Three Powers in Heaven:
The Trinitarian Controversies in Fourth-Century Roman Syria
And the Christian-Jewish Continuum

by

Emanuel Fiano

Graduate Program in Religion
Duke University

Date: May 15, 2017
Approved:

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Lucas Van Rompay, Supervisor

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Joel Marcus, Supervisor

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Daniel Boyarin

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Elizabeth A. Clark

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Malachi H. Hacohen

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate Program in Religion in the Graduate School
of Duke University

2017
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation pursues a re-examination of the late ancient parting between Christianity and Judaism. It argues that the progressive emergence of two distinct intellectual traditions out of a prior state of interfusion was produced by the crystallization of different discursive modes aimed at addressing a fundamental problem, shared by Jesus-believing and -disbelieving Jews: the question as to how mediation between the godhead and humankind is achieved. The first part of the dissertation tracks the appearance, reception, and history of effects of a particular theological expression in the course of the trinitarian controversies in Roman Syria, in order to illuminate a series of epistemic shifts within Christian theological thought. This study suggests that the increasing formularization, technicalization, and dogmatization of Christian manners of discussing the divine led to the development of a set of highly specialized discursive rules, which in turn brought about the formation of a distinct Christian intellectual field. In the second part of the dissertation, the re-interpretation of a passage from the Babylonian Talmud traditionally understood as disavowing binitarian beliefs leads to the hypothesis of a late ancient rabbinic rejection of the pursuit of exact knowledge about the divine realm, in favor of forms of religious discourse focused on halakhah and more directly supporting rabbinic authority. The dissertation concludes that, more than conflict over specific theological issues (such as the unicity vs.
multiplicity of divine entities), it was different intellectual practices and modes of religious discourse that came to affect Jews’ and Christians’ separate self-understandings.
Dedication

To the blessed memory of my grandparents

Miranda and Tullio,
Adriana and Amadio.
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Abbreviations

Classical Authors and Texts

Addai  Doctrina Addai
Chron. Ed.  Chronicon Edessenum
Hist. aceph.  Historia Acephala
Suda  Suda Lexicon

ʿAbd. ʿAbdisho‘ bar Brikha
Nom.  Nomocanon

Alex. Alexander of Alexandria
Ep. Alex. Epistula ad Alexandrum Constantinopolitanum

Ambr.  Ambrose of Milan
Exp. Luc. Expositio Evangelii secundum Lucam

Amm. Marc. Ammianus Marcellinus
Res gest. Res gestae

Ar. Arius of Alexandria
Ep. Alex. Epistula ad Alexandrum Alexandrinum

Arist.  Aristotle
Cat.  Categoriae

Ath. Athanasius of Alexandria
Apol. sec. Apologia secunda contra Arianos
Decr. De decretis Nicaenae synodi
Ep. fest. Epistulæ festales
Ep. Rufin. Epistula ad Rufinianum
Hist. Ar. Historia Arianorum
Syn. De Synodis Arimini et Seleuciae
Tom. Ant. Tomus ad Antiochenos

Barh. Barhebraeus
Chron. Eccl. Chronicon Ecclesiasticum

Call. Peter of Callinicus
Damian. Tractatus contra Damianum

Chr. John Chrysostom
Eust. In sanctum Eustathium Antiochenum

Cl. Clement of Alexandria
Paed. Paedagogus

Cyr. Cyril of Alexandria
Iuln. Contra Iulianum
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<td>Ephrem the Syrian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carm. Nis.</td>
<td>Carmina Nisibena</td>
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<td>Hymn. fid.</td>
<td>Hymni de fide</td>
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<td>Hymn. haer.</td>
<td>Hymni contra haereses</td>
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<td>Epiph.</td>
<td>Epiphanius of Salamis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adv. haer.</td>
<td>Adversus haereses (Panarion)</td>
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<td>Anc.</td>
<td>Anchatus</td>
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<td>Commentarius in Ps. 92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engastr.</td>
<td>De engastromytho</td>
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<td>Fug.</td>
<td>Apologia de fuga sua</td>
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<td>Inscr. tit.</td>
<td>In inscriptiones titulorum</td>
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<td>Chronicon</td>
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<td>Lucif.</td>
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<td>Vir. ill.</td>
<td>De viris illustribus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hil.</td>
<td>Hilary of Poitiers</td>
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<td>Frag. hist.</td>
<td>Fragmenta historica</td>
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<td>Hipp.</td>
<td>Hippolytus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haer.</td>
<td>Refutatio omnium haeresium (Philosophoumena)</td>
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<td>Noet.</td>
<td>Contra haeresin Noeti</td>
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<td>Ir.</td>
<td>Irenaeus of Lyon</td>
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<td>Adv. haer.</td>
<td>Adversus haereses</td>
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<td>M. Vict.</td>
<td>Marius Victorinus</td>
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<td>Adv. Ar.</td>
<td>Adversus Arium</td>
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<td>Mich. Syr.</td>
<td>Michael the Syrian</td>
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<td>Contra Celsum</td>
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<td>Comm. Cant.</td>
<td>Commentarius in Canticum</td>
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<td>Comm. Tit.</td>
<td>Commentarius in epistulam ad Titum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Princ.</td>
<td>De principiis</td>
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<td>Opt.</td>
<td>Optate of Milevis</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Thes. Thesaurus de sancta et consubstantiali Trinitate

xiii
Don.               Tractatus contra Donatistas
Pall.              Palladius of Galatia
Hist. Laus.            Historia Lausiaca
Philost.            Philostorgius
Hist. eccl.        Historia ecclesiastica
Phot.                  Photius
Comp.                Compendium Historiae ecclesiasticae Philostorgii
Pl.                    Plato
Resp.                  Respublica
Theaet.               Theaetetus
Tim.                  Timaeus
Plut.                 Plutarch
Quaest. plat.        Quaestiones platonicae
Ps.-Didym.          Pseudo-Didymus of Alexandria
Trin.                 De trinitate
Ruf.                  Rufinus of Aquileia
Hist. eccl.            Historia ecclesiastica
Hist. mon.        Historia monachorum in Aegypto
Soc.                   Socrates of Constantinople
Hist. eccl.            Historia ecclesiastica
Sulp.             Sulpicius Severus
Chron.                Chronica
Theod.             Theodoret of Cyrrhus
Hist. eccl.        Historia ecclesiastica
Theoph.            Theophanes the Confessor
Chron.                Chronographia
Zos.                   Zosimus
Hist. nov.            Historia nova

Journals, Serials, and Multi-Volume Publications

A&Cr       Antigüedad y cristianismo: monografías históricas sobre la Antigüedad tardía
AARC      Atti dell’Accademia Romanistica Costantiniana
Adamantius Adamantius: rivista del Gruppo Italiano di Ricerca su «Origene e la tradizione alessandrina»
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<td>AHC</td>
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<td>AHIg</td>
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<td>AIPHOS</td>
<td>annuaire de l’Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves</td>
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<td>AJAH</td>
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<td>Cristianesimo nella storia: ricerche storiche, esegetiche, teologiche</td>
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<td>Leshonenu: A Journal for the Study of the Hebrew Language and Cognate Subjects</td>
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<td>MCom</td>
<td>Miscelánea Comillas</td>
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<td>MediterrAnt</td>
<td>Mediterraneo antico: economie, societă, culture</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The bishops whom Constantine summoned to Arles in 314 in order to solve the Donatist controversy, which was arising in Africa at that time, turned their attention first to a different issue. Possibly at the Emperor’s own request, they examined a resurgent conflict that had vexed Christianity in different forms since the second century: the variance of opinions over the correct timing of the Easter celebration. The ancient quartodeciman movement, whose members aberrantly discontinued their pre-paschal fast on the eve of the Jewish Passover rather than prolonging it to the following Sunday, had subsided in the third century. However, another deviant practice, named protopaschism, still prevented the establishment of one common date for the Easter observance across the Christian world. Quite widespread in the east, protopaschism was the custom of computing the “paschal full moon” on the basis of the Jewish lunar calendar (in which it corresponds to rosh hodesh Nisan, the first day of the month of

\[\text{qui et filius diceris et pater inveniris} \]
\[(\text{Epitaph found in Rome})^1\]

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Nisan) rather than on the basis of the Julian (solar) one, thus causing, in some years, a difference of up to one month in the celebration of Christ’s resurrection.²

The western bishops’ promulgation of the Julian computation as correct was bound to have little effect, due to the limited jurisdiction and executive power of the Council of Arles.³ The issue did not cease to be perceived as pressing, to the point of reportedly inducing Constantine to entrust his fiduciary Hosius of Corduba with its resolution.⁴ Having failed at this attempt, the Emperor put the problem on the agenda of those gathered at the great Council of Nicaea in 325.

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The concern to bind imperial Christendom together liturgically through a unifying date for the paschal feast is a plausible motive for Constantine’s and the council’s intervention on this problem. Nevertheless, a reading of the synodal epistle addressed by the Nicene gathering to the bishops of Egypt suggests the presence of a different anxiety behind the deliberation to disjoin Easter from Jewish celebrations of Passover. A definitive secession from the Jewish people is explicitly adduced as the first of two motives for the decision in the long passage that details the rationale for this decree, and is dwelled upon at a considerable length. This text leaves little doubt that the Council of Nicaea, which was meant to inaugurate the new course of imperially-backed Christianity, saw itself among other things as a force of disambiguation between the practices defining the identity of the Jewish people and those that marked the life of the Church. Thirteen years after the Battle of the Milvian Bridge, the time was ripe and


5 See Theod. Hist. eccl., 1, 9. See also Socr. Hist. eccl., 1, 9. The other reason the text adduces is the need for uniformity within the Church.
the circumstances propitious for a global re-evaluation of the role the Jewish heritage played in Christian self-understanding.\textsuperscript{6}

The Council of Nicaea is of course not primarily memorialized for its intervention on the Easter controversy. It is remembered, rather, as a first, failed, attempt on the part of the Roman Emperor to restore peace in the Church by resolving the theological dissension that had struck it since the beginning of Arius’ preaching (318). During the four decades and a half of heated trinitarian debate that the Nicene Creedal declaration spurred, dissociation from Judaism continued to be a central part of Christian theological discourse. Several theologians, for example, made it a part of their heresiological practice to tar the name of their foes by denouncing their alleged association with Judaism or its hybrids.\textsuperscript{7} While this device was by no means new—the apologists had already deployed it abundantly, and it would continue to appear in


theological polemics throughout late antiquity and the early middle ages—, it became a very distinctive feature of pro-Nicene rhetoric.

The repeated conflation of Judaism and heresy typical of fourth-century trinitarian discourse adds to the language utilized in the report about the paschal decision cited above, to lend credence to the hypothesis that the Nicene council inaugurated a time of particular intensity in Christianity’s scrutiny of its ties with the Jewish tradition. The fourth century has come to be considered in revisionist historiographic models as “the first century of Judaism and Christianity.” It was then, a certain consensus is proposing, that, under the sway of imperial politics finally willing to enforce one religious truth, Jewry became estranged from a community with which—in spite of protestations on both sides—it was still substantially interfused.

Much innovative work has been conducted in recent decades on Christian-Jewish relations in late antiquity. Students of the adversus Iudaeos tradition have reached divergent conclusions about the degree to which the anti-Jewish sentiments expressed by the authors of these early Christian tracts are to be considered a result of real-life interactions between the two communities. Further disagreement reigns about what

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these interactions may have actually looked like. This study attempts to sidestep these and related thorny social-historical interrogations. It does so not to minimize their importance, but rather to approach the parting of the ways from a different angle. It will pose the following question: When and how did Christianity and Judaism *qua* intellectual traditions split paths? I propose that the trinitarian controversies represent an ideal juncture for the investigation of this split. While inscribed within a perduring Christian-Jewish continuum, these disputes constituted at the same time a landmark on the route to the emergence of clearer partitions.

The present **chapter 1**, conceived as an Introduction to the dissertation, will set up its methodological and theoretical framework, discuss some important aspects of the historiography of the trinitarian controversies, and then lay out briefly the contents of the chapters to come.

**1.2 Theoretical Framework**

This dissertation treats the parting between Christianity and Judaism as the parallel emergence of two intellectual traditions. This choice allows setting aside the

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plethora of complications that arise from any attempt at historically conceptualizing religious phenomena as such. Methodological reflection on historical inquiry into intellectual constructs has reached, over time, a greater degree of sophistication than that pursued within the relatively fledgling academic interest in religion per se.\textsuperscript{10} When in this examination Christianity and Judaism are considered as religions, it is so inasmuch as the kind of theoretical problems that (self-identified) members of these traditions attempted to address have been considered, primarily from late modernity onward, to be religious in nature.\textsuperscript{11}

The general notion that, at some point in history, a “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism was consummated—a notion to which this study subscribes—presupposes that the paths on which the “twins in [Rebecca’s] womb”\textsuperscript{12} were to tread were at some protological stage, to all effects and purposes, one and the same. The traditions that would eventually come to be known as Christianity and Judaism were thus in some earlier phase indistinguishable. Conversely, the also

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{10}]The need for a separate historical understanding of religious phenomena, as irreducible to other domains of human experience, can of course be legitimately made the object of questioning.
\item[\textsuperscript{11}]For recent work on the category of religion in late antiquity see B. Nongbri, \textit{Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept} (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2013), with further bibliographical references. On the aptness of the category of religion see D. Boyarin, \textit{How the Jews Got Religion} (forthcoming).
\end{itemize}
agreeable metaphor of two “ways that never parted,” provocatively used in a stream of studies on the topic, implies that the two paths persisted—at the very least—in a state of interfusion until a very late time: up to the end of late antiquity, and possibly well into the middle ages. The perspective adopted in the present study attempts to do justice to the elements of truth that both models display, while also taking into account that when the ways did part, they did so in particular geographical and cultural contexts—not everywhere and for all.

In this perspective the undifferentiated Christian-Jewish continuum out of which the two intellectual traditions emerged is envisioned as one field indebted to second temple Judaism and sustained by a shared monotheistic complex, to be understood as a structure of concepts, a set of ideas, or a constellation of constructs. I should emphasize that so-called pagan monotheistic materials are excluded from this examination. The

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13 See A.Y. Reed, “Jewish Christianity’ after the ‘Parting of the Ways.’ Approaches to Historiography and Self-Definition in the Pseudo-Clementine Literature,” in Becker and Reed, The Ways that Never Parted, 188-231; and in general the essays contained in that volume.

14 A mounting corpus of scholarship has dealt in recent years with the question of pagan monotheism: see P. Athanassiadi and M. Frede, eds., Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); S. Mitchell and P. Van Nuffelen, eds., Monotheism between Christians and Pagans in Late Antiquity (Interdisciplinary Studies in Ancient Culture and Religion 12; Leuven: Peeters, 2010); Eid., eds., One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); E. Peterson, Heis theos. Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur antiken “Ein-Gott”-Akklamation (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1926); repr. in Erik Peterson - Ausgewählte Schriften 8, ed. C. Markschies, H. Hildebrandt and B. Nichtweiss (Würzburg: Echter, 2012); P. Van Nuffelen, “Beyond Categorisation. ‘Pagan Monotheism’ and the Study of Ancient Religion,” CK 18 (2012): 451-463. The label “pagan monotheism” has come to be applied to non-Christian and non-Jewish expressions of “belief in the powers of a unique, supreme divinity, though not necessarily to the exclusion of all other gods,” a belief that is said to have “underpinned most forms of religion in the Roman world of the fourth and fifth centuries
framework for the identification of a monotheistic field employed here does not rely in fact on a phenomenological typology, but rather holds subjects and the communities in which they gather as its ultimate historical reference.

For reasons that might have to do as much with an intrinsic logic of monotheism as with the origins of its Jewish variety, in the complex shared from the first until the fourth century by Jesus-believing and Jesus-disbelieving Jews was inherent a fundamental theoretical tension: How to understand humankind’s relationship to a deity first posited as a radically other object, and then endowed with radical subjectivity? Given this shared tension, the parallel processes of individuation by which, from that continuum, two distinct intellectual traditions precipitated are to be equated with the development of divergent, historically identified discourses through A.D.” (Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *Monotheism between Christians and Pagans*, 1). Sharp critiques of this model have been offered, often with excellent arguments: see e.g. G. Sfameni Gasparro, “Monoteismo pagano nella Antichità tardiva? Una questione di tipologia storico-religiosa,” *ASR* 8 (2003): 97-127; M.V. Cerutti, “Unità del divino e unicità del principio: aspetti della rappresentazione dell’altro,” *ASR* 8 (2003): 179-195; Ead., “Monoteismo pagano? Elementi di tipologia storica,” *Adamantius* 15 (2009): 307-330; and several of the contributions collected in C. Guittard, ed., *Le monothéisme: diversité, exclusivisme ou dialogue ? Association européenne pour l’étude des religions (EASR), Congrès de Paris, 11-14 septembre 2002* (Paris: Éditions Non Lieu, 2010). See also the pugnacious yet interesting review of Mitchell and Van Nuffelen, *Monotheism between Christians and Pagans* in C. Wells, “Spotting an Elephant,” *Arion* 19 (2011): 159-172.

Whether such origins be sought in the Canaanite context of pre-exilic Israelite religion or, as Jan Assmann has it, in Egyptian culture (see e.g. J. Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008)).

For a similar, logical approach to the problem of intermediation in monotheism, though developed in different terms, see M. Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (London and Jerusalem: Continuum and Shalom Hartman Institute, 2007), 1-3.
which the common problem was to be addressed. Among the most prominent discursive modes that late ancient believers in Jesus developed—and effectively as well as definitively set into place during the fourth-century trinitarian controversies—was that of theology, whose characters remained for the most part alien—though not inaccessible, both in principle and in actuality—to then-rising Rabbinic Judaism.

1.3 Methodological Approaches

1.3.1 Intellectual History

Among the Christian theological controversies of late antiquity, it is the fifth-century disputes about the manner of cohabitation of the divine and human elements in Jesus Christ that have received most scholarly attention in recent decades—and understandably so. The fifth-century Christological debates lavishly provide practitioners of intellectual, social, and institutional history with examples of everything that seems worthy of study—and indeed, often, of criticism—about imperial Christendom in late antiquity. In comparison, the fourth-century trinitarian disputes have remained in the shadow.

17 My adoption of the category of “discourse is not specifically Foucaultian, as it does not primarily address Christianity as a totalizing system of power, endowed with effects of truth and consequences for the construction of late ancient selfhood. I intend “discourse” more simply as a set of linguistic codes related to particular practices deployed by identifiable historical actors.

18 This seems to be especially the case in Anglophone scholarly quarters.
The impression anybody would gain from even a casual recognition of scholarship on the trinitarian controversies in the last few decades is that there is very little about these disputes that could be meaningfully appropriated by the history of western or Mediterranean culture. Even in scholarly milieus, the signifier “trinitarian debates” appears to point only to barren contentiousness. With notable exceptions, an opportunity is here being missed for investigating Christianity in late antiquity—including its state of growing separatedness from Judaism—through the first intellectual dispute ever to unfold with such a dense and cohesive web of exchanges, on such a broad (pan-Mediterranean) geographical scale, and in such proximity to political power.19

Granted, any thorough treatment of, e.g., Eusebius of Caesarea or the so-called Cappadocian fathers is bound to engage with some aspects of the trinitarian debates. However, texts, figures, and events that were constitutive of these disputes tend to be invoked only for the information they disclose about themselves and their most proximate contexts. On the other hand, in the rare studies specifically focusing on the

debates *per se*, such texts, figures, and events are often interrogated with normative or constructive-theological investments.

As a result, the trinitarian discussions have largely turned into the reserve either of a historiography devoted to the exact reconstruction of the *histoire événementielle* (occasionally supplemented by a strong prosopographic interest), or of openly confessional readings. Now, as Lewis Ayres wrote with reference to those debates, after some generations of concentration on [...] local (temporal or spatial) examples of the complexity of development, the broad appropriation of modern historiographical techniques is forcing on us anew questions about what it is to speak of continuity and change in belief, questions that need facing on a large and theoretical canvas.\(^20\)

A separate note must be devoted to the war contemporary scholarship has waged against doctrinal labels derived from ancient heresiological practices. Ancient anti-“Arian” rhetoric has constituted an important site for investigations aiming to unmask the will for social control driving the rhetoric of self-styled orthodox writers, intent on policing the boundaries of their communities’ doctrinal identity.

In spite of its many valuable achievements, however, this scholarly project as a whole has not yet proven capable of replacing the traditional broad historical narratives with less tendentious and better explanatory accounts. The focus on heresy and heresiological discourse, with its one-sided interest in persecuted subjects and in the

practices that enabled their marginalization, might be discovered to be after all a curious obverse and an unwitting ally of confessional church history. Insofar as the approach I am proposing does introduce the linguistic matrix and the rhetorical operations the latter makes possible, it does so to assess the historical effects of different actors’ responses to intellectual problems whose substance is not exhausted by language games. If read merely as an empty receptacle of discursive practices, any enunciation located in the past loses full historical intelligibility.

At the same time, it would be myopic even for a historiographic model that takes theological constructs seriously to consider high-end literary products in isolation from the intellectual practices of elite actors. Such practices were themselves embedded in institutional and political contexts that accompanied, influenced, and were in turn affected by the transitions marking Christianity’s and Judaism’s parallel processes of


individuation: there can be no downplaying, e.g., the momentousness of the Constantinian turn for the realization of Christianity’s global ambitions, and for its march away from interfusion with Judaism.

