills (Matt. 11: 27).²⁷ Since language is powerless to express the truths revealed by scripture about the Father, we are better off meditating on his attributes than attempting to speak about them. While it is true that apophatic words like invisible, incomprehensible, and immortal suggest God's majesty, intimate our thoughts, and offer a sort of definition of what we mean when we talk about the Father, in the end our speech surrenders to this ineffable mystery and

²⁶ Ibid. II.6.21–3: 'Deus invisibilis ineffabilis infinitus, ad quem et eloquendum sermo sileat, et investigandum sensus haebetetur, et conplectendum intellegentia coartetur.'

²⁷ Ibid. II.6.26–8: 'Soli Filio notus, quia Patrem nemo novit nisi Filius et cui voluerit Filius revelare, neque Filium nisi Pater.'

acknowledges our inability to grasp his nature.²⁸ Since no language will be able to speak about the Father as he is or how great he is, we must acknowledge that it is within the liturgical and doxological life of the church that God the Father is properly known. Hilary writes: ‘Perfect knowledge is to know God in such a manner that, although he is not unknown, you know that he cannot be described. He must be believed, understood, adored, and by these observances, made known.’²⁹ We make him known to others not through abstract argument about his nature but through the exercise of our faith in the context of the worshipping community.

THE SON (II.8–28)

The longest section of Book Two concerns the Son, and has been revised the most by Hilary. It is difficult to identify exactly what is original to *De Fide*, and far easier to locate the material added by Hilary in 358. The preface to Book Two has sufficiently introduced us to the Homoiousian material Hilary prefers to incorporate into his own pro-Nicene articulation of the Trinity. Since Hilary could only have encountered these theological emphases during his time in exile, and particularly from his collaboration with the theological circle of Basil of Ancyra, the new material stands out. For the most part, the original material of *De Fide* lacks theological depth and reads like a homiletical reflection on the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. At the same time, Hilary often retreats to the pious thought, and humbly pleads with his reader to exercise patience as he attempts to find the right words to express the inexpressible. Moreover, Hilary would have retouched his original material to help the reader make the transition from old to new. With that said, it seems to me that the contents on the Son should be identified as follows, with the sections in brackets representing the added material: [8.1–9.8], 9.8–20,

²⁸ *De Trinitate*, II.7.

²⁹ *Ibid.* II.7.18–22: ‘... quidquid illud sermonum aptabitur, Deum ut est quantusque est non loquetur. Perfecta scientia est sic Deum scire, ut licet non ignorabilem, tamen inenarrabilem scias. Credendus est, intellegendus est, adorandus est, et his officiis eloquendus.’

[10.1–11.13], 11.14–19, [12.1–21.16], 22.1–18, [22.19–23.26], 24.1–28.5. At the beginning of the discussion on the Son the reader moves from added paragraph to original paragraph until arriving at the lengthy excursus on Photinus of Sirmium at II.12–21.

It is important to note the progression of thought in the original sections on the Son, and how Hilary supplemented these sections when he revised Book Two. At the beginning of his original discussion at II.9.8–20, Hilary laments his inability to explain the generation of the Son from the Father. If we cannot understand our own birth, how will we ever understand the birth of the Son? Hilary then commends to the reader a simple faith at the end of II.11. Faith *qua* faith knows that it cannot comprehend what it seeks. Hilary resumes this discussion of faith at II.22: a discussion that has been interrupted by the addition of his lengthy excursus. At II.22 Hilary again commends the integrity of this simple faith and its defence by the church against heretics. Up to this point in his original discussion of the Son, Hilary has said very little that would address the challenges raised by the various theological parties during the 350s.

At II.24 Hilary begins a discussion of the saving work of the Son. In this section he follows quite closely the narrative order of the Synoptic Gospels in describing the life and work of Christ. He writes: ‘Now, in what remains, we have the economy (*dispensatio*) of the Father’s will. The Virgin, the birth and the body, and then the Cross, death, and descent to hell—these are our salvation.’³⁰ Hilary is content in this discussion of the economic mysteries of the Son with homiletical reflections.

When Hilary returned to his discussion in 358, he must have immediately recognized its inadequacy to secure an orthodox understanding of the Son. He corrected this shortcoming by adding a great deal of exegetical, theological, and polemical material to the section on the Son. In fact, given the addition of these polemical sections, it is remarkable that scholars continue to refer to *De Fide* as a catechetical work that positively expresses the faith of the church.³¹ When

³⁰ Ibid. II.24.1–3.

³¹ See e.g. P. Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers, le premier docteur de l’église latine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 36–42; M. Simonetti, ‘Note sulla struttura e la cronologia del “De Trinate” di Ilario di Poitiers’, *Studi Urbinati*, 39 (1965), 278; C. Kannengiesser, ‘Hilaire de Poitiers’, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, VII/1 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969), col.

Hilary returned to the original material on the Son, he decided to make two important additions to the beginning of his discussion. Rather than starting with an acknowledgement of his inability to discuss the generation of the Son, Hilary opens with a positive statement on the relationship between the Father and Son that is indebted to a Homoiousian creedal tradition dating back to the Dedication Creed of Antioch in 341 (8.1–9.8). Next, he identifies false theological constructions on the Son and offers the necessary scriptural support to reject these various positions. Hilary then restates his inability to understand the eternal generation of the Son from the Father.

Hilary's second addition to the beginning of his discussion on the Son offers a litany of verses from the Gospel of John, and ends with another positive statement on the Son's relationship to the Father (10.1–11.13). This positive statement, like the first, reveals Hilary's creative integration of Homoiousian theological emphases with his own pro-Nicene concerns. The reader next encounters Hilary's endorsement of a simple faith: a pious acknowledgment that faith cannot comprehend what it seeks. At this point, Hilary makes his most significant change to Book Two. He inserts a lengthy excursus on the eternal generation of the Son that specifically refutes Photinus of Sirmium. We detect in Hilary's opening sentence to this excursus his dissatisfaction with the theological depth of his original comment on the Son. The excursus begins: 'Something still remains to be said about this unutterable birth; in fact, the something that still remains is everything.'³² Hilary now understands the polemical nature of these Trinitarian debates, and sees that commending a simple faith on the eternal generation of the Son will only make one vulnerable to the deceptive words of one's opponents. The something that remains to be said is 'everything' because Hilary has, in fact, said virtually

479; P. Smulders, 'A Bold Move of Hilary of Poitiers: *Est ergo erans*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 42 (1988), 121; and, more recently, M. Figura and J. Doignon, SC 443, 'Introduction', p. 50.

³² *De Trinitate*, II.12.1–2. Pierre Smulders has also recognized the embarrassment expressed by Hilary with this sentence. Smulders, however, did not recognize the editorial changes made by Hilary to Book Two, and labours to understand the odd progression of Hilary's discussion from II.10–11 to II.12–14. See Smulders, 'A Bold Move', 123.

nothing about the Son that would address the fourth-century challenges to his divinity or humanity. Hilary's excursus completely changes the character of Book Two. As the book now stands, it is an aggressive exegetical, theological, and polemical argument against the prevailing anti-Nicene theologies of the late 350s.

There are a few literary features that reveal the continuity of these added sections. The most obvious is the theological depth and polemical character of Hilary's discussion. His most detailed refutation of Photinus of Sirmium in his entire corpus is found in the added excursus to Book Two. The reader also encounters a heavy reliance on texts from the Gospel of John. As we will see, Hilary uses a catena of Johannine texts to frame his discussion of the Son. Related to this use of John is Hilary's designation of the Apostle as the 'fisherman' (*piscator*), who secures for the reader an orthodox understanding of the Son's relationship to the Father by means of the prologue to the Gospel of John. Hilary's only reference to John as the *piscator* in *De Trinitate* is found in these added sections of Book Two. Finally, Hilary continues to reveal his indebtedness to Homoiousian theological and polemical strategies throughout. For example, he further exploits the polemical utility of the term *progenies*, which he introduced in the added preface to Book Two. Hilary seems to have particularly gravitated towards Basil's characterization of the Son as the perfect Offspring (*progenies*) of the Father as a way of securing a proper understanding of the father/son analogy.

Book II.8–11

Hilary begins the section on the Son by reminding the reader of the difficulty of his discussion. He is forced by his opponents to leave the safe harbour of a simple faith and enter the 'stormy ocean' and 'high seas' of a theological defense of the Son's eternal generation from the Father.³³ His soul is filled with consternation as he tries to find the right words to discuss the Son. He proceeds with a positive

³³ *De Trinitate*, II.8.1–2. Hilary uses this metaphor of a sea voyage on numerous occasions; see e.g. I.37, VII.3, X.67, and XII.1–2. Meijering suggests that Hilary borrows this metaphor from Quintilian; see E. P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 5–6, 84.

statement on the relationship between the Father and the Son. He writes: 'He is the Offspring of the unbegotten (*progenies ingeni*ti), the one from the one, the true from the true, the living from the living, the perfect from the perfect, the power of power, the wisdom of wisdom, the glory of glory, *the image of the invisible God* (Col. 1: 15), the form of the unbegotten Father.'³⁴ Hilary's statement is clearly shaped by his exposure to Homoiousian theology. The litany of X from X language is derived from the Dedication Creed of Antioch that formed the centre of the eastern creedal tradition embraced by Basil of Ancyra. Hilary's inclusion of the Son as the image of the invisible God and form of the unbegotten Father finds its textual correspondence in Basil's letter and his argument against any modalist interpretation of 'image'. The phrase 'Offspring of the unbegotten', which is asserted throughout the added sections of Book Two and Three, is also derived from Basil's letter, and is used to secure a proper understanding of the father/son analogy.³⁵ More will be said about Hilary's use of *progenies* below.

Hilary continues by identifying not only the heretical theological positions that his positive statement about the Son excludes, but also indicating the appropriate scriptural passage to be used in refuting these false positions about the Son. In order to understand that 'the only-begotten is the Offspring (*progeniem*) of the unbegotten', you must follow the teaching of scripture and exclude any notion of separation or division (*adscisio aut divisio*, John 10: 38), adoption (*adsumptio*, John 14: 9), the idea that the Son was created like all other beings by command (*iussus*, John 5: 26), and finally that the Son is a mere part of the Father (*pars Patris*, John 16: 15, 17: 10, and Col. 2: 9).³⁶ Echoing Basil and the Dedication Creed, Hilary ends as he began this added chapter by asserting that the Son is the perfect one from the perfect one.³⁷

Hilary continues with a statement on theological method and the limitations of the human mind in comprehending the mystery of

³⁴ *De Trinitate*, II.8.5–8: 'Est enim progenies ingeni,ti, unus ex uno, verus a vero, vivus a vivo, perfectus a perfecto, virtutis virtus, sapientiae sapeintia, gloria gloriae, imago invisibilis Dei, forma Patris ingeni,ti.'

³⁵ On Basil's use, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.5.3–4; Williams, 438.

³⁶ *De Trinitate*, II.8.9–25.

³⁷ *Ibid.* II.8.24; Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.6.6; Williams, 440.

God. Following this brief interlude on method, Hilary resumes his scriptural and theological argument against his opponents. Rather than identifying false theological positions and attaching a scriptural verse to refute that position, Hilary simply produces a litany of verses reflecting the relationship between the Father and Son. Most of these verses come from the Gospel of John. He writes:

For this reason, pay attention to the unbegotten Father, listen to the only-begotten Son: *The Father is greater than I* (John 14: 28). Hear, *I and the Father are one* (John 10: 30); hear, *He who sees me sees also the Father* (John 14: 9); hear, *The Father is in me and I in the Father* (John 10: 38); hear, *I came forth from the Father* (John 16: 28), and *all things that [the Father] has he has delivered [to the Son]* (John 16: 15), and *The Son has life in himself as the Father also has life in himself* (John 5: 26). Hear about the Son, the image, the wisdom, the power, and the glory of God, and understand the Holy Spirit who declares, *Who shall proclaim his generation?* (Isa. 53: 8; Acts 8: 33). And criticize the Lord as he testifies, *No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and him to whom the Son chooses to reveal him* (Matt 11: 27).³⁸

Hilary's awareness of the polemical and theological value of these verses reflects his mature understanding of the Trinitarian debates. We see him both advancing his pro-Nicene theology and rejecting the two extreme positions of modalism and subordinationism by his deliberate use and ordering of these verses. For example, 'The Father is greater than I' insists on a distinction between the Father and the Son; 'I and the Father are one' demonstrates the essential unity between the Father and the Son. Moreover, Hilary shows his use of Basil's argument by correlating Son, image, wisdom, power, and glory.³⁹

Hilary continues by directing his opponents to immerse themselves in the scriptures. He encourages them to seek their answers from God's revelation and believe what they read. Yet, insists Hilary, they must understand the limits of the human mind and their inability to arrive at a complete understanding of the Son's eternal generation. He writes: 'Even though I know that you will not reach your goal, I nevertheless congratulate you for your progress. Whoever

³⁸ *De Trinitate*, II.10.1–11.

³⁹ Cf. Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.8.5; Williams, 442.

seeks after infinite things with piety, although he never reaches them, will still progress by pressing forward. Understanding stands firm at this limit of the words [in scripture].⁴⁰ We advance only with a pious mind: a mind that presses forward by faith in God's revelation. We cannot turn from that revelation and expect to arrive, in some measure, at the understanding we seek.

Hilary ends the first section on the Son (II.8–11) by offering another positive statement on the relationship between the Father and the Son. This statement has the advantage of Hilary's brief explanation of his understanding of the Son, the pertinent scriptural passages for securing both the unity and diversity of the Son and Father, and the rejection of modalist and subordinationist theological positions. He writes:

The Son [eternally] *is (est)* from his Father who [eternally] *is (qui est)*, the only-begotten from the unbegotten, the offspring (*progenies*) from the parent, the living from the living. As the Father has life in himself, so the Son has been given life in himself (John 5: 26). Perfect from perfect because whole from whole. There is no division or dissection, because the one is from the other, and the fullness of the Godhead is in the Son (Col. 2: 9). Incomprehensible from incomprehensible, for no one knows them but they alone know each other completely (*invicem*). The invisible one from the invisible one, because he is *the image of the invisible God* (Col. 1: 15) and because *he who sees the Son sees also the Father* (John 14: 9). One from the other because they are Father and Son. The nature of the divinity is not different in one and in the other, because both are one (*unum*): God from God; only-begotten God from the one unbegotten God; not two gods, but one from one (*unus ab uno*). There are not two unbegotten gods, because he is born from the unborn. The one is from the other and is not different in anything because the life of the living one is in the living one.⁴¹

The theological depth of Hilary's statement stands in stark contrast to the homiletical reflections and pious thoughts on the Father and Son in the original sections of *De Fide*. Here we have a summary of Hilary's mature understanding of God as Father and Son and a suggestion of their mutual indwelling of one another (*cicumcessio*

⁴⁰ *De Trinitate*, II.10.14–18: 'Etsi non perventurum sciam, tamen gratulor profecturum. Qui enim pie infinita persequitur, etsi non contingat aliquando, tamen proficiet prodeundo. Stat in hoc intelligentia fine verborum.'

⁴¹ *Ibid.* II.11.1–13.

or *perichoresis*); a point that Hilary makes explicit at the beginning of Book Three. He creatively integrates the exegetical and theological strategies of the Homoiousians into his own pro-Nicene theological understanding to assert the co-eternity and co-equality of the Father and the Son. He advances a distinction between the unity of the Father and Son as one (*unum*) in nature and their diversity as two eternally distinct Persons (*unus ab uno*).⁴² Hilary consistently maintains this distinction between *unum* and *unus* throughout his mature discussion.⁴³

Moreover, we finally see how the term *progenies* secures for Hilary the father/son analogy articulated by Basil. The names Father and Son are not mere titles of God but reflect both the distinction between the two and their unity of nature. Basil had argued that a proper understanding of God as ‘the Father of a unique Offspring’ secured not only a distinction between the Father and the Son against any modalist interpretation, but also the essential likeness of the Father and the Son against any Homoian theology that saw ‘likeness’ only at the level of will and not *ousia*. Hilary seems to have gravitated especially to this argument and the polemical utility of referring to the Son as the perfect Offspring of the Father. He introduces *progenies* in the preface to Book Two (II.2), returns to it in the opening chapter on the section dealing with the Son (II.8), and takes it up again in his most detailed positive statement on the relationship between the Father and Son (II.11).

Hilary not only exploits the polemical utility of the term *progenies* here in Book Two but also in *De Synodis*, which, as has been

⁴² The passage that lies behind Hilary’s use of *unum* is John 10: 30 (‘Ego et Pater unum sumus’).

⁴³ See e.g. *De Trinitate*, VII.31.34–5. Hilary explicitly states that the Father and Son are *unum* in *esse* not in *unus*. That is to say, the Father and Son are one in essence, two in Person. As such, Lewis Ayres’s translation of VII.31 loses the subtlety expressed by Hilary with *unum* and *unus*. See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 184.

For another clear example, see *De Trinitate*, VII.32.21–4. Hilary again shows how the Father and Son are united in nature and diverse in Person. He explicitly states that *unus et unus* does not allow for a modalist theology of a solitary God. For Hilary, *unus* expresses how the Father and Son are eternally distinct Persons. In fact, Hilary’s entire comment at VII.32 is an exceptional statement of his mature pro-Nicene theology. It demonstrates how Hilary not only integrates Basil of Ancyra’s insights, but also moves beyond them in his own theological formulations.

mentioned, was written by Hilary at about the same time he made the revisions to *De Fide* to form *De Trinitate*. The placement of his comment on *progenies* in *De Synodis* is particularly revealing and relevant for the discussion in Book Two. The impetus for Hilary's revisions in *De Trinitate* was the synod of Sirmium in 357 and its creedal statement. The same is true for *De Synodis*. In this letter to his fellow bishops in Gaul, Hilary begins by reproducing the offensive creed from Sirmium and, as a rebuttal, attaches twelve of the anathemas from Basil of Ancyra's letter written in early 358 against the Sirmium manifesto. After each anathema Hilary inserts his own commentary on the creed. Following Basil's twelfth anathema, Hilary takes up a discussion of the names Father and Son.⁴⁴ He tells us that his opponents utter these words, Father and Son, but regard them as mere titles and not as expressing 'a natural and genuine essence' (*naturalis et genuinae essentiae*). As such, these words do not represent anything real; they are mere literary convention. Hilary continues:

For the names are titular and not real if they have a distinct nature of a different essence, since no truth can be attached to a father's name unless the offspring (*progenie*) is from his own nature. So the Father cannot be called Father of an alien and dissimilar substance from his own, for a perfect birth has no variance and diversity between itself and the original substance. Therefore we repudiate all the impious assertions that say the Father is the Father of a Son begotten of himself but not according to his own nature.⁴⁵

The term *progenies* secures for Hilary a proper understanding of the father/son analogy both in *De Synodis* and in his revisions to Book Two. Moreover, both discussions of the term are occasioned by the theology expressed by those gathered at Sirmium. In the added sections of Book Two, Hilary insists that the Son is 'the perfect Offspring of the perfect Father'⁴⁶ in order to assert a clear distinction between the Father and Son, which secures an orthodox understanding against any modalist constructions, and to assert the equality of substance (i.e. *homoousios*) between the Father and the Son, which

⁴⁴ By my count, Basil's twelfth anathema is found at Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.11.3 (Williams, 445). According to Hilary's numbering, this is the seventh anathema.

⁴⁵ *De Synodis*, 20 (PL 10: 496AB).

⁴⁶ *De Trinitate*, II.22.21: '...perfecti Patris progeniem perfectam.'

secures a pro-Nicene understanding against any Homoian or Heterousian theologies. As Hilary puts it later in *De Trinitate*, the ‘same and identical divine nature’ is possessed by both the Father and the Son.⁴⁷ If the Son is the perfect Offspring of the Father, he must possess the same nature/essence of the Father; for that is what makes a father a father. Fathers do not produce offspring of a different essence. If the Son is not of the same and identical nature of the Father, then the names are without meaning and should be regarded as mere titles. As we have noted above, Hilary embraces Basil’s analogy in a limited sense. He does not reproduce the messiness of the analogy, but does incorporate its main insights: particularly, as we have noted here, the notion of the Son as the perfect Offspring of the perfect Father.

Finally, throughout this first section on the Son Hilary has retained his original comments on the limitations of the human mind and interspersed them with paragraphs on his mature understanding of the Trinity. His constant reminder to his readers of the limitation of the human mind in comprehending the mystery of God, and of human speech in articulating that mystery, are no mere exercises in humility. He charges his opponents with trying to understand God in the same way they understand the natural world around them. He rejects the possibility of ever obtaining such knowledge concerning God and, as we will see in the final chapters on Hilary’s theological method, will not even grant such complete knowledge of the natural world.

Hilary brings the first section on the Son to a close by reminding the reader that he is not assembling a complete and total understanding of the mystery of the Son’s birth from the Father. This cannot be done because, he explains, ‘what we are discussing cannot be comprehended.’⁴⁸ Hilary anticipates an objection from his opponents: ‘You declare that faith serves no purpose if nothing can be comprehended. On the contrary, faith confesses openly that its purpose is to know that it cannot comprehend what it is seeking.’⁴⁹ The heretics do not understand what faith is and how it operates

⁴⁷ Ibid. VII.32.18–19: ‘... eadem adque indissimilis Dei natura sit in utroque...’

⁴⁸ Ibid. II.11.15–16.

⁴⁹ Ibid. II.11.16–19: ‘«Nullum ergo, dicis, officium fidei est, si nihil poterit comprehendi.» Immo hoc officium fides profiteatur, id unde quaeretur inconpraehensibile sibi esse se scire.’

because they do not understand themselves. They are, as Hilary puts it in Book One, *sui inmemores*.⁵⁰ They are unmindful of the ontological limitations of their own human nature and the limited capacity of their minds to comprehend their infinite and eternal creator. As indicated above, the original contents of *De Fide* moved from the endorsement of a simple and pious faith to a reflection on the integrity of this faith and how the church secures it in her witness (II.22). When Hilary returned to Book Two, however, he would not allow this endorsement of a simple faith to remain as stated in the original material. As such, he inserts a lengthy excursus on the eternal generation of the Son.

Excursus on the Eternal Generation of the Son (II.12.1–21.16]

At this point in Book Two, Hilary proceeds with an aggressive argument against Photinus of Sirmium (II.12–21, 23).⁵¹ As we will see, Hilary pursues a similar line of argument as Basil and George had in their respective works against Photinus. He begins with a poetic flourish that contrasts the wisdom of a humble and poor ‘fisherman’ with the vain scholars of Greece. Hilary’s literary use of *piscator*, which is found throughout the excursus, is immediately evident: the fisherman is the Apostle John (Mark 3: 17; Luke 5: 10), and will serve as a reliable guide in refuting Photinian theology by carefully taking the reader through the first three verses of the prologue to the Gospel of John. In fact, only in this section of Book Two do these verses from John’s prologue play a central role in Hilary’s argument.

Hilary dwells on three phrases from the beginning of John’s prologue: ‘In the beginning was the Word’, ‘the Word was with God’, and ‘the Word was God’. The key term of theological significance in the first phrase, *In principio erat verbum*, is *erat*. The force of *erat* means that the Word already existed *in principio*, since it is incompatible with the meaning of ‘was’ for something not to have already existed.

⁵⁰ *De Trinitate*, I.15.1–8.

⁵¹ Pierre Smulders reads the whole excursus as a ‘direct confrontation with Arianism’ and ‘Hilary’s first full-blown encounter with Arianism’. He says nothing of Photinus. See Smulders, ‘A Bold Move’, 124.

The prologue continues, notes Hilary, to gloss Genesis 1: 1: ‘all things were made through him’ (John 1: 3). Since nothing exists apart from him and all things came into being through him, the Word which ‘was’ *in principio* must have an immeasurable existence (*infinitum*), which is to say, an eternal existence. Indeed, since everything that exists is created by the Word and time is a consequence of creation, then, notes Hilary, ‘time is from him.’⁵²

A correct understanding of *erat* and *in principio* reveals to the reader that the opening verse of John’s prologue unequivocally liberates the Word from time (*Verbum tempore liberavit*).⁵³ Lest the reader think that the eternal Word is a solitary being, the ‘fisherman’ adds that ‘the Word was with God (*apud Deum*)’. From this phrase we learn, explains Hilary, that ‘he who was before (*ante*) the beginning is *apud Deum* and without beginning (*sine principio*)’.⁵⁴ Hilary continues with a neologism that expresses the eternal relationship between the Word and God. He writes: ‘Est ergo *erans* apud Deum.’⁵⁵ Hilary seeks to retain the force of the imperfect *erat* by creating an imperfect participle for *esse* and forming a periphrastic construction with *est*.⁵⁶ Hilary’s theological point is that not only *was* the Word with God *in principio* but the Word is eternally, without beginning or end, with God. By using the vulgar *erans* and violating the rules of Latin grammar, Hilary would have immediately gained the attention of his reader. To capture his point and the action of *erans*, we might render his phrase: ‘He is and always was with God.’ Put another way, the relationship between the Word and God the Father indefinitely and infinitely exists in time and beyond time.⁵⁷

At this point Photinus is introduced, and given an opportunity to respond. Hilary writes: ‘You [Photinus] will say: “The Word is the utterance of a voice, a pronouncement of what is to be done, an expression of thoughts. *This was apud Deum* and was in the

⁵² *De Trinitate*, II.17.8–10.

⁵³ *Ibid.* II.14.1–2.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* II.14.5–6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* II.14.6–7. Emphasis added.