1.3.2 Pragmatic Sociology

At a time of controversy the social and intellectual field is rent. In the trinitarian debates of the fourth century, Christian believers who held each other as brethren suddenly discovered in one another enemies and heretics. Nevertheless, a controversy—even in its most divisive, sectarian, and even violent facets—can be also seen as a ritual through which, when the conflict does not result in institutional split, the eventually reconciled community retroactively sets its broadest boundaries.

After the Council of Constantinople (381) the borders of imperial Christendom coincided in a very real sense—although, of course, with exceptions—with those of the battlefield within which the trinitarian strife had taken place. Not long after the council, the loud cacophony of the trinitarian battles subsided. Even in those eastern regions of the Roman Empire where an anti-Constantinopolitan presence lingered, the fight was over.23 The voices that had resonated for decades—the war cries of homousians,

homoiousians, homoians, heterousians; the catchphrases of Marcellans, Eustathians, Eusebians, “Arians,” Eunomians, Athanasians, Macedonians; the mutual reviling of westerners and easterners; the stirring missives of the ardent pro-Nicene champions; the “meddlesome curiosity” of the lay anti-Nicene sympathizers—petered out.

At this time, all those who, however indirectly, had taken any side in the disputes must have gained awareness, in hindsight, of having partaken in an epoch-making clash. Conversely, all those groups who had preferred to stay out of the disputes, thinking there was nothing at stake for them in the struggle to establish Christ’s identity in ontological terms (and Jesus-disbelieving Jews were obviously among such groups), had de facto sanctioned their extraneity from the intellectual field of imperial Christendom.

The fourth century has long enjoyed among classical scholars the reputation of being a time of intellectual decline in the Roman Empire. The aversion toward culture and the significantly decreased literary production that marked this era must have put in even greater relief the feverish intellectual activities continuing—under the forms,


inter alia, of the release of synodal letters, the exchange of epistles, and the publication of doctrinal treatises—in the period between 319 and 383. Although disciplinary specializations appear to have prevented this from being acknowledged by historians of Greco-Roman literature, by virtue of the trinitarian controversies the fourth century was the century of Christian high culture. It is to be expected that, beyond doctrinal partisanship, the sheer density of literary transactions, involving hundreds of documents, would work toward the solidification of a discrete intellectual field.

1.3.3 Search for Epistemic Ruptures

Attention to the contents of theological reflection will be combined here with a search, within the twists and turns of the debate, for moments of discontinuity that might suggest a break in age-worn intellectual habits and the emergence of new forms of production of theological knowledge. Such an approach bears the mark of the social-constructivist enterprise of the sociology of scientific knowledge, which over the last half century has also become increasingly attuned to the impact of local factors on scientific

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26 Respectively the year traditionally assigned to Of One Body (Ἐνὸς σώµατος), considered the enyclical letter of the council gathered by Alexander of Alexandria (319) and the year of the presentation of four faith declarations to Emperor Theodosius by bishops Nectarius, Eunomius, Demophilus, and Eleusios (respectively an orthodox, a heteroousian, a homoian, and a Macedonian). R.D. Williams, Arius. Heresy and Tradition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 48-61 has provided a strong argument in favor of a complete reshuffling of the chronological order of the earliest Urkunde; by his account, Of One Body would be as late as 325. This document has been commonly deemed to be the work of Alexander himself; for a dissenting opinion, attributing it to Athanasius, see G.C. Stead, “Athenasius’ Earliest Written Work,” JThS 39 (1988): 76-91.
debates. Important historical works on the history of modern science have adopted the insights provided by such models.  

Along similar lines, this study presupposes that neither ways of inquiring into bini- and trini-tarian relations nor assumptions about the ways in which agreement about such matters was to be reached were shared a priori by participants in the debates. It is in the controversies themselves, rather, that culturally situated and geographically embedded intellectual practices and epistemic regimes came to clash, with knowledge traveling variously along routes closely tied to power structures.

The actors’ views about Christ’s relation to the Father and to the cosmos were expressed in ways that could not easily achieve a synthesis. For this to happen, the logic underlying their respective formulations had first to be made commensurable and capable of interlocution. By looking closely at some key passages of the discussions one will find, in ruptures and breaking points, the traces of a process that led to the establishment of an agreed-upon way of discussing the divine—and, eventually, via the Athanasian initiative of the early 360s and the Cappadocian effort of the 370s, to the Constantinopolitan settlement.

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The earliest contemporary construals of the trinitarian controversies, in pioneering works by Adolf von Harnack, Eduard Schwartz, Hans-Georg Opitz, and Adolf Loofs, turned this series of debates into a cohesive sixty-five-year long crisis unfolding under the unfailing guidance of a transparent logic. The masterful historical syntheses on the topic published in the second half of the twentieth century—in primis Simonetti’s and Hanson’s—28 have refined this picture by identifying with clarity different phases within this debate. Building on their works, scholars such as Lewis Ayres have been able to criticize that unitary rendition, and to argue for the existence of a plurality of interlocking debates that collectively constituted what is known as the trinitarian dispute. A treatment, such as the present one, aiming to seize elements of discontinuity may now be forced tactically to retrieve, in a retrograde but provisional fashion, a unitary perspective on the unsmooth and winding path of these theological exchanges.

I have found an important model for my undertaking, aimed at highlighting subtle epistemic shifts in the course of a debate, in Alain de Libera’s monograph on the

late ancient and medieval dispute on universals. In dealing historically—as opposed to philosophically—with that discussion, de Libera sets out to establish interpretive strategies capable of showing epistemological ruptures. He highlights how

le problème des universaux n’est pas un problème philosophique éternel, une question qui traverserait l’histoire par-delà « les ruptures épistémologiques, les révolutions scientifiques et autres changements d’ἐπιστήµη » : c’est un révélateur de ces changements - si changement il y a. L’histoire d’un objet n’est pas un état de la question à une période donnée. Il n’y a ni période ni question données. Il y a des questions durables en ce qu’elles créent leur propre durée.

Among the main elements identified by de Libera as deserving of historical interpretation are a basic text (functioning as the pretext for the problématique) that the historian ought to “describe and analyze within the framework to which it belonged, showing in what and through what it makes history;” a subsequent literary corpus, which is assumed to break with the original text; and “the set of enunciations available at each given moment of history, whereupon the philosopher’s work operates concretely, [and] which constitutes for him the horizon of the questionable (l’horizon du questionnable).”

L’horizon du questionnable in the medieval period, with which Libera’s analysis is mostly concerned, is to be identified with a field composed by the auctoritates, namely

30 Ibid., 13.
31 Ibid.
“the philosophical propositions deemed to have a definitional or operational value.”³²

Given this set of enunciations, the debate unfolds as a function of interpretive continuities, rearrangements or reworkings of those structures, and epistemic discontinuities.³³

It is precisely these three elements—continuities, reworkings, and discontinuities (the latter understood as the recombination of elements)—that the first part of this study will track, through a case study related to the trinitarian controversies in Roman Syria and with exclusive regard to the domain of epistemic practices. My treatment is therefore ipso facto a limited one, and one in whose purview a variety of valuable approaches—from social history to more literarily oriented readings—cannot find their place within the boundaries of a dissertation. The reader will still find in these pages, in a sizeable amount, the sort of history of ideas that makes up the bulk of scholarly writing on the Trinitarian controversies. This engagement, in turn, cannot be disentangled from that type of institutional and political history, having as its object church leaders and their relations to secular authorities, that has long passed under the name of “church history.” It should also be noticed that my intervention could not be farther away, at least in its intentions, from an attempt to translate ancient theological

³² Ibid.
³³ Ibid., 27-28.
constructs into a contemporary philosophical idiom and to diagnose, as for example the analytical-philosophy-minded “Oxford approach” has done, “confusions and faults in what the Fathers were trying to do – mistakes that would not have seduced them had they been able to call upon the logical tools developed in the early 20th Century by Frege, Russell” and others. The goal is here not to demonstrate how ancient theologians could have thought differently about God, but to trace how they came to shift the way they collectively did.

The idiosyncratic contributions and limitations of a historical narrative are often a function of its combined usage of scales and lenses. Looked at from enough of a distance and with a dogmatic-historical interest the trinitarian controversies can legitimately appear, as they did to the modern pioneers of the historiography of ancient Christianity, like a clash—though one marked by a gradation of attachment—between the partisans of Arius and those who resolutely opposed his views. Among the things such a tale sacrifices is an account not only of the ways in which theological trajectories pre-dating the controversy’s inception affected the emergence of the dispute, but also


of the complex and continuous reconfigurations of ecclesiastical alliances throughout the crisis.

Since those earliest attempts at a dogmatic-historical or theological-historical rendition of the trinitarian controversies, the application of varying sets of scales and lenses has led to novel proposals in the historiography of the Christian fourth century. The contribution that the first part of this dissertation hopes to make to that historiography is a re-evaluation of the controversies as a crucial moment in the formation not only of Christian theological contents (the “what” of the construction of belief), but also of the epistemic rules that govern theology as a collective activity (the “how” of that undertaking).

1.3.4 The Geography of the Parting of the Ways

The attempt to illuminate a broad historical dynamic through a case study presents a problem of representativeness: how to negotiate the relationship between the contingency of the story selected and the historical reality upon which one wishes to seize. Although the wager of the instructiveness of the narrative can only be adjudicated by the reader, I hope that the choice to pursue two parallel—yet by necessity asymmetrical—case studies, which will be announced shortly, will prevent the risk of excessive abstraction in the interpretation of intellectual developments. This choice
should also prove helpful with regard to the temptation, ever-present in inquiry into the parting of the ways, to generalize geographically the results of the investigation.

In the context of an examination of the relationships between Jews and Christians living in Persian territory, Adam Becker has reminded us of the importance of narrow geographic contextualizations in scholarship on the separation of Christianity and Judaism. This principle can be applied also to different locales within the Roman *limes*. If the case studies through which the argument outlined above will be presented shed light on any reality larger than the historical experience they narrate, this quality must still be restricted to the geographic boundaries within which the developments referred to took place. At the same time, the tale the two narratives try to tell anew is also one in which space itself plays different roles in the production of knowledge and in the development of ways of debating.

The first and significantly larger part of the study takes place in Roman Syria. Extant documentation for pre-Constantinopolitan theological thought originally expressed in Syriac in the fourth century is practically limited to the works of Ephrem (ca. 306-373) and Aphrahat (ca. 280-ca. 345). Only the writings of the former, a Nisibene poet and theologian who relocated to Edessa in 363, are directly relevant to the present

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work, which focuses on the portion of Syria under the direct political control and cultural influence of the Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{37}

In a series of articles devoted to Ephrem, Sidney Griffith has painted a picture of this deacon as a real \textit{intellectuel engagé} of the Edessene Church, in whose ecclesiastical ideology the local episcopate and the Roman Emperor were indissolubly bound by a sacred alliance in defense of orthodoxy. This proudly Syriac-writing theologian was at the same time a churchman capable of mobilizing the structures of the Greek-speaking Roman Empire, to the point of requesting that imperial force be used against the heretics.\textsuperscript{38}

This apparent contradiction points to the complex problems confronting any attempt to think through the linguistic and cultural status of Syriac Christianity—the

\textsuperscript{37}I adopt the adjective “Syrian” as indicating relationship to a geographic entity and to its distinctive cultural characters, regardless of the language in which these are expressed. On the other hand, I utilize “Syriac” in reference to the Northwesternmost dialect of Aramaic, to the literature that expresses itself in this dialect, and to all the historical manifestations of the religious cultures expressing themselves through that literature.

geo-cultural stream of Christianity that flourished in Syria and Mesopotamia beginning in the second century CE, and which expressed itself in the Syriac language—alongside other contemporary geo-cultural varieties of Christianity in the Western and near-Eastern Roman Empire.\textsuperscript{39}

Whatever the validity of the often-posited connection between the beginnings of Christianity in Syria and a putative "Jewish Christian" tradition, it is certain that Syriac Christianity developed in original ways in part as a result of its close cultural and linguistic ties to the local Jewish communities. While this dissertation does not set out to survey patterns of Christian-Jewish interaction directly, an examination of the parting of the ways in Syria does hold a particular significance. Among other things, such an examination may help conceptualize the diverse yet distinctive geo-cultural cast of Christianity that developed in bilingual Syria, and enrich our understanding of late


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ancient Syriac Christianity’s indebtedness and contribution to Greek-speaking and -
writing Christianity in the region.\textsuperscript{40}

\section*{1.4 The Long Road from Nicaea to Constantinople}

\subsection*{1.4.1 Traditional Accounts}

This section discusses the historiography of the trinitarian controversies, paying
particular attention to twentieth-century revisions of the older consensus and to twenty-
first-century reconceptualizations of the road that led from the Council of Nicaea (325)
to that of Constantinople (381). The Council of Nicaea of 325 declared the \textit{ὁμοουσία}
between the Father and the Son, stated that the Son is “from the ousia of the Father”\textit{(ἐκ της οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός)}, and included an anathema on those who affirmed that he “is
from another substance or essence” \textit{(ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας […] εἶναι)} than
the Father’s. The phrasing of the anathema has provided the basis for a widespread
narrative that casts the relationship between the Council of Nicaea and that of
Constantinople (381) almost as one of dialectical sublation.

Originating with Zahn and propagated by Harnack and Loofs, this account
identified the crux of the dispute in the initial inability, on the part of the theologians

\textsuperscript{40}The dynamics of cultural transfer involved in the fourth-century Syrian trinitarian debates, which
crossed linguistic divides, could be for example fruitfully investigated in light of the Jewish heritage to
provide insight into the nature of the relations between Greek- and Syriac-speaking milieus in this region.
involved in the early phases of the debates, to posit a philosophical distinction between

\textit{ousia} and \textit{hypostasis}.$^{41}$

According to Zahn the Nicene \textit{homoousios}, preaching the numerical identity and
the cohesiveness of the \textit{ousia} of the godhead, was tantamount to the \textit{ταυτοούσιος} (“self-
identical”), \textit{viz}. the expression of complete identification between the Father and the Son
promoted by the monarchians. Zahn had hypothesized the existence of a specific
difference between first-generation Nicenism and the Cappadocian solution, which he
identified with an interpretation of \textit{homoousios} as, respectively, expressing the numeric
identity of the substance (\textit{Wesenseinheit}, “unity of substance”) and a generic identity
(\textit{Wesensgleichheit}, “equality of substance”).$^{42}$ Similarly, Harnack had proposed that the
Cappadocian reinterpretation of the Nicene decision derived from homoiousian
theology, in reaction to the subordinationist and “scientific” theology of the homoians

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$^{41}$See T. Zahn, \textit{Marcellus von Ancyra. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Theologie} (Gotha: F.A. Perthes,
II, 262-264; and F. Loofs, “Das Nicänum,” in \textit{Festgabe von Fachgenossen und Freunden Karl Müller zum

$^{42}$For a clear formulation of the traditional model—which he goes on to contest—see H.C.
Wilhelm Schneemelcher zum 75. Geburtstag}, ed. P. Damaskinos, W.A. Bienert and K. Schäferdie (Stuttgart,
Berlin and Köln: W. Kohlhammer, 1989), 241. For a refutation of the theory that the Nicene \textit{homoousios} was
understood at Constantinople in a homoiousian sense, see A.M. Ritter, \textit{Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein
Symbol. Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. ökumenischen Konzils} (FKDG 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck &
Ruprecht, 1965). See also F. Dinsen, \textit{Homoousios: die Geschichte des Begriffs bis zum Konzil von Konstantinopel
(381)} (Thesis, Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel, 1976) (which unfortunately I have not been able to
consult) and Hanson, \textit{The Search}, 190-202.
and heteroousians.\textsuperscript{43} This story is repeated, in different variations, by many early scholars, and some alternative forms of it are found even in more recent accounts.\textsuperscript{44}

Such a narrative is consonant with a kind of triumphalist conception of the evolution of doctrine that has been lastingly dominant, if at times concealed under a coat of historicism, in historiography.\textsuperscript{45} As late as 1975, for example, the great historian of Christian dogma Alois Grillmeier, in the second edition of his milestone work on the figure of Jesus in the faith of the Church, referred to the Chalcedonian formula—which would import a temporary cessation of hostilities in the fifth-century conflict concerning the manner of cohabitation of the human and divine elements in Christ—as a “hidden entelechy.”\textsuperscript{46}

Similar accounts describe the unfolding of Christian thought in its first few centuries as a providentially driven sequence of twists and turns, inevitably culminating

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{44} See e.g. L. Abramowski, “Trinitarische und christologische Hypostasenformeln,” \textit{Th&Ph} 54 (1979): 41-42.
\end{itemize}
in the eventual orthodox formulations. They often celebrate the orthodox doctrinal achievement as the elaboration most adequately seizing the profound intuitions found in the earliest Christian understanding of Christ. Although it is admitted that orthodoxy re-reads and writes anew the original faith given, it is also assumed that it never completely upsets it, rather showing itself more respectful of its spirit than the heresies it fights.47

Thus, in the case of the trinitarian controversies, all traditional narratives give to the Constantinopolitan Council of 381 the role of a faithful (and fateful) interpreter of the logic ambiguously expressed by Nicaea in 325. Only after a distinction was drawn between ousia and hypostasis, thus these readings have it, would the term homoousios have ceased to convey the identity of the two, and would ousia have come to be understood as an Aristotelian secondary substance (δευτέρα οὐσία).48 A variation on this reconstruction explains that the Aristotelian distinction between ousia and hypostasis


had been lost, and that it was not until its reintroduction in the trinitarian debate on the part of Eunomius, and its reception by Basil of Caesarea, that a stable solution to the trinitarian debate could be provided.\textsuperscript{49}

1.4.2 Revisionist Accounts

Differing assessments have been proposed, in which the theological agreement achieved at Constantinople in 381 is shown as the product of the interventions of the actors in the controversy, occasionally involving the recourse to a past forcefully reinterpreted. Prestige has demonstrated that at Nicaea the \textit{homoousios} was meant to indicate simply equality with God, not unity or identity of substance. The term \textit{homoousios} “was officially laid down, with no suggestion of its being a definition of the unity of God, but solely as a definition of the full and absolute deity of Christ.” Prestige further clarifies: “So far as the Council of Nicaea is concerned, the problem of the divine unity did not arise. The question which it had to settle was whether both the Father and the Son were God in exactly the same sense of the word God.”\textsuperscript{50} It was Athanasius and his allies, rather, who were responsible for developing this stronger meaning.

Additionally, Stead has demonstrated that fourth-century actors did not construe the anathema of the Council of Nicaea directed at those stating that the Son was “from

\textsuperscript{49} X. Morales, \textit{La théologie trinitaire d’Athanase d’Alexandrie} (Collection des études augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 180; Paris: Institut d’études augustiniennes, 2006), 22.

another *hypostasis* (ἐξ ἐτέρας ὑποστάσεως) as condemning the notion that the Son constituted a separate *hypostasis* from the Father. The Nicene phrase, Stead explains, was rather understood as simply disavowing the idea that the Son had originated outside of the Father, *viz.* that he had been drawn out of nothing or out of a substance coeternal with God himself. Stead insisted that this was no interpretive escamotage: rather, the Nicene anathema, vague in its formulation, was at the very least capacious enough in its phrasing to reasonably hold this meaning.\(^5\)

Also building on Stead’s thesis, De Halleux criticized the traditional account described above because of the anachronistic way in which it identified early faithfulness to the Nicene Creed with the triadological question, which the Nicene fathers had left vague. In his assessment, the only concern on the Nicene fathers’ minds was pinning down the generation of the Son—as eternal and natural (as opposed to voluntary)—in terms on which Arius and his followers could not equivocate.\(^5\)

De Halleux’s revisionist paradigm has been followed by others.\(^5\) The sharpness of the contrast between this account of the course of the trinitarian controversies and

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more traditional narratives can be seen from the juxtaposition of the following quotes, respectively by Simonetti and De Halleux:

Il Credo niceno, in sostanza, escludeva, al di là della dottrina ariana, anche tutta l’impostazione della Logostheologie, che si riconosceva nella dottrina delle tre ipostasi e che ormai era largamente rappresentata in Oriente: sotto la volontà di Costantino impose la formula di fede alla maggioranza, ma lo scontento che tale imposizione determinò in Oriente poneva le basi per la ripresa delle ostilità, il che puntualmente si verificò alla morte del’imperatore (337).54

Il est invraisemblable que l’empereur Constantin ait imposé à la majorité du concile une condamnation de la théologie origénienne des hypostaseis, reçue par Alexandre d’Alexandrie lui-même. Fut seule condamnée, dans l’anathème, la négation arienne du caractère éternel, incréé et immuable du Fils, tandis que les formules du credo représentaient un compromis ambigu, encore qu’objectivement favorable aux vieux-nicéens.55

While for Simonetti it is the whole Origenist theology of the Logos (and, correlatively, the doctrine of the hypostaseis) which is condemned at the crypto-monarchian Council of Nicaea, in De Halleux’s evaluation Logos theology, so widespread in the East, could not have been proscribed by the council. The only view that Nicaea censured would have been, therefore, that of the temporal, created, and changeable nature of the Son. De Halleux himself concedes, however, that soon enough the vetero-Nicenes would interpret the Nicene Creed and its anathema in such a way as to identify ousia and hypostasis, whereas the neo-Nicenes would distinguish the two.