⁵⁶ For an extended discussion of this phrase, see Smulders, ‘A Bold Move’, 121–31; and SC 443, p. 300, n. 1.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of Hilary’s understanding of eternity, see John McDermott, ‘Hilary of Poitiers: The Infinite Nature of God’, *Vigiliae Christianae*, 27 (1973), 183, esp. n. 25.

beginning, because the expression of thought is eternal, since he who thinks is eternal.”⁵⁸ Photinus asserts the eternity of the Word as the utterance of a voice or expression of thought but not the eternal self-subsistence of the Word; rather, the word referred to by the fisherman that is *apud Deum* is more akin to God’s eternal thoughts. Hilary offers two responses to Photinus’ understanding of *verbum*. On a semantic level, Photinus’ argument does not fit with the first verse of the prologue: ‘In the beginning *was* the Word.’ True, notes Hilary, a mere word by its nature has the possibility of ‘being’, but the consequence of that possibility is that it will no longer ‘be’ after it is uttered. But, the Word *was* already ‘in the beginning’, which means that it already existed ‘before time’—a phrase, notes Hilary, that is absurd, since there is no before or after prior to creation and the beginning of time. Hilary continues with a second response. He writes:

Now even if as an uneducated hearer you dismissed the first clause, ‘*In principio erat Verbum*,’ why do you complain of what follows: ‘*Et Verbum erat apud Deum?*’ Did you hear ‘*in Deo*’ [and not ‘*apud Deum*’] in order to interpret it as the utterance of a hidden thought? Or has the difference between ‘to be in’ (*inesse*) and ‘to be with’ (*adesse*) escaped your simplicity? For indeed, what was *in principio* is declared to be ‘with’ another (*cum altero*), not ‘in’ another (*in altero*).

Hilary ends by quoting the final decisive phrase from the opening verses of the prologue: ‘And the Word was God.’ He comments: ‘This *Verbum* is a *res*, not a sound; a *natura*, not an utterance; God, not non-being.’⁵⁹

Hilary ends by emphasizing the equality and distinction between the Father and Son in a manner that clearly rejects Photinus’ adoptionist Christology and monarchian theology. In a manner reminiscent

⁵⁸ *De Trinitate*, II.15.1–4: ‘Dices enim: “Verbum sonus vocis est et enuntiatio negotiorum et elocutio cogitationum. Hoc apud Deum erat et in principio erat, quia sermo cogitationis aeternus est, cum qui cogitat sit aeternus.”’

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* II.15.15–21, 23–6: ‘Nam etsi sententiam primam rudis auditor amiseras: *In principio erat verbum*, de sequenti quid quaeris: *Et verbum erat apud Deum?* Numquid audieras “in Deo”, ut sermonem reconditae cogitationis acciperes? Aut fefellerat rusticum, quid esset inter inesse et adesse momenti? Id enim quod *in principio erat* non in altero esse sed cum altero praedicatur.’ Hilary concludes: ‘Dicit namque: *Et Deus erat verbum*. Cessat sonus vocis et cogitationis eloquium. Verbum hoc res est, non sonus; natura, non sermo; Deus, non inanitas est.’

of his earlier positive statements on the Son's relationship to the Father, Hilary writes: 'He who is born is the living from the living, the true from the true, the perfect from the perfect.'⁶⁰ Although scripture testifies about their equality and distinction, it does not explain that manner of the Son's generation. We must accept in humble obedience God's word and recognize that we will never grasp the Son's eternal generation from the Father. We have comfort, however, from the *piscator*. Hilary writes:

And to offer us some consolation because, according to the Prophet [Isaiah], it is impossible to describe this birth (Isa. 54: 5), the fisherman adds, *And the darkness grasped it not* (John 1: 4). Language has surrendered to nature and has no means of escape; still, the fisherman, who rested on the bosom of the Lord, acquired this knowledge. This is not the language of the world because the subject that it addresses is not of this world. . . . [L]et us [therefore] admire the teaching of the fisherman and let us cling to and adore the confession of the Father and the Son, the unbegotten and the only-begotten, that cannot be described and that transcends the entire reach of our language and thought. Following the example of John, let us rest on the bosom of the Lord Jesus in order that we may be able to apprehend and to express these truths.⁶¹

Hilary ends his lengthy excursus in the way he began: acknowledging his limitations and reliance on scripture. He is content to rest on the bosom of the Lord with his simple faith.

In this section of Book Two Hilary clearly articulates his understanding of the co-eternity of the Word and God by using the prologue to the Gospel of John. Moreover, Hilary exploits Photinus' distortion of the prologue and his attempt to read *apud Deum* as *in Deo* in order to deny the eternal self-subsistence of the Word.⁶² The excursus adds a great deal of theological depth to Hilary's presentation of his baptismal faith, by charting for the reader a clear distinction between pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology and monarchian

⁶⁰ Ibid. II.20.13–14.

⁶¹ Ibid. II.21.2–16.

⁶² According to Ambrosiaster, Photinus deliberately changed the punctuation of the first two verses of John's prologue to read as follows: *In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat. Verbum hoc in principio erat apud Deum*. See Ambrosiaster, *Questiones Veteris et Novi Testamenti*, XCI.10 (PL 35: 2285).

arguments. No polemical construal can be made between western orthodoxy and Photinian adoptionism.

Book II.22–3

Following Hilary's lengthy excursus, he resumes his discussion of the immovable foundation of faith, which is maintained by the authority of the Gospels and the teaching of the Apostles.⁶³ In a flourish, he draws together the arguments of the earlier sections of Book Two. He begins by stating his positive teaching on the Son. Let the 'preachers of a new apostolate' hear the confession of the catholic and apostolic church in 'the one (*unum*) unbegotten God the Father and the one (*unum*) only-begotten God the Son, the perfect Offspring of the perfect Father'.⁶⁴ He was not born by diminution, he is not a part of the Father, nor is he an emanation or derivation from the Father. Hilary once again takes the reader through the teachings of Marcellus, Photinus, and his 'Arian' opponents. He reintroduces the litany of Johannine texts from the beginning of his discussion on the Son, and applies the appropriate verse to the different anti-Nicene positions. Hilary has effectively framed his discussion of the Son around these key theological and polemical texts from John. He ends by insisting that these modalist and subordinationist views are contrary to the catholic and apostolic faith of the church; a faith, insists Hilary, that stands with Peter and confesses: 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.'⁶⁵

Book II.24–8

Hilary's final section on the Son concerns the mystery of the Incarnation and the human weaknesses attributed to Christ. We must appreciate that all the Son did pertains to our salvation. His birth, life, suffering, and death are our salvation.⁶⁶ How marvellous it is, exclaims Hilary, that the only-begotten Son, born of the unbegotten

⁶³ *De Trinitate*, II.22.1–18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* II.22.20–1.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* II.23.22–6.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* II.24.1–3.

Father in an unutterable manner, was enclosed in the womb of the Virgin Mary and grew in size. How marvellous it is that he at whose voice the archangels tremble is heard in the cries of infancy. If we consider these things unbecoming for God's majesty, how much more must we acknowledge our indebtedness to his kindness for bringing about our salvation in the manner he did?⁶⁷ Hilary continues: 'It was not necessary for him through whom man was made to become man, but it was necessary for us that God become flesh and dwell among us, that is, by the assumption of one flesh he made all flesh his home. His humility is our nobility, his shame our honour. What he is, while appearing in the flesh, that we have in turn become, restored unto God from the flesh.'⁶⁸ Our return to God is made possible because the Immortal One took upon himself our mortality so that we might be raised with him to immortality.⁶⁹ When we understand the events of Jesus' life in the context of soteriology, we are not scandalized by his Incarnation and suffering but we rejoice at God's abundant kindness on our behalf, seeing that his humility is our nobility, his shame our honour. Through his weakness we become truly human, and by means of his humility we come to truly know God.

THE HOLY SPIRIT (II.29–35)

The final section of Book Two discusses the Holy Spirit, who truly exists and is God in the same way that the Father and Son are God.⁷⁰ In Hilary's opinion, there is no point to the question of whether the Spirit exists (*an sit*).⁷¹ Hilary flatly states, he is (*est*).⁷² If it is not

⁶⁷ Ibid. II.25.1–18.

⁶⁸ Ibid. II.25.13–18: 'Non ille eguit homo effici, per quem homo factus est, sed nos eguimus ut Deus caro fieret et habitaret in nobis, id est adsumptione carnis unius interna universae carnis incoleret. Humilitas eius nostra nobilitas est, contumelia eius honor noster est. Quod ille Deus in carne consistens, hoc nos vicissim in Deum ex carne renovati.'

⁶⁹ See further *ibid.* III.13, IV.42, X.63, X.71, XI.35–6.

⁷⁰ Ibid. II.29.

⁷¹ Ibid. II.29.4–5.

⁷² Ibid. II.29.5–6.

accepted that the Spirit exists, then no discussion need take place concerning him. The heretics, however, are not really concerned with this question. As Hilary observes, they undermine the co-equality of the Spirit with the Father and the Son by focusing on the questions *quid sit* and *qualis sit*.⁷³ Hilary charges his opponents with obscuring the true nature of the Spirit by not properly distinguishing between God *qua* Spirit (John 4: 24) and God the Holy Spirit. Hilary proceeds, then, with a discussion of how we properly read and interpret scripture. He writes: 'There is a cause for every statement being made as it is [in scripture] and the meaning of what is said will be understood from the purpose for which the words were spoken, lest because of the response given by the Lord, *God is spirit*, the name Holy Spirit, his use and gift be denied.'⁷⁴ Hilary has already given similar advice at the beginning of Book Two. His opponents deliberately neglect the circumstances of particular verses in scripture and offer interpretations which the force of the words does not warrant.⁷⁵ They distort the meaning of passages because they separate the circumstances that occasion Christ's words from the words themselves. The faithful interpreter, however, will make the words dependent on their circumstances.⁷⁶

Hilary's opponents fail to answer properly the questions *quid sit* and *qualis sit* about the Holy Spirit, because they refuse to approach scripture free from their preconceived ideas about God. Hilary's concern for how to read scripture properly reinforces his statements from the preface to Book Two: 'heresy comes not from scripture, but from the understanding of it; the fault is in the mind [of the interpreter], not in the [divine] word.'⁷⁷ His opponents take the Lord's comment, *God is Spirit*, out of context in order to deny the name Holy Spirit and, as a result, his use and gifts. Since the Holy Spirit has been promised to us *that we may know the things that have*

⁷³ *De Trinitate*, II.29.23–4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* II.31.3–4: 'Omne enim dictum ut dicatur ex causa est, et dicti ratio ex sensu erit intellegenda dicendi: ne quia responsum a Domino est: *Spiritus Deus est*, idcirco cum sancti Spiritus nomine et usus negetur et donum.'

⁷⁵ Cf. *ibid.* II.3.1–4.

⁷⁶ Cf. *ibid.* I.18.14–16 and I.30.4–5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* II.3.4–5: 'De intellegentia enim heresies, non de scribura est; et sensus, non sermo fit crimen.'

been given us by God (1 Cor. 2: 12), the denial of the Spirit is the denial of the light of knowledge. If the soul does not breathe in the gift of the Spirit through faith, it will, explains Hilary, ‘have the natural faculty to perceive God, but it will not have the light of knowledge.’⁷⁸

Hilary ends by insisting that this gift, the Holy Spirit, is everywhere and available to all who are willing to receive it. When we approach scripture free from preconceived ideas, and when we allow faith to guide us in our search for understanding the mystery of God, we demonstrate our willingness to receive the gift of the Spirit. This gift not only brings the light of knowledge, but it brings us ‘the assurance of our future hope.’⁷⁹ Hilary ends Book Two, and his discussion of St Matthew’s baptismal formula, by emphasizing the certainty and comfort the soul receives when it confesses the catholic and apostolic faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We began by noting that Book Two is the most Trinitarian book in *De Trinitate*. When Hilary returned to his text in 358 he found it insufficient to meet the challenges raised by both the modalist and the subordinationist theologies of the 350s. He addressed these concerns by adding a lengthy preface that incorporated the theological insights of Basil of Ancyra, particularly exploiting the polemical utility of St Matthew’s baptismal formula and the father/son analogy. Moreover, he inserted a lengthy excursus refuting Photinus of Sirmium’s monarchian theology and adoptionist Christology. These additions to Book Two have thoroughly changed its character, from a homiletical reflection on the Trinity to a detailed theological refutation of anti-Nicene positions from the 350s; a refutation that is quite polemical in nature. In the end, Hilary’s revised Book Two is a robust articulation of pro-Nicene theology.

⁷⁸ Ibid. II.35.11–13.

⁷⁹ Ibid. II.35.18–19: ‘hoc [munus] ... futurae spei pignus est ...’

Book Three of *De Trinitate*

When Hilary returned to *De Fide* in 358 and decided to include it in his work on the Trinity, he supplemented his discussion of the relationship between the Father and Son to reflect his developed and mature understanding of the Trinitarian debates; an understanding that was greatly enhanced by his collaboration with Basil of Ancyra and exposure to the theological and polemical strategies of the Homoiousians. In Book Two, Hilary revised his presentation of the orthodox understanding of the Trinity by exploiting the polemical utility of St Matthew's baptismal formula, emphasizing the relationship between name and nature, and offering an extended excursus refuting Photinus of Sirmium's monarchian theology and adoptionist Christology. We noted as well his increased dependence on key texts from the Gospel of John.

When Hilary returned to Book Three, not only did he find the discussion inadequate, given his fuller understanding of the contemporary debates, but also susceptible to serious criticism. The original contents continued his reflection on the generation of the Son from the Father begun in the original sections of Book Two. He started with a lengthy discussion of Jesus' miracles, which demonstrated two things for Hilary. On the one hand, these miracles revealed the shared power between the Father and Son: shared power implies shared nature. On the other hand—and troubling for the mature Hilary—these miracles were intended to assist the reader's understanding of the Son's generation by means of analogy. Book Three ended with a reflection on wisdom and folly, emphasizing the limitation of human reason and the necessity of faith in God's word. In 358 Hilary drastically altered the presentation of the original contents of Book Three by attaching a new

preface that re-contextualized the book's argument and addressed two concerns that seem to have been raised against the original presentation of his faith (III.1–4). Following the preface, Hilary inserted an extended exegetical discussion of Jesus' high-priestly prayer in John 17 (III.8–17), and added a brief summary of his mature position that aggressively denounced the Homoian position (III.22–3).

ADDED PREFACE (III.1–4)¹

Hilary abruptly begins Book Three by quoting John 14: 10, 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. Many people find these words obscure, because 'the nature of our human understanding cannot grasp the meaning of this text'.² The mind struggles to understand how one thing can be in another and, at the same time, distinct from that thing. Similarly, the human mind is unable to comprehend how the Father and Son remain eternally distinct in number (*numerum*), but also 'mutually contain each other' (*se invicem continere*).³ Hilary continues, 'he who contains something else within himself and remains in this position and always remains outside of it can likewise be always present within him whom he contains within himself'.⁴ The equality of nature possessed by the Father and the Son, known from the perfect generation of the Son, which is to say, perfect *progenies* from perfect Father, indicates a perfect unity between the two that is best grasped by the mutual indwelling, *circumcessio* or *perichoresis*, of the Father and Son.⁵ To acknowledge the co-equality and mutual

¹ The Sources Chrétiennes edition designates this preface as Hilary's affirmation that the Son is of the same substance as the Father. See 'Introduction: 2. Plan et contenu de *La Trinité*', SC 443: 60. Meijering obscures this preface as well by designating it as an exegetical section on 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me'. See E. P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 125.

² *De Trinitate*, III.1.2–3: 'Natura enim intelligentiae humanae rationem dicti istius non capit.'

³ *Ibid.* III.1.6–7. Hilary puts his comments into the negative to show what people are not able to understand. I have stated them in the positive since this is Hilary's position.

⁴ *Ibid.* III.7–10.

⁵ As far as I can determine, Hilary never uses the word *circumcessio* or *circumsessio* in his writings. Cf. *ibid.* VII.32.

indwelling of the Father and Son is to have a proper understanding of God that is only apprehended by faith. Hilary continues: ‘The human mind will not grasp this and a comparison from human affairs will not manifest an analogy with divine things. But what is not understood by humans is possible for God.’⁶ On the one hand, Hilary resumes here his constant awareness of the ontological limitations of the human mind. If we cannot fully understand ourselves, we will certainly never understand a higher nature. Consequently, our ignorance must never limit what is possible for God, even if it finds that possibility completely contradictory to what we think we know of our natural world.

There is, however, more behind the sensitivity expressed here by Hilary. In Chapter 4 I discussed the various reasons that led Hilary to recast his efforts with *De Trinitate*, noting particularly his continued attention to the use of analogies. He is aware of their limitations, but also of their usefulness in suggesting, in some small measure, an understanding of the divine mysteries. Hilary ended his discussion in Book One with a significant comment on the limitations of human speech and the use of analogies in discussing the mystery of God. He wrote: ‘If, indeed, in our discussion of the nature and the birth of God, we shall bring forward certain examples of comparison, let no one think that they contain in themselves the perfection of an absolute relation. There is no comparison between God and material things.’⁷ Hilary continued by explaining that the weakness of our intellect forces us to use analogies of a lower nature to understand higher ones. Inadequate as the use of analogy might be, it is something we are forced to employ if we wish to achieve a shadow of the truth concerning God’s nature and the eternal generation of the Son.

In the discussion of Book Two, I noted Hilary’s careful use of Basil of Ancyra’s father/son analogy. He consistently capitalized on the

⁶ *De Trinitate*, III.1.11–14: ‘Haec quidem sensus hominum non consequetur, nec exemplum aliquod rebus divinis comparatio humana praestabit. Sed quod inintelligibile est homini, Deo esse possibile est.’

⁷ *Ibid.* I.19.1–4: ‘Si qua vero nos de natura Dei et nativitate tractantes comparationem exempla adferemus, nemo ea existimet absolutae in se rationis perfectionem continere. Comparatio enim terrenorum ad Deum nulla est.’ As we have seen, Hilary frequently reminds us of the weakness of our human understanding. Other significant examples would be: I.15–19, 37; III.22–6; IV.1–2, 14; VII.1; XII.50–1, *et passim*.

usefulness of this analogy, without engaging in a discussion of its particulars. Whenever Hilary referenced the analogy, he also made a comment on the limitations of human speech in articulating a divine mystery: particularly the generation of the Son from the Father. I suggested that this was likely to be an apologetic rejoinder to a larger polemical reaction to Basil's somewhat strained analogy. To some extent, this is certainly the case. As we will see below in the section on Christ's miracles, however, Hilary attempted in the original contents of Book Three to draw analogies between the miracles performed by Jesus and the mysteries of the Son's generation from the Father and the Incarnation. His comment on analogy in the added preface to Book Three, therefore, is more likely aimed at correcting his own exaggerated use of analogy in the original material of Book Three.

The first problem addressed by Hilary in the preface is the use of analogy in theological discourse. The second concerns his theological method and insistence that we rely on a simple and pious faith in confessing the truths of scripture. In the original material in Book Two, Hilary declared that 'faith confesses openly that its purpose is to know that it cannot comprehend what it is seeking'.⁸ Hilary will repeat this understanding of faith throughout his discussion of Christ's miracles in the original sections of Book Three. These comments seem to have been interpreted by some as endorsing a blind and unreflective faith. When we couple these original statements on faith with his ambitious use of analogy to convey divine mysteries, Hilary's original presentation must have caused a great deal of concern for his readers, and is likely to have produced some well-deserved criticism of his efforts. Hilary addresses both of these issues in the added preface to Book Three.

Hilary begins the added preface by rejecting the use of analogy in trying to understand John 14: 10. Analogy is of little help here, because this verse utterly confounds our human way of thinking. We can draw on nothing from our experience of the natural world that would analogously convey the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. In the natural world, if something or someone is somewhere, they are, as far we understand things, not also some-

⁸ Ibid. II.11.17-19.

where else. The alternatives are clear. Rely on your human reason and reject this verse from the Gospel of John, or humble your reason and profess your faith in this verse. For Hilary, the only option is to acknowledge that ‘what is not understood by humans is possible for God.’⁹ This conclusion, however, seems to lead Hilary down the path of a simple faith and to the very position that was the cause of concern in his original presentation. Hilary anticipates this criticism, and immediately clarifies his comment. He continues: ‘Let this not be said by me in such a way that the mere authority that something is said by God will be sufficient to understand the meaning of his words.’¹⁰ Although faith alone should cling to these words from God and believe that what confounds our human understanding is possible for God, Hilary assures his readers that he is not advocating an unreflective faith. We must ‘examine and understand what this means, *I am in the Father and the Father is in me*—if only we will be able to understand this verse as it is—so that the meaning of the divine truth may achieve what the nature of things is believed to be unable to undergo.’¹¹ We faithfully accept that these words convey the truth about the relationship between the Father and Son, despite their apparent offence to our natural reason, and proceed with a reason guided and informed by our faith, what Hilary will call heavenly reason (*ratio caelestis*), to understand the meaning of God’s word. We more easily achieve an understanding of this difficult verse when we follow ‘the teaching of the divine scriptures’ on the Father and the Son.¹² Only when we become familiar with the teaching of scripture will our words clearly express the relationship between the Father and the Son. Hilary here stresses not only the certainty of God’s word, but also that God chose the best possible words to convey to us the truth about himself; a position he advanced in the added preface to Book Two. We must use the gift of faith, imparted by the Holy Spirit, to achieve the light of knowledge. We do this by using the gift of reason to understand the meaning of God’s words and, as Hilary will later stress, to defend the teaching of his word against the distortions put forward by his opponents.

⁹ *De Trinitate*, III.1.13–14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* III.1.14–15.

¹¹ *Ibid.* III.1.15–19.

¹² *Ibid.* III.2.1–5.

Following his comments on analogy and the necessity of a reflective faith, Hilary turns his attention to the material discussed in Book Two in order to re-contextualize the discussion in Book Three. He writes: ‘As we discussed in the previous Book, the eternity of the Father surpasses space, time, appearance, and whatever else can be conceived by human reason (*humano sensu*).’¹³ For the most part, Hilary’s summary of his teaching on the Father is drawn from the original section of Book Two and follows that argument quite closely. He does, however, state his understanding with more precision, and in a manner that reflects his mature vocabulary. The Father is ‘invisible, incomprehensible, complete (*plenus*), perfect, and eternal.’¹⁴ The language of completeness and perfection is consistently used by Hilary in positive statements about God, following his exile. As has been demonstrated in previous chapters, this language is consistent with Basil of Ancyra’s presentation of his own faith, and echoes the language of the Dedication Creed from 341.

Hilary turns next to a summary of his teaching on the Son. He begins not with a positive statement, but by rejecting false understandings of the Son’s generation. The Son’s generation from the Father was neither from pre-existing matter nor from nothing; he is neither a part nor an extension of the Father; his generation is inconceivable, ineffable, and eternal. The biblical text that governs Hilary’s comments here on the Father and the Son, and links them to the added section on the Son below, is Colossians 2: 9 and Paul’s assertion that in Christ dwells the ‘fullness’ (*plenitudo*) of the Godhead. This ‘fullness’ means that from the ‘unbegotten, perfect, and eternal Father’ is the ‘only-begotten, perfect, and eternal Son.’¹⁵ Put another way, continues Hilary: ‘He is the perfect Son of the perfect Father, the only-begotten Offspring (*progenies*) of the unbegotten God, who has received everything from him who possesses everything: God from God, Spirit from Spirit, Light from Light. And so he boldly proclaims, *I am in the Father and the Father is in me* (John 10: 38).’¹⁶ The Father and Son are co-eternal, co-essential, and co-equal. What we say the Father is as God, we say the Son is also. They are

¹³ Ibid. III.2.6–8: ‘Aeternitas Patris, ut libro anteriore tractavimus, locos tempora speciem et quidquid illud humano sensu concipi poterit, excedit.’

¹⁴ Ibid. III.2.10–11.

¹⁵ Ibid. III.3.12–13.

¹⁶ Ibid. III.4.1–4.

both one in nature (*uterque unum*) but not two as one (*non duo unus*), as the modalist argue, but *alius in alio*, one in another possessing an equal nature.¹⁷ Hilary's language is frustratingly economical, and therefore difficult to express. The Father and Son are one, but they are not both the same acting subject or person such that the Father becomes the Son. By moving from *unum* to *unus*, Hilary is attempting, in his limited and not always consistent vocabulary, to recognize the unity and diversity of the Father and the Son.¹⁸ To be sure, his language is strained because of his lack of a technical Trinitarian vocabulary: an insufficiency shared by all the pro-Nicenes in these debates during the 350s. What he is attempting to express, however, is what the next generation of pro-Nicenes will articulate as one *ousia* and two eternally distinct *hypostases*.

Hilary ends his preface as he began, with a comment on the mutual indwelling of the Father and Son. He writes, 'they are mutually in each other (*se invicem*) because as all things are perfect in the Father so all things are perfect in the Son'.¹⁹ This, exclaims Hilary, is the unity (*unitas*) of the Father and the Son; a unity seen in their shared power. Those professing the faith of the church must never distinguish (*discernere*) the only-begotten Son from the unbegotten Father 'in time or power', but must always acknowledge him as the Son of God from God.²⁰

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

Book Three continues with a discussion of Christ's miracles (5–8, 18–21) that has been interrupted by a lengthy excursus added by Hilary on the glorification of the Son by the Father and the Father by the

¹⁷ *De Trinitate*, III.4.14–15.

¹⁸ Since Hilary's theological vocabulary is limited, it is important to follow the distinctions he makes between such words as *unum* and *unus*. For example, Lewis Ayres loses the subtlety of Hilary's technical use of these terms when he translates *unus* as 'one thing' and not as 'one [person]'. See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 184.

¹⁹ *De Trinitate*, III.4.17–18.

²⁰ *Ibid.* III.4.19–24.

Son. Hilary's discussion of the miracles of Christ is original to Book Three. This section was intended to show that the divine power exercised by Jesus revealed his divinity, and to suggest by means of analogy an understanding of the eternal generation of the Son and his Incarnation. Hilary begins:

There are powers in God of such a kind that how they operate is incomprehensible to our understanding, yet faith is certain in them on account of the truth of their accomplishment. We shall find this to be true not only in spiritual matters but also in material matters, where something is shown not to give us an analogy (*exemplum*) of the birth but of a deed that is astonishing yet understandable.²¹

Hilary continues with a discussion of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding at Cana (John 2: 1–11), and how our language and understanding fail to grasp how this miracle could occur. It is clear, however, that what happened did not involve a mixture of elements, but was rather a creation. Hilary explains: 'A creation begins not from itself but exists from one thing into another. What was weaker did not result through the pouring out of something stronger, but "what was" comes to an end, and "what was not" begins to exist.'²² Even if this miracle were not intended to suggest an understanding of the generation of the Son from the Father, the language used by Hilary to explain the incomprehensible miracle of turning water into wine resembles too closely the anti-Nicene position that the Son was created or made from nothing.

Hilary next introduces the feeding of the five thousand with five loaves (Matt. 14: 16–21). Once again, this miracle eludes the eyes of our mind. The five loaves are broken, and 'created fragments' seem to slip from the hand of those breaking the bread. The broken bread does not become smaller when broken, and the hand of the disciple breaking the bread is always full. Most astonishing of all, when the left-over fragments of bread are gathered, more remains than existed from the beginning. Hilary writes: 'There is what was not; what is seen is not understood; it remains only to believe that all things are possible with God.'²³ Since these miracles, by their very nature, confound our human way of thinking, Hilary instructs the reader

²¹ Ibid. III.5.1–3.

²² Ibid. III.5.10–13.

²³ Ibid. III.6.14–16.

to believe what is read and profess that all things are possible with God. With this comment, we begin to see how Hilary is using these miracles as analogies. Our senses are baffled when we consider the material miracles performed by Christ. They defy our understanding and our perception of the natural world. We see his power, but do not understand how these miracles happened. As such, if we are ignorant of how Christ performed the material miracles he did, how will we ever grasp the immaterial and ineffable mystery of his eternal generation from the Father?

At this point in the present text of Book Three, the discussion of miracles is interrupted by a lengthy excursus on Jesus' high-priestly prayer from John 17 (III.8–17). Following the excursus, the text resumes the discussion of Jesus' miracles (III.18). The astute reader is surely confused, as Hilary provides no assistance in transitioning into or out of the excursus. If we move to III.18 and restore the natural flow of Hilary's discussion on miracles, we find him explaining in what sense an analogy exists between these miracles and the Son's generation from the Father. He writes: 'The Son, wishing to strengthen our faith in his birth, put before us the analogy of his works, that from the ineffable manner in which his ineffable deeds were performed we would be taught about the power of his ineffable birth, when water was made wine, and when five loaves of bread satisfy five thousand men, not including women and children, and fill twelve baskets with the fragments.'²⁴ When we venture into the theological arena of the Son's generation from the Father, we are pursuing invisible and incomprehensible things with an understanding that is bound to visible and material objects.²⁵ Yet, we do not pause to pronounce judgement on God's mysteries or the extent of his power. We rashly engage in speculation on who the Son is, how he is a Son, and his relation to the Father, and all the while forget that this Son is the source of our salvation. He is, insists Hilary, our creator, who assumed flesh, conquered death, broke the gates of hell, gained us as co-heirs with himself, and takes us from this world of corruption to eternal glory.²⁶

For Hilary, the analogy that exists between these miracles and the Son's generation is that both are incomprehensible. Water does not

²⁴ *De Trinitate*, III.18.1–7.

²⁵ *Ibid.* III.18.16–18.

²⁶ *Ibid.* III.7.13–17.

turn into wine. You cannot break five loaves of bread and feed five thousand men—let alone break five loaves of bread into pieces and end up with more bread than you began with. The human mind blushes when faced with such seemingly impossible events. Yet, argues Hilary, these miracles are beyond dispute because they were performed by God. Therefore, just as we are unable to grasp these miracles with our human reason but are bound to accept them in faith, we acknowledge in humility that we are unable to comprehend the ineffable birth of the Son from the Father and profess in faith that all things are possible with God. Although Hilary's use of analogy seeks to demonstrate only the limitation of our human understanding, the introduction of material miracles into a discussion of the immaterial generation of the Son from the Father would have easily lent itself to uncharitable readings by those not disposed to give Hilary the benefit of the doubt. That such criticism came Hilary's way seems evident from the constant comment on the limitations of analogy in theological discourse throughout the added sections to *De Trinitate*, the cautious words of the added preface to Book Three on analogy, and, as we will see, the placement of a lengthy excursus in the middle of a discussion on the analogous use of Christ's miracles that demonstrates the co-equality and co-eternity of the Father and the Son without recourse to either miracles or analogy.

ADDED EXCURSUS ON JESUS' HIGH-PRIESTLY PRAYER (JOHN 17)

The middle section of Book Three deals at length with Jesus' high-priestly prayer from the Gospel of John, and the mutual glorification of the Son and the Father. In this excursus, Hilary pursues three questions.²⁷ First, what does it mean for the Son to request

²⁷ Throughout the discussion of this excursus, I follow Paul Burns's division of this text into three arguments. See Paul Burns, 'Hilary's Confrontation with Arianism, 356–357', in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments, Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 5–10, 1983, Oxford, England*, Patristic Monograph Series, No. 11 (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 294–6.

glorification from the Father and in turn bestow glorification on the Father? Is either in want or need of glorification? Second, what is the nature of this glorification? The Father is unchangeable and in need of nothing. In what sense, then, is he said to 'receive' glorification from the Son? Finally, continuing with the question of the nature of glorification, if the Son is 'perfect' God and man, in what sense does he 'receive' glorification from the Father? Although Hilary's comments are an extended exegesis of John 17, the governing text for the discussion is Colossians 2: 9, and particularly the 'fullness' of the Godhead dwelling in the Son. Put simply, if there is no fullness, there is no perfection, and the Son is not true God from true God.

Hilary begins with a comment on the false wisdom of his opponents; a wisdom that is folly before God. People who cling to 'opinions' drawn from their own reasoning rather than their faith deem it impossible that 'God was born from God, true from true, perfect from perfect, one from one'.²⁸ The false argument of Hilary's opponents asserts that if the Son is born from another, then he received a 'part' of the one who begot him. It follows from such an argument that neither is 'perfect', since the one who begot is less than he was before and the one begotten possess only the part given. Again, neither is 'perfect' because the one who begot loses his 'fullness' (*plenitudo*) and the one born does not obtain fullness.²⁹ It is this position that Hilary seeks to refute by using the high-priestly prayer. Moreover, the terms 'perfect' and 'fullness' clarify what Hilary means when he says that Jesus is the true Son of God born from God the Father. They are co-equal and co-essential because they are both perfect and both possess in fullness what the other is as God. Hilary's comments, then, are not simply directed against the modalist position, but are also aimed at clarifying pro-Nicene theology to both the Homoian and Homoiousian parties with key scriptural terms.

Hilary begins with a brief reflection on the Son's saving work. The foolish in this world are scandalized by the cross, and fail to see that what offends their reason fulfills God's plan of salvation. At this point Hilary introduces John 17: 1–6 into the discussion, and concludes

²⁸ *De Trinitate*, III.8.1–3.

²⁹ *Ibid.* III.8.6–12.

that this text expounds our salvation and guards the true faith in the relationship between the Father and the Son. He begins the excursus with a discussion of the troubling first verse: 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you' (John 17: 1). The difficulty with this verse is twofold. First, the Son requests glorification, suggesting perhaps a lack of something which must be given by the Father. Second, notes Hilary, the Son asserts that he will in turn give to the Father the very thing he requests. If the Son is to give what he requests, he must not, concludes Hilary, be in need of it in the sense that he is imperfect or lacking in the fullness of who he is. The confusion with this text is overcome when the reader realizes that the glorification about to be received by the Son deals with his humanity, not divinity. The scriptural witness bears this out. Following his humiliation and crucifixion, nature itself rebels. The elements of the world refused to participate in the injustice of Jesus' crucifixion: the sun hid itself, the earth trembled, rocks broke asunder. Following these incidents, the centurion charged with guarding the cross cries out, 'Truly this was the Son of God' (Matt. 27: 54). Here we see, argues Hilary, the glorification of the Son. The centurion's confession is the response to Jesus' request. Hilary explains: 'The Lord has said, *Glorify your Son* (John 17: 1). Not only in name did he testify that he is the Son but also in the true meaning of the word by which he said "your". Many of us are the sons of God, but not such as this Son. He is the proper and true Son, by origin not adoption, in truth not in name, by birth not creation. Therefore, after his glorification, the confession of truth followed.'³⁰ The first observation to be drawn from the beginning of Jesus' prayer is that this text does not suggest that the Son is weak and requires something from the Father. Again, insists Hilary, the glorification requested by the Son is in turn conferred on the Father by the Son. If the Son's request suggests weakness, then so too does the Father's glorification by the Son. Although neither the Father nor the Son needs glorification in the sense that they require 'perfection' or 'fullness' from the other, they nonetheless glorify each other. Hilary concludes, the glorification mutually given 'reveals the same power of the divinity in both of them.'³¹ The careful reader of John 17: 1 concludes that these words

³⁰ Ibid. III.11.5–11.

³¹ Ibid. III.12.19.

show the unity of the Godhead in the Father and the Son by the glory mutually given and received.³²

Hilary next addresses the nature of this glorification, and specifically the glorification bestowed on the Father by the Son. He notes that many puzzle over what it means to grant something to the Father, who is unchangeable and is always what he is. For the answer, Hilary turns to the next two verses of Jesus' prayer: 'You have given him power over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (John 17: 2–3). The glory the Father receives from the Son is that he is made known to us through the Son. Those who were estranged from the Father have been restored through the Son, who was nailed to the cross and suffered death in order to restore all people and bring them back to heaven.³³ When the Son is honoured by the faithful, that honour redounds to the Father because he is the one who sent the Son and the Son has received all things from the Father.³⁴

Jesus' prayer indicates that the very nature of eternal life is to know both the Father and the Son. A further concern emerges for Hilary. Why does Jesus refer to the Father as the only true God? Does he intend by this comment to dissociate himself from the true nature of God? To resolve this difficulty, Hilary makes a subtle reference to Basil's father/son analogy. To know the true God as Father is to know the Son—the sender and the sent, the begetter and the begotten. To know only the Father is not to know God truly. Indeed, this would be only historical knowledge of God, and in itself not sufficient for eternal life.³⁵ Since Jesus' prayer says that eternal life is to know the only true God, the Father, and the one he has sent, the Son, it is clear, argues Hilary, that Jesus does not disassociate himself from the Father in terms of nature, but more perfectly joins himself to the Father in order to reveal that knowing God is knowing both Father and Son and eternal life rests upon both of them.³⁶ When Jesus refers to the Father as 'the only true God', he is glorifying him before all people and restoring a knowledge of God the Father to all people. Put

³² *De Trinitate*, III.12.21–3.

³³ *Ibid.* III.15.7–10.

³⁴ *Ibid.* III.13.22–32.

³⁵ *Ibid.* III.14.4–5.

³⁶ *Ibid.* III.14.5–16.

simply, 'the Father has been glorified', explains Hilary, 'when he is acknowledged as God, when he is revealed as the Father of the only-begotten . . .'.³⁷ The glorification of the Father by the Son has nothing to do with an increase in the divine nature, but rather with the honour he received from those who were formerly estranged from him by their sin and are now restored by the Son's saving work.

Hilary ends the excursus by asking what it means for the Son, who was in need of nothing and in whom 'the whole fullness of the Godhead dwelt', to be glorified?³⁸ Indeed, repeats Hilary, the Son is 'perfect' in all that he is and possesses the 'fullness of the Godhead', and is yet glorified by the Father.³⁹ What then, asks Hilary, is the nature of the glorification received by the Son? Although Hilary has already gestured at an answer to this question at the beginning of the excursus, he takes it up more formally here. He writes: 'It is, of course, what he had with the Father before the world existed. He had the fullness of the Godhead and still has it, for he is the Son of God.'⁴⁰ Hilary continues with a statement that begins to unravel for the reader the theological position he seeks to oppose with his discussion of John 17 and Colossians 2: 9. He writes: 'He who was Son of God also began to be Son of Man for he was the *Word made flesh*.'⁴¹ The Son did not lose what he was when he assumed flesh, but rather he became what he had not been. He did not cease to possess his divine nature, but received our human nature. He did all of this for our salvation and to glorify the Father who sent him. Hilary continues by weaving together his insights with the prologue to the Gospel of John: a text that we have repeatedly seen used to distance Hilary's pro-Nicene theology from the adoptionist Christology of Photinus of Sirmium. He writes:

Therefore, since the Son is the Word, and *the Word was made flesh*, and *the Word is God*, and *he was in the beginning with God (apud Deum)*, and before the creation of the world the Word is the Son, the Son now made flesh prayed that the flesh might begin to be to the Father what the Word was, that what was temporal might receive the glory of that glorification which is beyond time, so that the corruption of the flesh might be swallowed up by being transformed into the power of God and the incorruption of the Spirit.

³⁷ Ibid. III.16.7–8.

³⁸ Ibid. III.15.19–20.

³⁹ Ibid. III.16.11–13.

⁴⁰ Ibid. III.16.18–20.

⁴¹ Ibid. III.16.20–1.

So this is the prayer to God, this is the confession of the Son to the Father, this is the prayer of flesh.⁴²

A proper understanding of the mutual glorification of the Father and the Son demonstrates to the careful reader of scripture the perfection and fullness of the Son as true God and true man. Moreover, by placing this discussion in a soteriological context, Hilary demonstrates that those who undermine the equality of the Son with the Father undermine the comfort of the Gospel and his saving work.

Hilary ends the excursus in the way he began. He underlines the true nature of God and that to know God truly is to know both the Father and the Son. This is to know the fullness of God—a fullness possessed equally by Father and Son. The Son glorifies the Father by his obedience in carrying out the Father’s will and by making him known as the Father of the only-begotten Son. Although the ‘name of God’ was not completely unknown, he was, argues Hilary, in a strict sense ‘completely unknown’ because he was not known as the Father of the only-begotten Son.⁴³ Hilary writes: ‘Now, no one will know God unless he confesses him both as the Father and as the Father of the only-begotten Son, born from him, not as a part, an extension, or an emanation, but in an ineffable and inconceivable way as the Son from a Father, who possesses the fullness of divinity from which and in which he has been born as the true, infinite, and perfect God. This is the fullness of God.’⁴⁴ Although God was known before the Incarnation, it is only with the coming of the Son in the flesh that the eternal Fatherhood and Sonship of God have become fully disclosed. To confess God is to confess the Father and the Son; anything less than this is a denial of God as he has revealed himself. Put simply, if you reject the Son, you reject the Father. By obediently carrying out the Father’s will and by revealing his Fatherhood to the world, the Son glorified the Father. At this point the excursus ends, and Hilary resumes his discussion of Christ’s miracles.

⁴² *De Trinitate*, III.16.25–37.

⁴³ *Ibid.* III.17.6–7: ‘Non ergo ignorabatur Dei nomen. Sed plane ignorabatur.’

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* III.17.7–13: ‘Nam Deum nemo noscet, nisi confiteatur et Patrum, Patrem unigeniti Fili, non de portione aut dilatatione aut emissione, sed ex eo natum inenarrabiliter inconpraehensibiliter ut Filium a Patre, plenitudinem divinitatis ex qua et in qua natus est obtinentem, verum et infinitum et perfectum Deum. Haec enim Dei est plenitudo.’

A FINAL ADDITION (III.22–3)

Following the excursus on the Son and the conclusion of his discussion on Christ's miracles, Hilary inexplicably makes one further comment on the disclosure of the Father's name to all people by the Son. Why Hilary decided to put this comment after what is now his second discussion on Christ's miracles, and not attach it to the end of the excursus on the Son, is puzzling. Such editing has drastically altered the text, and introduces a great deal of disorder into his argument. One possible explanation is that Hilary returned to Book Three after he had supplemented it with the new preface and the lengthy excursus on the Son, and decided to add a final clarifying comment. Although impossible to demonstrate, this suggestion seems likely given the elevated polemic in this final comment and its inexplicable disruption of an already disrupted text. It runs from III.22 to 23, and demonstrates a clear indebtedness to Homoiousian theological concerns. If the inclusion of John's prologue in the excursus on the Son suggests that Hilary was dealing with opponents who espoused the theological position associated with Photinus of Sirmium, this final comment, as we will see, is directed more explicitly against Homoian opponents.

Hilary begins abruptly: 'The Son said, "Father, I have manifested your name to men"' (John 17: 6). Although Hilary had already addressed this verse in the excursus, he introduces it here for a strictly polemical purpose. He immediately asks: 'Do you deny the Father?'⁴⁵ Hilary has plunged the reader into a polemical discussion with little warning or explanation. Indeed, it is by no means clear to the reader to whom this question is directed, or even why it is an appropriate question to ask of this verse. Hilary continues by asserting that the Son's greatest achievement was making the Father known to the world; indeed, as we have seen in the excursus, this is how the Son glorified the Father. The Father is denied, argues Hilary, when the Son is seen only as another creature created 'according to the will' (*pro voluntate*).⁴⁶ The purpose of this verse, insists Hilary, was not to

⁴⁵ Ibid. III.22.1–3.

⁴⁶ Ibid. III.22.5–6.

reveal God as the creator of all things, but rather to show that God is the Father of the Son.

Hilary continues by exploiting the relationship implied by the names Father and Son. Those who deny the Father by denying the Son argue that the Son was created from nothing (*ex nihilo*), and differs from all other created things in power alone (*sola potestate*). Hilary writes:

When you hear ‘Son,’ believe that he is the Son. When you hear ‘Father,’ be mindful of the fact that he is the Father... Names are applied to divine things according to the understanding of their nature. Why do you cause violence to the true meaning of the words? You hear ‘Father’ and ‘Son.’ Do not doubt that they are what they are named. The most important aspect of the revelation by the Son is that you know the Father. Why do you render useless the work of the Prophets, the Incarnation of the Word, the Virgin birth, the power of his miracles, the cross of Christ? All these things were freely expended on you, to be a guarantee to you, that through these things the Father and Son would be known to you. You now substitute the will, the creation, and the adoption—consider the warfare and campaign waged by Christ. Truly does he proclaim, *Father, I have manifested your name to men*. You do not hear, ‘You have created the creator of heavenly things.’ You do not hear, ‘You have brought about the author of earthly things.’ But you hear, *Father, I have manifested your name to men*. Make use of your Saviour’s gift. Know that he is the Father who begot, that he is the Son who was born, born from the Father who is with a true nature. Remember that it was revealed to you not that the Father is God but that God is the Father.⁴⁷

Hilary resumes his insistence that the names of Father and Son are not used metaphorically or as a mere convention in describing the special relationship that Christ has to God. Rather, these names indicate who God is. Father means Father and Son means Son. We have already seen that the eastern creedal tradition sought to locate the generation of the Son at the level of God’s will in order to avoid any suggestion that the relationship between the Son and the Father occurred at the level of God’s *ousia*. Hilary responds to such an argument by construing the moderate subordinationist position of locating generation at the level of will with creation *ex nihilo* and Photinian adoptionism. As Basil had argued before him, Hilary

⁴⁷ *De Trinitate*, III.22.16–35.

charges that all three of these positions undermine the cross of Christ and the salvation found in Christ as the true Son of the Father.

Although Hilary must have in mind Basil's father/son analogy, he does little to exploit its utility for the reader in this section. Given that he has already made use of the analogy in the added preface to Book Two, Hilary's reluctance to use it here is somewhat surprising, and is likely to be related to his own ambitious use of analogies in the original material from Book Three. With that said, Basil's analogy certainly informs this passage, especially Hilary's final comment. Those who sought to distance the Son from the *ousia* of the Father undermined the relational terms father/son by suggesting that they represented not shared essence or being as real fathers and sons possess, but rather that they indicated the closeness of the special relationship between the Father who is God and the Son who is in harmony with God but ontologically distinct and subordinate to him. But that, argues Hilary, is what is not revealed in the high-priestly prayer. The Father is not revealed as God, but rather God is revealed as Father. Father implies Son and so, as the excursus demonstrated at length, God is Father and Son.

Hilary asks his opponents why they separate and divide the Son from the Father when they hear: 'The Father and I are one (*unum*)?' They are both one. Two are one. Hilary explains: 'He who is possesses nothing that is not also in him from whom he is. When you hear the Son saying, "I and the Father are one," apply this saying to the persons.'⁴⁸ That is to say, allow the Son to declare that he is *unum* with the Father and the Father to declare that he is *unum* with the Son. By doing this, you understand that the *unum* refers to their shared nature and essence. Therefore, concludes Hilary, 'we confess in each of them the same likeness of power and the fullness of the divinity'.⁴⁹ Once again, Hilary returns to Colossians 2: 9 and the fullness of the divinity in both of them. Here he underlines that the divinity in both of them is *unum*.

Hilary continues, 'the Son received everything from the Father and is the form of God and *the image of his substance*'.⁵⁰ The language, 'image of his substance' (Heb. 1: 3), is not meant to suggest a 'dissimilarity of nature' but rather, argues Hilary, that the Father

⁴⁸ Ibid. III.23.2–5.

⁴⁹ Ibid. III.23.10–13.

⁵⁰ Ibid. III. 23.13–14.

and Son, possessing the ‘perfect fullness of the Godhead in each of them’, are distinct from one another as Father and Son.⁵¹ The Son is not imperfect or less than the fullness of what the Father is as God. A proper understanding of ‘image’ and ‘likeness’ demonstrate that Father and Son are both true God, sharing completely in what the other is as God. Hilary writes:

An image is not alone and the likeness (*similitudo*) is not to itself. Something is not able to be like God unless it is from him. Moreover, what is like in all things is not from some other source, and the likeness of the one to the other does not allow them to be joined together as two contradictory things. Do not change the likeness and do not separate things where truth allows no separation. For he who said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image and likeness’ (Gen. 1: 27), reveals them to be mutually like each other when he says, ‘our likeness’.⁵²

The Father and Son are *unum* in being, and mutually share in what the other is as God. They are co-essential and co-equal, but also distinct from one another as Father and Son. Hilary’s language seeks to avoid both modalism and subordinationism, and demonstrates very clearly his indebtedness to Homoiousian theology. Indeed, his argument and exploitation of ‘like in all things’ closely resembles George of Laodicea’s insistence that ‘like in all things’ means not just in ‘will’ but also ‘in existence, subsistence and being’.⁵³ At this point, Hilary’s polemical comment ends as abruptly as it began. The reader moves from this in-depth theological discussion to a reflection on faith.

EXHORTATION FOR THE FAITH

The final section of Book Three is an extended exhortation for the Christian faith. Hilary would have initially intended this as the final section of his treatise *De Fide*, and, as we will see, he summarizes many of the methodological points he has made thus far in the

⁵¹ *De Trinitate*, III.23.15–18.

⁵² *Ibid.* III.23.19–27.

⁵³ Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.15.5; *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, trans. Frank Williams, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 449.

treatise. He begins by reminding the reader of the ontological limitations of all humans. We are created, and therefore imperfect. He writes, ‘what is imperfect cannot comprehend what is perfect, nor can what derives its existence from something else achieve a perfect understanding either of its author or of itself.’⁵⁴ We must never place so much confidence in human knowledge as to suppose that we ever achieve a perfect understanding of anything. As created beings, we are by nature finite, which means that our ability to understand ourselves and the world around us is finite. If we can achieve only an approximation of the truth concerning ourselves and the natural world, we certainly cannot gain a perfect understanding of God.

Since we are dependent on God for our very being, Hilary considers it the height of foolishness to think that we can ascend to the heights of the heavens and determine what is possible and what is not for God. When we do this, we boast in the false name of wisdom.⁵⁵ Hilary proceeds to quote 1 Corinthians 1: 17–25, and then comments: ‘And so all unbelief is foolishness because using the wisdom of its own imperfect mind as it measures everything according to the opinion of its weakness, it believes that what it does not understand is not able to be accomplished.’⁵⁶ When we cling only to what is grasped by our weak nature, we regard God’s saving work on our behalf as foolishness and make void the cross of Christ. The faithful, however, see not foolishness in the cross but power and victory. The faithful, explains Hilary, ‘measure nothing [that God does] by the weakness of their own natural reason, but weigh the efficiency of divine power according to the infinity of heavenly power.’⁵⁷ Put simply, unbelievers reject what is beyond their understanding, and the faithful accept the infinite ability of God’s power.⁵⁸

For Hilary, what separates his opponents from the catholic and apostolic faith of the church is their refusal to believe what God reveals about himself. Such unbelief results from not acknowledging who we are and what our potential for knowledge about God is. In Hilary’s estimation, the actions of his opponents, their doubting, judging, and questioning of God, reveals the depth of human sin-

⁵⁴ *De Trinitate*, III.24.5–7. Cf. IX.72.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* III.24.13–15.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* III.24.36–8.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* III.25.10–14.