1.4.3 Lewis Ayres’s Nicaea and Its Legacy

In the past two decades, the work that has left the most profound marks on the ways in which the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century have been understood and narrated in the English-speaking world is probably Lewis Ayres’s *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (2004). Drawing on almost half a century of revisionist scholarship on numerous aspects of the debates spanning the years 318-381, Ayres provided a novel account of those theological strands that would eventually come to be considered orthodox by Constantinopolitan standards.

At the same time, in the wake of efforts initiated at least as early as 1995, with the publication of a study by Michel René Barnes, Ayres’s book aimed to replace a time-worn geographical paradigm of the development of Christian dogma—a model whose invention has come to be attributed, somewhat inappropriately, to a three-volume study published at the end of the nineteenth century by Théodore De Régnon. The “De Régnon paradigm” portrayed eastern trinitarian theology as having as its point of

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departure the multiplicity in the godhead and moving toward its unity, and described western Christian thought, on the contrary, as starting from the “one” and moving in the direction of the “three.”

Among the contributions of Ayres’s monograph is the attempt at providing a comprehensive and innovative taxonomy of pre-Nicene trinitarian postures. The logical presupposition of this innovation is that

[t]o speak about unity and diversity in God, one must already have agreed that Father and Son (let alone Spirit) are all “part” of the one God. Theologians at the beginning of the fourth century are still grappling with the problem of whether Father and Son are both “true God,” with the question of whether it is possible to speak of degrees of divinity. The division I have tried to make here is between groups who favour different primary metaphors and analogies for speaking about the relationship between God and Word, Father and Son.59

But it is the identification of what Ayres termed a “pro-Nicene” culture,60 intentionally constructed as crossing geographic and linguistic boundaries, which proved to be the most original feature of his effort of reinterpretation of fourth-century Christian thought. As a result, much of the reception of Nicaea and Its Legacy has also focused on this aspect.61 In contrast to Barnes’s tripartite distinction between old, neo-


60 “Pro-Nicene” refers in this dissertation to the favoring of the contents of Nicene Creed of 325, understood in whichever manner. Ayres’s own understanding of the word is clarified below.

61 In their responses to the book, Behr and Beeley argued, though from diverging positions and on different specific matters of detail, that Ayres, eager to mend the alleged split between East and West, had glossed over significant differences in ways of discussing the godhead (for example by applying readings fit for Latin theologians—in particular Augustine—to eastern Greek writers, especially the Cappadocian
and pro-Nicenism. Ayres distinguishes only the label of old Nicene from that of pro-
Nicene, which he assigns to “a constantly developing theology with at least two
significant phases between 360 and 380.”

Ayres’s reflection on the category of pro-Nicenism attempts to answer a set of
questions perceived as urgent: “How should we envisage unity and diversity among
pro-Nicenes? Where can we identify distinct pro-Nicene traditions, and on what basis
do we do so? […] Indeed, how we should even define the pro-Nicene?" Consequently,
Ayres describes the approach pursued in the book as “search[ing] for a minimal

fathers): see C. Beeley, “Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus,”
HThR 100 (2007): 199-214; J. Behr, “Response to Ayres: The Legacies of Nicaea, East and West,” HThR 100
(2007): 145-152. See also the critique of Ayres’s treatment of the Latin West in C. Beckwith, “Review of L.

Ayres, “Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Introduction,” 143. The concept of neo-Nicenism, coined by
Loofs (“Jungnicänismus”) and soon adopted by Cavallera (“néonicénisme”), became part of historiographic
parlance in the early twentieth century: see F. Loofs, Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte (Halle: Max
Niemeyer, 1890), 139-141; F. Cavallera, Le schisme d’Antioche (IV e et V e siècle) (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils,
1905), 303-305 (cit. in C. Markschies, “Was ist lateinischer »Neunizänismus«? Ein Vorschlag für eine
Antwort,” ZAC (1997): 74, n. 4 and 7 respectively).

definition while also arguing that pro-Nicene theology developed over a period of time.”

The result of this search is the discovery that a series of theological and epistemological presuppositions were shared by all four theological trajectories that eventually produced pro-Nicenism. These traditions are respectively marked as theologies “of the true Wisdom” (Alexander of Alexandria and Athanasius), “of the One Unbegotten” (the “Eusebians”), “of the undivided Monad” (Marcellus of Ancyra), and of a “Son born without division” (western theologians). Chief among the basic premises that these trajectories shared were a distinction between person and nature; a pairing of the proclamation of the eternal generation of the Son with an attitude of respect for God’s incomprehensibility and ineffability; and an acknowledgment of the economic, operative inseparability of the three persons of the trinity.

Ayres defined the notion of a “pro-Nicene culture” as an intellectual milieu “interweaving pro-Nicene trinitarian theologies with discussions of cosmology, epistemology, anthropology and—importantly—with conceptions of how to read

65 Ibid.

66 Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 236 and 274-278.
Scripture.” The foundation of his inquiry, he explained, was the scholarly consensus that the trinitarian controversy is a complex affair in which tensions between pre-existing theological traditions intensified as a result of dispute over Arius, and over events following the Council of Nicaea. The conflict that resulted eventually led to the emergence of a series of [...] pro-Nicene theologies interpreting the Council of Nicaea in ways that provided a persuasive solution to the conflicts of the century. Pro-Nicene theologies combined both doctrinal propositions and a complex of intellectual theological strategies. Together these doctrines and the strategies within which those doctrines were intended to be read constitute a theological culture.

Ayres claimed that an original Nicene theology could be spoken of inasmuch as a set of common themes could be identified in the writings of the exponents of this line. As examples of such writing he cited Alexander of Alexandria’s letters to Alexander of Byzantium, the fragments of Marcellus of Ancyra and of Eustathius of Antioch, and the fragments reporting Constantine’s views on trinitarian matters, as well as Athanasian writings establishing continuity with Alexander’s teaching and pre-dating the construction of the category of “Arianism,” such as Against the Heathen and On the Incarnation. At the same time, Ayres defined a pro-Nicene theology according to the fulfillment of the following three criteria:

1. a clear version of the person and nature distinction, entailing the principle that whatever is predicated of the divine nature is predicated of the three persons equally and understood to be one (this distinction may or may not be articulated

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67 Ibid., 1.
68 Ibid., 11.
69 Ibid., 98-99.
via a consistent technical terminology); 2. clear expression that the eternal
generation of the Son occurs within the unitary and incomprehensible divine
being; 3. clear expression of the doctrine that the persons work inseparably.\footnote{Ibid., 236.}

The focus of Ayres’s narrative is on the outcome of the eventual clear-up of the
differences between four early-fourth-century traditions (with its distant effects in the
theological summation of Augustine of Hippo). As a result, he seems significantly less
interested in the processes whereby such a reconciliation came about than in the fact that
it did. The ghost of a Hegelian “cunning of reason” can then be seen lurking behind
Ayres’s implicit rendition of those theological trajectories as oriented towards their
eventual coherence in an orthodox pro-Nicene “culture.” I am not the first to notice a
similar movement of thought at play in *Nicaea and Its Legacy*. Sarah Coakley, in her
discussion of the book, detected Ayres’s “remarkable underlying appeal to the Spirit’s
operation in Christian history:”

It is a nice irony […] that what causes him ire in his rejection of Hegel (Hegel’s
pneumatology), can become for Ayres, in turn, the distinctive means whereby
the maintenance of the authority of “the Church” is affirmed, and the elusive
mechanics of doctrinal development assured. If this is not systematics, then, it is

Ayres’s overall historiographic approach to the controversy is fully agreeable to
me, and his line of inquiry compelling for the historical (and indeed for the systematic)
theologian. But I am hardly unveiling a hidden agenda in observing that such a
trajectory is less fruitful for readers of ancient Christian texts with no stake in the identification of a theoretical kernel within the Nicene tradition that can be appropriated by a living community. More centrally, while there is no denying the important work that the concept of “culture” can perform in social-theory-inspired historical accounts, I am unable fully to see the helpfulness of its deployment as a descriptive category for the pro-Nicene perspective specifically.

Ayres’s definition of “culture” has as its main references Pierre Bourdieu and—somewhat surprisingly—Michel De Certeau. “To identify a culture here,” Ayres explains, “may be to speak of a particular collection or bricolage of practices and ideas that may themselves be found in other cultures, and to identify a style of interaction with other cultures.” He acknowledges that material, social, and performative practices—such as “styles of rhetorical display and argumentation, and particular material structures, such as processes of book production, styles of epistolary interchange, and practices of communal ritual exchange”—have their place within the examination of a “culture,” while declaring his focus to be on intellectual development,

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73 Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 274.

74 Ibid., 276.
described as the “life of the mind.” At the same time, in concentrating on the latter Ayres is committed to speaking “less technically” in order to emphasize his understanding of habitus “as something that both evolves and takes similar but subtly different forms in different contexts.”

In my view, however, the intellectual “habits” belonging to the pro-Nicene writers on which Ayres’s identification of a culture rests can be taken to articulate a culture strictly speaking only within an analytical framework that, in continuity with the fourth-century pro-Nicene tradition, makes such issues into linchpins of a totalizing theory of human existence. From a standpoint not partaking of Christian discourse, there may be too little to draw on in outlining the contours of a “culture.” The “Arian” controversy is best described not through categories internal to the Christian tradition, but rather with the standard toolset of intellectual history.

The material, social, and performative aspects Ayres himself mentions—as well as other related ones which he does not reference—are foundational for the identification of any given culture based on a fabric of habitus. An examination of such domains as letter-writing, conciliar gathering, literary circulation, or establishment and

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 The supplements to his perspective on culture provided in Ayres, “A Response,” 170-171 do not change the situation by much.
revocation of communion between different dioceses would reveal overwhelming commonalities across the pro-/anti-Nicene divide, such as to justify speaking of a “culture” of the fourth-century Christian writers engaged in theological dispute, irrespective of their particular leanings. More importantly, as I will propose, despite the commonalities identified by Ayres there existed serious theoretical differences between the various “proto-pro-Nicene discussants,” such that speaking of a plural constellation of viewpoints appears more appropriate than speaking of a cohesive side of a dispute.

In contrast to Ayres’s historiographic effort, which I understand as focused on describing the removal of hindrances to the unity of all the pro-Nicenes (a unity implicitly treated as though it had always been meant to be), my study will research the discursive conditions that enabled the eventual convergence around a particular re-interpretation of the Nicene decree.

This outlook will allow me to put in fuller relief the novelty of Athanasius of Alexandria, whose intervention in the ecclesiastical events in Syria has an import not limited to the solution of the “Arian” crisis. The changes in modes of theological inquiry embodied by the bishop’s intervention, as will be shown, bequeathed a consequential legacy to the Christian intellectual tradition. While much of the scholarship concerning the trinitarian debates has dealt with the effort of re-conceptualization that led from the stalemate of Nicaea to the resolution of Constantinople, in order for the fourth-century
trinitarian debates ever to be solved an implicit meta-language had to be produced, capable of ensuring that all actors, when enunciating, would be engaged in the same theoretical exchange.

This study proposes that through the heated confrontation between different geographically based and culturally identified theological traditions, not unlike those described by Ayres, new ways of conceptualizing intra-trinitarian relations came about. Those traditions were originally less about a theological content that could be distilled by a formula (e.g., to cite one of Ayres’s four trajectories, “the undivided monad”) than about a combination of locally embedded intellectual concerns (e.g. the preservation of the divine monarchy in the Ancyran mia-hypostatic tradition), institutional structures (e.g. the Syriac mono-episcopate),78 and communicational practices (e.g. the lecturing system in the Alexandrian Didaskaleion).79

As such, the reconfiguration to which the machinery of the global controversy subjected those traditions invested the manner of debating theological matters more powerfully than it did specific theological formations. Without needing to go so far as to claim that those formations are the product of reinvention, it is possible to see them as


capable of being recognized only *a posteriori*, and thanks to the now-established common terms of the debate. An example of this dynamic that will be treated in later chapters pertains to the opposition between the mia- and tri-hypostatic traditions. Often assumed in scholarship to hold a stable meaning across many decades, such traditions learned to see themselves as pitted against one another with regard to their recently-acquired fundamental memes—‘one *hypostasis*’ and ‘three *hypostaseis*’—only through the processes of logical distillation and formularization activated by the debates.\(^80\)

### 1.5. From the Affair of Paul of Samosata to the “End of Dialogue”

#### 1.5.1 The Roots of an Attitude

In the first of his *Provincial Letters* (1656), Blaise Pascal, writing under the pseudonym of Louis de Montalte about the fierce controversy that was raging in those years between Jansenists and their detractors, offered a fictionalized account of his attempt to grasp the divergences between the different manners of conceiving the action of God, mediated by grace, in human salvation. Having originally identified the bone of contention in the Jansenist affirmations that “grace is given to all” or that “grace is effectual, and determines our will to do good,” de Montalte is disabused of his conviction by an anti-Jansenist theologian. This informs him that the problem with the

\(^{80}\) For a definition of “meme” see R. Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), although some of the most technical aspects of Dawkins’s theorization are not part of my utilization of this term.
opinions of Antoine Arnauld—the Port-Royal intellectual who was undergoing
interrogation at the Sorbonne—was, rather, his failure to acknowledge “that believers
have the power of fulfilling the commandments of God.”

Once a Jansenist, upon consultation by de Montalte, denies that his party
disagrees with that statement, the author goes back to express his puzzlement to the
first, anti-Jansenist theologian. The latter instructs him that the Jansenists will refuse to
call that universally bestowed power of fulfilling the commandments “proximate:” in
that refusal, he explains, lies the crux of the dispute. In a new questioning of the
Jansenists, however, de Montalte learns that the Molinists—a term equated here with the
opponents of the Jansenists—harbor within their ranks people holding various and
indeed opposite understandings of the “proximity” of that power, and that one of those
two concepts aligns perfectly with the Jansenists’ own. As his Jansenist informant puts
it,

“So far are [the Molinists] from being united in sentiment that some of them are
diametrically opposed to each other. But, being all united in the design to ruin M.
Arnauld, they have resolved to agree on this term “proximate,” which both
parties might use indiscriminately, though they understand it diversely, that
thus, by a similarity of language and an apparent conformity, they may form a
large body and get up a majority to crush him with the greater certainty.”81

Conferring now with a free will advocate, a Molinist disciple of one Monsieur le
Moine, de Montalte, determined to get to the bottom of the question, is told that the

“proximate power” of doing something is to be seen as the same as having “all that is necessary for doing it in such a manner that nothing is wanting to performance.” But when he goes to pay a visit to a different kind of opponent of the Jansenists, a Dominican described as a neo-Thomist, he hears a different story. De Montalte asks his interlocutor:

“[I]f anything is wanting to that power, do you call it proximate? Would you say, for instance, that a man in the night-time, and without any light, had the proximate power of seeing?” “Yes, indeed, he would have it, in our opinion, if he is not blind.” “I grant that,” said I; “but M. le Moine understands it in a different manner.” “Very true,” they replied; “but so it is that we understand it.” “I have no objections to that,” I said; “for I never quarrel about a name, provided I am apprised of the sense in which it is understood. But I perceive from this that, when you speak of the righteous having always the proximate power of praying to God, you understand that they require another supply for praying, without which they will never pray.” “Most excellent!” exclaimed the good fathers, embracing me; “exactly the thing; for they must have, besides, an efficacious grace bestowed upon all, and which determines their wills to pray; and it is heresy to deny the necessity of that efficacious grace in order to pray.” “Most excellent!” cried I, in return; “but, according to you, the Jansenists are Catholics, and M. le Moine a heretic; for the Jansenists maintain that, while the righteous have power to pray, they require nevertheless an efficacious grace; and this is what you approve. M. le Moine, again, maintains that the righteous may pray without efficacious grace; and this is what you condemn.” “Ay,” said they; “but M. le Moine calls that power “proximate power.”” “How now! fathers,” I exclaimed; “this is merely playing with words, to say that you are agreed as to the common terms which you employ, while you differ with them as to the sense of these terms.” The fathers made no reply [...]82

De Montalte’s exasperated cry (“How now!”) is a response to the revelation of one of the main devices of Christian orthodoxy: the emphasis on terminological

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82 Ibid., 150-151.
correctness, or “ortholalia.” In a time of controversy, correct forms of confessing theological truths (viz. formulas) function not only as a key to accessing appropriate beliefs, but also as a tool to promote, paradoxically in strategic derogation from what the actors perceive as theologically appropriate, the grouping and re-grouping of different ecclesiastical factions around a particular creedal definition, in joint opposition to a belief cast as heretical and functioning, from the discourse-analytical standpoint, as a master signifier.

Though hardly ever thematized as such by ancient Christian authors, the insistence on technical theological terminology manifested in its more radical consequences by this seventeenth-century episode has a long history, whose roots go back to ancient times. This history is an integral part of the progressive dogmatization of theological discussion and abandonment of purely zetetic (viz. inquiry-centered) modes of theological discourse. As soon as this process was able to harness the support of political power, it led to the late ancient formation of orthodoxy as a stable theoretically

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84 For a theorization of “master signifiers” within the field of discourse analysis see E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985); and E. Laclau, Emancipation(s) (London: Verso, 1996), 36-46 (“Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?”).

and socially operative category. I propose that that process emerged for the first time in
the third century, and came to fully observable fruition in the period between the
councils of Nicaea and Constantinople.

Rebecca Lyman alludes in an illuminating passage to the possibility that the
drive towards orthodoxy displayed in the course of the fourth-century trinitarian
debates may have to be placed within a broader cultural Zeitgeist, in which the Platonic
preferential option for unity found institutional embodiment in the action of political
and ecclesiastical leaderships within the Roman Empire. A contextualization of the
orthodox push of the fourth century within the broader intellectual landscape of the
Roman Empire must be left outside the bounds of this dissertation. Nevertheless,
Lyman’s proposal contains a promising path for exploring the late ancient construction
of orthodoxy beyond the much-scrutinized domain of power—with an eye, e.g., to

86 Not her expression.
87 See R. Lyman, “Natural Resources: Tradition without Orthodoxy,” AThR 84 (2002): 67-80. See also
Platonists and Neo-Pythagoreans,” in The Question of “Eclecticism” Studies in Later Greek Philosophy, ed. Id.
and A.A. Long (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 103-125; P. Athanassiadi, “The Creation of
Orthodoxy in Neoplatonism,” in Philosophy and Power in the Graeco-Roman World: Essays in Honour of Miriam
philosophico-political presuppositions within the broader Greco-Roman intellectual tradition.\textsuperscript{88}

As Averil Cameron writes,

it is still useful to ask how Christians, the quintessential outsiders as they appeared to men like Nero, Pliny, Tacitus and Suetonius, talked and wrote themselves into a position where they spoke and wrote the rhetoric of Empire. For it is perfectly certain that had they not been able to do this, Constantine or no Constantine, Christianity would never have become a world religion.\textsuperscript{89}

The formation of a Christian discourse—and more specifically of theological codes as the primary discursive mode of Christian intellectual pursuit—played a decisive role in giving historical effectiveness to the institutional and political sea changes of the fourth century. At the same time, the progressive technicalization of theological discussion, namely the increasing preference for logical distillation and formulaic enunciation of religious beliefs, was of course no disembodied odyssey of consciousness, but rather a historical development accompanied by material processes. Theological production needed routes to travel along and institutional settings within which it could be pursued.


These processes may be non-exhaustively summarized as follows: a) the recourse
to councils to settle doctrinal disagreements;\(^9\) b) the evolution of the synod form into an
institution that, besides settling issues of doctrine, was also in charge of trying
individual members of the clergy; c) the progressive institutionalization of the Church;
d) the establishment—through travel and epistolary exchanges—of transregional
episcopal alliances mediated by the granting, withdrawal, and withholding of
sacramental communion; e) the proximity of such alliances to political power.

The zenith of these processes can be observed in the set of fifth- and sixth-
century phenomena, associated with the Christological disputes, whose discursive
correlative (\(viz.\) dogmatization) has been captured under the rubric of a supposed late
ancient “end of dialogue” — down to the recognized victory of the figurative and the
paradoxical over argumentative logic in the Byzantium of Emperor Justinian (on the
throne from 527 to 565).\(^9\) According to scholars like Richard Lim and Henrietta
Athanassiadi, the third century initiated a process of reduction of the spaces for the free
expression of religious opinions. For them, this process culminated in the Council of

\(^{9}\)On the fact that councils were not an ever-present institution prior to the fourth century see
Ayres, \textit{Nicaea and Its Legacy}, 85. On the early councils see R. MacMullen, \textit{Voting about God in Early Church}
Councils (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006).

\(^{9}\)The circumstance that language be treated technically is of course \textit{per se} no necessary condition
for dogmatization: a form of dogmatization can be conceived wherein linguistic technicalization would play
no important role.
Chalcedon (451), after which there would no longer be any theological discussion, but only *florilegia* expediently summarizing the truth on a variety of doctrinal topics.\(^\text{92}\)

Proposals of an end of religious competitiveness in late antiquity have typically worked with a narrow definition of what constitutes dialogue, sometimes even identifying the latter *tout court* with the eponymous literary genre or with the institution of public debates. Peter Van Nuffelen rightly observes, *contra* Lim, that free and fair disputation, a modality that has its roots in the fourth century, still worked as an ideal in the fifth century.\(^\text{93}\) Similarly, *contra* Athanassiadi, who had written about the rise of *florilegia* as a sign of obscurantism and ideological conformism, Sébastien Morlet commonsensically remarks that the genre of the *florilegium* was born precisely out of the need to summarize previous teachings precisely for the purposes of polemic.\(^\text{94}\) The changes in Christian intellectual culture of the fifth- and sixth-century indeed did not


bring an end to dialectic. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that they did represent the culmination of a process of dogmatization, exemplified by the tendency to cite conciliar resolutions as the best way to validate one’s theological positions.

1.5.2. **Excursus: The Affair of Paul of Samosata: The Beginning of a Process**

1.5.2.1. **The Events and Their Writing**

The onset of these discursive and material processes, sometimes located generically in the third century, can be more precisely signposted, I propose, with the events surrounding the deposition of Paul of Samosata (268). The present *Excursus* is therefore devoted to an interpretation of the affair concerning this Christian arch-heretic as a clear historical example of the early burgeoning of those historical dynamics. Without pursuing a new theological analysis of the extant fragments connected to Paul’s case, after summarizing the episode I will make the case that the at times ambiguous or factually inaccurate memorialization of this affair on the part of late ancient Christian writers suggests an intention to construct the episode as foundational for imperial Christendom as those post-Constantinian and post-Theodosian authors knew it. This is particularly true in relation to the five material processes highlighted in the previous section: recourse to councils, transformation of the synod into a judicial body, institutionalization of the Church, establishment of transregional episcopal alliances, and the proximity of such alliances to political power. Since the first two novelties
appear self-evidently from simple acquaintance with the events, centered on the prosecution of Paul at the synod of Antioch of 268, I will focus in what follows on the remaining three factors.

In the 260s, the Antiochene bishop Paul of Samosata fell under the attack of fellow Syrian church leaders, ostensibly on account of his theological persuasions. He was eventually deposed, after several councils, in a synod gathered in the years 268-269, where he was defeated in a public debate by the priest and skilled rhetorician Malchion, performing for the occasion the task of inquisitor. Paul was replaced with Domnus, the son of the bishop Demetrianus, who had either died or been kidnapped during the Persian invasion of the city.

Eusebius, our main informant about Paul’s condemnation, is not very generous with information concerning his theology, described simply as lowly and as turning Jesus into a common man.\(^{95}\) We do hear from the church historian, however, plenty

about Paul’s behaviors that were deemed unbecoming to his episcopal rank. Eusebius also includes in his report a citation of the epistle issued by the synod, which accuses Paul of professing that the Son of God came from below, and his followers of worshipping Christ as an angel. In addition to this report, several other sources about this episode have reached us. The only ones that Patricio de Navascués has considered authentic in the most comprehensive study of Paul of Samosata to date are a letter addressed to Paul by Hymenaeus and five other bishops prior to his condemnation (known as Letter of Hymenaeus or Letter of the Six Bishops); the fragments of the transcript of the debate between Paul and Malchion; and the fragments of the synodal letter, reported both by Eusebius and by later florilegia.96

Though always recounted as a milestone in early Christian history, Paul’s deposition—along with its memory—is rarely evaluated in connection to contemporary or later historical processes. In actuality the controversy around Paul constituted a foundational moment not only for Antiochene Christian identity, but for late ancient Christian identity writ large. The events surrounding the condemnation of Paul are in fact congruent with the material processes expounded above in connection with the working methods of Christian intellectuals. Because of its precocious exhibition of these characteristics, Paul’s affair crystallized in Christian memory as a founding episode.

Not only did Christian literature in both the West and the East keep the memory of Paul alive all the way through the sixth century, integrating his name into heretical genealogies alongside those of such authors as Artemon, Ebion, Sabellius, Photinus, and Nestorius: Christian authors may have even read, and written, their own views of Christianity into the very renditions upon which our reconstructions of the events


depend. As is often the case, even once our sources’ unreliability with regard to Paul is ascertained (as it often has been), those can still be fruitfully interrogated in order to shed light on the worldviews of the producers of those narratives.

An example is provided by the ethnic and national dimension of the episode, which emerges in several ancient testimonies. This aspect has been dealt with mostly from a positivistic standpoint. Until recently, credit has been given to Paul’s association with the Palmyrene queen Zenobia by virtue of their alleged shared Judeophilia, reported with variations by five ancient sources (Athanasius, Philastrius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Photius). With exceptions, skepticism now prevails, after Fergus Millar’s demonstration that any notion of a Palmyrene influence over Antioch prior to 270 is purely speculative. The fact that no mention of Paul’s relations with Zenobia is

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made in the synodal letter reported by Eusebius further confirms that apprehension about the historicity of this tradition is warranted.

It seems appropriate, however, to apply to this question the same kind of attention to the rhetorical dimension of our sources displayed, for example, by an essay that Virginia Burrus devoted to the synodal letter’s denigration of Paul as a bad rhetorician.\textsuperscript{100} If we move beyond the negative evaluation of those accounts about Paul’s pro-Palmyrene and pro-Jewish sentiments as unreliable, we can begin to investigate what might have motivated fourth- and fifth-century authors, upon whom the ninth-century Photius was dependent, to level against Paul the charge of intelligence with a territorial enemy cast as Judaizing. The constellation of alterity (xenophilia, Judeophilia, and heresy) that these orthodox authors are keen on weaving around the figure of Paul could instruct us, for example, about their wish for an orthodox Christianity that, having finally parted from Judaism, might constitute itself as the religion of the Roman Empire.

\subsection*{1.5.2.2 Institutionalization of the Church}

From the viewpoint of ecclesiastical organization, the Paul affair, inasmuch as it reportedly involves the deposition of an autocratic bishop-monarch on the part of the clergy of his own city and of the surrounding region, may testify to the limits and resistances encountered by an onrush of episcopal centralization in the Syrian Church, to

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which we may find clues in other contemporary documents tied to Syria. As Camplani suggests, e.g., Aphrahat’s *Demonstration 14*, though composed further to the east, could be read as testifying to similar tensions. The gradual emergence of such centralizing forms of ecclesial organization is consistent also with developments observed in the fourth-century *Teaching of the Apostles*, a Syrian document that goes beyond Ignatius of Antioch’s ecclesiology in programmatically casting the bishop as a king ruling in solitude over his community.

A comparable perspective emerges also from the fourth-century redaction of the *Pseudoclementines*, another work of Syrian origin. Here the episcopal office is cast in the mold of human and divine monarchy as well as gubernatorial authorities, a development that in Bernard Pouderon’s view finds its *Sitz im Leben* in the ecclesiastical reality of fourth-century Antioch. In connection to the mention of the

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102 Camplani, “L’Esposizione XIV di Afrate.”


*Pseudoclementines*, it is worth recalling the theory, produced on the basis of that corpus, that the emergence of a monarchical episcopal leader may have to be seen as a development—due to the need to celebrate the sacred meal—that occurred within presbyteral structures of governance, providing examples of a form of corporate authority that Christian groups had taken over from Jewish diaspora communities.\(^{105}\)

### 1.5.2.3 Establishment of Transregional Episcopal Alliances

Eusebius of Caesarea informs us that as soon as it became clear that Paul of Samosata held an unfitting view of Christ, a first synod was summoned to which clergymen from across the Empire hastened (eight of them, says Hilary; seventy in Athanasius’s counting; one hundred eighty according to Basil the Great). Of these, Eusebius says, the most eminent were Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea of Cappadocia; Gregory the wonder-worker and Athenodorus, pastors of the churches in Pontus; Helenus of Tarsus, Nicomas of Iconium, Hymenaeus of Jerusalem, Theotecnus of Caesarea of Palestine, and Maximus of Bosra. Dionysius of Alexandria, unable to come, sent a letter to the Antiochene community.

Shortly after the gathering of the first synod against Paul in 264 (and possibly after that of some more councils), the *Letter of the Six Bishops* was composed. Hymenaeus

of Jerusalem and his colleagues affirm they have already had a chance to discuss their faith with Paul, but suggest that for the sake of clarity they would like to expound their teaching again. There follows a long creed insisting on the eternity of the Son, and a request for Paul to indicate whether he agrees with their expression of faith.

Hymenaeus’s co-writers are, in the order of their appearance, Theophilus, Theotecnus of Caesarea of Palestine, Maximus of Bosra, Proclus, and Bolanus. Their names are found also among the fifteen signatories of the letter addressed to Dionysius of Rome and Maximus of Alexandria by the synod that eventually condemned Paul, along those of Helenus, Nicomas of Iconium, Aelianus, Protogenes, Hierax, Eutychius, Theodore, Malchion, and Lucius.

Following this onslaught of names, a bit of prosopography may be in order. About Helenus of Tarsus we hear also on another occasion: at the time of the Novatian schism, he had written to Dionysius of Alexandria to summon him to a council assembled in Antioch. There he had agreed with the heads of the Churches of Cilicia, Cappadocia, and Galatia on the need to baptize anew the heretics, and had been excommunicated by Stephanus of Rome for this reason. The important role to which Helenus had risen on the occasion of the Novatian schism is the same one which he seems to have held in the case of Paul’s affair, since he is found as the first subscriber to the encyclical and may have even presided over the synod gathered at Antioch.
The most noteworthy names appearing in the dossier about Paul, however, are those of Firmilian of Caesarea of Cappadocia and Dionysius of Alexandria. The two, who were acquainted with one another, may be the fullest embodiment of the novel global ecclesiastical climate of the third century. Firmilian was a champion of long distance networking. In the course of his forty-year-long episcopal career, he induced Origen to visit him in Cappadocia, corresponded with Cyprian about the re-baptizing of those who had been baptized by the heretics, and partook in numerous synods.

Similarly, Dionysius of Alexandria corresponded with Fabius of Antioch, Novatian, and the Roman bishops Cornelius, Sixtus II, and Dionysius. Writing after the end of the Novatian schism, he described to Stephen of Rome in 254 the situation of the Church in idyllic terms, indicative of the existence of a broad project of ecumenical integration that required the closing of the ranks of the Church, the thickening of its web of communication, and the globalization of its operations.106

Only seven years before the beginning of turmoil in Antioch, church histories record Dionysius of Alexandria’s name in relation to the famous polemic about trinitarian matters that opposed him to his homonym of Rome.107 The fact that Paul’s

Syrian opponents sought out the involvement of both “Dionysii,” and through them of arguably the two most important episcopal sees of the Christian world, is significant. In general, the celebration of a council summoning churchmen from Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Arabia, and Egypt suggests the Syrian clergy’s resolve to integrate Antioch’s ecclesiastical life into this network, globalizing what was after all a local doctrinal disagreement. Through the regional and transregional connections woven on the occasion of the Paul affair, Antioch made for the first time—prospectively speaking—the headlines of Church histories. This operation, fully of a piece with the unfolding ecclesiastical climate, represented a conscious geo-ecclesiological move, through which the Syrian Church aimed to claim part of the limelight on the ecclesiastical stage in the Roman Empire.108

The exponents of the Syrian episcopate who were promoting this project of global ecclesial integration were at the same time working at the construction of the prominence of the patriarchate of Antioch. This see was on the rise on the geo-
ecclesiological horizon of the triarchy, the inter-patriarchal structure including Rome and Alexandria and destined to transform into a tetrarchy first, and a pentarchy later, over the next two centuries (with the respective addition of Jerusalem and Constantinople). In the transregional political scheming that surrounded the prosecution of Paul of Samosata later Church writers could then recognize the first historical instance in which the global system of ecclesiastical power that they saw so effectively at work in their own days could be observed.

1.5.2.4 Proximity of Episcopal Alliances to Political Power

Political power emerges as a central knot in the web of connections woven on the occasion of Paul’s condemnation thanks to another, much-studied aspect of the affair, namely the involvement of Emperor Aurelian. Eusebius writes:

As Paul had fallen off, along with the orthodoxy of faith, also from the episcopacy, Domnus, as has been said, received the office of the church in Antioch. But, since Paul was in no way willing to give up the building of the church, the Emperor Aurelian, petitioned, settled the matter most equitably, ordering that the building be given to those to whom the bishops of Italy and of the city of Rome should issue judgment (for it to be given). Thus the above-mentioned man was indeed driven out of the Church with the uttermost shame by the worldly power.

109 Euseb. Hist. eccl., 7, 30, 18-19: Τοῦ δὴ οὖν Παύλου σὺν καὶ τῇ τῆς πίστεως ὀρθοδοξίᾳ τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς ἀποπεπτωκότος, Δόµνος, ὡς εἰρηταὶ, τὴν λειτουργίαν τῆς κατὰ Αντιόχειαν ἐκκλησίαν διεδέξατο. ἀλλὰ γὰρ μὴ δώσως ἐκκηρύγνῃ τοῦ Παύλου τοῦ τῆς ἐκκλησίας οἰκον θέλοντος, βασιλεὺς ἐντευχθεὶς Αὐρηλιανὸς αἰσιώτατα περὶ τοῦ πρακτέου διείληφεν, τούτοις νεῖμαι προστάται τῶν οἰκον, οίς ἂν ὁ κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν καὶ τὴν Ῥωμαίων πόλιν ἐπίσκοποι τοῦ δόγματος ἐπιστέλλον, οὕτω δῆτα ὁ προδηλωθεὶς αὐτὴ μετὰ τῆς ἐσχάτης αἰσχύνης ὑπὸ τῆς κοσμικῆς ἀρχῆς ἔξελθη τῆς ἐκκλησίας. All translations in the text, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.
Although some modern historians have found in this passage a record of the earliest interventions of the secular Roman power in an ecclesiastical matter,\textsuperscript{110} it has been demonstrated that in all likelihood Aurelian did nothing but accept a petition in the way he normally would have, according to the practice of the rescript.\textsuperscript{111} Nevertheless, the possibility should be considered that Eusebius—even if in his account cited above he consciously utilized a technical term to refer to the signing off of rescripts—did not see the subtleties involved in the legal context of Aurelian’s resolution as distinguishing the Emperor’s behavior in any meaningful way from the favor that Constantine would later show Christians. Whether or not Aurelian’s intervention was proto-Constantinian in its essence (and it most likely was not), it is probable that post-Constantinian Christians remembered it as such, and that this may have a relationship with the place it received in Eusebius’s already fairly extensive narrative devoted to Paul of Samosata.

By the same token, Aurelian’s consultation with the Roman and Italian clergy may well have been, as Giorgio Barone Adesi has proposed, a routine and predictable initiative originating from the Emperor, in line with the centralizing and Italo-centric


religious policy he adopted towards all imperial cults. All the same, we can still interrogate the significance attributed by later historians to the Antiochene community’s decision to send a petition to Rome in the first place, whether the latter was addressed to the Emperor himself or to the Roman clergy, in hopes that these might exert greater pressure upon Aurelian. As with the previous factors, this dimension of the affair of Paul of Samosata may have contributed to make the episode worthy of memorialization for ancient Christians invested—as Eusebius certainly was—in the closeness between the Church and Roman power.

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113 The reported decision to involve the secular or religious power in Rome speaks volumes about the degree of integration into the ranks of imperial Christendom that the Christian leadership in Antioch and the surrounding region was promoting. These moves on the part of Paul’s opponents represented an important moment on the way to the declaration, made at Nicaea in 325, of the superiority of the episcopal see of Antioch—although we will have to wait until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 for an exact description of its jurisdiction. It is difficult to reconstruct whether this development had had any antecedents in the early third century. Its ramifications, however, can be witnessed in the post-Nicene era in the work of Edessene origin known as the *Teaching of Addai*. In this text, as noticed in S. Griffith, “The *Doctrina Addai* as a Paradigm of Christian Thought in Edessa in the Fifth Century,” *Hugoye* 6.2 (2003): 269-292, the Edessene church leaders are offered an alliance with the Antiochene and Roman episcopates against the rising political and ecclesiastical power of Constantinople. The *Teaching* shows Edessa as positioned in a web of alliances punctuating the ecclesiastical and political landscape of the fourth century. Casting a long-duration geo-ecclesiological glance at these developments will require also considering the constitution of areas of influence and the formation of satellites, such as Edessa indubitably came to become in the context of the ideal model of Antiochene supremacy in the East advocated in the fifth century, e.g., by Theodoret of Cyrrhus.
1.6 The Contents of This Dissertation

In one of his recent writings, Guy Stroumsa invites readers to study the different religious traditions of late antiquity alongside one another, in order to identify “the main vectors of religious innovation” and “discover the rules of a transformative grammar which could explain patterns of religious transformation.”

While holding in abeyance the question of whether our descriptive sample is ample enough for such a “transformative grammar” ever to be reliably written, this dissertation sets out on the road Stroumsa indicated. In spite of an obvious disciplinary bent in the direction of early Christian studies, it scrutinizes together texts deriving from two different late ancient religious traditions, and it does so in order to seek in them elements that might suggest distinct forms of discontinuity within their own traditions, pointing to historical divergence.

Chapters II through V are conceived as a chronologically, thematically, and geographically selective re-evaluation of the fourth-century trinitarian disputes. By looking, through a series of observable moments, at the evolution of a particular theological motif, I wish to exemplify some of the historical dynamics outlined above. In particular, the reception history of a particular lexeme will shed light on theoretical

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developments within the fourth-century trinitarian landscape, with particular attention being paid to the recombination of distinct theological trajectories. The assumption of the study contained in this section is that modifications in theological language not only provide trustworthy guidance for navigating changes in theoretical, conceptual, and ideological models, but can also offer glimpses into shifts in epistemic presuppositions.

Along the way, I will also offer a contribution to the ongoing re-drawing of the broader contours of a crucial passage in the development of the controversies, namely the consolidation of the pro-Nicene front that would triumph at the Council of Constantinople (381). This examination centers on the literary and theological heritage of the Syrian writer Eustathius of Antioch. In maintaining that the largely neglected Eustathian tradition contributed substantially to pushing forward the trinitarian discussion in the fourth century, I hope to make a case for the usefulness of utilizing understudied Syriac texts, whether Syriac translations or originally Syriac compositions, in treatments of ancient Christian intellectual history writ large.

**Chapter II** lays out the historical and doctrinal background for the case study in Christian intellectual history. It narrates the inception of the trinitarian controversy, discusses the philosophical and theological origins of Arius’s theology, and offers a brief history of the employment of the concepts of *hypostasis* and *ousia*, which were utilized, as seen above, by the creed of the Council of Nicaea. It then proceeds to follow, through a
selective account of the dispute in the period 325-345, the rise of the topic of the number of \textit{hypostaseis}. In tracing the long-distance dialogue taking place between the “Eusebian” Council of Antioch (341), the westerners’ Council of Sardica (343), and the easterners’ presentation of the \textit{Long-Lined Exposition} to Emperor Constans in Milan (345), I argue that in these related doctrinal documents we witness \textit{a}) a re-conceptualization of the problem of the status of the Son (originally framed by the Nicene fathers as concerning the manner of his begetting) into an interrogation of his personal subsistence; and \textit{b}) a thematization of the importance of theological lexicon, through the expression of the awareness that only agreement about the latter will solve the controversy.

\textbf{Chapters III, IV, and V} jointly present the case study through which I wish to highlight a circumscribable historical dynamic at work in the trinitarian controversies. As seen above, the late ancient development of a technical theological language has traditionally been read as related—whether as a symptom or as a cause—to an increase in intellectual dormancy. I suggest instead that the fourth-century disputes, driven by a deepening of the inquiry into the roots of the disagreement, resulted in the recombination of various geo-culturally-based theological traditions into identifiable (and identifiable-with) theological brands, captured through bywords—or, in some cases, memes proper—that could be fought and negotiated over more easily.
Chapter III introduces the figure of Eustathius of Antioch, describes his ecclesiastical career, and expounds his widely-recognized pro-Nicene trinitarian beliefs. In a debated Syriac fragment of Eustathius dating from the 340s or 350s, whose authenticity I defend, a novel theological expression can be found, which likely translates the Greek πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον (“substantial πρόσωπον”) or πρόσωπον ὑφεστώς (“established πρόσωπον”). The development of this phrase, whose implications are elucidated, presupposes a deep logical effort to comprehend the question at hand in the disputes, and indicates a subtle but poignant epistemic shift that paved the way for, among other things, a more conciliatory course within the pro-Nicene alliance.

Chapter IV continues the investigation of the previous chapter by focusing on the declaration of the compatibility between “one-hypostasis” and “three-hypostaseis” theologies made in the Tome to the Antiochenes, a document issued by an ad hoc session summoned after the Council of Alexandria (362) with the intention of mending the rift in the Antiochene Church. After a narration of the main events that marked the history of ecclesiastical division in Antioch in the fourth century, ample space is devoted to the tangled historiography of the Alexandrian episcopal gathering. Some of the interpretive obscurities presented by the Tome to the Antiochenes are addressed. The brilliance of this document, I argue in the last part of the chapter, consists in a) having put to fruitful use...
the theoretical groundwork laid in the doctrinal innovation testified to by the Eustathian fragment and by the Ancyran declaration; and b) having logically reduced, with a good degree of arbitrariness, the conflict internal to the pro-Nicene front to a confrontation between two related formulae, thus creating the conditions for commensurability—before compatibility could even be sought—between two geo-culturally embedded theological traditions: the idiosyncratically Antiochene “Eusthathianism” and the cosmopolitanly eastern “Meletianism.’