⁵⁸ *De Trinitate*, III.25.18–20.

fulness. The refusal to acknowledge the ontological limits of human nature, the weakness of the human mind, and the inadequacy of human language all demonstrate how we, mere finite creatures, seek to be gods ourselves. Hilary explains:

Our infidelity advances against the truth itself and we violently attack the power of God in an effort to overthrow it. If it were possible we would lift our bodies and hands to heaven, we would disrupt the fixed annual orbit of the sun and other stars, we would throw into confusion the high and low tide of the ocean, we would inhibit the flow of the fountains, we would reverse the natural flow of the rivers, we would shake the foundations of the earth, against all these works of God, we would rage with murderous fury. But fortunately the nature of our bodies restrains us within the necessary limits of moderation. To be sure, we do not hide what we would do if we had the ability to do it. For truly, since we are able, because of our impious and impudent will, we overthrow the nature of truth and we declare war on the words of God.⁵⁹

If we question what God has revealed to us about himself, determine what is acceptable and unacceptable for our faith, then we will abandon the certainty of God's word which our soul requires. Without the certainty of knowing that Christ is the true Son of God, perfect God from perfect God, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead and through whom we have eternal life, the soul will fall into despair, fear its impending death, and hopelessly wander from one speculative philosophy to another. That wandering reveals the depth of our sinfulness, as we do not hesitate to doubt God's own testimony about himself, judge what is and is not possible for him, and, in the end, determine the acceptable content of our faith.

Hilary concludes his efforts in Book Three and, indeed, what would have been *De Fide* by summarizing his theological approach to a discussion of God's mysteries. We must never determine what is proper for God according to our limited human reasoning. If we wish to acquire true wisdom, we must clothe ourselves in foolishness by becoming aware of our limited human nature. When we confess that we cannot, by our own power, arrive at a proper knowledge of God and what he has done for us, we are then led by the Holy Spirit to the knowledge of God. When we become aware of ourselves and

⁵⁹ Ibid. III.21.2–14.

our need for God's guidance, we no longer restrict the Lord of nature to the laws of nature, and we no longer determine what is possible for God.

Since we have been following the chronological development of Hilary's treatise, and particularly the editorial changes he made to *De Fide*, we have not yet discussed Book One: the book that Hilary wrote in 358 and deliberately placed at the beginning of his newly envisioned treatise on the Trinity. The importance of this first book for Hilary cannot be overestimated. It outlines the theological method necessary for a proper discussion of who God is—a method that Hilary sees his modalist and subordinationist opponents compromising. Moreover, by placing a book on theological method at the beginning of *De Trinitate*, Hilary attempts to insulate himself from any future criticism on such issues as analogy or the endorsement of a simple and unreflective faith in theological reflection.

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Part III

The Theological Method of *De Trinitate*

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Book One of *De Trinitate*

When Hilary recast his efforts in the autumn of 358 and composed *De Trinitate*, he drastically revised and improved his two earlier works, *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*. In the previous chapters I discussed in detail how Hilary added new prefaces to Books Two to Six of *De Trinitate* and reworked and updated his argument in Books Two and Three to reflect the exegetical and polemical strategies of the Homoiousians and his own pro-Nicene theological commitments. The material added by Hilary reflects his mature Trinitarian theology, and demonstrates his familiarity and engagement with the various pro-Nicene and anti-Nicene theological parties in the late 350s. It is easy to understand why Hilary made the changes he did to these early books. The argument in Books Two and Three lacked theological depth, and Books Four to Six offered commentary on a letter from the 320s that no theological party in the 350s considered authoritative or representative of their own theological concerns.

When we turn to the content and function of Book One and its structure and chronology within *De Trinitate*, we encounter a few difficulties. For starters, contrary to scholarly opinion, which will be discussed below, Book One never formed a part of *De Fide* but was added in 358 when Hilary made the other revisions and updates to Books Two to Six. As such, Book One was not retouched by Hilary in 358, but was newly composed by him and deliberately placed as the opening book of *De Trinitate*. From this perspective, Book One takes on a wholly different character and a far more significant role in our understanding of Hilary's revisions to his earlier works and his purpose in writing *De Trinitate*. Since nearly every scholar writing on Book One has assumed that it was written as the first book of *De*

Fide, they have not considered the wider implications of Book One for Hilary's theological agenda, and how its content deliberately sets the tone for *De Trinitate* as conceived in 358.

There are two problems that must be overcome in order to achieve a proper understanding of Book One. The first deals with content, and particularly the manner in which Hilary composed this book. For whatever reason, Hilary chose to write what purports to be an autobiographical narrative describing his intellectual journey to the Christian faith. According to this autobiography, Hilary's soul, troubled with thoughts of death, began to search for answers about God and his involvement with creation. He turned first to popular philosophy, and discovered numerous opinions that he thought contradicted one another. Frustrated with these diverse and uncertain teachings, Hilary turned to scripture and discovered, as he puts it, 'God's testimony about himself'. He learned who God is and the salvation won by Jesus Christ, who, according to scripture, is both human and divine. Amidst the comfort and certainty of the saving promises of the Gospel, Hilary next encountered people professing an adherence to scripture but denying the divinity of Christ and consequently, in Hilary's estimation, his saving work. These people rejected the very teaching that calmed Hilary's anxious soul, yet claimed to accept scripture, the very source of Hilary's assurance. He ends his narration with a pro-Nicene statement on the Trinity, which, he tells the reader, he has learned from his own private reading of scripture.

The second problem deals with the reception of Book One in the scholarship on *De Trinitate*. Since scholars have always assumed that Book One was the first book of *De Fide*, they have regarded it as only introductory in character, and focused their attention on questions concerning the historical, literary, or theological purpose of Hilary's autobiographical narration. The problem, it should be noted, is not the conclusions drawn by scholars about the character of the autobiographical narration, but the artificial limit they place on the significance of Book One for *De Trinitate*. When we approach Book One, knowing that Hilary deliberately wrote it and put it at the front of his treatise in 358, we are no longer permitted to see it as a gratuitous reflection on his journey to the faith. Book One is Hilary's deliberate attempt to articulate his theological and polemical agenda

for the whole treatise, and his attempt to give coherence to a work he heavily edited in 358. To underestimate the value of Book One by dismissing it as merely introductory is to misunderstand the whole of Hilary's project in *De Trinitate*. Since there is more scholarship written on Book One than any other aspect of Hilary's treatise, and since Book One is central to understanding Hilary's purpose with *De Trinitate*, a brief review of the major scholarly opinions on the book is in order.

SCHOLARLY OPINION ON BOOK ONE

Scholars addressing the historical reliability of the narration fall into three groups. The first group takes a traditional approach that follows the Church Fathers and uncritically accepts the narration as it reads: an account of Hilary's journey to the faith.¹ For example, E. W. Watson writes: 'It was, then, as a man of mature age, of literary skill and philosophical training, that Hilary approached Christianity. He had been drawn towards the Faith by desire for a truth which he had not found in philosophy; and his conviction that this truth was Christianity was established by independent study of scripture, not by intercourse with Christian teachers; so much we may safely conclude from the early pages of the *De Trinitate*.'² The problem with Watson's straightforward reading of Hilary's narration is that it yields a description not consistent with *De Trinitate*. We are led to believe that Hilary was thoroughly schooled in philosophy, had a strong desire to know the 'reasons' for the faith, and, as a result of these two characteristics, the western church, entrenched in a

¹ Jerome and Augustine both think Hilary converted to Christianity because of the narration in Book One. See Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam prophetam*, XVII. 60 (PL 24: 594–5), and Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, II.61. On the other hand, Hilary's biographer, Venantius Fortunatus, flatly states that Hilary was Christian from infancy: Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita S. Hilarii* I.3 (PL 9: 187A). For a discussion of these sources, see E. Boularand, 'La Conversion de saint Hilaire de Poitiers', *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, 62 (1961), 82–6, 95–104.

² Watson, 'Introduction Chapter 1, The Life and Writings of St. Hilary of Poitiers', NPNE, 2nd ser., IX, p. v.

traditional piety, could not satisfy Hilary's ardent and logical mind.³ Hilary's treatise does not bear out Watson's assertions. *De Trinitate* is not a speculative treatise that seeks the reasons for the faith, nor does it push the limits of human understanding in an effort to conceptualize the Trinity.

Pierre Smulders and C. F. A. Borchardt have modified Watson's uncritical approach. They argue that Hilary did convert to Christianity as described in the narration, but that the details in Book One offered by Hilary cannot accurately represent his conversion.⁴ Similarly, Manlio Simonetti thinks that these opening chapters of Book One allude to Hilary's *itinerarium ad Deum* but contain 'no precise autobiographical value'.⁵ Although these scholars are surely correct in evaluating the historical details of the narration, the problem with their reading is its overall ambivalence toward the narration's purpose in Book One and *De Trinitate*. Rather than questioning the historical reliability of Hilary's narration and then observing a larger purpose for these opening chapters within the structure of Book One and the rest of the treatise, these scholars have, for the most part, dismissed Book One. Manlio Simonetti sees Book One as 'exclusively introductory in character'. In his summary of *De Trinitate*, he devotes one sentence to Book One and then turns, in his words, to 'the actual treatise itself'.⁶ Similarly, Pierre Smulders describes Book One as 'a substantial prologue', with 'the real subject' beginning only in Book Two.⁷ As will be demonstrated below, Hilary's purpose with Book One is not simply to introduce an argument that begins in Book Two. Rather, Book One establishes Hilary's agenda for *De Trinitate* by

³ Watson, 'Introduction', p. v–vii. For remarks on philosophy in *De Trinitate*, see I.1–8, III.25, VII.53, XII.19–20; for Hilary's wish not to write a treatise on the Trinity, which is contrary to the speculative desire described by Watson, see *De Trinitate*, I.37, II.2–3, IV.2, V.1, VII.3, VIII.2, *et passim*.

⁴ Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers*, Analecta Gregoriana, 32 (Rome: Universitatis Gregorianae, 1944), 37, n. 96; Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 37.

⁵ Manlio Simonetti, 'Chapter II: Hilary of Poitiers and the Arian Crisis in the West', in A. di Berardino (ed.), *Patrology, IV: The Golden Age of Latin Patristic Literature from the Council of Nicea to the Council of Chalcedon* (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1986), 36.

⁶ *Ibid.* 40.

⁷ Pierre Smulders, 'A Bold Move of Hilary of Poitiers', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 42 (1988), 123. See also, Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire*, 41.

laying out a conservative theological method and articulating the exegetical and polemical strategy that he will pursue throughout the text—especially in those parts of *De Trinitate* that are revised in 358.

A second approach to Book One has been taken by scholars who, following an observation made by Jerome, have focused on the narration's rhetorical similarities with Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*.⁸ The most recent scholar to do this, E. P. Meijering, argues that Hilary's autobiographical narration functions as the *exordium* within the rhetorical structure advocated by Quintilian.⁹ For Meijering, the purpose of Hilary's autobiographical material was to win over the audience. He explains: 'This work must have been intended primarily for Christian readers and especially for those Christians who, just like Hilary, were trained in popular philosophy, became dissatisfied with Pagan ethics and polytheism and consequently were converted to Christianity. They could be expected to be interested in the story of Hilary's conversion. In order to appeal to as many readers as possible this story had to contain, apart from autobiographical, also stereotype material.'¹⁰ Although Meijering's suggestion makes a great deal of sense, it creates more questions than answers. If this were Hilary's purpose in the narration, why does he not make reference to it in the rest of *De Trinitate*? Indeed, outside of this narration Hilary never mentions his conversion in *De Trinitate* or any other work. More troubling is Meijering's acknowledgment that he cannot account for the various themes raised by Hilary in Book One, such as fear of death and the excesses of human philosophy.¹¹ I will

⁸ Jerome, *Ep.* 70.5: 'Hilarius, meorum temporum confessor et episcopus, duodecim Quintiliani libros et stilo imitatus est et numero.'

⁹ According to Meijering, Book One begins with an *exordium* (I.1–14), proceeds with the *narratio* (statement of facts, I.15–19), then the *partitio* (outline of the treatise, I.20–36), and ends with a prayer (I.37–8) that Christianizes a metaphor of God's spirit filling the sails of faith found at the beginning of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. See E. P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 9.

The dependence upon Quintilian has been well documented by scholars since the beginning of the twentieth century. See e.g. H. Kling, *De Hilario Pectaviensi artis rhetoricae ipsiusque, ut fertur, Institutionis oratoriae Quintilianae studioso* (Freiburg: Buchdruckerei des Pressvereins, 1909); Jean Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1971). Meijering throughout his work gives the parallels observed by Kling and adds to them.

¹⁰ Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*, 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

argue below that these two themes are central to Hilary's purpose in Book One and *De Trinitate*.

A third group of scholars has moved away from the historical question of the narration altogether and pursued a theological purpose for the opening of Book One. Paul Burns argues that the autobiographical section has a theological motive, and stresses 'the critical soteriological role of the divinity of the Son'.¹² Burns's brief essay, however, addresses only Hilary's use of the Gospel of John in the first three books of *De Trinitate*, and does not advance his initial insight of a theological motive for Book One. Paul Galtier similarly suggests that Book One has a theological orientation.¹³ He points out that if Hilary intended his narration to be a confession of how he came to profess the Christian faith, we would expect it to be more personal than it is. To the contrary, the opening chapters of *De Trinitate*, asserts Galtier, display a cold rationalism.¹⁴ Galtier concludes that the opening chapters of *De Trinitate* serve as a doctrinal exposition of the basic truths of the Christian faith on such topics as the Word, the Son of God, the Incarnation, baptism, the limitations of human understanding, and the necessity of faith. This doctrinal exposition prepares the reader for the teachings in the following books of the treatise. Galtier takes seriously Hilary's insistence that his treatise gradually reveals the truths of the Christian faith in order to instruct in such a way that the reader ascends to great heights without realizing the arduousness of the task.¹⁵ To accomplish this slow and gradual ascent, Hilary begins with a 'fictive journey' to the faith, enunciating along the way the more elementary aspects of the

¹² Paul Burns, 'Hilary of Poitiers' Confrontation with Arianism in 356 and 357', in *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments, Papers from the Ninth International Conference on Patristic Studies, September 5–10, 1983, Oxford, England*, Patristic Monograph Series, No. 11 (Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 298.

¹³ P. Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers, le premier docteur de l'église latine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 9–10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 9. Jean Doignon disagrees with Galtier's characterization of Hilary's narration of his conversion as impersonal, but does agree with his general reading of Book One. He argues that Hilary intended Book One as a straightforward exposition of the contents of the faith before teaching them in a systematic way. See Doignon, *Hilaire de Poitiers avant l'exil*, 85–156. Doignon's argument quickly becomes cumbersome, as he identifies the numerous Christian and non-Christian parallels with Hilary's presentation.

¹⁵ *De Trinitate*, I.20.1–12.

Christian faith.¹⁶ By dismissing any historical value to this narration, Galtier has permitted his analysis to move beyond questions of Hilary's conversion. While Galtier's reading avoids the tendency exhibited by other scholars of failing to observe a connection between Book One and the rest of *De Trinitate*, he does not develop his idea in any substantial way.

Although there is more scholarship on Book One than any other aspect of Hilary's *De Trinitate*, it is hindered by a preoccupation with the historical reliability of Hilary's peculiar autobiographical narrative and, as noted above, by assuming that Book One was written as the opening book of *De Fide*. This is not to suggest that the various positions represented by Smulders, Meijering, and Galtier are wrong. In fact, they are all likely to be correct in their own way. That is to say, if Hilary converted to Christianity as the narration suggests, it is unlikely, as Smulders argues, that the historical details of that conversion are as Book One recounts them. Moreover, Hilary's *De Trinitate* does seem to have some rhetorical dependence on Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, as Meijering demonstrates. Finally, Galtier is undoubtedly correct that Hilary has a theological motive for including the narrative. That is to say, Hilary has a theological agenda in writing Book One, and he attempts to soften the reception of his agenda by using the literary trope of his own troubled soul.

A NEW READING OF BOOK ONE

I have already discussed parts of Book One in earlier chapters. I have noted in particular the similarities between Book One and Book Seven in my discussion of the chronology of *De Trinitate*. We have also seen Hilary advance an agenda with the inclusion of the synopsis of books at the end of Book One. The use of the synopsis, and Hilary's repeated assertion in the materials added to Books Two to Six in 358 that he is proceeding in an orderly and coherent way, suggest that Hilary received criticism for his presentation of the Christian faith. Hilary counters that criticism with the synopsis. Just as the synopsis

¹⁶ Galtier, *Saint Hilaire*, 10.

was not accidental to Hilary's purpose in *De Trinitate* but was a deliberate response to criticism, so too Hilary's sustained discussion of theological method in the first part of Book One is not accidental but deliberate. It serves, we will see, a constructive and polemical purpose for him in advancing his own pro-Nicene theological agenda. By setting aside the historical question of the autobiographical narrative, and remembering that Book One was intentionally composed in 358 as part of Hilary's revision of his earlier works, we will see that Book One purposely sets forward a theological method, used throughout the treatise, on how we are to approach the mystery of God. We find in Book One a reflection on such things as sources of knowledge about God, the relationship between faith and reason in theological inquiry, and the proper approach to scripture.

The Structure of Book One

Book One is generally divided into four distinct parts: the prologue or autobiographical section (1–14); Hilary's presentation of heretical attacks on the true faith (15–19); a summary of Books Two to Twelve of *De Trinitate* (20–36); and a concluding prayer (37–8). Most interpreters of Book One fail to observe any theological continuity between the first two sections of Hilary's narration (1–14 and 15–19) and, consequently, the rest of the treatise. If we divide the prologue into two sections (1–8, 9–14), however, we will see that Hilary's comments on the heretics (15–19) forms a complementary third section, not a distinct second section, to the opening chapters of the treatise. Moreover, when we recognize the continuity of Book One, we will better understand its methodological role in preparing the reader for a discussion on the mystery of God—a point that cannot be emphasized enough, as this is surely the theological and polemical reason why Hilary composed Book One in 358.

Philosophy and Scripture (I.1–8)

Hilary opens *De Trinitate* by demonstrating how natural reason correctly acknowledges certain things about God. He portrays his

soul as anxious and troubled, searching for an understanding of God and his involvement with creation. When the soul is led by nature, it discovers that its purpose is not to seek gratification or be slothful but to pursue a life of virtue. The soul directs itself toward a virtuous life, knowing that God ‘has not given life only to end in death’. Indeed, God would not, asserts Hilary, ‘be understood as a giver of the good if along with the pleasant sense of living he also imparts the most miserable fear of dying’.¹⁷

The manner in which Hilary begins his narrative is significant. An inner conflict exists within the soul, which, according to the narrative, is Hilary’s soul but is certainly intended to represent all souls. The soul intuits that since God gives life, death must not be the end, but death is all the soul sees and never knows with certainty whether its intuition is right or wrong. This uncertainty causes the soul great anxiety, since, as repeatedly stressed by Hilary, it constantly fears its own death.¹⁸ The soul, driven to despair by its own reasonable deductions, knows not where to turn to find the assurance of eternal life that it desperately desires.

Hilary continues in his narrative to argue that natural reason is unable to calm the anxious soul. Although natural reason advances true notions concerning God, it is easily misled and abused. As Hilary’s soul sought answers to its questions about God and its ultimate fate, it encountered various philosophical opinions. Some people taught that there were many gods, and others that there were none. Some people rejected God’s presence in his creation, and others thought gods dwelt in images of humans or animals. Still

¹⁷ *De Trinitate*, I.2.15–18. On a natural religious desire in Hilary, see Joseph Emmenegger, *The Functions of Faith and Reason in the Theology of Saint Hilary of Poitiers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 43–6; Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers’ Role in the Arian Struggle*, 45; Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*, 24–6; Donal Corry, *Ministerium Rationis Reddendae: An Approximation to Hilary of Poitiers’ Understanding of Theology*, *Tesi Gregoriana*, 87 (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2002), 44–50.

¹⁸ In addition to the present reference, Hilary stresses this theme at I.9 and I.13. In I.14 Hilary has discovered the saving promises of the Gospel and now confesses that death is only another name for eternal life. Later in the treatise Hilary comments that the anxiety of human fear (*humanae trepidationis anxietas*) occurs in all earthly bodies and is overcome only by faith in God. Since fear of death is natural to all humans, it is regarded as contrary to nature when that fear is overcome by our faith (X.44–5).

others, explains Hilary, looked to the stars for truth. These various opinions not only contradicted each other, but also were contrary to the fundamental intuitions made by natural reason about God; namely, that God is Good, One, omnipotent, and eternal.¹⁹ Although natural reason could potentially advance these appropriate notions about God, it always suffers, argues Hilary, from its unrestrained curiosity. The plight of reason, then, is that it has no guiding authority and is limited only by its imagination. As such, reason never knows with certainty the truthfulness of what it supposes.

Although early in the narrative, Hilary has already established two important points. First, by opening the narrative with a psychological conflict, Hilary establishes from the outset a soteriological context for Book One, and indeed the whole of *De Trinitate*. Put simply, all people have a desire to know their eternal destiny, and at some point they must wrestle with questions about life and death. From the beginning of his treatise, Hilary not only invites the reader to consider these weighty questions but also shows how to do it, by recounting the spiritual journey of his own troubled soul. Second, although natural reason indicates that there is more to life and our relationship with God than what is seen in this world, it is unable to provide satisfactory answers for the troubled soul. Indeed, natural reason left to its own devices produces a multiplicity of opinions on God and his involvement in and with his creation that only further burdens the soul.

At this point in the narrative Hilary's troubled soul encounters scripture, and begins to find an answer to its questions. Hilary reads, 'I am that I am' (Exod. 3: 14), and discovers God testifying about his most characteristic property, his being (*esse*). What reason rightly suspected, scripture made certain and expressed, continues Hilary, 'in language best adapted to human understanding, an incomprehensible knowledge of the divine nature'.²⁰ Indeed, it was worthy of God to reveal his existence, 'as the testimony (*ad protestationem*)²¹ of

¹⁹ *De Trinitate*, I.4.

²⁰ *Ibid.* I.5.7–9.

²¹ Hilary always uses *protestatio* in reference to the testimony given in scripture. It is either the testimony given by God about himself (I.5, I.18), by Jesus (I.27, I.31, IX.58, IX.66, IX.67, X.49), by Wisdom (XII.35), or by the Apostle (XI.45). Only once does Hilary use *protestatio* in reference to our testimony. But even here he is talking

his everlasting eternity'.²² When the soul is guided by natural reason, it fails to achieve the certainty brought about by God's own testimony. Reason finds nothing to confirm its ideas, guide its thoughts, or limit its speculations. However, when the troubled soul encounters scripture, it encounters God's testimony about himself, and in that testimony finds certainty.

A third point established by Hilary in the opening of his narrative is that certainty is found only in scripture. That is to say, certainty is found not within the individual (natural reason) but beyond the individual (God or scripture). Such a move by Hilary prepares the reader for his discussion of faith and the priority of faith. Hilary returns to scripture and introduces the reader to God's infinity in order to contextualize his understanding of faith. Hilary reads, 'he who holds the heaven in his palm and the earth in his hand', and 'The heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool. What house will you build me or what shall be the place of my rest?'²³ Hilary discovers in these verses God's infinitude, which means, for him, that God is present in all things, and in him who is infinite all are included.²⁴ Moreover, Hilary's soul realized that God's greatness infinitely surpasses our limited minds.²⁵ Hilary's insight is meant to be both humbling and assuring. We are humbled by the great distance between God, our creator, and ourselves, his creatures. The mind is unable to ascend to heaven and grasp the nature and work of God by rational means. Put another way, our thoughts and our ways are not

about our confession of faith which is derived from scripture (X.70). Since it is God's testimony or the Holy Spirit's testimony through the Apostle, it brings assurance and certainty. Philosophy never achieves this kind of certainty, no matter how correct it might be in its assertions.

²² *De Trinitate*, I.5.15–16. In his *Commentary on Matthew*, Hilary uses *aeternitas* to designate the 'community of substance' shared by the Father and Son. See *In Matt.*, 5.15, 16.4–5, 23.5 and esp. 31.2–3. Cf. *CaP B II.10* (CSEL 65: 151–2). On this point, see Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire*, 75.

²³ *De Trinitate*, I.6.2–10; Isa. 40: 12, 66: 1–2.

²⁴ *De Trinitate*, I.6.41–5. On the issue of infinity in Hilary, see John McDermott, 'Hilary of Poitiers: The Infinite Nature of God', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 27 (1973), 172–202. For a strikingly similar comment on this verse, see Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catachesis*, 4.5, in *Cyril of Jerusalem*, trans. Edward Yarnold, SJ (London: Routledge, 2000), 99. Cyril cites Isa. 40: 12, and proceeds to describe God's infinity without using the word infinity.

²⁵ *De Trinitate*, I.6.30–5; Cf. I.32, X.53, XI.44, XII.37.

the thoughts and ways of God. The problem that plagues our reason, argues Hilary, is that it suspects proper things about God but then distorts those initial insights by attempting to conform the ways of God to what we consider appropriate or palatable expressions for God. At the same time, Hilary's insight is meant to be assuring and gives the anxious soul the certainty it seeks. God does not require that we ascend to him by means of our limited reason, but rather he descends to us to reveal most fully who he is and what he has done and continues to do for us.

Hilary brings the first section of the narrative to a close. We already anticipate the polemical move he will make against his opponents. They evacuate the comfort and certainty of faith by distorting who God is through an excessive reliance on their natural reason. They seek to ascend to God through their own means, rather than allowing God to descend to them. Moreover, given the soteriological context established by Hilary from the very beginning, a move reminiscent of Basil of Ancyra, to rely on reason instead of faith in understanding who God is will distort what God has done for us. At this point in the narrative Hilary immediately takes the reader to the New Testament and the Incarnation.

Saving Faith (I.9–14)

Given the polemical manner in which Hilary presents his theological method, it comes as no surprise that he turns immediately to the prologue to the Gospel of John—the very text distorted by Photinus of Sirmium. Hilary's theological point is clear: it is only in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, that the assurance we seek comes before us and the anxiety over death is finally put aside. In the prologue, Hilary's troubled soul discovers that its creator is God of God and that the Word is God, who was in the beginning with God. Moreover, those who receive him 'by the merit of their faith' become sons of God.²⁶ Finally, Hilary's distressed soul found the knowledge of saving faith that granted the comfort and certainty it desired. He writes:

²⁶ *De Trinitate*, I.10.29–30.