Chapter V caps this narrative by presenting the fourth-century history of effects of the πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον meme on the vetero-Nicene, mia-hypostatic alliance as well as on the broader pro-Nicene coalition, through a series of historical witnesses: that of Jerome of Stridon (for which ample contextualization is provided), George of Laodicea, Epiphanius of Salamis, and some second-generation Ancyran Marcellans. The transformation of πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον into something akin to a byword constitutes further testimony to the unacknowledged contribution that the Eustathian tradition made to the progress of the trinitarian discussion not only within the limited domain of the Antiochene church, but in Christendom at large.

Chapter VI, conceived as a supplement to the treatment of the trinitarian debates in Syria pursued in previous chapters, contains a study on the unfolding of these controversies in the city of Edessa, arguably the second most important Christian center
in Roman Syria. By indicating possible contacts with a variety of ecclesiastical milieus, this chapter explores institutional developments in the Edessene Church, traces its participation in the broader Empire-wide debates, and suggests an avenue for further research concerning the earliest stages of construction of a local memory, embedded in ecclesiastical propaganda. Overall, fourth-century Edessa appears as a theologically diverse Christian center, receptive to outside intellectual and institutional trends, and fully integrated in the imperial Church.

**Chapter VII** explores the broader significance held for the parting of the ways by the production of a highly individuated Christian theological discourse seen in **chapters II-V**. In surveying scholarly literature on the problem of so-called Jewish binitarianism in late antiquity, the focus will lie here almost exclusively on the interpretive odyssey of the notorious “two powers in heaven” (.':) meme, and more specifically on its very limited Amoraic occurrences. The phrase occurs in Jewish literature in reference to different varieties of minut (religious deviance) possibly including Christian binitarianism. As such, its value has been investigated also with regard to the role that

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theological beliefs could have played in the “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism in late antiquity.

Within this framework, I propose a re-thinking of the late ancient “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism as one between communities of knowledge, using as a case study a story—transmitted in different forms by a cluster of texts—of the first-century tanna Elisha ben Abuyah’s ascent to a mystical realm and view of the angel Meṭatron. In reaction to this vision, Elisha is reported to have uttered a statement containing the famous syntagm רשויות שני (“two powers”), and, at least in traditional scholarly interpretations, to have been punished as a consequence. Focusing on the account contained in a passage of the Babylonian Talmud (Ḥagigah 15a), I propose that the text’s undeniable concern with religious practice be understood as woven within a contrast between legitimate and illegitimate ways of knowing. The variety of discourse the text disavows and casts as foreign, I additionally suggest, is consciously linked to a system of justification comparable to the Christian one and incompatible with that of the Rabbis.

Building mainly on Daniel Boyarin’s analysis of the divergent yet congruent approaches to religious discourse deployed by post-Nicene Christian writers and late-fourth-century Rabbis, I conclude that this sugiyah points to the possibility that, within the Rabbinic field, the crystallization of particular modes of intellectual inquiry,
connected to a restricted “horizon of the questionable,” affected a distinct self-
understanding of the Rabbinic community more significantly than theological
disagreement between Jews and Christians.
2. The Trinitarian Debates

2.1 The Origins of the Trinitarian Controversies

2.1.1 The Generation of the Son

Early Christians developed a variety of views about the identity of Christ and his relation to God the Father. Literary works from the second and third century such as Ascension of Isaiah, Odes of Solomon, Ignatius of Antioch’s Letters, Shepherd of Hermas, or Acts of Peter testify to different answers to the question as to who Christ was. The fourth-century disputes about the identity of Christ to which the present study is devoted have been traditionally termed “Arian,” from the name of the Alexandrian presbyter of Libyan origins who with his teaching provided, at some time between 318 and 322, a catalyst for their eruption.¹

The most controversial feature of Arius’s teaching was the attribution of a created status to the Son of God, whose generation Arius defined through the use of the verbs “to beget” (γεννάω), “to place into existence” (ὑφίστηµι), and “to create” (κτίζω).

The idea that Christ had been the object of “begetting” was admitted with no reserves by his conservative Origenist opponents; similarly, the notion that the Son of God might

have been “placed into existence” was acceptable to them thanks to its ambiguity.

Nevertheless, the concept that the Son might have been “created,” and that his ontological status should therefore be equated with that of God’s creatures, was bound to upset traditional Alexandrian theologians.

The sharpest tool Arius employed to posit that the Son had been created *ex nihilo*—the way in which God’s creation of the cosmos was also commonly assumed to have occurred—was the expression “out of things that were not” (ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων), which he employed in the famous and early Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia.² Arius explained there that the adoption of this syntagm was meant to avoid usage of the materialistic expression “from God” (ἐκ θεοῦ).³ The Son, he taught, was “neither a part of God nor deriving from an underlying substrate” (ὦτε µέρος θεοῦ οὔτε ἔξ ύποκειµένου τινός).

By denying the validity of the *theologoumenon* “a part of God,” Arius intended to oppose an understanding of the godhead as a compound substance that could be resolved back into its components. At the same time, his rejection of the Stoic substrate was meant to

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² Analytically speaking this phrase, used since the second century to deny the notion of creation as molding of formless matter, does not adequately describe *creatio ex nihilo*, because τὰ οὐκ ὄντα may refer to a defective being (as opposed to τὸ ὄν), and because any change is in a sense ἔξ οὐκ ὄντων (in that any X is from non-X). The way in which the phrase was understood, however, was enough to turn Christ into a creature, though leaving space for him to be a perfect one, and the first, chief, and creator of all others. These considerations about the ἔξ οὐκ ὄντων are dependent on G.C. Stead, “The Word ‘from Nothing,’” *JThS* 49 (1998): 671-684.

³ De Halleux, “‘Hypostase’ et ‘Personne,’” 317.
distance theology from materialistic conceptions of the Son and the Father as two particular specifications of a shared divine stuff.

However, an old philosophical commonplace, going back to Parmenides, taught that “nothing comes into being from nothing” (*ex nihilo nihil fit*). Although theorists of self-production and self-generation had challenged this notion, their objections could hardly apply to the Son of God. Arius’s bold affirmation that Christ was “out of things that were not” thus remained not only theologically but also philosophically problematic. As a result, the Alexandrian priest felt the need to qualify the expression by implicitly relying upon the Aristotelian distinction between different types of causality. The Son, Arius explained, is “out of things that were not” only insofar as his material cause is concerned (namely, God is not a begetter). At the same time, Christ is “from God” (ἐκ θεοῦ) with regard to his efficient cause (namely, God is a maker), inasmuch as he is created by God’s will (βουλημα) and volition (θελημα).⁴

The definition of the created status of the Son hinged for Arius not only on his origin, but also on the punctiliarness, as opposed to the continuousness, of his begetting. The bishop Alexander, Arius’s main opponent in Alexandria, followed Origen in holding that the Logos was eternally generated from the Father,⁵ whereas Alexander

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⁴See the role of God’s will in Pl. Tim., 41B.
⁵Orig. Princ., 4, 4, 1.
differed from Origen in ascribing to the two entities equal dignity and power. Arius, on the contrary, rejected both Origenist doctrines: to make the Logos coeternal with God and equally divine, he opined, was tantamount to positing two Gods.

A philosophical precedent for this disagreement has been identified in intra-
Platonist discussions about the creation of the world. Plato, in Timaeus, had made time dependent on the motion of the heavenly bodies, thus making a creation in time virtually impossible. Since time was commonly understood by Christians as having been created through the Son, a comparable problem arose for Arius and anybody else who might have an interest in claiming that the Son’s creation had occurred in time. About two hundred years prior to Arius’s intervention, the second-century Platonist philosopher Atticus had solved this difficulty by affirming that before the creation of the time as we know it, which is measured through astronomical units, there existed an indefinite extension of immeasurable time.

Arius claimed he had overcome the problem by similarly avoiding usage of chronological language and proclaiming that “there was when he was not” (ἦν ποτε ὅτε ἦν).

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7 Pl. Tim., 38B-39.
— as opposed, e.g., to affirming that “there was a time when he was not” (ἦν πότε χρόνος ὅτε οὐκ ἦν).

His opponents were not particularly impressed with this lexical trick. The slight intervening gap that Arius posited could in fact hardly avoid being translated in terms of a time of sorts. They claimed that it was Arius’s very use of the aorist ὑπῆρξεν (from the verb ὑπάρχω, “to come into being”) to express the Son’s coming into existence that gave away his view that the generation of the Logos was a momentary event, rather than an eternal accompaniment to the Father’s being.

2.1.2 The Origins of Arius’s Doctrine

The puzzlingly rapid pace at which the “Arian” crisis turned from a local quarrel into an earthquake for Christendom globally has led scholars to ask what was at stake in the dispute. In recent decades the so-called “Arian” debates have been more commonly

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9 Be this as it may, a God who had not been eternally Father posed an additional philosophical difficulty for Arius. In his Letter to Alexander of Alexandria, in the context of denying the Son’s co-eternity and co-unbegottenness to the Father, Arius contested his opponents’ (possibly Dionysius of Alexandria and Novatian’s) utilization of the expression τὰ πρὸς τι, used in Arist. Cat., 7 to signify relationship (see W.A. Löhr, “Arius Reconsidered (Part 1),” ZAC 9 (2006): 524-560; Id., “Arius Reconsidered (Part 2),” ZAC 10 (2006): 121-157). Aristotle himself had specified that the coexistence of two terms of a relationship is not a universal law, and that, when it does apply, the two ends of the relationship may exist either synchronously or asynchronously. But while relations are commonly accidents (συµβεβηκότα)—thus the argument of Arius’s opponents may have gone—, in God they do in fact have to be eternal, and therefore the Father must be eternally such. This argument could have been rebutted, as had been done by Methodius of Olympus, by showing that it made God dependent on the existence of some inferior being, or on the basis of non-reciprocity arguments found in Pl. Theaet., 155A-C. Arius, however, does not appear to have undertaken to do so. See Stead, “The Platonism of Arius,” 26-29.
referred to by the adjective “trinitarian,” in a shift away from the heritage of heresiological practices, as well as in recognition of the relatively marginal role that the figure of Arius occupied for all those eastern Christian intellectuals—in some historical accounts called “Eusebians”—who fought against the coalition that had emerged victorious from the Council of Nicaea (325).

Additionally, three and a half decades ago, new readings began to be set forth that did away with the traditional image of Arius as a radical and even impious innovator. Proposals were made that his motives were instead such concerns as the conservative upholding of the unique dignity of God the Father for devotional purposes, or the propounding of an exemplarist soteriology. On the other hand, more specifically theological or exegetical hypotheses were offered to explain Arius’s doctrine, allowing

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11 See e.g. Hanson, The Search, xvii-xviii.

interpreters to see him as a partaker in a web of ongoing debates rather than as the singlehandedoriginator of an international crisis.13

One of these proposals found the roots of Arius’s system in a radicalization of the theological subordinationism typical of the Origenist tradition. The third-century Alexandrian theologian Origen, after all, had sharply marked in his writings the ontological difference between the Father and the Son.14 What is more, Origen considered that whatever could be said about the Son applied to the Father in a transcendent degree, whereas anything that could be predicated of the Father could be

13 See M. Wiles, “Attitudes to Arius in the Arian Controversy,” in Barnes and William, Arianism after Arius, 31-44.

said about the Son only in a relative sense. If Arius could be proven to be a radical epigone of Origen, his bold demotion of the status of the Son of God could be explained.

Critics of this reconstruction were quick to point out that Origen’s theology, for all its subordinationism, was fundamentally pluralistic, and did not aim at emphasizing God’s oneness. Thus, a competing hypothesis preferred to place Arius in the Antiochene tradition of theological adoptionism and exegetical literalism, embodied by the likes of Paul of Samosata and Lucian of Antioch.15 This solution, however, met with several objections. The fact that for Arius the Father brought into being the essence and dignities of the Son at the time of the latter’s birth is likely to locate the Alexandrian’s views far from any doctrine resembling adoptionism. With regard to scriptural exegesis, it was additionally remarked, the origins of Arius’s literalism may be traced back more economically to Peter of Alexandria (d. 311 ca.) or to the so-called Alexandrian simpliciores, or non-allegorists, who are recorded to have opposed the exegetical practices of Clement (150-215 ca.), Origen, and Dionysius (d. 265 ca.).16


2.1.3 The Generation of the Son and the Philosophical Tradition

A related but different route that has been explored in relation to the outbreak of the trinitarian controversies has consisted in assessing the philosophical frameworks within which both Arius and his opponents couched their understanding of intra-divine relations. But Arius’s acquaintance with, and dependence upon, specific recent or contemporaneous philosophical doctrines is controversial. Some have tried to show that Neoplatonism was part of Arius’s intellectual background. Others have expressed skepticism as to how widely known Neoplatonist ideas were in Alexandria at his time, and have pointed to Middle Platonist ties instead.\(^\text{17}\)

Beyond the correctness of these specific identifications, contextualizing the controversy initiated by Arius’s theological intervention within a broader philosophical landscape has opened up the possibility of more comprehensive interpretations of its stakes. According to one reading, e.g., the trinitarian controversies led to a divorce between the Platonic tradition and Christianity. While both Arius and his pro-Nicene opponents agreed that there could be no middle term between the transcendent and the

created world, they allegedly diverged over the realm to which the Son should be assigned. In a different interpretation, the struggle between partisans and opponents of Arius had at its core a divide between Aristotelianism, which empirically derived concepts from concrete individual entities, and Platonism, concerned instead with pure ideas.

In theological discussions in Alexandria predating Arius’s interventions, Christians stressed the unity and indivisibility of God against the Valentinian and Manichaean doctrine of prolation (προβολή), Stoic conceptions of a material deity, and the speculations of Stoicizing Platonists such as Plutarch. In order to do so, they applied to the Son of God Plato’s teaching concerning the generation of the world. Arius according to the view now being discussed conservatively opposed these developments, fearing that God’s freedom and personality might be compromised. His stance

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19 See the reconstruction of these scholarly postures in H.A. Wolfson, “Philosophical implications of Arianism and Apollinarianism,” DOP 12 (1958): 3-28.
concerning the willfully and punctiliarly created—rather than eternally generated—nature of the Son were thus derivative of postures taken in intra-Platonist debates about God’s creation of the world.

In Plato’s Timaeus the demiurge is in fact notoriously called “father” (πατήρ) and “maker” (ποιητής) of all things. These two expressions were commonly understood as respectively referring to rational beings (father) and to the rest of creation (maker). As a result of exegetical discussions of this passage, both pagan and Christian Platonically-minded thinkers had split opinions about the origin of the cosmos, believing roughly one of the following: a) that the cosmos had always existed, in dependence on the godhead (e.g. Aristotle, Speusippus, and Xenocrates); b) that it was created out of formless matter by an act of God (e.g. Plutarch and Atticus); c) that it was created ex nihilo (Christians and others).

The transformation of a discussion originally concerning the created status of the world into one centering on that of the Son of God can be comprehended in light of the crucial innovation introduced in the first century CE by Philo of Alexandria: the turning of the Logos into a space that houses an intelligible

\[20\text{ Pl. Tim., 28C.}\]
\[21\text{ Witness to these discussions is borne, e.g., by Plut. Quaest. plat., 2.}\]
\[22\text{ See Stead, “Philosophy.”}\]
world of ideas.\textsuperscript{23} Arius’s Christology appropriated Philo’s two-stage view of the Logos and returned to the conception of God as a maker, as opposed to a begetter.

\textbf{2.2 The Council of Nicaea}

\textbf{2.2.1 From the Eruption of the Controversy to the Council of Nicaea (325)}

Arius’s preaching of his idiosyncratic ideas about Christ’s begetting must have encountered some approval among the laypeople of his church in the Alexandrian section of Baukalis. Soon enough, however, his positions led to a public debate, in which his views were proscribed by bishop Alexander of Alexandria. Condemned again, along with his followers, by a synod of approximately one hundred bishops that gathered at Alexandria, Arius addressed a Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, in which he scolded Alexander for considering the Son coeternal with the Father and originating from His same substance. At the same time, appearing preoccupied that the divine might be

\textsuperscript{23} On ideas in Philo see R. Radice, “The ‘Nameless Principle’ from Philo to Plotinus: An Outline of Research,” in \textit{Italian Studies on Philo of Alexandria}, ed. F. Calabi (Boston: Brill, 2003), 167-182. Following Christian apologists’ identification of Philo’s Logos with John’s, Irenaeus and Origen had attributed to the Logos only one stage of existence, thus making it eternally generated by God. A similar development is seen in Ammonius Saccas and Plotinus, who, however, replaced the Logos with the Nous. The Christian writer Methodius of Olympus (3rd-4th century CE) also maintained the \textit{creatio ex nihilo} of the world (although not of the Logos: see Barnard, “What was Arius’ Philosophy?”). This is interesting to notice because Methodius was one of the greatest adversaries of Origen, whose marked subordinationism Arius is often alleged to have adopted while stripping it of its qualifications (see G. Patterson, “Methodius, Origen and the Arian Dispute,” in \textit{Studia Patristica XVII. Vol. 2: Ascetica, Liturgica, Second Century, Tertullian to Nicea in the West, Origen. Papers Presented at the Eighth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, Sept. 3-8, 1979}, ed. E.A. Livingstone (StPatr 17.2; Peeters: Leuven, 1982), 912-923).
understood materialistically, he affirmed unequivocally that before being drawn out of nothing the Son did not exist.

As a result of his condemnation, Arius began to seek the support of fellow disciples of his master Lucian of Antioch (the so-called “Collucianists”) elsewhere in the east.24 Eusebius of Caesarea and his namesake of Nicomedia, responding to the call, mobilized their networks in Arius’s support.25 After a Palestinian sojourn, probably facilitated by the former, Arius sought shelter with Eusebius of Nicomedia.26 Taking advantage of the absence of disciplinary regulations for inter-diocesan relationships, Arius’s network members gathered a synod in Bithynia and another in Palestine, which ruled in his favor. Soon enough the geographic expansion of the epistolary

24 Arius received support in Libya (Secondus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica), Phoenicia (Paulinus of Tyre and Gregory of Berytus), Palestine (Eusebius of Caesarea), Bithynia (Maris of Chalcedon, Theognis of Nicea, and Eusebius of Nicomedia), Phrygia (Theodotus of Laodicea), Cilicia (Athanasius of Anazarbus, Anthony of Tarsus), and Cappadocia (Asterius the Sophist).


correspondence on both sides of the dispute—primarily pursued, however, by Arius’s partisans—turned a local Alexandrian disagreement into a problem for a great part of the oikoumenē.

The Emperor Constantine, informed of these events, attempted to solve the dispute first by a letter in which he invited the two sides to find concord, and then by requesting the intervention of his envoy Hosius of Corduba. As a result of the latter’s inability to bring peace, the Emperor resolved to gather a council at Ancyra in May 325. Before that convocation was held, a different gathering of eastern bishops is likely to have taken place; its historicity is one of the most hotly debated questions in scholarship on the trinitarian controversies. If we are to trust the Syriac translation of a Greek document, informing us of Hosius’s convocation and conduction of this synod in Antioch, the bishops who gathered in the city on the Orontes in late 324 or early 325 condemned Eusebius of Caesarea and other erstwhile allies of Arius’s.27

Possibly alarmed by this outcome, Constantine, who initially might have favored Arius’s alliance over the opposing one, decided to switch the location for the ecumenical council from Ancyra (in Asia Minor) to Nicaea, an episcopal see closer to the interim capital Nicomedia.\(^{28}\)

The Emperor offered to all bishops the possibility of traveling for free with the imperial carriage system. Church leaders convened in great number, possibly exceeding 250, from numerous locations in the Roman east, as well as from the western regions of the Empire and from beyond the eastern limes.\(^{29}\) According to historical testimonies,


Constantine’s initial speech at the council was followed by an intervention of the president of the assembly, either Hosius of Corduba or Eustathius of Antioch. Not much information has been handed down about the proceedings of the council. It is clear that a letter by Eusebius of Nicomedia was read in which the latter opposed, most centrally, the notion of Christ’s natural begetting on the part of God. This kind of generation would have in fact made the Son—Eusebius wrote—_homoousios_ with the Father, with dangerous ditheistic results.

After condemning the views expressed by Eusebius’s letter, the council attempted to reach an agreement about a positive doctrinal statement. This task, according to the account of the events provided by Athanasius, proved more challenging, as the front that opposed Arius and his allies held very heterogeneous positions. Moreover, the “Arians” were reportedly very skilled at subtly bending to their own understanding all the scriptural expressions that the synodal majority put forward in order to capture the equality between the Son and the Father. Eusebius of Caesarea famously claimed that the council utilized the creed of his own church as the basis for

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what would become known as the *Nicaenum*. Whether or not he should be trusted on this point, a text was approved by a large coalition, formed by the moderate Origenian bishops, led by Alexander of Alexandria, and by the so-called monarchians, led by Marcellus of Ancyra and Eustathius of Antioch. The text contained a repudiation of several of Arius’s own claims, as well as, most famously, the declaration that the Son is *homoousios* (ὁµοούσιος, commonly translated as consubstantial) with the Father.