God the Word became flesh that through his Incarnation our flesh might make progress towards God the Word. And lest we should think that the Word made flesh was some other than God the Word, or that his flesh was of a body different from ours, he dwelt among us. While he dwelled among us he remained none other than God and by his dwelling among us he was known as God Incarnate in no other flesh than our own. Moreover, though he had condescended to assume our flesh, he was not destitute of his own [nature] because he, the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is fully possessed of his own [nature] and truly endowed with ours.²⁷

Since we are unable to ascend to heaven on our own and grasp the magnitude of who God is and the love he has for us, he came to us in our lowly condition that we might come to know him. God descended, assuming our flesh and our weaknesses, that we might humbly acknowledge our limitations and infirmities and thereby ascend to him through Christ. Hilary's point is clear: when we fail to humble ourselves, as God humbled himself, we distort the Incarnation of the Word—the very event that makes possible our return to God—by supposing that the Word was not flesh as we are flesh or not God as the Father is God. Put another way, our reason distorts either Christ's true humanity or divinity, suggesting it is something other than it is, for it would be unfitting for God to dwell among us or suffer on a cross for us. When this distortion occurs, argues Hilary, what actually happens is that we distort our humanity by failing to recognize who we are and the limitations of our natural reason.

Hilary's use of the prologue intentionally brings Photinus of Sirmium into the conversation and polemically charges that his faulty theological formulations result from relying too heavily on natural reason and proceeding without humility. From Hilary's perspective, Photinus arrogantly supposes that his own created natural reason is more reliable and authoritative than his creator's revealed word. In contrast to Photinus, Hilary argues that the pious reader acknowledges the great distance between God and himself, a distance exacerbated by sin, and finds comfort in these opening verses from the Gospel of John. Indeed, as Hilary continues, his soul rejoiced to learn that it was 'called to new birth through faith'.²⁸ The soul was assured that God would not destroy a creature whom he had

²⁷ Ibid. I.11.19–27.

²⁸ Ibid. I.12.2–3.

summoned into existence from nothing.²⁹ These wonderful truths eluded natural reason, which cannot by its own power achieve an understanding of the mystery of salvation. Therefore, concludes Hilary, he would guide his thoughts about God by his ‘infinite faith’, never forgetting that if he believed he would be able to understand.³⁰

Hilary brings the second section of his narrative to an end by appealing to the Apostle Paul and his warning against those who distort the faith. We begin to see the source of Hilary’s theological method and polemical construal of Photinus and Hilary’s other opponents with the efforts of pagan philosophers. According to the narrative, Hilary’s soul, after discovering the truth of the Gospel, turned to Paul and found instructions on how to maintain its most certain faith (*absolutissimam fidem*): ‘Beware lest anyone spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to human traditions and the elements of the world, and not according to Christ in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Col. 2: 8–9).³¹ As we have seen in earlier chapters, this text was particularly important to Hilary in his revisions of *De Fide* and in his integration of Homoi-ousian theological insights with his own pro-Nicene concerns. In Book One he uses this text to bolster his own theological method and to suggest polemically that any method contrary to his own undermines the divinity of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, and his saving work. From Hilary’s perspective, when God is measured according to what we think appropriate for him, we tend to fashion for ourselves an idea of God contrary to scripture and his own testimony about himself. Faith, however, rejects the vain subtleties of philosophical inquiry and refuses to confine God ‘within the limits of our common understanding.’³² Faith finds its certainty not in itself but in Christ.

After using the passage from Colossians to establish his theological approach to scripture and God, Hilary immediately turns to the mystery of Christ’s saving work. That is to say, from Hilary’s perspective, knowing who God is means you know what he has done for you. Hilary continues with a fuller exegesis of the text: Christ who is without sin took upon himself our sinful flesh in order to forgive sins; he permitted himself to suffer on a cross that by the curse of the

²⁹ *De Trinitate*, I.12.4–6.

³⁰ *Ibid.* I.12.15–16. Cf. 2 Tim. 2: 7.

³¹ *De Trinitate*, I.13.2.

³² *Ibid.* I.13.19–20.

cross he might abolish the curse of the Law; and finally, he who is immortal and cannot be overcome by death, took upon himself death, that we, who believe in him, might gain eternity.³³ Only faith understands how these mysteries are possible. This faith, explains Hilary, rests on the confession that ‘Christ Jesus is none other than God’.³⁴ At last, his troubled soul did not fear the interruption called death, which now seemed only another name for eternal life.³⁵

At this point, Hilary’s soul has met the challenges and anxieties brought about by natural reason by turning to the prologue to the Gospel of John and Colossians 2—two texts that are central to Hilary’s revision of *De Fide* and informed by his collaboration with Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousians. When the soul allows itself to be guided by its unlimited faith in God’s testimony about himself, it confesses that God is omnipotent and eternal and that he continues to care for his creation but is not confined by it. Moreover, God’s purpose for humans is not eternal death but everlasting life. The promise of salvation depended on the truths that God became man and that Christ was none other than true God and true man possessing the *fullness* of the Godhead. In a final polemical flourish against Photinus, which brings us to the final section of Book One, Hilary insists that ‘there is no salvation apart from Christ, who in the beginning was God the Word with God (*apud Deum*)’.³⁶

The Heretics and the Orthodox Faith (I.15–19)

Hilary uses the final section of Book One to demonstrate how uncertainty and anxiety return when faith is not allowed to guide the person through scripture. When natural reason asserts itself, impious notions concerning God re-emerge as he is measured by human standards and his saving work obscured. This is what Hilary

³³ Ibid. III.7.15–17 For a similar patristic discussion of Christ’s saving work, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 30.5–6, in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 179–80; Cyril of Alexandria, *On the Unity of Christ*, trans. John McGuckin (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2000), 55–60.

³⁴ *De Trinitate*, I.13.55–6.

³⁵ Ibid. I.14.3–4.

³⁶ Ibid. I.16.13–15. Cf. VI.24.1–6; VII.26.10–13; XII.51–2.

saw his opponents doing. Rather than allowing God to descend to them, and ascending to an infinite knowledge of God with their boundless faith, they ‘confined infinite things within the boundary of their own understanding and made themselves judges of religion.’³⁷ These people sought to be masters of religion, while the work of religion, explains Hilary, is a work of obedience (*opus oboedientiae*): faithful obedience to what God has revealed about himself. By seeking knowledge of God from themselves rather than from God, Hilary charges his opponents with making their own natural reason, instead of scripture—God’s own testimony about himself—the ultimate standard of judgement on theological matters.

At the beginning of the narrative, Hilary’s troubled soul encountered those people discussing the mystery of God from the perspective of popular philosophy. He corrected their false speculations by faithfully accepting God’s testimony about himself. His modalist and subordinationist opponents, however, conceal their blasphemy, corrupting the mystery of the evangelical faith, laments Hilary, by appealing to scripture and piously confessing only one God.³⁸ At this point, Hilary offers a brief description of the unacceptable theological formulations asserted by his opponents. Here we are finally able to identify the opponents Hilary has in mind. He writes:

To pass over in silence the other extremely ridiculous beliefs of the heretics—but which we shall discuss when the opportunity presents itself in the course of our treatise—there are certain individuals who so distort the mystery of the evangelical faith that they deny the birth of the only-begotten God, while piously professing that there is only one God, that there is an extension rather than a descent into man, that he who became the Son of Man from the moment he assumed our flesh never existed previously and is not the Son of God, that in him there is not a birth from God but the same one comes from the same one, in order that this unbroken, unweakened continuity, as they believe, may preserve intact our faith in the One God, while the Father, who has extended himself even to the Virgin, is born as the Son.

There are others, on the contrary—since there is no salvation without Christ who in the beginning was God the Word (*erat Deus Verbum*) with God (*apud Deum*)—who, while denying the birth, have acknowledged creation alone, so that the birth does not admit the true nature of God,

³⁷ *De Trinitate*, I.15.3–6.

³⁸ *Ibid.* I.16.1–5.

and creation teaches that he is a false god, and, while this would misrepresent the faith in the nature of the one God, it would not exclude it in the mystery. In place of the true birth they substitute the name and faith of creation, and separate him from the true nature of the one God in order that a creature may not usurp the perfection of the Godhead, which had not been given by the birth of a true nature.³⁹

As we have seen in earlier chapters, Hilary begins the description of his opponents by offering a caricature of Marcellus of Ancyra's theological position and then turns to his Homoian opponents from Sirmium 357. In an obvious polemical gesture, he correlates the theological sympathies of his Homoian opponents with the universally condemned Photinus by returning once more to the opening verses of John's prologue and emphasizing that the Word was God and was *with* God. Moreover, we see Hilary continuing the polemical strategy of Basil of Ancyra by suggesting that his position, the orthodox position, avoids the twin errors of modalism and subordinationism.

At this point in the treatise Hilary is not interested in refuting the claims of his opponents, only in exposing their faulty approach to the evangelical faith. According to Hilary, they correctly look to scripture for answers, but are misled because they do not depend on faith in their reading of scripture. Instead of being obedient to God's word, they make God's word obedient to their natural reason: rending it from its context, pitting one revelation against another, and allowing their limited human reason to guide their interpretation and to form the acceptable content of their faith. The correct interpreter, continues Hilary, will make use of the 'regenerate intellect', and 'not measure God's nature by the laws of his own nature but judge God's assertions by the magnificence of God's testimony about himself'.⁴⁰ When the divine gift of understanding is imparted to the regenerate through Holy Baptism, faithful readers no longer bring a meaning to bear on scripture that simply agrees with their natural reason, but rather they accept what scripture reveals with their boundless faith.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid. I.16.

⁴⁰ Ibid. I.18.14–16.

⁴¹ Hilary opens the treatise by explaining that understanding (*intellegentia*) is a divine gift, and repeats that here. See I.1.4, 'ad intelligentiam divino munere obtineret', and I.18.6–8, 'ut unumquemque conscientia sua secundum caelestis originis munus inluminet'. See also I.30, III.22, IV.14, VII.13, IX.69, X.1.

Hilary continues by describing the best method for approaching scripture:⁴² ‘For he is the best reader who allows the words to reveal their own meaning rather than imposing one on them, who takes meaning from the text rather than bringing meaning to it, and who does not force a semblance of meaning on the words that he had determined to be right before reading them.’⁴³

The only assumption held by the interpreter will be that God has full knowledge of himself and we know him only through his own words. Hilary ends by saying, ‘let us leave to God knowledge of himself and let us in pious reverence obey his words. For he is a fitting witness (*testis*) to himself who is only known through himself.’⁴⁴ Therefore, the faithful reverently approach scripture by obediently agreeing ‘to speak about God with the words of God.’⁴⁵

THE PURPOSE OF BOOK ONE

If we set aside Hilary’s exaggerated rhetoric and polemical characterization of his opponents, and look beyond the question of the historical accuracy of his intellectual journey to the Christian faith, we see that the autobiographical narration establishes what Hilary considers to be a proper theological method. The narration begins with a reflection on sources of knowledge about God (1–8). Hilary

⁴² Hilary’s method, briefly stated here, is frequently cited and used by the Reformers. See e.g. Martin Luther’s comments in *Luther’s Works*, general editors Helmut Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan (St Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House), 1: 263, 32: 194, 33: 205, 41: 53, quoting *De Trinitate* I.18 directly at 31: 276 and offering an interpretation of it at 41: 83–4; Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.7.4, 1.11.1, 1.13.21. Martin Chemnitz also made explicit use of Hilary’s comments on scripture in his treatise *De Coena Domini*. See Martin Chemnitz, *The Lord’s Supper*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1979), 31–3, *et passim*.

⁴³ *De Trinitate*, I.18.14–16: ‘Dei naturam non naturae suae legibus metiatur, sed divinas professiones secundum magnificentiam divinae de se protestationis expendat. Optimus enim lector est, qui dictorum intelligentiam expectet ex dictis potius quam inponat et rettulerit magis quam adtulerit, neque cogat id videri dictis contineri quod ante lectionem praesumpserit intellegendum.’ Cf. *In Matt.*, 7.8: we must not accommodate the scriptures to our thoughts but our thoughts to scripture.

⁴⁴ *De Trinitate*, I.18.21–3. Cf. II.6–7, IV.1, IV.14, V.20, VIII.43, IX.40.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* I.19.15–16. See also IV.36: ‘God is his own interpreter.’ Cf. V.21, VI.13, VII.38, VII.41.

starts with a discussion of philosophy and its failure to speak with any unanimity on the nature of God, and then turns to a discussion of scripture and God's testimony about himself. For Hilary this is a progression in authority. Philosophy engages the faculty of reason and encourages speculation which, in the end, leaves the individual without certainty. Scripture pronounces, and its pronouncements are from God himself. These pronouncements arouse faith in the individual because they are God's testimony about himself. The contrast, then, between philosophy and scripture is one between uncertainty and certainty. For Hilary, this is not a commentary on the value of reason or philosophy for the Christian, but a comment on the proper ordering of faith and reason for the theological enterprise.

The underlying theme throughout Book One is death. Those outside of the faith fear death because they have no hope for eternal life, which is found only in Christ, the true Son of God. The second section of Book One (9–14) resolves the fear of death by discovering that God became man, assumed sin, suffered on the cross, and rose from the dead for our salvation. While the first section of Book One established where we are to look for our knowledge concerning God—scripture, not philosophy; or, more to the point, God, not ourselves—the second section establishes how we must proceed in interpreting the principal source of our knowledge about God and what he has done for us. That is to say, faith has priority over natural reason in our reading of scripture.

The third section demonstrates how uncertainty returns when Hilary's opponents confound the priority of scripture over philosophy and faith over reason. No disjunction occurs at this point in Book One. While many scholars overlook the connection between the discussion of the heretics in chapters 15–19 and the prologue, Hilary makes the relationship explicit when he announces that his opponents 'confined infinite things within the boundary of their own understanding and made themselves judges of religion'.⁴⁶ That is to say, his opponents sought knowledge of God from themselves rather than from God's own revelation of himself in scripture. They made themselves and their own natural reason, instead of scripture and

⁴⁶ Ibid. I.15.3–6. Cf. *Liber II Ad Constantium*, v (CSEL 65: 201), where Hilary refers to the heretics as 'arbitri caelestium sacramentum'.

faith, the ultimate standard of judgement on the mystery of God. Although Hilary's opponents also asserted their dependence on scripture, they acted, he argues, more like philosophers relying on their human reason than theologians relying on God's revelation. Hilary's Book One, then, briefly identifies the proper authority for discussing who God is, the role of faith and reason in understanding what God has done for us, the correct way to interpret scripture, and the soteriological consequences of disrupting the proper theological approach to the mystery of God.

Although Hilary provocatively casts his own troubled soul as the narrator, the progression from natural knowledge to revealed knowledge about God need not be the narration of his spiritual formation only. Rather, Hilary seeks to describe what he considers to be the proper approach to the mystery of God. When Hilary's opponents emerge and assert the self-sufficiency of reason in the domain of faith, the reader, prepared by the earlier sections of Book One, recognizes that the soul's calm assurance and the gift of salvation in Christ is threatened, if not lost. It is this method, so clearly articulated by Hilary at the beginning of his treatise, that he intends to guide the reader throughout *De Trinitate*.

Finally, there is no doubt that Hilary portrays the theological method of his modalist and subordinationist opponents in unflattering terms and in a manner that they would not embrace. Despite the elevated rhetoric, and whether it accurately portrays any theological constituency in the 350s, we do see that from Hilary's perspective there is a fundamental difference between his theological efforts and inquiry into the mystery of God and that of his opponents. For Hilary, all knowledge of God comes from God and is received by faith through scripture. When we attempt to control the act of discovery or enlightenment concerning who God is by relying on our human reason apart from our faith, we assert ourselves as the ultimate authority on who God must be or can be, rather than allowing God to determine who he is. What is ultimately at stake, from Hilary's perspective, is the governing authority or source of our theological knowledge: it is either God or ourselves.

Faith and Reason

In the previous chapter we established that Hilary uses Book One, written after Books Two through Six in 358, and deliberately placed as the first book of the newly conceived and revised *De Trinitate*, to advance a theological agenda that both apologetically articulates his own theological method and polemically critiques and exaggerates the method of his opponents. The two principal themes highlighted by Hilary are the relationship between faith and reason in acquiring theological knowledge, and the normative role of scripture in such a discussion. Although Hilary acknowledges that his various opponents theoretically ground their insights in scripture and give priority to faith, he argues that in practice their theological assertions reveal that they follow not scripture, but natural reason. Hilary's polemical charge is that they rely on themselves and their rational insights rather than God and his revelation. Hilary uses the literary trope of his anxious and troubled soul in the so-called autobiographical narrative of Book One to suggest that if he were to accept the teaching of his opponents, he would have to return to the pagan philosophy his soul once embraced and to abandon the comfort and certainty of eternal life provided by the Gospel.

Although Hilary's theological method serves a polemical purpose, it is also intended to address some of the criticism he received from his original presentation in *De Fide*. As we have seen in previous chapters, Hilary had recourse in the original sections of Books Two and Three to what was perceived by some as a simple and unreflective faith. Given the material he added to those books in 358, and the manner in which he edited them, it is clear that Hilary was criticized for his retreat to an uncritical acceptance of scripture when faced

with difficult theological questions. Hilary uses the opportunity to revise his works in 358 to address this criticism and insulate himself from any charge of a simple fideism, by developing a nuanced understanding of faith and reason. Hilary's argument, as we will see, is that the problem with reason lies not with the faculty itself, which, like faith, is also a gift from God, but with the employment of the faculty. When the will is rightly ordered by the Holy Spirit through faith, a person no longer relies on an uncertain natural reason but possesses, argues Hilary, a heavenly reason (*ratio caelestis*) to engage critically and constructively his faith and the truth of scripture.

THE APOLOGETIC CONTEXT FOR HILARY'S COMMENTS ON FAITH AND REASON

In Book Two, Hilary began his original discussion of the Son by emphasizing his own inability to explain the eternal generation of the Son from the Father (II.9.8–20). The Son's generation, argued Hilary, eludes our understanding and must be accepted by faith without question. Indeed, faith as faith means we accept what we are unable to comprehend. As Hilary puts it, 'faith confesses openly that its purpose is to know that it cannot comprehend what it is seeking'.¹ Hilary's recourse to a simple and pious faith meant that he said very little about the generation of the Son in the original sections of Book Two. Moreover, he engaged none of the challenges raised by the various theological parties during the 350s. When he returned to *De Fide* in 358, he addressed the inadequacy of his discussion by adding a great deal of pro-Nicene and Homoiousian theological and polemical material to the section on the eternal generation of the Son and by apologetically re-contextualizing his comments on faith. As discussed in Chapter 5, following his original endorsement of a pious and simple faith, Hilary inserted a lengthy excursus on the Son's eternal generation that aggressively refuted Photinus of Sirmium. Hilary's editorial changes to Book Two prevent his critics from charging him with

¹ *De Trinitate*, II.11.17–19.

endorsing an unreflective faith that is unwilling to engage critically and constructively the coherence and integrity of what scripture proclaims. Moreover, the alteration to Book Two reveals Hilary's new commitment to a relationship between faith and reason in theological reflection.

A similar editorial change occurred in Book Three. In the original composition of Book Three, Hilary insisted that faith must acknowledge its inability to understand the Trinitarian and Christological mysteries proclaimed by scripture. For example, Book Three originally possessed a lengthy section on the miracles of Christ. In his discussion of these miracles, Hilary repeated the same position on faith that he established in Book Two; namely, although we cannot understand how Christ performed the miracles he did, we must accept them as they are because scripture proclaims them. It seems certain that Hilary received criticism for his endorsement of such an unreflective approach to Christ's miracles, and for his lack of engagement with the pressing Trinitarian issues of the 350s. When he returned to Book Three in 358, one of the issues he explicitly addressed was his understanding of the relationship between faith and scripture.

In the added preface to Book Three that Hilary wrote in 358, he began with a reflection on John 14: 10 and the mutual indwelling of the Father and Son. He explains that, although the relationship between the Father and Son eludes our understanding, we must acknowledge that 'what is not understood by humans is possible for God'.² At first, it looks like Hilary is repeating his earlier position on faith and its simple acceptance of what scripture proclaims. Hilary continues, however, with a significant qualification. He writes: 'Let this not be said by me in such a way that the mere authority that something is said by God will be sufficient to understand the meaning of his words.'³ Hilary's qualification not only demonstrates his sensitivity to the charge of simply endorsing scripture, but also indicates how he will proceed in his revised presentation of *De Trinitate*. Although faith alone should cling to these words from God and believe them, we must, insists Hilary, 'examine and understand' them in order to achieve a deeper and subtler appreciation of

² Ibid. III.1.13–14.

³ Ibid. III.1.14–15.

the scriptural witness.⁴ Although Hilary will continue to argue that we should faithfully accept the words of scripture as God's testimony about himself, even when they offend our natural reason and contradict our understanding of the world around us, we must also proceed, if able, with a reason guided and informed by our faith (*ratio caelestis*) to understand the meaning of God's word and defend it against distortion. It is this final endorsement of a proper function and use of reason, heavenly reason, that Hilary adds to his theological method in 358 to prevent charges of an unreflective faith or a negative appraisal of our rational gifts.

Hilary's mature position on faith and reason seeks to establish a proper role for both as gifts from God. He maintains the position established in Book One throughout *De Trinitate*, that faith has priority over reason and must guide reason in all theological reflection. At the same time, Hilary's revisions to his earlier works emphasize the value, indeed necessity, of reason for theological discourse. His argument is not, therefore, with the faculty of reason, but with the use and employment of that faculty. The fault of his opponents, he argues, lies in their abuse of the gift of reason. When reason is the servant of faith, we should, suggests Hilary, arrive at a proper understanding of God as we allow God to disclose himself to us. When reason is the master of faith we limit and distort our faith, becoming entangled once again in the errors of the philosophers.

NATURAL REASON'S POTENTIAL FOR THEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE

The only extended comment on the potential of natural reason to discern who God is in *De Trinitate* occurs at the beginning of Book One, in the so-called 'autobiographical section'. Given the structure and chronology of *De Trinitate* that has been presented in this monograph, we know that Hilary's motive for composing Book One was not simply to offer a brief autobiography on his journey to the Christian faith, nor to prepare the reader for the lengthy

⁴ *De Trinitate*, III.1.15–19.

argument in *De Trinitate* with a helpful synopsis of books. Every feature of Book One was deliberately composed by Hilary to serve an apologetic and polemical purpose.⁵ The synopsis of books and the autobiographical narrative address concerns that were raised by Hilary's critics with the original presentation of his material in *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*. With this in mind, when we see Hilary begin Book One—indeed *De Trinitate*—with a discussion of natural reason, particularly its potential and limitations, we must bear in mind that he is addressing criticism raised by his endorsement of an unreflective and pious faith in the original offering of Book Two and Three, and with what may have appeared to many as his dismissal of reason and our rational abilities in theological activity.

In the previous chapter we saw that Hilary begins Book One by addressing the sources of our knowledge about God and the respective authority assigned to those sources. After describing the natural desire that all people have to seek knowledge about God and why he

⁵ A proper understanding of Hilary's purpose with the autobiographical narrative is especially necessary when reading his comments on natural reason. For example, by following a traditional reading of the opening narrative in Book One, Donal Corry has argued that Hilary endorses philosophy as a valid and objective means of acquiring knowledge about God outside of faith—knowledge that is complementary to that acquired by faith in God's revelation. Here we see the pitfalls of a traditional reading: it obscures Hilary's argument against the certainty of reason's assertions outside of faith, confuses the proper order between faith and reason in achieving knowledge about God, and prevents us from appreciating the *ratio caelestis* used by the believer in articulating and defending the faith. Donal Corry, *Ministerium Rationis Reddendae: An Approximation to Hilary of Poitiers' Understanding of Theology*, Tesi Gregoriana, 87 (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2002), 21–37; see esp. p. 28, 'The Social Medium', for an overly literal reading of *De Trinitate*, I.4.

For an alternative reading see Joseph Emmenegger, *The Functions of Faith and Reason in the Theology of Saint Hilary of Poitiers* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1947), 2–3, 43–6. Both Emmenegger and Corry deal with faith and reason in Hilary, but take different approaches. Emmenegger, as the title of his book suggests, focuses on Hilary's understanding of the function of faith and reason in theological discourse. Corry, on the other hand, deals more abstractly with faith and reason in Hilary's understanding of theology. Neither work deals exclusively with *De Trinitate*. They both offer a comprehensive and systematic treatment of faith and reason in the thought of Hilary of Poitiers. It should be noted that a traditional reading of Book One does not necessarily lead to the conclusions drawn by Corry. Emmenegger, for instance, assumes that Book One discusses Hilary's conversion, but never concludes, as Corry does, that philosophy has a positive role in the acquisition of theological knowledge that anticipates a person's acceptance of God's revelation by faith.

created us, Hilary briefly reviewed a number of philosophical opinions and their failure to speak with unanimity on the nature of God.⁶ According to Hilary's narration, the faculty of reason was used in such contradictory ways that some people taught that there were many gods and others that there were none; some people rejected God's presence in his creation and others thought creation was filled with gods. Despite these contradictory opinions, it was also asserted by reason that God is Good, One, omnipotent, and eternal.⁷ In the narration of these opinions, Hilary made no attempt to discriminate between the various uses of reason by the different philosophical schools. Despite the fact that some philosophers came nearer to the truth of Christianity in their use of reason, Hilary refused to make such an acknowledgment, and proceeded to emphasize that they all failed in the end to arrive at a proper understanding of God because they suffered from a lack of restraint in their use of reason. Hilary's failure to distinguish between the different philosophical groups and their potential for advancing appropriate notions about God was not due to carelessness, but was quite intentional. It would have compromised his purpose in Book One and *De Trinitate* to discuss the value of certain philosophical groups or to promote a philosophical faith that anticipates in some measure the truth revealed in scripture.⁸

Hilary's purpose in emphasizing the lack of restraint and humility by the different philosophical groups in the autobiographical narrative was an attempt to polemically construe their approach with the approach taken by his Photinian and Homoian opponents. Such a construal allowed Hilary to establish a stark contrast between natural reason without faith, which would appropriately be termed philosophy for him, and reason with faith, which he terms heavenly reason

⁶ On a natural religious desire in Hilary, see Emmenegger, *The Functions of Faith and Reason*, 43–6; C. F. A. Borchardt, *Hilary of Poitiers' Role in the Arian Struggle* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1966), 45; E. P. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity* (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 24–6; Corry, *Ministerium Rationis Reddendae*, 44–50.