### 2.2.2. Homoousios and ousia

Much ink has been spilled over the origins of the term *homoousios* as well as over its intended meaning in the context of the Nicene Creed. As a technical philosophical term (as distinct from its unspecific sense of “possession”) *ousia*, on which the term *homoousios* is compounded, could take up a wide range of meanings. In his by now

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34See the discussion in Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, 83-84; Hanson, *The Search*, 163-166.

35In light of this debate, I have avoided providing a univocal English translation for the word, and I have opted, rather, for using the Greek term throughout. The most complete history of *homoousios* is in Prestige, *God*, 197-218. The most common translation is “consubstantial.”

classical analysis of the question, strongly influenced by analytical philosophy, Christopher Stead identified seven “dimensions” and four “modes of reference” that would constitute an ideal grid of possible meanings of *ousia*, based on varying acceptions of the verb “to be” (*εἶναι*), from which this noun derives. The dimensions Stead discussed are: 1) existence (a sense not so clearly distinguished from that of reality, substance—further specified as matter or form,—truth, or “all that exists”); 2) category or status; 3) substance (the most permanent form of being, which persists through modifications and makes the latter intelligible); 4) stuff or matter (with different degrees of specificity or inclusiveness); 5) form, species, or genus (something whose lacking will cause a thing to cease to exist); 6) identity of a definition; and 7) truth. *Ousia’s* modes of reference, on the other hand, would be a) “the fact that something exists or is in a certain manner” (*τὸ εἶναι*, or ὅτι ἔστι); b) “what something is” (*τὸ ὄν* as a predicate, or ὅ ἐστι); c) “that which is” (*τὸ ὄν* as a subject, or ὃ ἔστι, in a generic sense); and d) “something that is” (*τὸ ὄν* as a subject, or ὃ ἔστι, in a specific sense).

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37 Some of the twenty-eight slots remain empty, while some others are hardly distinguishable from an adjacent one.
Although *ousia* was used by ancient authors in all these varying senses, Stead contended, these variations went for the most part undetected.\(^{38}\) Most writers accepted the Platonic contrast between intelligible and sensible substances, and implicitly equated it to the distinction between the general and the particular. Christian thinkers, moreover, often rejected as trivial any attempt to push the inquiry further.

Since God’s existence was taken for granted, when the term *ousia* was used in reference to God it rarely indicated mere existence, a notion that the word ὅπαρξις most commonly expressed. Some Christian authors, such as Alexander of Alexandria and Cyril of Jerusalem, avoided *ousia* altogether, and referred to *hypostasis* in a roughly similar sense. They did so either out of fear that the term would be understood in its sense of stuff; as a result of a perceived need to harmonize their theological language with the Latin use of *substantia*; or out of wariness of the non-scriptural nature of the word. The Platonic saying, contained in Republic, that the idea of Good is “beyond being” (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας\(^{39}\)) might have also been influential upon this Christian reticence, although this statement was interpreted in a variety of ways—including some

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\(^{39}\) Pl. Resp., 509B, 8-9.
such as “beyond material substance,” “beyond created substance,” and “beyond intelligible substance.”

The first ecclesiastical writer to use *homoousios* in a trinitarian context may have been Origen, in a passage whose authenticity has, however, been questioned. Chronologically speaking, the next occurrence of the expression in a Christian text is found in the dispute between Dionysius of Rome and his namesake of Alexandria. Meanwhile, the term had had some fortune in gnostic literature, where it assumed a variety of meanings: identity of substance between generating and generated, between things generated out of the same substance, and between the partners of a syzygy. The most immediately relevant precedent for its Nicene usage is the meaningful appearance it made in the dossier related to the condemnation of Paul of Samosata in Antioch (268).

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Scholarly opinions on the proximate source of homoousios’s utilization at Nicaea are varied. Countering a widespread account, according to which the term’s sources needed to be sought in western theology,44 Franco Beatrice gave credence to Eusebius of Caesarea’s claim that the word was inserted in the Nicene Creed solely by the personal order of Constantine.45 Recently, Ilaria Ramelli has proposed that Eusebius himself may have had a prominent role in suggesting the usage of homoousios to Constantine.46

According to Barnes the term was originally promoted within the anti-“Arian” party by neither Hosius nor Constantine, but Alexander of Alexandria. In his reconstruction, Alexander’s opponents deployed the concept in order to tarnish his theological stand through association with a term that in the previous century, on the occasion of the censure of Paul of Samosata, had come to describe the monarchian modalist posture. Much to their surprise, Alexander decided to cling to the word, given that it had the virtue of preventing Arius and his allies from equivocating.47

44 Summarized in Stead, Divine Substance, 250-251.
Whichever the origin of the employment of the term homoousios at Nicaea, its later rising to the status of a technical gauge of the correct faith proved consequential for the development of the disputes and for the shaping of late ancient Christian thought more broadly. This same historical-intellectual dynamic of formularization and technicalization expressed by the contested parabola of ousia, which will not be tracked up-close here, will be observed in the chapters that follow with regard to the development of a terminology capable of articulating the relationship between unity and multiplicity within the godhead.

2.3 Terminological Awareness: The Early Debates over Hypostasis

2.3.1. From Nicaea (325) to Antioch (341)

Having provided some historical, theological, and philosophical background for the origins of the trinitarian debates, I will now offer a selective account of the latter in the period 325-345. As discussed in the Introduction, the controversies have been traditionally interpreted based on the assumption of a continuity between the theological contents of the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople. The theologians who laid the groundwork for the turn of 381 would have done so by distinguishing the terms ousia and hypostasis, which were allegedly mentioned as synonyms in the anathemas of Nicaea. Revisionist accounts, however, have shown that the issues addressed by the two councils—respectively the consubstantiality between the Son and the Father, and the
number of hypostaseis to be distinguished within the godhead—were different, and that any attempt to read the concerns of Constantinople back into those of Nicaea is a construction ex post.

While these newer perspectives emphasize how the outcome of the trinitarian discussions was the product of the historical agency of post-Nicene intellectuals, they do not address the changes that the controversies brought about in the ways in which the issues were discussed. These changes, which my own narrative attempts to track, were bequeathed to the Christian intellectual tradition as durably as any of the particular theologoumena contained in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed, and affected the less-than-dialogic and dogmatic character of Christian culture toward the end of late antiquity.

This section analyzes jointly a select sequence of interrelated texts: the second formula of the Council of Antioch of 341, the westerners’ creed of the Council of Sardica of 343, and the Long-Lined Exposition of 345. It argues that the incipient discussions of the number of hypostaseis in the context of the trinitarian controversies, which concerned the issue of how to name that which there are three of within the deity, presupposes a novel awareness of the importance of shared theological vocabulary as a tool for negotiation within the polemic.
Whether thanks to the appeal of *homoousios*, by virtue of a generic quality, or by reason of Constantine’s intimidating presence, the Nicene Creed was readily subscribed to by almost all members of the assembly of 325, including some, like Eusebius of Caesarea, who would have had in fact many reasons for ideological reservations. Only Arius himself and two Libyan bishops, Secundus of Ptolemais and Theonas of Marmarica, asked to be excused from signing. As a consequence the council condemned, deposed, and exiled them.\(^4\)\(^8\) Shortly after the council, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nicaea were also deposed, this time by Constantine, and exiled to Gaul.\(^4\)\(^9\)

This series of condemnations appeared to have definitively established the rejection of Arius’s views, and of any accommodation to them, as the correct belief of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Nevertheless, they were followed by the beginning of a time of conflict from which the Church would emerge with a different ideological majority than the one that had affirmed itself at Nicaea. Such sudden development is primarily to be ascribed to Constantine’s change of heart with regard to which ecclesiastical alliance should receive his backing.

Soon after the celebration of the Council of Nicaea, in fact, Constantine began to seek a balance between the orientation expressed by the synod’s canons (particularly

\(^{48}\) Arius was probably sent to Illyria. On his exile see T.D. Barnes, “The Exile and Recalls of Arius,” *JThS* 60 (2009): 109-129.

\(^{49}\) On the reasons and circumstances on these depositions see Hanson, *The Search*, 173-174.
their anathemas) and radical forms of subordinationism, antonomastically represented by the specter of Arius. Through a series of well-calculated episcopal reappointments and depositions, the Emperor managed to gain the trust and favor of a wide theoligico-ecclesial area of moderate, typically Origenist, generically subordinationist eastern bishops. Though wary of the *homoousios*, which they regarded as fundamentally Sabellian, these church leaders disagreed with those who were still in communion with Arius.

Ancient sources, always prone to *chercher la femme*, blame Constantine’s about-face on the influence of the women of the imperial court: Helena, Constantia, and Basilina. Partly because of family connections, these relatives of Constantine’s did in fact favor the Eusebians over the Nicenes.\(^50\) A likelier explanation for the Emperor’s change of heart, however, is that he was interested in favoring the formation of a grand coalition of church leaders, so as to cut off the more radical wings on both ends of the trinitarian spectrum. In so doing, he hoped to create that ecclesiastical harmony that the Council of Nicaea had failed to bring about.

It should be added that the Nicene outcome had been perceived as essentially monarchian by a wide eastern episcopal front of moderate Origenists who, while

\(^{50}\)See Ath. *Hist. Ar.*, 5, 6; Philost. *Hist. eccl.*, 2, 12; Amm. Marc. *Res Gest.*, 22, 9, 4; Ruf. *Hist. eccl.*, 1, 9; 1, 12; Soc. *Hist. eccl.*, 1, 25; Soz. *Hist. eccl.* II.27; Theod. *Hist. eccl.*, 2, 3. All cit. in Simonetti, *La crisi ariana*, 101, n. 2 (Simonetti’s indication of the book of Ammianus’s *Res gestae* as 12 is to be rendered as 22).
unhappy with the positions of Arius and his allies, saw theological subordinationism as indispensable. Perhaps even more consequentially, the patriarchal statuses and geo-ecclesiological ambitions of the two main engines of the anti-Arian effort that had led to the approval of the Nicene Creed—Antioch and Alexandria—were bound to clash. Any alliance between these two archbishoprics was unlikely to endure.51

Constantine’s change of heart led to the recall from exile and episcopal reinstatement of Theognis of Nicaea and Eusebius of Nicomedia in 328. A series of depositions were now in store for the champions of Nicaea. Most notably, Athanasius was banned from Alexandria, and Marcellus of Ancyra was condemned as a heretic in Constantinople (336) thanks to the accusations levelled against him by Eusebius of Caesarea. Arius, on the other hand, was rehabilitated on the basis of a confession of faith sent to Constantine, although he died before being able to reenter Alexandria.

Upon Constantine’s death (337) the Empire was divided between his sons Constans, who in 340 defeated his brother Constantine II and assumed full power over the western provinces, and Constantius II, who became responsible for the East. Constantius shared Constantine’s interest in pursuing the political unity of the Church. After two decades of ongoing clashes, he concluded that only a centralized and energetic imperial initiative could achieve the longed-for ecclesial unity. To this end he

51 See Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 102.
summoned a series of councils aiming at conclusively settling the controversies.\textsuperscript{52} He thus sided with Eusebius of Nicomedia, forcing the pro-Nicene eastern bishops, who had meanwhile returned home, back into exile in the west.\textsuperscript{53}

It was during their exile that Athanasius and Marcellus managed to convince Pope Julius of Rome that their enemies in the east, in reality moderate Origenians, were Arians \textit{tout court}—a feat that would prove rife with negative effects for the relationships between easterners and westerners throughout the rest of the trinitarian controversies. As a result of these maneuvers, in 341 a Roman council rehabilitated Athanasius and Marcellus and accused the easterners of Arianism.\textsuperscript{54} To this affront Eusebius of Nicomedia responded by gathering the ecclesiastical front he led in a council held at Antioch, in 341, under the presidency of the local bishop Flacillus, and known as the Dedication Council (or council \textit{in encaeninis}).

\begin{thebibliography}{1}


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2.3.2 From Antioch (341) to Milan (345)

The ninety-seven conciliar fathers gathered in Antioch rejected the accusation of Arianism hurled at them by the Roman council, confirmed the condemnation of Arius’s views, and closed their ranks around a series of traditional eastern theological views. Four formulas of faith have been transmitted in relation to the synod in *encaenii* of 341. The first is simply an introductory statement. The second, the most significant and historically consequential of them all, will be discussed presently. The third was presented apologetically by Theophronius of Tyana, who had been accused of monarchianism. The fourth—which is *sensu stricto* not really a product of the council—is a summary of the second, and it was presented in the following year to Emperor Constans in Milan (or in Trier). Its slightly more generic presentation of the Eusebian beliefs was an attempt at mediating with the western clergy, and thereby ingratiating the western Emperor.

The second formula, possibly based upon an early confession of Lucian of Antioch, is the official credal statement of the synod, which would constitute the basis for eastern declarations of faith until 357. The formula marks a stark distance from

Arianism by expressing with clarity the divinity of Christ; by refraining from equating begetting to creation; and by defining the Son as a perfect image of the *ousia* of the Father, which holds no differences from it. At the same time, the creed is the expression of a theological tradition far removed from the decisions of the Council of Nicaea, in particular insofar as its text contains a certain subordinationism and describes the union between the different persons of the trinity only as one of harmony in will and action.\(^{56}\)

Particularly noteworthy in this formula is the affirmation of the triplicity of *hypostaseis*, contained in the following passage:

And (we believe) in the Holy Spirit, given to the believers for consolation, sanctification, and perfection, as also our Lord Jesus Christ ordered to the disciples, saying: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (*Matthew* 28:19), namely (in the name) of the Father, who is truly Father, of the Son, who is truly Son, and of the Holy Spirit, who is truly Holy Spirit—since the names have not been given superficially and in vain, but rather indicate exactly the particular hypostasis, order, and glory of each of the named, so that they are three things with regard to the hypostasis but one thing only with regard to the harmony.\(^{57}\)


The episcopal milieus that were in communion with Eusebius of Nicomedia best represented, during the early phase of the trinitarian controversies, a theological tradition that can be named tri-hypostatic. While the initiator of this line could be considered Origen, its foremost champion in the early fourth century was Eusebius of Nicomedia’s erstwhile ally Eusebius of Caesarea. Johannes Zachhuber described this tradition as a combination of emphasis on the separate subsistence of the members of the godhead, utilization of the term hypostasis to describe such subsistence, and a subordinationist attitude. The proponents of tri-hypostatic doctrine countered monarchianism while eschewing the tri-theistic consequences that would have resulted from coordination between the Father and the other two members of the trinity.58

Already Arius, at the very beginning of the disputes, had asserted the existence of three hypostaseis in his letter addressed to Alexander of Alexandria:

For the Father, having given to him (scil. the Son) the inheritance of all things, did not deprive Himself of the things that He unbegottenly has in Himself: for He is source of all things. Therefore there are three hypostaseis. And God, being cause of all things, is, absolutely alone, without beginning, whereas the Son, begotten timelessly by the Father and created and formed before the eons (cf. Proverbs 8:22-25), did not exist before having been begotten, but, begotten timelessly before all things, he alone was given subsistence by the Father.59

59 Ar. Ep. Alex., 4: οὐ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ δοὺς αὐτῷ πάντων τὴν κληρονοµίαν ἐστέρησεν ἑαυτὸν ὧν ἀγεννήτως ἔχει ἐν ἑαυτῷ· πηγὴ γάρ ἐστι πάντων. ὥστε τρεῖς εἰσὶν υποστάσεις. καὶ ὁ μὲν θεὸς αἰτίως τῶν πάντων τυχάνων ἐστὶν ἄναρχος μονώτατος, ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ἀχρόνως γεγεννηθεὶς ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων κτίσθεις καὶ θεμελιωθεὶς οὐκ ἦν πρὸ τοῦ γεγεννηθῆναι, ἀλλ᾿ ἀχρόνως πρὸ πάντων γεγεννηθεὶς μόνος ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ὑπέστη.
Nevertheless, until the Council of Antioch (341) the expression had not appeared—whether positively or negatively—in the conciliar documents and creedal declarations of any of the theological fronts.

The west was scandalized by the affirmation of three divine *hypostaseis* made by the council *in encaenii*. The divergence of perspectives with regard to this issue was bound to manifest itself at Sardica (in Dacia), where in 343 a conciliatory attempt made by Pope Julius, with the support of the western Emperor, resulted in failure. Although the bone of contention was here *in primis* canonical, easterners and westerners eventually excommunicated each other over theological matters. The former confirmed the validity of the decisions of the Dedication Council of 341. The latter, on the other hand, published a document that exceeded even Nicaea in its monarchianism. Interestingly, this document did not cite the *homoousios*, and even condemned as heretical discussions of *ousia*. Reacting vehemently to the Antiochene affirmation of three divine *hypostaseis*, the westerners’ text asserted the existence of one sole *hypostasis* of the godhead:

*As for us, this Catholic and apostolic tradition, faith, and profession we have received and learned, (and) this one we maintain: that one is the *hypostasis*, which the heretics name *ousia*, of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And if they asked which one is the *hypostasis* of the Son, we respond that it is that professed as the Father’s only one, and that the Father has never been without*
the Son, nor the Son without the Father (nor could he be [such], namely Logos not having Spirit).⁶⁰

The affirmation that the one divine hypostasis is called ousia by the “heretics” intends to refer not to a supposed identification of the two terms on their part, but to the fact that the tri-hypostatic theologians identified—mistakenly to the westerners’ minds—the unicity of God only at the level of the ousia. Nevertheless, the formulation of the passing condemnation (“which the heretics name ousia”) is significant in that it reveals an incipient awareness of the fact that the dispute revolves around technical terminology. By identifying the hypostasis of the Son with that of the Father, the authors of the western creedal declarations of Sardica made it clear that the Eusebian attachment to the notion of the existence of three hypostaseis was seen as a serious hindrance on the road toward reconciliation, and suggested that a change in terminology on the part of their opponents would have gone a long way toward the regaining of communion.

As a result of a series of changes within the political landscape,⁶¹ in 344 the Eusebian front thought it appropriate to make one more attempt at doctrinal agreement with the westerners, an attempt that would maximize areas for potential theological

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⁶⁰ Westerners’ Creed of Sardica, apud Theod. Hist. eccl., 2, 6 (Hahn and Hahn, Bibliothek, 188): Ἡµεῖς δὲ ταύτην παρειλήφαµεν καὶ δεδιδάγµεθα καὶ ταύτην ἔχοµεν τὴν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν παράδοσιν καὶ πίστιν καὶ ὁµολογίαν, µίαν εἶναι ὑπόστασιν, ἣν αὐτοὶ οἱ αἱρετικοὶ οὐσίαν προσαγορεύουσι, τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύµατος. καὶ εἰ ζητοῖεν τίς τοῦ υἱοῦ ἡ ὑπόστασις ἐστιν, ὁµολογοῦµεν ὡς αὕτη ἦν τοῦ πατρὸς ὁµολογουµένη, µηδὲ ποτε πατέρα χωρὶς υἱοῦ µηδὲ υἱὸν χωρὶς πατρὸς γεγενήθηκαί µηδὲ εἶναι δύνασθαι, ὅ ἐστι λόγος πνεύµα οὐκ ἔχων.

⁶¹ On which see Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 187-189.
compromise. Thus in 345 an eastern delegation took to Constans in Milan a text promulgated possibly by a council gathered at Antioch the previous year.\(^{62}\) In this confession, known as Long-Lined Exposition (Ἐκθεσις µακρόστιχος), the distinction the Eusebians made between the three hypostaseis was pushed to a maximum of compatibility with the westerners’ mia-hypostatism.

The first part of the Exposition drew very heavily on the so-called fourth Antiochene creed (342) discussed above, with the addition of the anathemas the easterners had written at Philippopolis (343), after the failure of the negotiations at Sardica. Following the anathemas, the authors expounded their doctrine in seven points, presenting it—as per the usual script—as a moderate middle ground between the extremes of Arianism on the one hand and monarchianism on the other (the latter explicitly equated with the doctrines of Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Photinus). As a whole the document, which defines the relationship between the Father and the Son as one of true generation, makes a clear effort to couch the unity between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in terms that would be satisfactory for the western bishops.

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\(^{62}\) This was made up of the bishops Eudoxius of Germanicia, Macedonius of Mopsuestia, Demophilus of Beroea, and one not better identified Martyrius. On the Long-Lined Exposition see Socr. Hist. eccl., 2, 19; Soz. Hist. eccl. 3, 11.
It is not the overall theological outlook of the document, however, that will
detain this study. What is most relevant for my proposal is rather the innovative
relationship to technical terminology which that text displays. This is evidenced in the
effort to assuage the fears of the westerners (who at Sardica had polemically equated,
with some theoretical coarseness, tri-hypostatism with tri-theism) by replacing the
terminology of hypostaseis with that of πράγματα and πρόσωπα:

Nor, affirming three entities (πράγματα) and three persons (πρόσωπα) of the
Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit according to the Scriptures, do we
thereby make out three Gods, because we know the perfect and unbegotten,
unbegun and invisible God to be only one, the God and Father of the only-
begotten, the only one who has the being from Himself, the only one who grants
it without envy to all others.63

Some doubt could be placed on the earnestness of the easterners’ intention to
compromise on their deeply-held views by the possibility that in using πρόσωπα they
had some hope of being able to equivocate on its typical Latin translation as personae, a
term that commonly also corresponded to hypostaseis.64 Nevertheless, the word πράγμα,
which had previously seen some limited theological usage (specifically on the part of

63Long-Lined Exposition, 7, apud Ath. Syn., 26, 6 (Hahn and Hahn, Bibliothek, 193): οὔτε μὴν τρία ὁμολογούντες πράγματα καὶ τρία πρόσωπα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς τρεῖς διὰ τούτο τοὺς θεοὺς ποιοῦμεν, ἐπεὶ δὴ τὸν αὐτοτελῆ καὶ ἀγέννητον ἀόρατον θεὸν ἕνα µόνον οἴδαµεν, τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα τοῦ µονογενοῦς, τὸν µόνον µὲν ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ τὸ εἶναι ἔχοντα, µόνον δὲ τοῖς ἄλλοις πᾶσιν ἀφθόνως τοῦτο χαριζόµενον.

Origen and Alexander of Alexandria, had never been a particularly individuating term. Similarly, as will also be seen later, πρόσωπον per se, though more widespread in theological parlance, did not directly denote individual subsistence.

What again appears noteworthy about the passage cited is the awareness it displays of the importance that technical terminology is assuming in the dispute. It cannot be considered coincidental that at the moment of insisting on triple nature of God the authors of the documents utilized two terms (πράγµατα and πρόσωπα) different from that (hypostaseis) which their own party had utilized in the immediately preceding conciliar occasion, three or four years before, in Antioch. Without relenting on their belief in the individuated character of the Son and the Holy Spirit, they showed a willingness to compromise while signifying, in response to the westerners’ creed of Sardica, their awareness that terminology was the terrain on which the game of doctrinal unity was now being played.

In recent contributions, Samuel Fernández proposes to read the fourth-century trinitarian controversy in continuity with the monarchical debates of the third century (as expressed in such works as Hippolytus’s Against Noëtus, Tertullian’s Against Praxeas,

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65 See Orig. Cels., 8, 12; Alex. Ep. Alex.
and the *Refutation* attributed to Hippolytus). In Fernández’s view, the trinitarian discussions primarily featured an opposition between advocates of God’s unity and defenders of a real distinction between Father and Son. In effect the opposition between the mia- and tri-hypostatic memes, *viz.* the ideas that one *hypostasis* or three *hypostaseis* are found within the godhead respectively, played an important role during the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century. Fernández’s perspective is therefore fully justified.

The process that leads to the definition of the issue of whether there exist one or three *hypostaseis*, however, needs to be differentiated from that which allowed for the implicit articulation of the question “what are there three of?” In other words, I propose reconstructing the steps of the process through which the debates, which around the time of Nicaea had undeniably concerned the problem of the co-eternity of the Son, came to revolve around the question of how that of which there exist three in God should be called. The three texts whose counterpoint has just been reported show the

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early onset of that process. The next important step in the process on which this study will focus is the Council of Alexandria (362); the next section will follow the controversy in the time between the developments discussed in the present section and the Alexandrian synod.

### 2.3.3 From Milan (345) to Alexandria (362)

As a result of the attempt at reconciliation expressed by the *Long-Lined Expositions* the westerners agreed to condemn Photinus, but the easterners’ reported refusal to do the same with Arius halted the negotiations once again. The ecclesiastical strife went on. In 346 Constantius II (337-361) was forced by Constans to authorize Athanasius’s return to Alexandria. After Constans’s murder (350) and Maximus’s defeat (351), however, Constantius gained control over the whole Empire and resolved to unify it religiously. At the councils of Arles (353), Milan (355), and Bézier (356), the western bishops were coerced into condemning again Athanasius the bishop of Alexandria, and many bishops faithful to the creed of Nicaea were exiled. Among the exiles were Eusebius of Vercellae, Lucifer of Calaris, Hilary of Poitiers, and Liberius of Rome, who are some of the protagonists of the events that will be discussed in chapter IV.

As a result of the exile meted out by Constantius II, Athanasius, also one of the main actors of the chapters to follow, fled to one of the monastic communities of the Egyptian countryside. There he was able to devote substantial time to ecclesiastical
writing. To this period dates the encyclical letter *To the Bishops of Egypt* (356), in which Athanasius exhorts his fellow bishops not to subscribe to declarations of faith other than that of Nicaea. Most decisively, this was the time of Athanasius’s shift toward a staunch defense of the *homoousios*.

From the death of Eusebius of Caesarea (339/340) until the early 350s, neither of the theological fronts that were battling one another on the stage of imperial Christianity—best identified respectively by their anti-“Arian” and anti-“monarchian” antagonisms—had made a serious attempt at delving into the doctrinal questions arising from their discussions. This was soon to change, mainly due to Athanasius.

Deposed twice consecutively at an Antiochene council (349) and at the Council of Sirmium (351), Athanasius nevertheless stayed in Alexandria until 356. Eventually removed from the metropolis in that year, and subjected to his third exile, he spent the majority of the years until Constantius’s death among the monks of the Egyptian countryside. It was during that time that his approach to trinitarian matters, and as a result the whole *oikoumenē*-wide discussions, took a momentous turn. With a booklet *On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod*, which he wrote likely in 355 or the following year, and with a work titled *On the Sentences of Dionysius*, of disputed dating (352/353 or 357/360),

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67 For the later dating see U. Heil, ed., *Athanasius von Alexandrien: De Sententia Dionysii* (Patristische Texte und Studien 52; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999), 22-35; for the earlier one, see T.D. Barnes, *Athanasius and*
Athanasius brought the Nicene declaration of the Son’s consubstantiality with the Father into the center of the debate, where it had never before belonged.68

Athanasius composed this work in response to a fellow pro-Nicene (possibly Julius of Rome),69 who had been baffled by his opponents’ argument to the effect that both the Nicene expression homoousios and the notion, also upheld in the creed of Nicaea, that the Son was “from the ousia of the Father” (summarized in the term homoousios) were unscriptural. The ousia language employed by the Council of Nicaea, Athanasius patiently explained in his short work, was necessary in order to defend the validity of actually scriptural titles applied to Christ—such as “Wisdom” (σοφία), “Power” (δύναµις), and “Word” (λόγος)—whose substance would have otherwise crumbled under the attacks of the “Arians.”70

The term homoousios was therefore employed in order to rule out such explanations of the generation of the Son as had been proposed by Arius and his

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69 See Barnes, Athanasius and Constantius, 110-111.

70 On Athanasius’s definition of ousia in On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod see Morales, La théologie trinitaire, 285-293.
acolytes.\textsuperscript{71} As Ayres notes, \textit{homoousios} is presented in \textit{On the Decrees} as a complement to the notion that the Son is “from the \textit{ousia} of the Father,” and not as an independent formula, designed to contain in itself the essence of the correct faith.\textsuperscript{72} “\textit{Homoousios} is thus defended,” Ayres writes, “not by reference to a detailed understanding of what the term implies in itself, but by arguing that it is an important cipher for other terms and phrases.”\textsuperscript{73}

The dynamic whose emergence has been witnessed through the distant interaction between the easterners’ and the westerners’ conciliar documents was thus brought to a fuller realization through this Athanasian linguistic ciphering, which retroactively produced the \textit{homoousios} as an arbitrary touchstone for correct belief. The turning of the \textit{homoousios} into a shibboleth imposed a transformation not only on the contents of the trinitarian debate, but also on the manner of the discussions, which would become increasingly preoccupied with lexical exactitude and with willingness to provide support for one or the other technical term.\textsuperscript{74} It is no coincidence that the


\textsuperscript{72}See Ayres, \textit{Nicaea and Its Legacy}, 141-142.

\textsuperscript{73}Ayres, \textit{Nicaea and Its Legacy}, 142-143. See also Ayres “Athanasius’ Initial Defense.”

Athanasian initiative was shortly followed by a proliferation of theological fronts identified (by their leaders or by others) by one or another signifier.

This was also a time of important ecclesial developments. In 357 Valens of Mursa, Ursacius of Singidunum, and Germinius of Sirmium convened a synod in Sirmium (357), where the position of the Son was starkly subordinated to the Father’s, and the doctrinal use of the terms homoousios and homoiousios was proscribed. This degree of openness to radical subordinationism à la Arius was unprecedented in the east, where the formula of the Dedication Council of 341 had until then won the day.

In those same years the heteroousian movement, whose affiliates had no qualms in claiming the Son’s essence (οὐσία) to be different (ἑτέρη) from God the Father’s, was created by Aëtius and Eunomius. After the death of bishop Leontius, the radical Eusebian Eudoxius of Germanicia ascended to the see of Antioch. He called back from Egypt Aëtius, originally elected deacon by Leontius but then exiled. Aëtius, who enjoyed in Antioch the favor of the Caesar Constantius Gallus, first cousin of Constantius II, brought with himself also his disciple Eunomius. Eudoxius, Aëtius, and Eunomius were later exiled by decision of a homoiousian council held at Sirmium in 358, which was summoned by Constantius II.

The reaction was led by Mark of Arethusa, George of Alexandria, and Acacius of Caesarea, who convened another council at Sirmium in 359. The new formula
promulgated by this council proscribed usage of the term *ousia*, submitting that Christ was “similar” (ὁµοιος) to the Father, and only “according to the Scriptures” (κατὰ τὰς γραφὰς) on top of that, *viz.* in no specifically ontological way. The political front Acacius was spearheading, consequently named homoian, hoped to impose a solution to the trinitarian discussions by striking a diplomatic middle ground between those that were seen as the opposite extremes on the trinitarian spectrum.

To anybody interested in the legacy of Nicaea the claim of the Son’s generic similarity to the Father rang almost as blasphemous as the radical subordinationism of the heteroousians. In 359, at the Council of Seleucia, the homoiousians were able to impose the formula of Antioch (341) on a homoian alliance formed by followers of Acacius and Eudoxius, which was upholding the formula of Sirmium (359). At Ariminum, however, the westerners, gathered in another council, were compelled to ratify at the same time a homoian formula that prohibited the usage of *ousia* by reason of its lack of scriptural attestations. A council gathered in Constantinople in 360 confirmed the decisions of Ariminum, sanctioning the triumph of Acacius and Eudoxius and meting out exile to the homousians.

The councils of Ariminum (359) and Constantinople (360) undeniably dealt great blows on the heterogeneous front—composed of homooousians and homoiousians—that expressed an opposition to radical subordinationism. As Jerome famously wrote
some twenty years after the events, “The whole world groaned and was amazed to find itself Arian” (ingemuit totus orbis et Arianum se esse miratus est). But this homoian last throw of the dice, implemented through the coercion of western and eastern bishops to subscribe to the homoian creed, was too little, too late: the gears of the homoiousian reaction had been already set in motion.

After the election of the nakedly heteroousian Eudoxius of Germanica as a successor in the see of Antioch to the cautious homoian Leontius, (344-358), George of Laodicea, an early supporter of Arius’s who had progressively shifted towards more moderate Eusebian postures, had prompted Basil of Caesarea into action by addressing to him an impassioned plea. Basil had convened the Council of Ancyra (358), whose lengthy synodal letter had declared the Son “similar according to the ousia” to the Father, and had condemned the homoousios as equivalent to the Sabellian tautoousios (self-same being). This new alliance had had the effect of splitting the anti-Nicene, “Eusebian” front, thereby isolating the radically subordinationist elements from the generically Origenist eastern episcopate and creating a new homoiousian alliance. Constantius, worried now by the rapid rise of the heteroousians, had lent his ear to the

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75 Hier. Lucif., 19.

76 The letter, also addressed to Macedonius of Constantinople, Cecropius of Nicomedia, and Eugene of Nicaea, is reported in full in Soz. Hist. eccl., IV.13.

77 On the importance of the events of 358 see Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 348-350.
cause of these homoiousian leaders, and sanctioned as orthodox the Antiochene formula of 341 as reinterpreted through their theology. Eudoxius and other heteroousian bishops were consequently exiled.

Constantius did soon have a change of heart, offering his support to the homoian initiative of Acacius. But the homoian formula was a political project sponsored by him, and his death, in December 361, was not without significant consequences for its spread. After acceding to the throne, the decidedly anti-Christian Emperor Julian\(^78\) issued an edict allowing the exiled bishops to return to their sees.\(^79\) A series of synods were consequently promoted by the pro-Nicenes in Gaul (in particular in Paris, where a council was led in 361 by Hilary of Poitiers), Greece, Spain, and Asia Minor. The purpose of these meetings was to re-gather the organizational forces of the pro-Nicenes and concomitantly grant forgiveness to those Christians who had shared communion with their opponents during the years of Constantius’s persecution.\(^80\) Different conditions for reconciliation were set depending on the gravity of the returnees’ lapsing.

Athanasius was among those pro-Nicenes whom Julian’s edict allowed to return to their sees. In February 362 he hastened back to Alexandria, where pro-Nicene

\(^{78}\) On Julian’s religious politics see F. Fatti, *Giuliano a Cesarea. La politica ecclesiastica del principe apostata* (Studi e testi tardoantichi 10; Rome: Herder, 2009).

\(^{79}\) *Hist. aceph.* VII, 10.

Christians received him with all the honors behooving his revered position of defender of the right faith. Upon his renewed installment within the Alexandrian see,Athanasius was faced with the reality of weakened ecclesiastical structures. Athanasius proceeded to summon a council in Alexandria to re-array the ecclesiastical landscape of the region, nominate bishops for vacated Egyptian sees, and offer a chance to enter his alliance to those who had joined the ranks of the anti-Nicenes during his exile.

In so doing, he was possibly acting on the recommendations of the so-called “synod of the confessors,” a meeting held shortly before in the Thebaid between Lucifer of Calaris and Eusebius of Vercellae in the presence of Hilary of Poitiers, Asterius of Arabia, and “the other likeminded ones” (σὺν τοῖς ἄλλοις ὁµόφροσι). It was here that the original strategy was set in order to ensure that the pro-Nicene front would recover from the disarray into which Constantius’s reign had thrown it.

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Seizing power again in the archdioceses of Alexandria and Antioch was the centerpiece of the exiles’ strategy. In the Egyptian city they could count on the work of Athanasius, to whom they planned to send Eusebius to assist him in the organizational endeavor. Lucifer of Calaris refused Eusebius of Vercellae’s invitation to join him in the journey to Alexandria, resolved to send there only a delegation, and set out for Antioch instead, in the company of Cymatius of Paltos (Coele Syria), Anatolius of Beroea (although the Tomus says Euobea), and Carterius of Antaradus.

In so acting, Athanasius was arguably scheming to gain the leadership of an eastern front that would promote again the symbol of Nicaea as the linchpin of orthodoxy, along the lines of the relatively tolerant blueprint he had laid out in his work On the Synods (359):85

As for those who deny the council altogether, these few remarks are sufficient for a refutation; however, as for those who accept everything else of those who wrote at Nicaea, but doubt only with regard to the *homoousios*, it is necessary that they not be treated as enemies; for we, too, do not contrast them as Ariomaniacs or as opponents of the Fathers, but we discuss with them as brothers with brothers who are of our same mind, but who doubt only the word (of *homoousios*). […] This suffices to show that the meaning of th(ose) beloved ones is neither alien nor far from the *homoousios*.86

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86 Ath. Syn., 41,1; 43,1: Καὶ περὶ µὲν τῶν ἐξ ὅλου τὴν σύνοδον ἀρνουµένων ἀρκεῖ πρὸς ἔλεγχον τὰ ὀλίγα ταῦτα, πρὸς δὲ τοὺς ἀποδεχοµένους τὰ µὲν ἄλλα πάντα τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ γραφέντων, περὶ δὲ µόνον τὸ ὁµοούσιον αµφιβάλλοντας χρή µή πρὸς ἐχθροὺς διακεῖσθαι. καὶ γὰρ καὶ ἡµεῖς ὁµοίως ὁµοίως πρὸς τοὺς πατέρας ἐνιστάµεθα, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀδελφοὶ πρὸς ἀδελφοὺς διαλεγόµέθα τὴν αὐτὴν µὲν ἡµῖν διάνοιαν ἔχοντας, περὶ δὲ τὸ ὄνοµα µόνον διστάζοντας.
In this passage adherence to the *homoousios* is interestingly extended to include non-literal subscription of the term. The concept expressed by the word is still regarded as the litmus test of orthodoxy, but it is a test that more people can pass than those who are willing to pronounce the *shibboleth*. A signifier’s capacity as an ideological aggregator is here expanded beyond its literal boundaries—a development that, as will be seen, will prove decisive in the discussion of the number of *hypostaseis*.

The bishop knew that the implementation of such an ambitious program of reconciliation needed to occur on an interregional scale. It should be noted, however, that this reconciliation still involved no degree of relenting on his personal antipathies since as far as Athanasius was concerned all his opponents were “Arians”\(^7\). For this reason he made efforts to involve in the council representatives from various eastern dioceses. Although most of the bishops who gathered in Alexandria in 362 came from Egypt and Libya, in attendance were also Eusebius of Vercellae, Asterius of Arabia, and

\[^7\] J.-M. Leroux, “Athanase et la seconde phase de la crise arienne (345-373),” in Kannengiesser, *Politique et théologie*, 148-149. In *On the Synods* Athanasius still dubbed as “Arian,” in addition to the Acacian compromise of Seleucia (see Ath. *Syn.*, 14, 15-29, 32), very traditional eastern symbols that had been adopted by church leaders who simply happened not to have chosen to be in communion with him: see Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio,” 196.
two Sardinian deacons, Herennius and Agapetus, representing Lucifer of Calaris. The list of senders included in the Tome plays up the interregional nature of the meeting in order to augment its significance.

The Tome to the Antiochenes issued by the Council of Alexandria (362) chiefly dealt with five topics: provisions concerning the bishops who had underwritten the anti-Nicene formula of Ariminum (359); ecclesial reconciliation of a schism that was plaguing the Christian community of Antioch; condemnation of those who held the Holy Spirit to be a creature; the existence of a full human soul in Christ; the question as to whether one or three hypostaseis of the godhead should be confessed.

This latter problem represented the latest reformulation of the theological conflict that had befallen Christianity since the beginning of the “Arian” crisis. As I will attempt to show in chapter IV, the solution to the problem of the number of hypostaseis presented by Athanasius at the Council of Alexandria of 362 expresses a key passage in the transition, whose inchoate stages have been tracked by the present chapter, toward a manner of debating based primarily on the confrontation between theological labels that

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89 Leroux, “Athanase et la seconde phase” considered this a local council. Martin, Athanase, 545-546 noted that Ruf. Hist. eccl., 1, 29 emphasized the presence of the only two non-Egyptian bishops, who happened to be one — Eusebius — a westerner and the other one — Asterius — an easterner who had joined the westerners at Sardica (343), in order to call the council “apostolic” and make them missionaries to the whole oikoumenē.
could be more easily compared and negotiated among trans-regional ecclesiastical factions. The relevant formulation contained in the *Tome to the Antiochenes* implicitly relied, I suggest, upon an innovation brought about by Eustathius of Antioch, which will be discussed in the following chapter.
3. The Emergence of a Meme

3.1. Eustathius of Antioch

3.1.1 Life and Career

As mentioned above, this chapter offers a case study drawn from the *Eustathiana syriaca*, and is built around a meme expressed by a two-word phrase. To the problem of which degree of substantiality should be attributed to the Son, and of the manner in which this degree could be correctly expressed, Eustathius, bishop of Antioch, offered an innovative terminological solution in a passage from *Against Photinus* (Fr. 142), a work in which he had to fend off accusations of polytheism coming from radical monarchianists. This chapter reevaluates Eustathius’s fame as a staunch advocate of the unity of the godhead and opponent of any sort of substantiality of the Son, arguing, through a reestablishment of the authenticity of Fr. 142, that his contribution to early Christian theology exceeds the supposedly regressive notion of “one hypostasis” commonly considered to be his and his followers’ signature *theologoumenon*.

Before introducing the text that contains the expression to which I am referring, it will be necessary to provide information about the life, works, and trinitarian thought of Eustathius.¹ Born in Side (Pamphylia)² sometime between 275 and 300, Eustathius had

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made a name for himself as a confessor during the Diocletianic or Licinian persecutions. He was bishop of Beroea (modern-day Aleppo, in Coele Syria) until a synod led at Antioch by Hosius of Corduba called him to succeed to Philogonos in the see of that city after the latter’s death in 324. In 325 he partook in—and possibly presided over—the Council of Nicaea, but in 327-328 he fell victim to the anti-Nicene reaction; Eusebius of Nicomedia in particular began to scheme against Eustathius, who had contributed to his downfall.

Deposed possibly on counts of Sabellianism or, as Athanasius recounts, on the basis of groundless allegations of immorality, Eustathius was exiled to Thrace and

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2 Hier. Vir. ill., 85.
replaced in his see by one of his opponents. He continued unwaveringly to defend the Nicene homoousios. His Antiochene followers, as will be discussed later, refused to compromise with the partisans of Meletius, who in early 360 grew closer to the legacy of Nicaea, bending the meaning of its creed through a formula that interpreted Christ’s consubstantiality to God as “similarity” — rather than “equality” — in relation to ousia. This dilution of the theological rigor of the homoousios rang as blasphemy in the ears of the Eustathians, who never established communion with the Meletians, thereby furthering a breach within the pro-Nicene front, and the Antiochene Church, that did not mend until 414.