⁷ As Meijering points out, Hilary's criticism about the contradictory nature of paganism is not limited only to Christian writers. He is part of a polemical tradition that goes back to Cicero. See e.g. Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, 1.1.2. Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*, 29–30.

⁸ As such, there is nothing in Hilary's *De Trinitate* that resembles Book Seven of Augustine's *Confessions*.

and we would call theology. From Hilary's perspective, the difference between the philosopher and the theologian is not found with the faculty of reason but with its employment. When it is informed by faith, then it is guided by the Holy Spirit and will necessarily lead to a pious understanding of God. It is important to note, however, that the faculty itself and its potential remain the same for both the philosopher and the theologian. Although Hilary labels one 'natural' and another 'heavenly', it is the same reason, just employed differently.

THE LIMITATIONS OF NATURAL REASON

It is not entirely clear from the autobiographical narrative in Book One why natural reason is not sufficient in itself to arrive at an understanding of the mysteries of the Christian faith. Although Hilary demonstrates at length natural reason's failure to achieve a consistent and coherent understanding of God, and polemically construes the vacillating opinions of the philosophers with his theological opponents, he does not offer the reader a sustained explanation as to why reason fails to arrive at a proper understanding of God. If we look at the material written by Hilary after his revision in 358, however, we find him consistently emphasizing two reasons for the limitations of natural reason. The first focuses on the individual's understanding of reason's potential for knowledge, and the second deals with the ontological limitations of the faculty itself.

The first reason, and indeed the one that Hilary returns to most often in his treatise, builds on the position established in Book One: namely, a false understanding of reason's potential leads to incorrect and uncertain assertions. When the abilities of reason are either overestimated or exaggerated, the individual begins to speculate not only on the things of this world but also on the things above our world. Hilary makes his point by appealing to his own inability to discern the reasons for the natural workings of his world. He tells us how he marvels at the yearly revolutions of the stars, but fails to understand what he witnesses. Similarly, he watches the ebb and flow

of the ocean's tide, but knows neither the source of the water he sees nor its place of retreat. He observes how seeds fall to the ground and decay, only to spring forth to new life. Hilary sums up these wonders saying: 'I found nothing in these things that I could understand with my own reason. But my ignorance helps me to understand you.'⁹ Although explanation eludes his understanding, he knows with certainty that these things occur as he sees them with his own eyes, but knows not why or how. His natural ignorance leads him to a greater appreciation for God's governance of creation and to the acknowledgment that a reasonable explanation must exist, even though it lies above his own understanding. Such an acknowledgment, explains Hilary, is made by faith.

The point Hilary wishes to make by observing these wonders within the natural world is that, if we fail to achieve non-theological knowledge through our natural reason, how much more will we fail to understand an infinite and omnipotent God, the creator of all things, through our natural reason. Although Hilary's questions over the workings of the natural world may not seem so formidable from our vantage-point today, his point remains. As more refined and enlightened explanations emerge on the workings of creation with the passage of time, natural reason uncovers new questions as it probes new effects—effects which used to be called causes. When the cause of any particular effect is discovered, like the cause of the ocean's tide or the movement of the stars, the question moves one step back in the seemingly infinite line of cause and effect. As this happens, one generation's cause becomes the next generation's effect of some not-yet understood prior cause. Such exploration will continue until the ultimate or first cause is discovered; a discovery that will always lie beyond our finite reason.

The second reason identified by Hilary to explain why reason is unable on its own to arrive at theological knowledge deals with the natural limitations of the faculty itself. That is to say, whether we are discussing natural reason or heavenly reason, the faculty itself has an inherent limitation, in that it is exercised by a created rational being. Hilary explains that when we think of ourselves in relation to God, we must understand our dependence on him, our creator, for our exist-

⁹ *De Trinitate*, XII.53.17–18.

ence. For Hilary, that dependency indicates that all created beings are imperfect and limited by their own nature. Those natural limitations mean not only that we are finite and corruptible beings, but also that we are limited in what we can understand of higher natures or beings. As Hilary puts it, ‘what is imperfect cannot comprehend what is perfect, nor can what derives its existence from something else achieve a perfect understanding either of its author or of itself’.¹⁰ As created beings we cannot be wise beyond the capacity of our own nature. Hilary explains: ‘The human mind knows only what it understands and . . . it judges as possible only what it sees or does.’¹¹ When we are dealing with the things of this world, our reason, which judges according to its senses, is beneficial and appropriate—albeit limited. When we are dealing with things above our nature, we must acknowledge who we are and our natural limitations. This acknowledgment or awareness of who we are requires restraint and humility. Hilary explains, ‘when the mind is not restrained by the necessity of its own nature and judges everything to be contained within the limits of its own weakness, it boasts in the false name of wisdom’.¹² In Hilary’s estimation, his opponents assert false things about God because they fail to acknowledge who they are and their natural limitations. As Hilary puts it in Book One, his opponents are *sui inmemores*, unmindful of themselves.¹³

If we wish to come to knowledge of God, we must, insists Hilary, recognize the bounds of human reason and the dependency of our nature. We do this when we acknowledge that God is God and we are human. We are not self-caused, but created. When we acknowledge that we are created beings, we rightly acknowledge the use and limits of the gifts God has given us. He endowed us with sense-perception and natural reason to understand, as best we can, ourselves and the

¹⁰ Ibid. III.24.5–7. Cf. IX.72.

¹¹ Ibid. VIII.53.9–12.

¹² Ibid. III.24.13–15. Cf. IV.14.6–14: ‘For human weakness will not by itself acquire the knowledge of heavenly things, nor will the faculty that deals with corporeal things arrive at an understanding of invisible things. For neither what is created and carnal in us, nor what was given by God for the exercise of our daily lives, will distinguish in its own judgement the nature of the Creator and his work. Our natural abilities do not rise to the level of heavenly knowledge, and our weakness can not grasp in any sense his incomprehensible power.’

¹³ Ibid. I.15.7.

wonders of the world. We do not presume to know things perfectly and with certainty when our faculty of reason is by nature limited and imperfect. When we overstep the bounds of reason, we not only abuse it but also, insists Hilary, fail to grasp rightly what lies within its power.

Although human reason is naturally limited because it is exercised by a created being, Hilary warns that this limitation is further exacerbated when it is abused. That is to say, human reason has the potential to know certain things. When the person exercising reason abuses it by pursuing what lies beyond its power, he further weakens his faculty of reason and ends up knowing less than he otherwise would have. Hilary explains this further debilitation of human reason by drawing an analogy between the limited ability of the human eye to gaze on the light of the sun and the attempts of the human mind to dwell on God. If the eye looks too long on the brightness of the sun, its ability to see is greatly diminished, if not altogether briefly lost. Likewise, if a limited and imperfect mind tries to gain too great an understanding of an infinite and perfect God, it will lose its ability to grasp even what lies within its bounds, and begin to assert contradictory things about God. Hilary explains:

If those who strain their power of sight by gazing upon the brightness of the sun become senseless, so that when the eye inquires into the cause of the radiant light with too curious a gaze, the nature of their eyes begins to extinguish its sense of vision, and it happens that trying to see more of that brightness, you do not see at all, what should we expect in the things of God and in the Sun of justice? Will not foolishness press upon those who wish to be too wise? Will the stupidity of a lack of understanding occupy the place of that keen light of intelligence?¹⁴

Hilary's point is that our limited natural reason can only assert itself so far before it must yield to our unlimited faith. If we fail to acknowledge this, we risk losing the very understanding within our bounds. As the eye may gaze ever so briefly upon the sun before diminishing its own faculty for sight, the mind too is limited in how it dwells on God.

¹⁴ *De Trinitate*, X.53.18–28.

To be sure, there is something that you are able to perceive in God, if only you desire what is possible. Just as you are able to perceive something in the sun, if you desire to see what you can, but you lose what you are able to see when you strive for what you cannot see. Similarly, concerning the things of God, you possess an understanding of something if you desire what you can understand. If you aspire beyond what is possible, you may no longer be able to do what you once could.¹⁵

Hilary's analogy demonstrates not only his positive understanding of natural reason, but also his concern that a person exercise reason with awareness of self and humility. The faculty itself, like sight and smell, is a gift from God to be used with great benefit when employed wisely, but of no use when abused. When the eye stares endlessly at the sun, it blinds itself and loses its ability to see anything at all. Similarly, when natural reason is abused by forgetting its creaturely limitations, it too loses its ability to understand the things that lie within its scope.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE ORDERING OF THE WILL

In discussing natural reason's potential for theological knowledge, Hilary advances a distinction between the natural capacity we all possess to apprehend God and the kind of knowledge derived from our natural reason. Although we possess the faculty necessary to apprehend that God exists, we will never achieve a certain and right knowledge of the Trinity and the saving work of God if we are not engaged by the Holy Spirit. 'Since our human weakness,' writes Hilary, 'cannot comprehend the Father and the Son,' we have been promised 'the gift of the Holy Spirit' to guide us in our knowledge of the mysteries of the faith.¹⁶ Hilary explains the role of the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ Ibid. X.53.43–9. A similar comment is made by Rufinus of Aquileia in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed. See Rufinus, *Commentarius in Symbolum Apostolorum*, 4; cited in Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 336–7.

¹⁶ *De Trinitate*, II.33.12–17.

in acquiring theological knowledge by trading once again on the analogy of the senses. He explains:

... the Apostle says, *But we have not received the spirit of this world but the Spirit which is from God, so that we may know the things that have been given us by God* (1 Cor. 2: 12). Therefore the Spirit is received for the sake of knowledge. For as the nature of the human body is inactive when there are no causes to stimulate its senses—such that the eyes, without natural or artificial light, do not exercise their office to see; the ears, without hearing a voice or sound, do not recognize their duty to hear; the nose, without smelling an odour, does not understand its purpose to smell. It is not that the natural faculty is wanting because the cause to stimulate the sense is absent, but because the employment of the faculty depends on the cause. Similarly, the human mind will possess the natural faculty to know God, but will not have the light of knowledge unless it has, through faith, received the gift of the Spirit.¹⁷

The faculty of the eye requires some sort of light in order to properly function. When there is no light, the faculty is unable to perform and grant sight to the person. Similarly, the faculty of reason requires the Holy Spirit, received by faith, in order to arrive at the light of theological knowledge. When this happens, explains Hilary, ‘the mind advances beyond the understanding of natural reason and is taught more about God than it had thought possible’.¹⁸

By outlining the potential and limitations of human reason and the necessity of faith and its priority in our search for understanding, Hilary underscores both an apologetic and polemical point. A person should not embrace a simple and unreflective faith at the expense of abandoning the gift of reason. Rather, a person is to guide reason by faith in order to articulate a deeper understanding of scripture and to defend a proper confession of the apostolic faith. The polemical move made by Hilary, then, is to argue that his opponents abuse the gift of reason by ignoring the gift of faith. Their reason makes use of faith when it is convenient for their theological assertions; as such, in Hilary’s estimation, they make faith a servant of reason. When the order is reversed and the faculty of reason assumes its proper place as a servant of faith, it is highly esteemed by Hilary. When faith makes use of reason, the believer ascends to a heavenly wisdom by means of

¹⁷ *De Trinitate*, II.35.2–13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* I.10.24–5.

a heavenly reason. To borrow a well-known phrase from Gregory of Nazianzus, faith gives fullness to reason.

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When the Holy Spirit calls us to faith by grace and our faith gives fullness to our reason, we arrive, in the words of Hilary, at a 'heavenly wisdom' (*caelesti sapientia*) and 'heavenly reason' (*ratio caelestis*).¹⁹ We are to use this *ratio caelestis* to understand our faith and refute the 'earthly learning' and 'worldly speculations' of those who oppose it.²⁰ Throughout the sections added by Hilary to *De Trinitate* during his revisions of 358, and in the material composed after that date, he emphasizes the reasonableness of faith and the reasonable knowledge obtained by faith from God's testimony about himself. As we have seen, Hilary uses this material to correct his earlier overemphasis on what was perceived as a simple faith. His mature position on faith and reason, however, insists on a proper use of the gift of reason in the theological enterprise: a gift that is guided by faith and scripture. Hilary explains:

For what the Lord professed concerning himself that is beyond the understanding of the human mind, he adapts to the faith of understanding (*intellegentiae fidem*), as much as possible, with examples of his power . . . so that what is not grasped by our dull human nature is attained by our faith equipped with reasonable knowledge (*rationabilis scientiae*); since neither may we doubt God's word concerning himself, nor may we suppose that an understanding of his power is beyond the reasoning of faith (*rationem fidei*).²¹

No longer does Hilary retreat to an unreflective faith, but now endorses a 'faith of understanding' and the 'reasoning of faith' available to those who proceed with humility and awareness in the exercise of reason. Moreover, argues Hilary, God took into consideration the weakness of our limited mind and adapted his revelation

¹⁹ Ibid. XII.20.27–32.

²⁰ Ibid. XII.20.21–32.

²¹ Ibid. I.22.3–10. For the numerous patristic parallels on this point, see Emmenegger, *The Functions of Faith and Reason*, 75, n. 20.

to the simplest words possible to convey the content of our faith.²² Hilary explains: 'God, therefore, mindful of our human weakness, does not teach the faith in the uncertainty of bare words. For, although the authority of the Lord's words alone prove the necessity to believe in them, nevertheless, he has instructed our human reason with an understanding that explains their meaning.'²³ It is the 'nevertheless' that is new to Hilary's approach to the mystery of God following his revisions in 358. When a person recognizes the extent of reason's potential and guides it by faith, that person is led to a heavenly understanding of God and his saving work.

The gift of reason is known only to the believer who recognizes the limitations of his mind and the poverty of his own human wisdom. For Hilary, it is the awareness of self, accomplished by faith, that frees the faculty of reason from the burdens placed upon it by the philosophers. That is to say, the philosophers, and, as Hilary sees it, his Photinian and Homoian opponents, abuse God's gift of reason by making it guide and determine what they know or believe about God and his salvific work. As we have seen, the difference between the natural reason of the philosophers and the heavenly reason of the faithful is not the faculty itself but the role of faith, and hence the grace of the Holy Spirit, in the person's search for understanding.

If we return once more to the autobiographical narrative in Book One, we see the proper relationship between faith and reason acted out by Hilary's own troubled soul. He arrived at an understanding of the faith only after he acknowledged his own foolishness and the poverty of his own human reason. After coming to faith through God's sacred books and after his baptism, Hilary's will was rightly ordered and he began to understand the proper use of reason. After being 'called to a new birth by faith' and obtaining 'a heavenly regeneration', Hilary's soul 'measured the attributes of God according to the magnificence of the eternal power, not with natural reason, but with an infinite faith . . . and remembered that it would be able to understand if it believed'.²⁴

²² *De Trinitate*, IX.40.14–18. Cf. XI.23.1–4. For further examples and patristic parallels, see Meijering, *Hilary of Poitiers on the Trinity*, 61–2.

²³ *De Trinitate*, VIII.52.1–5.

²⁴ *Ibid.* I.12.3–5, 11–16. Cf. Isa. 7: 9 (LXX).

THE COMPLEMENTARY GIFTS OF FAITH AND REASON

We might summarize Hilary's mature view on faith and reason in *De Trinitate* by saying that faith, a gift of the Holy Spirit, rightly orders the will which yields a proper understanding of the self and the gift of natural reason. Although faith is sufficient for salvation, God has not left us without the gift of reason, heavenly reason, as Hilary calls it, to understand as best we are able the mysteries of the evangelical and apostolic faith. While Hilary grants the possibility of knowing that God exists outside of faith, reason alone struggles to offer a correct and coherent explanation of God. Just as our faculty of sight requires light to fully exercise the gifts possessed by the eye, so too, notes Hilary, our faculty of reason requires the light of the Holy Spirit to exercise fully its gifts and potential to arrive at a heavenly wisdom and reasonable faith.

In the previous chapter I stressed the importance of Book One for advancing Hilary's theological and polemical agenda. In this chapter, we have seen how Hilary's deliberate placement of a discussion on theological method, particularly the relationship between faith and reason, at the beginning of his treatise also served an apologetic purpose. In his early attempt in *De Fide* at articulating the subtleties of the Christian faith in a Triune God, Hilary struggled to offer his readers more than pious thoughts and homiletical reflections on the scriptural witness about God. When he returned to his earlier works in 358, and decided to revise them by integrating the exegetical and theological insights of his Homoiousian friends with his more developed pro-Nicene theological commitments, he also addressed the criticism that he endorsed an unreflective or simple faith. Just as his synopsis of books at the end of Book One was a call for patience and an attempt to request that the reader engage his entire treatise before passing judgement on the manner in which he orders his Trinitarian and Christological thoughts, so too, his deliberate reflection on theological method in the autobiographical narrative in Book One and his endorsement of a proper role for reason in theological reflection throughout *De Trinitate* was an attempt to insulate himself from criticism that he dismissed the role of reason in the theological enterprise.

Hilary's Understanding and Use of Scripture

The two principal themes highlighted by Hilary in the autobiographical narrative of Book One are the relationship between faith and reason and the normative role of scripture in acquiring theological knowledge. In the previous chapter we discussed Hilary's views on faith and reason, and particularly the apologetic context of his thoughts on the faculty of reason and its place in theological reflection. Hilary's understanding of scripture and its normative use in discussions about God does not proceed on apologetic grounds. The challenge faced by Hilary is that his Homoian opponents routinely insist that their theological assertions are grounded in scripture. Indeed, Hilary regretfully acknowledges throughout *De Trinitate* that his opponents not only assign scripture a normative role in their arguments, but also promote what he considers faulty theological positions by appealing to scripture only. Hilary recognizes that the dispute over scripture is not about its place in theological reflection, but over its employment and the assumptions made about the text.

Since claiming to be guided by scripture does not ensure a proper understanding of it, Hilary devotes a great deal of time to reflecting on the nature of scripture. From Hilary's perspective, the best reader or interpreter must know what scripture is and its purpose, must recognize the unity of the Old and New Testaments, and must discern the logic, context, or grammar of discrete passages of scripture. Most importantly, the person reading scripture must appreciate the overarching narrative or sense of scripture. For Hilary, the whole of scripture is governed by a soteriological narrative that progressively

discloses how God comes to us in order to make possible our return to him. If the interpreter of scripture loses sight of this governing narrative, God's saving work will be distorted, which will necessarily distort who God discloses himself to be.

Although Hilary's view on scripture remains consistent throughout the various editorial stages of *De Trinitate*, his interpretation and application of key scriptural texts in the Trinitarian disputes does change in 358. The second part of this chapter, therefore, will be devoted to the development of Hilary's exegesis in the material written during or after 358, and how his revised argument engages the contemporary theological strategies of the various anti-Nicene parties of the late 350s. The concern here is not to offer an exhaustive understanding of Hilary's exegesis, but to continue noting the theological and exegetical development in his revised text. Since Hilary's two principal opponents are Photinus of Sirmium and the Homoians gathered at the synod of Sirmium in 357, we will look at two texts central to these constituencies, the prologue to the Gospel of John and Proverbs 8: 22 ff. These texts demonstrate not only Hilary's theological and exegetical development in the various editorial stages of *De Trinitate*, but also show his careful handling of scripture in securing a pro-Nicene theology, and his concern for the methodological points he establishes for a proper understanding of what scripture is.

HILARY'S UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

Before writing *De Fide* in 356, Hilary had already completed his *Commentarium in Matthaëum* in the early 350s. The significance of this earlier treatise for Hilary's later works is that he had already spent significant time working through his understanding of scripture in the theological task.¹ That is not to say that Hilary follows the same exegetical strategies in *De Trinitate* that he had in the earlier

¹ See M. Simonetti, 'Note sul Commento a Matteo di Ilario di Poitiers', *Vetera Christiana*, 1 (1964), 35–64, and Charles Kannengiesser, 'L'Exegese d'Hilaire', in *Hilaire et son temps* (Paris, 1969), 127–42.

commentary. He does not. Indeed, one scholar describes Hilary's commentary as 'a dreary jungle of empty fantasy' because of what he deems an excessive reliance on allegory.² Whatever we might think of this colourful description of the commentary, the exegetical concerns of *De Trinitate* have a different purpose than the earlier commentary. Hilary's *De Trinitate* aims to secure his own pro-Nicene exegetical and theological reading of scripture against his various anti-Nicene opponents of the late 350s. Therefore, Hilary's exegesis in *De Trinitate* focuses more on the sentence structure and language of disputed texts than on readings that depart from the plain sense (*sensus litteralis*). Moreover, since Hilary readily admits that his opponents rely on scripture in discussing the mystery of God, he devotes more time to methodological considerations of what he thinks scripture is and how it is to be used in order to arrive at a pro-Nicene understanding of God.

Scripture as the Word of God

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Hilary argues that the faculty of human reason is limited and requires the guidance of faith in its reading of scripture. Once a person acknowledges that he is an imperfect and finite creature seeking to understand a perfect and infinite creator, he needs to know where to find authoritative knowledge about God and his mysteries. The person will ask, explains Hilary: 'From what books shall I take words to explain such difficult mysteries?'³ The answer is, scripture. From the very beginning of the treatise, Hilary informs the reader that he will have recourse only to God's words when discussing God. He writes: 'Since our treatise will be about the things of God, let us leave to God knowledge of himself and let us in pious reverence obey his words.' Indeed, argues Hilary, God is 'a fitting witness to himself who is only known through himself'.⁴ How could we, asks Hilary, who

² R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381 AD* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988), 474.

³ *De Trinitate*, II.12.5–6.

⁴ *Ibid.* I.18.21–3. Cf. II.6–7, III.9, IV.1, IV.14, V.20, VIII.43, IX.40, IX.69.

cannot even understand the workings of the natural world around us, refuse to believe God's own explanation of who he is?⁵

Hilary will maintain throughout *De Trinitate* that our thoughts about God must be governed only by scripture. At the same time, Hilary is aware that this is insufficient to overthrow the assertions of his opponents. They, too, appeal to scripture and use God's testimony about himself. Indeed, Hilary repeatedly acknowledges their reliance on scripture and laments their 'deception', as he calls it, of promoting anti-Nicene theological positions under the guise of scripture alone.⁶ Although both parties appeal to scripture, the difference rests, argues Hilary, with how scripture is approached and the normative role assigned to scripture in forming the content of a person's confession about the mystery of God. In many respects, Hilary's argument mirrors closely what he has to say about faith and reason. Although his opponents claim to give priority to faith in discerning the mystery of God, Hilary argues that in practice they neglect faith by abusing their gift of reason and limiting God's revelation of himself to what seems reasonable to their finite and created minds. Similarly, Hilary admits that his opponents claim to be guided by scripture, but in practice they distort it by failing to recognize the scriptural context of the passages they interpret, by pitting one verse against another in an effort to dismiss unfavourable or difficult texts, and by allowing their limited human reason to guide their interpretation and to form the acceptable content of their faith.

At the end of the autobiographical narrative in Book One Hilary offers a brief description of what he considers to be the proper way in which to interpret scripture. The correct interpreter must approach questions about God 'through faith'.⁷ The faithful reader will not measure 'God's nature by the laws of his own nature but will judge God's assertions according to the magnificence of God's testimony about himself'. Hilary continues: 'For he is the best reader who allows the words to reveal their own meaning rather than imposing one on them, who takes meaning from the text rather than bringing

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.* XII.53.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.* IV.7–9; IV.11; V.1.23 ff.

⁷ *Ibid.* I.18.8–12.

meaning to it, and who does not force on the words a semblance of meaning that he had determined to be right before reading them.⁸ The only assumption held by the interpreter is that God has full knowledge of himself and we know him only through his own words.

The dispute between Hilary and his opponents is not over the place of scripture in theological discourse, but about the manner in which the words of scripture are permitted to disclose who God is. Since Hilary's opponents argue that they are just as indebted to scripture as Hilary claims he is, his only recourse is to polemically argue that they abuse their gift of reason in order to promote a defective reading of scripture.

The Language of Scripture

A defining characteristic of Hilary's exegesis in *De Trinitate* is a commitment to the deliberate syntax and grammar of discrete scriptural passages. This concern leads Hilary to reflect on the nature of the language used throughout scripture and the necessity of our use of metaphorical or analogical language in describing the divine reality depicted by scripture. The first point to be noted when it comes to the language of scripture, insists Hilary, is that God speaks *to us*, not to himself, and therefore his speaking is done with words most fitting to our finite and created nature. Hilary writes, 'we must first of all know that God has not spoken to himself [in scripture] but to us and has adapted the language of his declaration to our understanding such that the weakness of our nature is able to grasp his meaning'.⁹ God's revelation is for us and is meant to be understood by us. Hilary's comment echoes the very beginning of his treatise. God gives testimony about himself, he explained, 'in language best

⁸ *De Trinitate*, I.18.14–16. Cf. *In Matt.*, 7.8: we must not accommodate the scriptures to our thoughts but our thoughts to scripture.

⁹ *De Trinitate*, VIII.43.1–4. Cf. *Tract. in Ps.*, 126.6 (CSEL 22: 617): 'Sermo enim divinus secundum intellegentiae nostrae consuetudinem naturamque se temperat communibus rerum vocabulis ad significationem doctrinae suae et institutionis aptatis. Nobis enim, non sibi loquitur, atque ideo nostris utitur in loquendo.' This last sentence summarizes Hilary's understanding of the language of scripture well: 'he [God] speaks to us, not to himself, and therefore makes use of our language in speaking.'

adapted to human understanding'.¹⁰ Since the purpose of God's testimony is to disclose who he is and what he has done, he necessarily accommodates his revelation to the words most easily grasped by us. Hilary writes: 'The Lord expressed the evangelical faith in words as simple as possible, and adapted his language to our understanding to the extent that the weakness of our nature could grasp them; nevertheless, he did not say anything that was unworthy of the majesty of his nature.'¹¹ Since scripture discloses who God is in words best adapted to our limited understanding, if we fail to grasp God's word the fault 'lies with our faith', not scripture.¹²

Hilary's final point concerns the analogical and metaphorical necessity of human language in discussing the sublime mystery of God. Although God has adapted his revelation to words that should be easily understood by us, his words point to a reality not fully grasped by our human minds or expressed by our human words. It is appropriate, indeed necessary, argues Hilary, to make use of analogies as a way of suggesting the meaning of the divine word, though by no means exhausting that meaning.¹³

We have already discussed Hilary's sensitivity to his own use of analogy in the original sections of *De Fide*, and his integration of Basil of Ancyra's father/son analogy into his own pro-Nicene theology. Although Hilary certainly received criticism for his use of analogy in theological reflection, his remarks should not be seen only in an apologetic context. He does wish to retain a positive role for analogy as a partial image of heavenly things. Hilary explains, these analogies 'are used only as images, drawn from the material realm, to impart to our mind a spiritual understanding of heavenly things so that we may advance our nature along this step to an understanding of divine majesty'.¹⁴ They provide comparisons derived from our earthly experience that assist us in grasping, in whatever small measure, the profoundness of such heavenly mysteries as the Son's eternal generation from the Father. When material analogies are used to understand the Son's birth, we must remind ourselves that they are, in the end, unsatisfactory at fully grasping the

¹⁰ *De Trinitate*, I.5.7–9. Cf. VIII.16; XII.9; *Tract. in Ps.*, 126.6.

¹¹ *De Trinitate*, IX.40.14–18. See also VI.16.20–6.

¹² *Ibid.* VII.38.

¹³ *Ibid.* I.19.1–16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* VI.9.29–35.

divine mystery. Hilary explains, 'human analogies are not satisfactory examples of divine things; nevertheless through these material images our mind achieves a partial understanding [of divine things].'¹⁵ Analogies are only used to impart to our minds, in some small measure, a better understanding of the faith.

The Unity and Context of Scripture

For Hilary, scripture is the instrument used by the Holy Spirit to convey the truths about God and our salvation. It was one and the same Spirit who confirmed 'the true and salutary profession of our faith' throughout the course of history in the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles.¹⁶ Hilary writes: 'There is one Holy Spirit everywhere who enlightens all the Patriarchs, the Prophets, and the entire assembly of the Law, who also inspired John in his mother's womb, and was then given to the Apostles and the other believers that they might understand the truth that had been given them.'¹⁷ That same Spirit now guides the faithful in their weakness to understand the mysteries of the faith.¹⁸ When we acknowledge that it is one and the same Spirit who enlightened the Prophets and Apostles alike, we are better able to discern the unity of scripture and the progressive revelation of God's saving work from the Old Testament to the New.¹⁹ Hilary's emphasis on the unity of scripture allows him to negotiate any argument that is grounded in isolated verses of scripture and not in scripture as a whole or unit. When individual texts are used to overthrow the larger narrative or sense of scripture, Hilary argues that the Spirit is undermined by breaking the word of God and by pitting one verse against another.²⁰

When theological argument focuses on particular verses or passages, the best interpreter, argues Hilary, must consider the larger scriptural context. By discerning the reason or motive (*causa*) of the verse, a proper understanding of its meaning (*ratio*) will follow.²¹ It is this attention to context that, Hilary argues, his opponents neglect.

¹⁵ *De Trinitate*, VII.28.1–4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* V.38.1–4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* II.32.11–15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* II.33.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* I.30.

²⁰ Cf., *ibid.* V.23, VII.24, and XII.3.3–6.

²¹ *Ibid.* II.31.3–4.

From his perspective, they arbitrarily accept various words of scripture but neglect the circumstances of those words. They take words spoken in one context and for one purpose, and arrange them so as to understand them in a different context for a different purpose.²² For example, they deny the equality of the Father and Son by citing 'The Father is greater than I' (John 14: 28) whenever confronted with such verses as 'I and the Father are one' (John 10: 30) or 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (John 14: 10). Therefore, conclude Hilary's opponents, when Christ is called God, the name is only a title, not a true description of his nature. When scriptural verses are used in this way by his opponents, they fail, argues Hilary, to grasp their meaning because they do not 'discern the circumstances of time, or apprehend the mysteries of the Gospel, or understand the force of the words'.²³ They pass over the reasons that prompted these verses by neglecting the words that either precede or follow, and in the end undermine the unity of scripture and its progressive disclosure of God's saving work.

The Soteriological Narrative of Scripture

When confronted with seemingly contradictory words spoken by Christ, we must, insists Hilary, understand the context and the reason for the words. Moreover, we need to view the words in the light of Christ's dispensation. We accomplish all of this by recognizing the unity of scripture and its gradual disclosure of the Son and his redeeming work. Finally, remembering that the words of scripture are God's words spoken for us and accommodated to our limited

²² Hilary's criticism here is reminiscent of Irenaeus, who complained that the Gnostics 'contradict the order and the continuity of the scriptures, and, as best they can, dissolve the members of the truth. They transfer and transform, making one thing out of another and thus lead many astray by the badly constructed phantom that they make out of the Lord's words they adjust' (*Against Heresies*, I.8.1). Irenaeus proceeds with the well-known description of the disfigured mosaic of a king. The good image of the king is rearranged by heretics into that of a dog or fox and used to deceive simple believers. Hilary's point throughout this section and his earlier discussion of his opponents' show of piety is very similar to the concern expressed here by Irenaeus. See *Irenaeus of Lyons*, trans. Robert Grant (London: Routledge, 1997), 65–6.

²³ *De Trinitate*, IX.2.28–30.

minds, we are to humbly and piously approach God's revelation through our faith in order to arrive at a proper understanding of God. Although Hilary presents his view of scripture in polemical terms, suggesting that his Photinian and Homoian opponents arrive at a defective understanding of scripture because of their failure to understand properly what scripture is, Hilary understands that his insistence on the priority of scripture and his numerous methodological considerations of the text do not guarantee a proper interpretation of scripture. To arrive at such an authentic interpretation you must first know the purpose or intent of scripture. From Hilary's perspective, you must presuppose that scripture is shaped by a narrative about God's saving work for us. Put another way, before approaching scripture, you must first confront, as Hilary's troubled soul did in the autobiographical narrative, questions about life and death and your own eternal destiny. Once this question is in mind, you are prepared to turn to scripture and discover the answer that will calm your anxious and troubled soul. If you approach without this question or anxiety about life in mind, you will be looking for the wrong thing in scripture.

Hilary's interpretive moves throughout *De Trinitate*, whether in the material written before or after the revisions of 358, are guided by his commitment to the soteriological purpose of scripture. That commitment means that Hilary approaches the task of reading and interpreting scripture with the presupposition that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, came into our world, took on flesh, suffered and died on a cross in order to restore all who believe in him to God the Father. Moreover, this narrative demonstrates and demands, insists Hilary, that the Father and Son are co-equal and co-eternal. Hilary refers to this narrative and the pro-Nicene interpretive framework that follows from it with such phrases as 'the apostolic and evangelical faith', the 'catholic faith', or the 'faith of the church'.²⁴ Although the modern reader will charge Hilary with employing a circular argument, his

²⁴ According to Smulders, Hilary uses these phrases around seventy times in *De Trinitate*. See Pierre Smulders, *La Doctrine trinitaire de S. Hilaire de Poitiers*, *Analecta Gregoriana*, 32 (Rome: Universitatis Gregoriana, 1944), 107. See also Donal Corry, *Ministerium Rationis Reddendae: An Approximation to Hilary of Poitiers' Understanding of Theology*, *Tesi Gregoriana*, 87 (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2002), 158, n. 45.

point is that to read scripture faithfully you must first have the faith professed by scripture. Put another way, you must first have the Holy Spirit to read the words inspired by the Spirit.²⁵ This is the 'faith' that has been handed down in part by the Prophets and in full by the Apostles throughout the generations of the church, and is rehearsed and confessed daily by the church in her liturgical celebrations, especially, as emphasized by Hilary, in the sacrament of baptism and the baptismal formula.

Hilary's constant refrain, that his opponents undermine God's saving work when they assert that the Son is not co-eternal and co-essential with the Father, may be easily dismissed by the modern reader as a polemical flourish or exaggerated rhetoric. Such language, however, demonstrates an important presupposition for Hilary's reading of scripture. If scripture is read or interpreted outside the larger narrative of God's saving work, then the overall scope of scripture is distorted and yields misleading, if not false, theological conclusions. It is for this reason that Hilary began the revisions to Book Two in 358 by quoting St Matthew's baptismal formula, to baptize 'in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit', and then asks: 'What is not contained in these words concerning the mystery of human salvation?'²⁶ From Hilary's perspective, the difference between his reading of scripture and that of his opponents is found in the narrative that they each allow to govern scripture and the implications of that narrative for who God is.

HILARY'S USE OF SCRIPTURE

Although it is not possible in one short chapter to demonstrate the richness of Hilary's exegesis and the sensitivity with which he handles scripture, we can offer two examples that will demonstrate well the commitments outlined above, and reveal the exegetical improvements he made to his treatise after his decision to revise in 358. Although we were able to identify the improvements Hilary made to *De Fide* in 358 by noticing shifts in theological content and literary

²⁵ *De Trinitate*, II.35.11–13.

²⁶ *Ibid.* II.1.1–9.

style, the task is more difficult when it comes to his exegesis. The main reason is that Hilary does not tend to use the same scriptural texts in 358 that he did in the earlier versions of *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*. There are, however, two texts that were central to the Trinitarian debates of the 350s and used by Hilary both before and after his revisions in 358. The first text, the prologue to the Gospel of John, I have discussed on a number of occasions in this monograph and is central to Hilary's refutation of Photinus of Sirmium. The second text, Proverbs 8: 22 ff., which was particularly exploited by the various 'Arian' groups of the fourth century, appears in Hilary's early rebuttal of a generic Arianism in Book Four of *Adversus Arianos*, written prior to 358, and in the final book of *De Trinitate*, Book Twelve, written some time around 360. What we see in the exegesis of these two texts is not only a significant improvement in Hilary's deployment of scripture in securing his own pro-Nicene theology, but also a careful handling of the text that attends to the methodological points made above with respect to his understanding of what scripture is.

The Prologue to the Gospel of John

Prior to his exile and encounter with the Homoiousians, Hilary did not appreciate the theological and exegetical utility of the Gospel of John in securing a pro-Nicene understanding of God.²⁷ When Hilary revised his works in 358, however, he added a great deal of relevant exegetical material to *De Fide* that brought his argument up to date, and fully exploited the usefulness of such things as the Gospel of John. There is, however, at least one example in Book Four where Hilary used the prologue in the material written before 358. Here we see not only a lack of engagement with the text, but also a lack of

²⁷ Although Hilary is indebted to Basil of Ancyra and perhaps George of Laodicea for his mature understanding of this text's utility to refute Photinus of Sirmium, he was already familiar with the prologue and its distortion by those with Photinian sympathies when he wrote his *Commentarium in Matthaeum* in the early 350s. See Carl L. Beckwith, 'Photinian Opponents in Hilary of Poitiers' *Commentarium in Matthaeum*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58: 3 (2007), 611–27.

understanding in how the text might secure a proper understanding of God.

Book Four originally served as the first book of Hilary's rebuttal of Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria (*Adversus Arianos*). Hilary attempted to use this letter to offer a refutation of the various anti-Nicene positions of the 350s. By using a letter from the 320s that no theological party embraced in the 350s, Hilary's discussion in *Adversus Arianos* was immediately dated and failed to address the concerns of the contemporary debate. Although the theological conclusions drawn by Hilary in these books promote his pro-Nicene position, they do so by not engaging the exegetical and polemical issues of the 350s. The best way of describing Hilary's efforts in the original sections of these books—remembering that he added new prefaces, retouched parts of *Adversus Arianos* in 358, and drastically reworked *De Fide*—is that his argument is frustratingly general and therefore underwhelming. We see this particularly in Hilary's deployment of such texts as the prologue to the Gospel of John.

Following Hilary's translation of Arius' letter at the beginning of Book Four, he offers a brief reflection on scripture. We are to use the words of scripture to express our understanding of God. Indeed, notes Hilary, our human faculties are not sufficient by themselves to arrive at an understanding of the nature and work of God. Despite the contentious use of scripture, 'we must', insists Hilary, 'believe God when he speaks about himself'. If we reject God's own revelation of himself to us, then we deny him. If we believe him to be God, then, continues Hilary, 'we can have no other understanding of him than what he has testified about himself. Therefore, let private human opinion cease and let human judgement not extend beyond the order established by God.'²⁸ If we wish to gain theological knowledge about God, we must have recourse to scripture; even if, as Hilary observes, disputes exist over the text.

Hilary begins his refutation of Arius' letter by arguing that Deuteronomy 6: 4 (*Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one*) does not mean that the Son of God is not God, nor does it in any way undermine the divinity of Jesus Christ.²⁹ Hilary makes his point by appealing to

²⁸ *De Trinitate*, IV.14.14–26. See also VI.13, VII.30, VIII.14, IX.69.

²⁹ *Ibid.* IV.15.

the creative work of the Son and underlining the unity of scripture. The Apostle Paul expresses the faith clearly, begins Hilary, when he writes: 'One God the Father from whom are all things, and our one Lord Jesus through whom are all things' (1 Cor. 8: 6). Similarly, Moses describes creation by repeatedly saying, 'Then God said...' (Gen. 1).³⁰ By correlating Paul and Moses, Hilary argues that the Prophet expresses the creative work of God by simply referring to God and stressing his unity, while the Apostle explains more fully the diversity of God by clarifying that it was *from* the Father and *through* the Son that all things were created. All of this is confirmed for Hilary in the prologue to the Gospel of John. Hilary proceeds to quote in full the first three verses of the Gospel: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him' (John 1: 1–3). Again, what Moses discusses in general is here given more detail by John. Hilary only uses the prologue to underscore that all things come from the Father and through the Son. Hilary's conclusion, therefore, is that the Son was not himself created, because all things were created through him. He does not demonstrate, however, how it follows that the non-temporal existence or beginning of the Son necessarily implies co-eternity or co-equality with the Father.³¹

Hilary's exegetical use of the prologue in Book Four does little to secure a pro-Nicene theology. As we have seen in Chapter 1, the Eusebian position maintained that the Son was not created like the other creatures, that his generation happened before time, as the first-born of all creation (Col. 1: 15), and explicitly rejected any theological indebtedness to Arius' letter. Therefore, from the perspective of the anti-Nicene theological parties of the 350s, Hilary's rebuttal of Arius' letter in Book Four is not relevant. Moreover, at this stage in his theological development Hilary does not seem to appreciate fully the subtlety and nuance of the moderate Eusebian position that grants the non-temporal existence of the Son without asserting his

³⁰ *De Trinitate*, IV.16.

³¹ Hilary does, however, clarify how he thinks his reading of 1 Cor. 8: 6 underscores the co-eternity and co-equality of the Father and the Son in the material added in 358 to the beginning of Book Four. See *De Trinitate*, IV.5–6.

co-eternity or co-equality with the Father. It is this conclusion of co-eternity that Hilary seems to think follows from his use of John's prologue and the other texts demonstrating the creative work of the Son.

When Hilary revised his earlier works in 358, he made extensive use of the prologue to the Gospel of John in the added excursus on the Son in Book Two, the added section on Jesus' high-priestly prayer in Book Three, and in various discussions throughout the final books of *De Trinitate* when refuting the theological position of Photinus of Sirmium.³² Moreover, in the autobiographical narrative of Book One, Hilary polemically construed Photinus' theological position with that of his Homoian opponents by making reference to John's prologue. The exegetical moves made by Hilary in the deployment of this text demonstrate well his understanding of scripture and the need to attend to the context, grammar, and soteriological narrative of the text in order to secure a pro-Nicene understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

In the revised discussion in Book Two, Hilary used the prologue to the Gospel of John to offer an aggressive rebuttal of Photinus of Sirmium's adoptionist Christology and monarchian theology. Although I have discussed Hilary's use of this text at length in previous chapters, my focus and attention in those discussions was on the polemical and theological strategies employed by Hilary in 358. By revisiting his use of the prologue here, we can focus more deliberately on the exegetical moves made by him to secure his pro-Nicene position. His use of the prologue in Book Two dwells on three phrases: 'in the beginning was the Word', 'the Word was with God', and 'the Word was God'. The key term of theological significance in the first phrase, *In principio erat verbum*, is *erat*. Immediately Hilary draws the reader to a close reading of the text, particularly, in this case, the grammar of the text. The force of *erat* means that the Word already existed *in principio*, since it is incompatible with the meaning of 'was' for something not to have already existed. Hilary continues

³² For the use of this text against Photinus in the later books of *De Trinitate*, see Carl L. Beckwith, 'Suffering Without Pain: The Scandal of Hilary of Poitiers' Christology', in Peter Martens (ed.), *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays in Honor of Brian E. Daley* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008).

by contextualizing this verse with the Old Testament. The prologue, notes Hilary, glosses Genesis 1: 1: 'all things were made through him' (John 1: 3). Although it seems like an obvious point for Hilary to make, by contextualizing the prologue with Genesis, he underscores his emphasis on the unity of scripture and the narrative continuity between the two testaments. Moreover, by paralleling the beginning of Genesis with the prologue, Hilary's theological point is that not only do all things come into being through the Word and nothing exists apart from him, but also this Word which 'was' *in principio* has an immeasurable existence (*infinitum*), which is to say, an eternal existence.³³

Hilary interrupts his exegesis of the prologue to offer Photinus of Sirmium's reading of the text. He writes: 'You [Photinus] will say: "The Word is the utterance of a voice, a pronouncement of what is to be done, an expression of thoughts. *This was apud Deum* and was in the beginning, because the expression of thought is eternal, since he who thinks is eternal."' ³⁴ Hilary offers two exegetical responses to Photinus' understanding of *verbum*. On a semantic level, Photinus' argument does not fit with the first verse of the prologue: 'In the beginning *was* the Word.' Although a human word by its nature has the possibility of being and the consequence of that coming to be is that it will no longer exist after it is uttered, the text from John states that the Word *was* already 'in the beginning', which means it already existed. A careful reading of the text and attention to the unity of scripture demonstrates that this Word does not have the possibility of existence but already exists (*erat*) in the beginning.

Hilary continues with a second response that highlights Photinus' grammatical distortion to the prologue. He writes:

Now even if as an uneducated hearer you dismissed the first clause, '*In principio erat Verbum*,' why do you complain of what follows: '*Et Verbum erat apud Deum*?' Did you hear '*in Deo*' [and not '*apud Deum*'] in order to interpret it as the utterance of a hidden thought? Or has the difference between 'to be in' (*inesse*) and 'to be with' (*adesse*) escaped your simplicity? For indeed, what was *in principio* is declared to be 'with' another (*cum altero*), not 'in' another (*in altero*).

³³ *De Trinitate*, II.17.8–10.

³⁴ *Ibid.* II.15.1–4.

Hilary repeatedly stresses that God uses the language of scripture to express in words best adapted to our human understanding who he is. Careful attention to the language and grammar of scripture yields a proper understanding of God. Photinus' interpretation of the prologue abuses these words by reading *apud Deum* as *in Deum* and, in the end, promoting a defective understanding of God. When scripture pronounces that the Son is *apud Deum*, it designates, argues Hilary, the Son's co-eternity with the Father. As we have seen in Chapter 5, Hilary's argument continues by demonstrating that co-eternity implies and necessitates the co-equality and consubstantiality of the Father and the Son.

Finally, as we have seen, Hilary explicitly uses the prologue to the Gospel of John in Book One to articulate his saving faith: 'God the Word became flesh that through his Incarnation our flesh might make progress towards God the Word.'³⁵ It was Hilary's faith in the saving work of the Son which calmed his anxious and troubled soul. When the co-eternity and co-equality of the Father and Son is undermined, so too, argues Hilary, is the salvation that is only available in what Christ has done. Hilary continues in Book One to use the opening verses of the prologue to construe the false teaching of Photinus with that of the Homoians gathered at Sirmium in 357. Although Book One is not the place for an extended rebuttal of the theological and exegetical moves made by his opponents, we do see in Hilary's brief comment the exegetical issues that will occupy his mature discussion in Book Two and Three. Hilary writes:

There are others, on the contrary—since there is no salvation without Christ who in the beginning was God the Word (*erat Deus Verbum*) with God (*apud Deum*)—who, while denying the birth, have acknowledged creation alone, so that the birth does not admit the true nature of God, and creation teaches that he is a false god, and, while this would misrepresent the faith in the nature of the one God, it would not exclude it in the mystery. In place of the true birth they substitute the name and faith of creation, and separate him from the true nature of the one God in order that a creature may not usurp the perfection of the Godhead, which had not been given by the birth of a true nature.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid. I.11.19–20.

³⁶ Ibid. I.16.13–21.

A careful reading of the prologue to the Gospel of John attends to its context and grammar, recognizes the unity of scripture, and discerns that the point of the text is our salvation. Throughout Hilary's discussion of the relationship between the Father and the Son, he underscores the reciprocal relationship between God's nature and work. For Hilary, to know who God is is to know what he has done and continues to do for the salvation of his people. The relationship between theology proper and soteriology is perhaps best seen here in Hilary's use of the prologue, but it is a presupposition or commitment that guides all of his exegesis.

Proverbs 8: 22 ff.

The text from Proverbs 8: 22 ff. was used extensively during the fourth century by the various 'Arian' parties to demonstrate the createdness of the Son, who, though a perfect creature of God and through whom the Father made all things, was nonetheless created before all times and ages.³⁷ Hilary discusses the text from Proverbs 8 in Books Four and Twelve.³⁸ The discussion in Book Four follows Hilary's comments on the prologue to the Gospel of John discussed above, and precedes a lengthy reflection on the Christological character of Old Testament

³⁷ *De Trinitate*, IV.11–12. The description of the Son as a 'perfect creature of God' unlike all other creatures is from Arius' letter to Alexander of Alexandria, quoted by Hilary at IV.12–13 and VI.5–6. For a standard 'Arian' reading of Proverbs 8, see Eusebius of Nicomedia's letter to Paulinus of Tyre, in Theodoret of Cyrus, *HE* I.5, and the *Ekthesis Makrostichos* from Antioch 344 in Athanasius, *De Synodis*, 26. The 'Arians' argued that Proverbs 8: 22 discussed the generation or creation of the Son from the Father. The pro-Nicenes argued that Proverbs 8: 22 discussed the Incarnation of the Son, not his eternal generation from the Father. For an acknowledgment of both of these views, see Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 13–14.

³⁸ Although we have seen above and in previous chapters how Basil of Ancyra and his theological circle influenced Hilary's understanding and appreciation of the polemical and theological utility of the prologue to the Gospel of John, a similar influence is not found with Hilary's mature understanding of Proverbs 8: 22 ff. Although Basil correlates his understanding of Proverbs 8 with the Gospel of John, a move that would seem amenable to Hilary's own efforts, Hilary's exegesis departs from Basil and follows a more explicitly pro-Nicene reading of this text. For Basil, see Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 73.7.2–8.5. For standard pro-Nicene readings, see ps.-Athanasius (Marcellus?), *Expositio Fidei*, 3 (for discussion of this text, see Hanson, *Search*, 231–4); Athanasius, *Orationes Contra Arianos*, III.18–82, esp. III.45.

theophanies. Hilary's discussion in Book Four continues his insistence that the Son is a co-creator and therefore co-eternal with the Father. As we will see, Hilary's argument does not fully explain how he moves theologically and exegetically from the acknowledgment of the Son's pre-temporal existence as the one through whom all things were created to an affirmation of the Son's co-eternity and co-equality with the Father. Hilary's mature argument in Book Twelve, on the other hand, proceeds at a nuanced and sophisticated level, as his exegesis attends to the context and grammar of Proverbs 8 to demonstrate his pro-Nicene theology.

As noted above, after Hilary reproduces Arius' letter to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria at the beginning of Book Four, he argues that his opponents falsely interpret Deuteronomy 6: 4 in order to deny the Son's divinity. Hilary refutes their argument by correlating texts from the Old and New Testaments that emphasize the Son's work in the creation of all things. It was in this context that he appealed to the prologue to the Gospel of John. After establishing the Son's work in creation, Hilary turns next to Genesis 1: 26–7 (*God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image and likeness...'*). He proceeds to exploit the phrase 'let us make' to demonstrate that the Father is not an isolated being, but that another, the Son, is present with him.³⁹ Moreover, insists Hilary, the phrase, *our image (nostrum imaginem)*, indicates that there is no 'difference' between them in terms of nature, otherwise the scriptural witness would have 'our images' (*imagines nostras*).⁴⁰

Hilary continues by unexpectedly introducing Proverbs 8: 22 ff. into his discussion. Wisdom, who is Christ, the Son of God, is present with the Father in arranging and ordering the world. When it is said, *Let us make*, the command (*iussio*) is given by the Father and the deed (*factum*) done by the Son or Wisdom. What we have here, notes Hilary, is a distinction between persons (*Personarum*), not works, which would suggest a distinction in nature.⁴¹ Hilary's use of Proverbs 8 demonstrates for him how Wisdom, the Son of God, is with the Father and cooperates with him in bringing about the creation of the world. The only difference between the Father and the Son/Wisdom is one of person, not work or nature.

³⁹ *De Trinitate*, IV.17–18.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* IV.18.1–7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* IV.21.8–31.

At this point, in what must be an addition to the original contents of Book Four, Hilary acknowledges that much more needs to be said about Proverbs 8, but that discussion is postponed for a later book: namely, Book Twelve.⁴² Although Hilary's use of Proverbs 8 supports his own understanding of the unity in nature and diversity in person between the Father and the Son, his argument reveals a certain misunderstanding of the polemical use of Proverbs 8 by his anti-Nicene opponents. In Book Four, Hilary chooses not to address verse 22 ('The Lord created me for the beginning of his ways, for his works'), and focuses instead on verses 28–31, which emphasize that Wisdom was with the Father in the creation of the heavens and earth.⁴³

When we turn to Book Twelve, we encounter Hilary's mature reflection on Proverbs 8. He begins with a textual analysis of verses 22 and 23. In verse 22 we read, *Dominus creavit me in initium viarum suarum* (Prov. 8: 22, LXX).⁴⁴ The use of the preposition 'in' indicates, notes Hilary, purpose and time. The careful wording of the verse reveals that Wisdom 'had been created *for* the beginning of the ways of God and *for* his works *in time* (*a saeculo*)'.⁴⁵ Moreover, continues Hilary, lest anyone attempt to subordinate the Son's 'infinite birth to time (*tempori nativitatem infinitam*)', the text continues to state that Wisdom was established 'before the ages' (Prov. 8: 23, LXX: *ante saecula*).⁴⁶ The text makes an important distinction for Hilary between 'created in time for some purpose' and 'established before the ages'. This distinction, insists Hilary, allows the attentive reader to understand that 'the establishment is *ante saeculum* and the creation for the beginning of the ways and for the works *post saeculum*'.⁴⁷ The deliberate wording of the text prevents anyone from correlating the 'creation' of Wisdom *post saeculum* or *a saeculo* with the *ante saeculum* of the generation or establishment of Son from the Father.

The text continues, 'Before he made the earth, before he established the mountains, before all the hills, he begot (*genuit*) me' (Prov. 8: 25–6, LXX).⁴⁸ Here we read, notes Hilary, that the one who was

⁴² *De Trinitate*, IV.22.

⁴³ Hilary does cite Proverbs 8: 22 at IV.11 as part of a litany of 'Arian' texts. This litany of verses was certainly added by Hilary when he revised his earlier works in 358. In fact, Hilary discusses almost none of the key texts he identifies in this section.

⁴⁴ *De Trinitate*, XII.35.7–8.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* XII.36.9–10.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* XII.36.14–15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* XII.36.19–21.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* XII.37.2–3.

established *ante saeculum* was already begotten. By stating that Wisdom was begotten before the temporal creations of earth, mountains, and hills, the text is attempting to draw our mind to the contemplation of infinity, and particularly Wisdom's infinite eternity.⁴⁹ At this point Hilary takes up the issue raised in Book Four but left unexplained: namely, how does the pre-temporal existence of the Son or Wisdom guarantee co-eternity with the Father? Hilary begins by quoting Proverbs 8: 28–31, the text used in Book Four to demonstrate that Wisdom was with God the Father when the heavens and earth were created. We read, 'God made the regions, both the uninhabitable parts and the heights that are inhabited under the heavens. When he prepared the heavens and when he set apart his dwelling place, I was with him' (Prov. 8: 26–7, LXX). Although the text clearly states that Wisdom was with God the Father *before* the creation of the heavens, it is still susceptible to an anti-Nicene reading. Hilary explains, 'although he precedes these created things in time, he is nevertheless not infinite if we concede only that he was born before temporal things.'⁵⁰ If it is argued that he is born before temporal things, his birth is still expressed in temporal terms and understood in relationship to time, created or uncreated.

To suggest that Wisdom is prior only to temporal things makes a false assumption about the creative work of God. Such an assumption, notes Hilary, suggests that the preparation of the heavens is a deliberative act that requires time. Hilary asks: 'Is the preparation of the heavens a matter of time for God, so that a sudden movement of thought entered his mind, as if it had been previously inactive and dull, and in a human way he searched for ingredients and instruments for the making of the heavens?'⁵¹ God does not pause for reflection in the preparation of any work. Although created things have a temporal beginning insofar as their creation is concerned, they do not have a beginning when it comes to the knowledge and power of God. Hilary explains: 'Although the things that shall be in the future are yet to be insofar as they must first be created, yet to God, for whom there is nothing new or sudden in the things to be created, they have already been made. From the perspective of time, it remains for them to be created; from the perspective of the prescient

⁴⁹ Ibid. XII.37.19–22.

⁵⁰ Ibid. XII.38.13–14.

⁵¹ Ibid. XII.39.4–8.

activity of the divine power, they already have been created.⁵² From our human perspective, we are able to reflect on creation only in temporal terms. Such an understanding is appropriate, notes Hilary, when we are talking about the actual creation of the hills, mountains, or earth. But such a temporal understanding is wrong if we are considering the eternal counsel of God. Put simply, all that exists in time exists eternally in the mind of God. There is no succession of thought for God, argues Hilary, such that the idea of creating the heavens came first, and then after further consideration God set about the task of creating the earth, first flat, then with mountains, and finally with gentle rolling hills.⁵³ With this in mind, when Wisdom announces that it has been born *ante saecula* (Prov. 8: 23, LXX) and that it is present in creating the heavens and the earth, it teaches, insists Hilary, that it is co-eternal (*coaeternam*) with God the Father.⁵⁴

Finally, Hilary returns to Proverbs 8: 22 and the idea that Wisdom is created. The attentive reader must distinguish *nativitas ante saecula* and *creatio in initium viarum Dei et in opera*.⁵⁵ The generation or birth of Wisdom, the Son of God, before the ages is not the same thing as his creation for the ways and works of God which refers to the appearances of the Son in the various Old Testament theophanies and the Incarnation. The one created is the same one who was before the ages; the former involves time (*tempus*), the latter is timeless (*intemporelem*).⁵⁶ When the words of Proverbs 8: 22 are understood properly and in the context of God's creative work and progressive dispensation of his saving work, the reader sees that Wisdom, who was created *for* the works and ways of God and not *because* of these works, speaks not about the generation *ante saecula* but about God's saving work which had its beginning *a saeculo*.⁵⁷

Hilary ends his comment on Proverbs 8 by turning to the Old Testament theophanies of the Son, as he did in Book Four. Since Christ is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1: 24) and the Way to the Father (John 14: 6), he appeared to the Patriarchs and Prophets, explains Hilary, in order to prepare God's people for how they would return to the Father through the Son, the Way, by means of the mystery of

⁵² *De Trinitate*, XII.39.22–6.

⁵³ *Ibid.* XII.40.1–12.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* XII.39.28

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* XII.42.2–3.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* XII.42.9–10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* XII.44.34–7.

his final dispensation.⁵⁸ The Son who is co-eternal with the Father was created as the beginning of the ways for the works of God in order to prepare God's people for his Incarnation and redeeming work. To appreciate the unity of scripture, the faithful reader must recognize Christ's work in these theophanies and how they prepare God's people for his Incarnation and saving work. Moreover, in order to preserve the mystery of the eternal generation of the Son, the reader must carefully note the grammar and context of Proverbs 8 and read it in the light of the soteriological narrative that governs all of scripture.

HILARY'S THEOLOGICAL METHOD

When Hilary decided to revise his earlier works and compose *De Trinitate* in 358, he creatively integrated the theological and polemical strategies of his Homoiousian friends with his own pro-Nicene theological commitments. We have noted the extensive revisions Hilary made to *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos* in the previous chapters of this monograph. It is significant, however, that Hilary chose not to begin *De Trinitate* with the newly revised Book Two. He certainly could have. Hilary, however, deliberately chose to place Book One at the front of his treatise. To some extent, he had to do this in order to offer the reader some assistance in working through *De Trinitate*. We have noted Hilary's heightened sensitivity to the ordering of his discussion, and his constant request that the reader exercise patience in reading his whole treatise. Toward this end, Hilary composed a synopsis of each book of *De Trinitate* in order to give the impression that the development of his treatise, odd as it may sometimes seem, was deliberate. Nowhere does Hilary tell the reader that he has heavily edited two separate works, updating their theological and exegetical arguments to reflect the contemporary Trinitarian debates of the 350s, and combined them to form *De Trinitate*.

Hilary's helpful explanation for how his argument in *De Trinitate* proceeds, and his summary of Books Two to Twelve, come only at the

⁵⁸ Ibid. XII.45.13–14.

end of Book One. Again, Hilary could have chosen to include only this final section of Book One as an introduction to his treatise and quickly moved to the beginning of his argument in Book Two. But he did not. Instead, Hilary offered a lengthy reflection on the journey of his troubled soul to the Christian faith. The final three chapters of this monograph have explained in detail that the purpose of this narration was to establish Hilary's theological method for approaching the mystery of God. His two chief concerns are the relationship between faith and reason in acquiring theological knowledge, and the normative role of scripture in the pursuit of that knowledge. From Hilary's perspective, when he began the task of revising his earlier works (*De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*) in 358, he deemed it necessary to offer a sustained reflection on how a person goes about the task of discussing God before addressing the contemporary challenges to his own pro-Nicene theology. As we have seen, it became apparent to Hilary that asserting the priority of faith and the normative role of scripture in theological reflection does not guarantee an authentic and proper reading of what scripture proclaims about God.

If we move beyond the exaggerated rhetoric and polemic used by Hilary to describe the method of his opponents, we see his own positive and constructive understanding of what is necessary to secure a pro-Nicene reading of scripture: a proper understanding of God requires a proper understanding of yourself. When people pause to reflect on their life and the world around them, they are led to consider, argues Hilary, their own mortality and the inevitability of their own death. Once this inner conflict ensues, the person will search, as Hilary's soul did, for an answer that says death is not the final end and purpose of human life. It is this perspective of the troubled soul and the recognition of its mortality that prepares a person to approach scripture humbly and faithfully. As the person progresses in his reading of scripture, he discovers that all of scripture is governed by a soteriological narrative that discloses the co-eternity and co-equality of the Father and Son. The purpose of scripture is not to invite philosophical speculation or encourage abstract musings about God, but to comfort troubled souls and give them the knowledge that the God who created them is the same God who redeemed them. Hilary explains: 'God does not call us to the blessed life through difficult questions, nor does he create confusion for us by

the various uses of persuasive speech. For us eternal life is certain and easy: believe that Jesus was raised from the dead by God and confess that he himself is the Lord.⁵⁹ It is this pastoral concern and understanding of scripture, established from the very beginning of Book One in the so-called autobiographical narrative, and worked out at length throughout *De Trinitate* in the articulation of his theological method, that governs Hilary's pro-Nicene theology.

⁵⁹ *De Trinitate*, X.70.27–31.

Conclusion

Mark Twain describes a classic as 'something that everybody wants to have read and nobody wants to read'.¹ If that is the case, Hilary of Poitiers' *De Trinitate* might rightfully claim to be a classic. Students and colleagues easily recognize Hilary's name and grant him a certain amount of importance in the history of the church, but struggle to identify any theological contribution he might have made to the fourth-century Trinitarian debates. To be sure, scholars working on these debates fare a little better, but even they struggle to assess Hilary's own contribution to the history of Christian thought. Rarely will someone write an article or monograph on Hilary that does not spend some time trying to identify his theological debt: from Tertullian to Athanasius, scholars search for the source of Hilary's thoughts. Most are reluctant to credit Hilary with his own theological and exegetical creativity in articulating a pro-Nicene theology. Admittedly, my monograph has participated somewhat in that effort by locating the impetus for Hilary's revised efforts in *De Trinitate* with the Homoian manifesto from the synod of Sirmium in 357, and by identifying Basil of Ancyra and his circle as a major contributor to Hilary's mature thoughts on the Trinity.

Hilary's dubious place in the minds of students and scholars today mirrors his reception throughout the history of the church. His contemporaries were divided over whether he ought to be praised or condemned for his labours. The more stringent Nicenes, like Lucifer of Cagliari, Hilary the Deacon, and Faustinus, vehemently denounced his collaboration with the so-called 'semi-Arians' like

¹ Mark Twain, *Speeches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 194.

Basil of Ancyra. Athanasius chose silence as a way of expressing his dissatisfaction with Hilary's conciliatory efforts. As the years passed and the political winds shifted, Hilary's name soon became associated with the church's most widely recognized theologians. His works were sought and used by Gregory of Elvira, Phoebadius of Agen, Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, Leo, John Cassian, and Theodoret of Cyrus, among others. Indeed, by the seventh century Hilary's name is joined with Ambrose and Augustine as a 'pillar' of the church.²

During the medieval period theologians sought to balance the traditionally established high regard for Hilary's name with what they perceived as questionable theological positions taken by him. Although Hilary's name continued to be placed on shortlists of important Fathers, a great deal of literary output was now devoted to clearing him from any association with theological problems.³ For example, Abelard took the position that anything deemed questionable in Hilary's writings should be discounted as coming from Origen.⁴ Bonaventure was so troubled by some of Hilary's Christological statements that he suggested they might be *contra fidem*.⁵ Similar attempts to reconcile Hilary's infelicitous statements with the church's teaching were made by Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. Frustrated with efforts to recover an orthodox understanding of Hilary's Christology, someone—perhaps Bonaventure himself—relieved the situation by circulating a pious rumour. According

² Jonas Bobiensis, *Vita S. Columbani*, 87.1014A; quoted in Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, vol. 1, trans. Mark Sebanc (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 275, n. 59.

³ *Ibid.* 1: 4–8, see esp. nn. 33, 39, 49, 59, 72, and 75 on pp. 274–6. For a nice summary of the efforts of these medieval theologians to reconcile Hilary's Christology with orthodoxy, see Kevin Madigan, 'On the High-Medieval Reception of Hilary of Poitiers's Anti-"Arian" Opinion: A Case Study of Discontinuity in Christian Thought', *Journal of Religion*, 78: 2 (1998) 213–29.

⁴ Abelard, *Sic et Non*, prologue (PL 178: 1342–3); quoted in de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, 202. For Abelard's Latin, see the corresponding footnote in de Lubac. Abelard's use of Hilary stands out among the medieval writers. He used Hilary's *De Trinitate* in the *Sic et Non*, *Theologia Christiana*, and *Theologia Scholarium*. For whatever reason, however, most of Abelard's citations are from Book Twelve of *De Trinitate*.

⁵ Bonaventure, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, in *S. Bonaventurae Opera Omnia*, studio et cura PP. Cellegii a S. Bonaventura, 11 vols. (Grottaferrata: Collegium S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1882–1902), 3.16 dubium 1, 3: 359. Cited in Madigan, 'Discontinuity', 215, 221–2.

to the rumour, William of Paris had seen a statement of retraction in which Hilary corrected his unorthodox statements on Christ's suffering.⁶ This rumour freed the medieval writers from defending Hilary's seemingly untenable Christological position, and preserved his orthodoxy and theological integrity for the medieval church. The usefulness of this rumour persisted well into the sixteenth century, and is found, among other places, in the writings of the Lutheran theologian Martin Chemnitz.⁷

Interest in Hilary continued during the Reformation, as his literary corpus, like that of many other Church Fathers, was reduced to citation and used as an authority in various church disputes. Although scholars today are less concerned with claiming Hilary's support in ecclesiastical disputes and more interested in locating his theological contribution within the historical debates on the Trinity, they have been hindered by Hilary himself. When Hilary decided in 358 to recast his own refutation of anti-Nicene theologies, he chose to revise his earlier treatises, *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, rather than writing a new work that would integrate his own pro-Nicene concerns with the polemical and theological strategies articulated by Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousians. He further complicated matters by attempting to conceal his use of these earlier works by adding new prefaces and, at times, drastically altering the original argument and content of the material. These moves by Hilary have left scholars with a confusing final text whose early books (Books Two to Six) are filled with editorial mistakes, chronological inconsistencies, and, at times, abrupt shifts in content.

The confusion introduced by Hilary has been carried over into the scholarly assessments of his treatise. There is no consensus on the dating of *De Trinitate*, the theological contribution of the work, or the opponents being engaged by Hilary. The most that has been said

⁶ Bonaventure suggests that William of Paris had seen this letter. See Albert the Great, *Commentarii in IV Sententiarum*, in *B. Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*, ed. É. Borgnet (Paris: Vivès, 1890–95), 3.15.G.10 solutio, p. 287; Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombard*, ed. P. Mandonnet and R. P. Moos (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1929–47), 3: 505, n. 1; Bonaventure, *Sent.*, 3.16.1.1 ad primum, p. 346. For a discussion of these sources, see Madigan, 'Discontinuity', 223, nn. 40–1.

⁷ Martin Chemnitz, *Oratio de Lectione Patrum sive Doctorum Ecclesiasticorum* (1554), (1653), 4, and *De Duabus Naturis in Christo* (1653), cap. III, p. 15.

about the structure and chronology of Hilary's treatise is that he combined two works to create *De Trinitate*. Nearly all scholars agree that the first work, *De Fide*, comprises Books One to Three, and *Adversus Arianos* comprises Books Four to Twelve. Little is offered for when Hilary may have combined these two works, and nothing on why he did this.

This monograph has sought to advance our understanding of the structure and chronology of Hilary's treatise by re-evaluating all of the scholarly assumptions made about *De Trinitate*, and by sorting through and identifying the various editorial stages of the treatise. When Hilary decided to combine *De Fide* and *Adversus Arianos*, he prefaced them with Book One, which addresses the proper theological method to use in a discussion on God, added new prefaces to Books Two to Six to give the appearance of an orderly and unified treatise, and drastically revised the text of *De Fide* to reflect his mature understanding of the Trinitarian debates. The first scholarly assumption that has been dismissed in this monograph is that *De Fide* comprised Books One to Three.⁸ Indeed, it is only when Book One is freed from *De Fide* that one begins to understand the complex reworking of Books Two and Three by Hilary in 358, and to see the various reasons that led him to recast his efforts in articulating his pro-Nicene theology.

The second scholarly assumption that has been dismissed is that *Adversus Arianos* comprises Books Four to Twelve. To be sure, the scholarly commitment to designating all of these books as belonging to a treatise against the Arians has less to do with strong arguments in its favour and more to do with the absence of any argument challenging this designation. A close reading of Hilary's text reveals that he decided to recast his efforts with *De Trinitate* by the time he came to write Book Seven. Therefore, *Adversus Arianos* only consisted of Books Four to Six. This designation brings a great deal of clarity to these middle books, and explains their underwhelming argument as

⁸ I do not wish to make light of this scholarly assumption, as I too assumed that Book One was part of *De Fide* in my early work on Hilary's *De Trinitate*. For example, see Carl Beckwith, 'A Theological Reading of Hilary of Poitiers' "Autobiographical" Narrative in *De Trinitate* 1.1–19', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 59: 3 (2006), 253.

compared to the revised *De Fide* and the highly engaged theological argument of Books Seven to Twelve.

By identifying the textual limits of Hilary's original writings and the point at which he began writing *De Trinitate* in earnest (that is, Book Seven), a new understanding of Hilary's treatise emerges. The synod of Sirmium in 357 and its Homoian manifesto was the historical event central to Hilary's new vision. After collaborating with Basil of Ancyra and his circle in 358, Hilary decided to recast his own rebuttal of the various anti-Nicene theologies by integrating the theological and polemical insights and strategies of the Homoiousians with his own mature pro-Nicene commitments. Although indebted to Basil and his circle for his deeper understanding of Photinus of Sirmium and the Homoians, Hilary does not hesitate to modify Basil's arguments to articulate his own commitment to the co-equality and consubstantiality of the Father and Son.

When Hilary decided to recast his efforts in 358, he composed new prefaces for Books Two to Six, added lengthy sections to Books Two and Three that reflected his mature understanding of Photinian and Homoian theology, and placed a detailed reflection on theological method as the first book of his new treatise. These added prefaces and sections have all gone undetected in the scholarship on Hilary's treatise, and have contributed to the mixed reception of Hilary and his work in the history of the church and by scholars today. By not observing these alterations to Hilary's text, the reader moves unexpectedly from pious thought to polemical argument, from issues unrelated to the Trinitarian debates of the 350s to issues of great concern for the pro-Nicenes and Homoiousians. Moreover, by assuming the integrity of Books Two and Three and an early date for their composition, scholars have wrongly described these books as a catechetical work that positively expresses the Christian faith,⁹ and

⁹ Although this characterization may have been appropriate for the original *De Fide*, it is very misleading given the present state of the text. See e.g. P. Galtier, *Saint Hilaire de Poitiers, le premier docteur de l'église latine* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1960), 36–42; M. Simonetti, 'Note sulla struttura e la cronologia del "De Trinitate" di Ilario di Poitiers', *Studi Urbanati*, 39 (1965), 278; C. Kannengiesser, 'Hilaire de Poitiers', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, VII/1 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1969), col. 479; P. Smulders, 'A Bold Move of Hilary of Poitiers: *Est ergo erans*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 42 (1988), 121; and, more recently, M. Figura and J. Doignon, SC 443, 'Introduction', 50.

have promoted the false view that Hilary's theology develops within *De Trinitate*: suggesting, for example, that the argument in Book Seven reveals a deeper engagement with the Trinitarian debates than Books Two and Three.¹⁰ Hilary's argument certainly develops from 356 to 358, but, given the editorial changes to *De Fide* in 358, such development is not found in the final form of *De Trinitate*. The addition of highly nuanced arguments against Photinus and the Homoians in Books Two and Three effectively obscures any such development within the treatise.

The most interesting addition or change to Hilary's treatise is found with Book One. He deliberately placed this book at the front of *De Trinitate* in 358. Showing that he is no slave to clarity, Hilary chose to reflect on sources of knowledge about God, the respective roles of faith and reason in theological reflection, and the normative role of scripture in theological discourse by using the literary trope of his troubled soul's journey to the Christian faith. By composing what purports to be an autobiographical reflection on his soul's movement from popular philosophy to Christianity, Hilary only further complicated the scholarly engagement with his treatise. Scholars have been so taken by the seemingly unanswerable question of the narrative's historical reliability that they have proceeded to say very little about the theological content of Book One and its importance for the structure of *De Trinitate*. This lack of engagement seems to be more the result of chronological assumptions about the book and less the result of its peculiar literary style. Since nearly all scholars have assumed that this book belongs to *De Fide*, they have read it as the first book composed by Hilary when he set about the task of engaging his fourth-century contemporaries on the question of God. As such, the narrative has been taken at face value, whether accepted as historically accurate or not, and seen as the introduction or prologue to the real argument which begins in Book Two.

When we approach Book One knowing that Hilary deliberately wrote it and placed it at the front of his treatise in 358, we are no longer able to see it as a gratuitous reflection on his journey to the faith. Hilary uses Book One to articulate his theological agenda and

¹⁰ A recent example would be Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 180–2.

to polemically construe the theological method of his Photinian and Homoian opponents with the vain speculations of the philosophers. Moreover, Hilary's Book One allows him to contextualize his discussion of the Trinity, as Basil of Ancyra had done, with soteriology. To reflect on the mystery of God is to reflect on God's saving work. Although Hilary uses a great deal of exaggerated rhetoric and polemical argument to describe the method of his opponents, Book One and the alterations to *De Fide* also serve as an apologetic rejoinder to what many considered Hilary's simple endorsement of the scriptural witness with an unreflective faith. Hilary uses the opportunity to revise his earlier works in 358 to respond to these concerns and offer a positive role for the gift of reason—heavenly reason, as he calls it—in the understanding and defence of what faith confesses.

As noted at the outset, the most under-studied issue in Hilary scholarship has been the structure and chronology of his principal work, *De Trinitate*. As we have seen, the main reason stems from the confusing final form of the text. By offering a new understanding of the structure and chronology of *De Trinitate*, by identifying Hilary's main theological opponents as Photinus of Sirmium and the Homoians gathered at Sirmium in 357, and by showing the centrality of theological method and the soteriological context of all theological reflection for Hilary, I hope that this monograph encourages a fresh reading of *De Trinitate* and a renewed appreciation of and engagement with Hilary's creative and original contributions to the fourth-century Trinitarian disputes.

Appendix: From De Fide to De Trinitate

Book One

- Written during 358 and added as introductory reflection on theological method for the newly conceived *De Trinitate*.

Book Two

- Originally the first book of *De Fide* and written in 356 after the synod of Béziers.
- Original contents: brief discussion of the Father, 6–7; some homiletical comments on the eternal generation of the Son and our need to trust in scripture, 9.8–20, 11.14–19, 22.1–18, 24.1–28.5; and a somewhat general discussion of the Holy Spirit, 29–35.
- Material added during 358: preface, 1–5; positive statement on the relationship between the Father and the Son, 8.1–9.8; Litany of verses from the Gospel of John, 10.1–11.13; Lengthy excursus on Photinus of Sirmium’s distortion of John’s prologue, 12.1–21.16; brief excursus on the difference between Marcellus of Ancyra and Photinus, 22.19–23.26.

Book Three

- Originally the second book of *De Fide* and most likely written in 356 after Béziers.
- Original contents: homiletical comments on Christ’s miracles, 5–8, 18–21; and reflections on the limitations of the human mind, wisdom, and folly, 24–6.
- Material added during 358: preface, 1–4; excursus on the glorification of the Father by the Son and Son by the Father, 9–17; discussion of name/nature and ‘likeness’ language, 22–3.

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