3.1.2 Works and Posthumous Fortune

Eustathius is rarely recognized by modern scholarship as a central figure in late ancient Christian thought. Admittedly, the status of his writings’ textual transmission has hardly helped his cause. Although Eustathius was the author of at least fifteen works in addition to some Discourses against Eusebius of Caesarea and a series of


7 De Enagastrymytho contra Origenem (composed between 312 and 324); Contra Ariomanitas et de anima (61 excerpts—composed after 325); In inscriptione titulorum (3 excerpts); In illud: Dominus creavit me initium viarum suarum (Prov 8:22) (17-20 excerpts) - after 325; In inscriptiones Psalmorum graduum (2-3 excerpts); Commentarius in Ps. 92 (5 excerpts); Contra Arianos (7 excerpts); De fide contra arianos (4 excerpts—this could be the same work as the previous one: see Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, ccclxxvi); Epistula ad
Letters, the only complete work time has preserved is the exegetical treatise On the Belly-Myther against Origen. There, interpreting Saul’s consultation with a witch in 1 Samuel, he attacks the Alexandrian exegete for allegorizing on all occasions except the one at hand.

All of Eustathius’s other works are preserved fragmentarily, excerpted by later authors who cover a chronological span going from John Chrysostom in the fourth century to Bar Hebraeus in the thirteenth. The new edition of Eustathius’s extant works published in 2004 by José Declerck, containing a total of one hundred and fifty-five excerpts, importantly adds sixty-two fragments to those contained in Michel Spanneut’s 1948 collection. Eight of the new items are in Syriac, thus bringing the total count of the Syriac excerpts, edited and translated in Declerck’s edition by Lucas Van Rompay, to twenty-five.

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*Alexandrum Alexandrinum (De Melchisedech) (5 excerpts—composed before 324); De temptationibus (1 excerpt—composed possibly before the rise of “Arianism”); Oratio coram tota Ecclesia in: Verbum caro factum est (Ioh. 1,14) (1 excerpt in two languages); Secunda oratio coram tota Ecclesia (1 excerpt); De Hebraismo (1 excerpt); In Ioseph (2 excerpts); In Samaritanam (1 excerpt).*


*M. Spanneut, Recherches; Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, cccclxxvi.*

*This is a list of the Syriac excerpts from works by Eustathius of Antioch edited in Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, n. 65, 80*, 81*, 84*, 88, 92, 93, 94*, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113 (‡ ino), 117 (‡), 118 (‡), 119 (‡ b), 124*, 125*, 126*, 134 (†), 142 (‡; † b and c), 143* (‡), 153 (‡), 154 (‡), 155 (‡). Asterisks mark those excerpts that are newly edited and were not present in Spanneut, Recherches; obelisks indicate the fragments declared spurious by Declerck; and the diesis signs are apposed to fragments declared spurious by R.V. Sellers, Eustathius of Antioch and His Place in the Early History of Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928).*
In spite of what appears to us now as the poor transmission of his works, Eustathius commanded the interest of, and enjoyed a posthumous fortune among, Syriac writers of diverse theological orientations. The excerpts transmitted under his name are found in forty-two different sources. Between the sixth and eighth centuries his authority is invoked against a very wide array of perceived heresies. At least seventeen of the sources reporting Eustathius’s excerpts were composed during the fifth century, when he is quoted by dyophysite, “orthodox,” and miaphysite writers alike.\footnote{Fourth- and fifth-century sources for Eustathius of Antioch’s excerpts are the following: Chrysostom, \textit{Oratio in S. Eustathium Antiochenum} (between 386 and 397); Ps.-Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{Contra Ariomanitas et de anima} (end of the 4th or beginning of the 5th cent.?); Eusebius of Dorylaeum, \textit{Contestatio publice proposita} (428); Anonymous, \textit{Refutatio Cyrilli Alexandrini Apologiae xii capitulorum contra Orientales} (431 [lost]); Andrew of Samosata, \textit{Florilegium} attached to a letter for Rabbula of Edessa (432 [lost]); Theodoret, \textit{Pentalogos}, IV (432 [lost]); Theodoret, \textit{Pro Diadoro et Theodoro} (after 438 [lost]); Theodoret, \textit{Eranistes seu Polymerphos} (447 or 448); Theodoret, \textit{Histoia ecclesiastica} (445-449); Anonymous, \textit{Refutatio xii capitulorum Cyrilli}, ms. Cambridge University Library, Or. 1319 (433); \textit{Florilegium scholia in quosdam Gregorii Nazianzeni locos continens}, ms. Vat. Borg. Syr. 82 (5th cent.); Anonymous, \textit{Florilegium Edessenum}, ms. BL Add. 12,156 (between 432 and 435); Gelasius of Cyzicus, \textit{Historia ecclesiastica} (475 ca.); Pope Gelasius I, \textit{Florilegium} (494); \textit{Catena in Genesim} (second half of the 5th cent.); \textit{Collectio Caesliniana in Genesim} (second half of the 5th cent.); \textit{Catena Polychronii in Proverbia} (5th cent.); \textit{Catena Polychronii in Ecclesiasten} (5th cent.); \textit{Florilegium Achridense}, II (possibly second half of the 5th cent. or first half of the 6th cent.).}

The ancient author most generous with Eustathius’s quotations, however, was Theodoret of Cyrrhus, to whom we owe forty-one of the authentic excerpts. Eustathius’s prominence in Theodoret’s writings, I propose, is no happenstance. As a result of the ecclesiastical struggles that Theodoret began to face in 448, he turned to the history of the Church of Antioch during the trinitarian controversies as a source of inspiration for his own organization of the episcopal front. The outcome of this historiographic effort is
preserved in the *Church History* he published in 449, narrating the history of the Antiochene episcopate from the inception of the Arian crisis until the year 428.

One of the difficulties of dealing with the account of Theodoret’s *Church History* lies with discerning historical reality from the bishop’s ideological agenda, driven by the interests of the Antiochene see.\textsuperscript{12} Theodoret’s narrative revolves around the identification of the Antiochene orthodox tradition with the bishop Meletius of Antioch. However, Meletius’s imperially-mandated initial election as a homoian to the episcopal see of Antioch posed a clear problem. How could Theodoret justify that Meletius had come to accept the Nicene *homoousios* only as late as 363, years after his consecration?\textsuperscript{13}

Theodoret found his way out of this historiographic predicament by placing Meletius, in a wildly counterfactual manner, directly within the Eustathian tradition. The communion the Meletians had eventually gained in 414 with the Eustathians, a group that had adamantly upheld the *homoousios* at a time when Meletius was openly battling it, allowed Theodoret to bridge a decades-long gap in his own Antiochene community’s record of orthodoxy. Eustathius’s crucial place in this reconstruction


\textsuperscript{13} See Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio.”
probably accounts for the authority to which he rose in Theodoret’s *Church History*, and, I would argue, for the abundance of his citations in Theodoret’s other writings.

### 3.1.3. Theological Views

#### 3.1.3.1 Christological Views

The Church of Antioch between the third and the fifth centuries has been traditionally understood as a two-party system, in which bishops of so-called Origenist and so-called “Asiatic” Christological tendencies alternated on the throne. This narrative identifies an unbroken line of genuinely Antiochene theological teaching, which would be expressed by the “Asiatic” Ignatius, Theophilus, Paul of Samosata, and Eustathius, and would have been then transmitted to the “duo” Flavianus and Diodorus, to Chrysostom, and to Nestorius.

This intellectual trajectory would have sustained an anti-Origenist, anti-Alexandrian ecclesiastical party. It is commonly described as propounding a Christology grounded in the notion that the Word of God found union with a full human being, complete of a soul, and is therefore summarized as “Logos/anthrōpos” (“Word/human being”). The figure of Eustathius works in this intellectual trajectory as a link ensuring, in a century in which Christological matters were not in the spotlight, the transmission
of that meme, which would prove central to the fifth-century and later Antiochene tradition.¹⁴

This account is at least in part the product of a retrojection of later developments in the history of Christian controversies. Its origins and variations have been described with great accuracy by Sophie Cartwright, who, in particular, has made a compelling appeal for a more nuanced understanding of the functioning of Origen’s legacy.¹⁵ Paying attention to individual theological notions and to wider historical contextualization, for example by reading controversies, as Cartwright does, within the broader philosophical landscape, can indeed open fissures in our seamless geographically-based diachronies.¹⁶ Thus Eustathius’s Christology has been investigated in light of Stoic, Peripatetic, and Platonic philosophical influences (respectively by Manlio Simonetti, Patricio De Navascués, and Sophie Cartwright).¹⁷

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¹⁶Moreover, working at the intersection of geo-ecclesiology and intellectual history may illuminate the ways in which the ancient construction of local intellectual traditions—what Peter Van Nuffelen has very recently termed “geo-genealogies”—plays into the operations of prestige-building performed by episcopal sees; as well as the ways in which geographical locales and spatial reasoning have affected both ancient intellectual debates and modern reconstructions thereof.

¹⁷M. Simonetti, Origene, Eustazio, Gregorio di Nissa. La Maga di Endor (Biblioteca patristica 15; Florence: Nardini, 1989); P. de Navascués Benloch, “El sustrato filosófico de la obra de Eustacio de
Although these avenues have proven productive, it may be possible to expand the scope of the search for relevant *comparabilia* to include the Syriac theological tradition. Eustathius’s writings show him concentrating, in his fight against the “Arians,” on the impassibility of the incarnate Logos. Considering that the human flesh of Jesus would be destroyed by its absolute incommensurability with the Logos, Origen had stipulated the presence of a human soul in Christ. The same premise had led the “Arians,” who shared with their eastern adversaries—such as Athanasius—an anti-Origenist Word/flesh anthropology, to flatly deny the divinity of the Word, to whom they applied those New Testament passages that describe Jesus’s ignorance of what was to come, prayers against temptation, or growth in wisdom. Eustathius held the opposite position:

> If in Christ dwells all the fullness of the divinity (Col 2:9), (then) one is he who dwells and another he who was dwelled in. And it does not behoove us to ascribe suffering and death to the divine nature, but those things accompany him who was assumed.18

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But in talking about the manner of the incarnation, Eustathius made abundant usage of the typically Syriac clothing and inhabitation language, as for example in this excerpt:

O temple similar to the sun, which was put on by the true God! O house worthy of God, which received as dweller God eternally! O Christ, victorious king: to you do we offer outspoken praises, for it is through you that we ascend towards God, who is in you.¹⁹

At the same time, in keeping with his Word/human being Christology, he took great care—as Odes of Solomon had done before him—²⁰ not to utilize the expression “to put on the flesh” or “to put on the body.” Rather, similarly to Paul of Samosata in his debate with Malchion some sixty years earlier, he expressed himself in the following terms:

The Son of God, when he wore the whole human being and showed him partaking of the divine nature, made him mediator of the two races.²¹

While Sebastian Brock indicates that the earliest Syriac attestation of the terminology of “putting on a human being” is in the Syriac version of Theodore of

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¹⁹ Fr. 84, Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 154.

²⁰ See Murray, Symbols, 309-310.

²¹ Fr. 81b, Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 152.
Mopsuestia’s *Catechetical Homilies*, Eustathius could be Theodore’s source for this particular construct.\(^\text{22}\)

### 3.1.3.2 Trinitarian Views

In trinitarian matters Eustathius is remembered in the acts of the second Council of Nicaea (787) as “the unwavering warrior of the true belief and dissolver of the Arian demonic evil.”\(^\text{23}\) Eustathius’\(\text{’}\)s fame as a staunch advocate of the unity of the godhead and opponent of any sort of theological subordinationism was no doubt well deserved.\(^\text{24}\)

From the very outset of the Arian crisis Eustathius began to devote all his energy to countering Arius’\(\text{’}\) ideas, and many of his anti-subordinationist writings date from the years around Nicaea.\(^\text{25}\) His influence is often cited as great on Nicaea and its historical surroundings. Parvis proposed, e.g., that Eustathius’\(\text{’}\)s inspiration can be seen behind


\(^{\text{25}}\)Ibid., cccxc.
some of the crucial doctrinal points of the *Nicaenum*, such as the expression “begotten, not made” (γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα), the replacement of the expression “Logos of God” (present in the creed of Eusebius of Caesarea) with “Son of God,” and the substitution of “one Holy Spirit” (ἕν πνεῦµα ἅγιον) with “the Holy Spirit” (τὸ πνεῦµα ἅγιον).

Logan suggested that Eustathius might have influenced the Council of Nicaea in reference to the distinction between “begetting” (in the sense of “the product of an act of begetting,” γέννηµα) and “creature” (κτίσµα). Whatever the validity of these specific proposals, it is clear that the traditional reading of Eustathius’s trinitarian theology sees in this thinker a monarchian à la Sabellius, conservatively influencing the course of the pro-Nicene movement.

On the other hand, Loofs, in a series of works in which he was clearly more concerned with Eustathius’s Christology—more prominent in the extant corpus—than

26 Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra*, 60.
27 Ibid., 86.
28 Ibid., 90.
29 See Logan, “Marcellus of Ancyra,” 436 n. 41.
31 This is, e.g., the position of F. Zoepfl, “Die trinitarischen und christologischen Anschauungen des Bischofs Eustathius von Antiochien,” *TQ* 104 (1923): 170-201.
with his trinitarian theology, innovatively claimed that Eustathius held an “economic,” soteriologically-based, and therefore more substantially individuated, understanding of the action of the Logos. It is indeed undeniable that Eustathius conceived of the Son as carrying fuller substantiality than a pure virtue, energy, or power of the Most High. In the following passage, e.g., drawn from Against the Ariomaniacs and on the Soul, Eustathius discusses in no uncertain terms the saving action of him whom he calls “the child of God” (ὁ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς):

Certainly, therefore, in the transgression of the protoplast sin’s death fell in, great and fatal. But the child of God, having resolved cautiously to punish the devil, begetter of death, by means of the human being of the same race, bore that same whole human being after fastening him to the divine frames, so that, once he [scil. the child of God] would thereby defeat the evil one, he [scil. the human being] might rule with incorruptible life.34

Between the traditional Sabellian reading and the quasi-Logos-theological interpretation of Loofs, Spanneut struck a perceptive middle ground. While seeing Eustathius’s articulation of the unity of the hypostasis into the action of a duality as a


34 Eust. Ariom.: Τοιγαροῦν ἐν τῇ τοῦ πρωτοπλάστου παραβάσει, πολὺς καὶ ἀνήκεστος ὁ τῆς ἁµαρτίας ἐνέσκηψε θάνατος· ὁ δὲ τοῦ θεοῦ παῖς προνοητικῶς διὰ τοῦ ὁµογενοῦς ἀνθρώπου τὸν τοῦ θανάτου σπορέα διάβολον ἀµύνασθαι βουληθεὶς, αὐτὸν ὅλον τὸν ἀνθρώπου θεοτοκίας ἐξάψα ἁρµονίαις ἐφόρεσεν, ὡς ὡς ἀν διὰ τούτου τὸν ἔχθιστον νικήσας, ἀδιάφθορον πρυτανεύσῃ ζωήν (Fr. 22b, Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 85-86, ll. 9-14).
purely “scholastic” movement of thought (by which he appeared to mean something along the lines of a merely logical, soteriologically insufficient solution), Spanneut emphasized that Eustathius’s Christ, who is called in the extant excerpts “Word,” “Son,” and “truly begotten,” should not be seen, either, as a mere impersonal attribute of the deity.\(^\text{36}\)

Eustathius was one of the main representatives of the so-called mia-hypostatic tradition. Although the usefulness of the mia- vs. dyo-hypostatic distinction as a category through which to interpret the trinitarian debates has come under question by Ayres, it still describes, as Parvis noted, something that other terminologies do not.\(^\text{37}\) In the case of Eustathius, the notion allows one to capture what Eustathius shared with Marcellus of Ancyra, namely the confession of one lone hypostasis of the godhead; but while the Ancyran is known to have identified only one πρόσωπον within the godhead, Eustathius confessed three. An additional difference with Marcellus concerns the eternal status which Eustathius was willing to attribute to the Son.

Some passages give the impression of a certain logical static nature in his triadic understanding of the divine. This is well exemplified by a passage contained in On the


\(^{36}\)Spanneut, “La position théologique,” 222.

Belly-Myther against Origen (a work where any reference to Arianism is missing, leading scholars to believe that it preceded the eruption of the crisis), in which Eustathius writes:

But here (scil. in Deut. 13:11), presenting the dyad of the Father and of the only-begotten Son, it defined one as the Lord who tests, and the other, alongside this one, (it showed) to be the beloved Lord and God, so as to demonstrate out of a dyad the one divinity and the true theogony.  

At the same time, other texts articulate a cosmogonic role for the Son, and discuss his begetting in terms that connect the trinitarian problem with the Christological one:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>Syriac</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If indeed the Word received a beginning of the generation since the moment he, having passed through the motherly womb, bore the bodily frames, he gave proof that he was born of a woman (Gal 4:4). If, however, the Word was also God from above beside the Father, and (if) we say that everything came into being through him, then he was not born of a woman who (permanently) exists and is the cause of all the originated (beings). However, he came into being from a woman who was placed in the womb of the virgin mother by the Holy Spirit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For if the God-Word took inception from the birth, by passing through the womb of a virgin and wearing the frame of the body, it has been proven true that he came into being from a woman (Gal 4:4). If, however, the Word is God since the beginning beside the Father (cf. Jn 1:1-2), and we say that everything came into being through him (cf. Jn 1:3), (then) he did not come into being from a woman (Gal 4:4), inasmuch as it is he who is the cause of everything. However, he came into being from a woman who was fashioned in the Holy Spirit.

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38 Eust. *Engastr.*, 24, 8: ἀλλ᾽ ἐνταῦθα µὲν τὴν δυάδα πατρός τε καὶ τοῦ µονογενοῦς νιστὰν, ἀλλον µὲν τὸν ἐκπειράζοντα κύριον ωνόµαζεν, ἄλλον δὲ παρὰ τούτον εἶναι τὸν ἄγαπόµενον κύριον τε καὶ θεόν, ἰν᾽ ἐκ δυάδος τὴν µίαν ἀποδείξοι θεότητα καὶ τὴν ἀληθῆ θεογονίαν.

But if the Word is God (cf. Jn 1:1) and is connatural with the Father, and (if) we say that everything has come into being through him (cf. Jn 1:3), then he who is the cause of the existence of every (being) did not come into being from a woman (Gal 4:4), but rather he is in the mighty, boundless, and incomprehensible divine nature. From a woman, then, came into being that human being who was constituted in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 1:35); for it is to this one that Mary gave birth.\footnote{Eust. Inscr. t. n. 1:35; cf. Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 137.}

Eustathius’s excerpts bear ample testimony to the mia-hypostatic character of his trinitarianism. Such is the case, for instance, with an excerpt cited by Severus of Antioch in his Letter 3 to Sergius the Grammarian, and drawn from Eustathius’s Commentary on Psalm 92. In this passage—preceded in the citation by its lemma—the duality articulated by the relationship between Father and Son is clearly resolved back to the unity of hypostasis guaranteed by the one godhead:

It is time for us to profess also the holy Trinity as (made out) of one hypostasis.
For we find that Eustathius of blessed memory, he who was bishop of Antioch,

\footnote{Behr, “Response to Ayres,” 148.}

\footnote{Eust. Inscr. t.: ἦρεν ὁ λόγος ἐγείρεται ἀπὸ τῆς γυναῖκος καὶ ἐν τῷ γυναικεῖῳ ἐσχάτῃ ἐσχάτως ἐαυτὸς ἐπεστάλη. (fr. 65b, Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 137.)}

\footnote{Eust. Inscr. t.: ἔσται ὁ λόγος ἐπετέληται ἐν τῇ γυναικί. (fr. 65c, Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 137.)}
in the Commentary on the Ninety-Second Psalm professed in these terms the Father and the Son to be of one hypostasis:

“While both invisibly work wonders at the very same time, oftentimes the divine Scriptures ascribe the greatness of their action to one, for they on the one hand introduce duality out of singularity, on the other proclaim singularity out of duality, by virtue of the fact that there exists one hypostasis of the godhead.”

Nevertheless, as I will attempt to show in what follows, Fr. 142, drawn from Against Photinus, reveals that a traditionally monarchian characterization of Eustathius’s mia-hypostatic theology does not capture the whole picture.

### 3.2 Challenges to the Authenticity of Fr. 142

#### 3.2.1 The Chronological Difficulties

While the editor of Eustathius’s fragments, José Declerck, declared Fr. 142 spurious, I take the excerpt to be authentic. Although various kinds of arguments—based on chronology, philology, and theological contents—have been employed to deny its Eustathian authortship, the issue is far from settled. I will here briefly address each of those types of challenges separately.

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43 Eust. CommPs. 92: οἱ δύο µὲν ἐν ταυτῷ θεῷ τοῦτο λέγοντες ἄνευ ἕνου λόγου ἐπαναστάλλοντες τὸν λόγον οὐκ ἔχουσι φαντασίαν συνάδελφον τοῖς ἀποκαλόμενοις. Τὸν τόσον ἐπιστάσαντες τῷ λόγῳ πάντων, ἐπαναστάλλοντες τὸν λόγον τῶν συνάδελφων τινὰ ἄνευ τοὺς τοῖς ἐπαναστάλλοντες τῷ λόγῳ διδάσαντες.
The chronological arguments are mostly based on the presumption of Eustathius’ early death. They will be recalled here only in their broad outlines.\textsuperscript{44} The name of Photinus, to whose refutation the work from which Fr. 142 derives is devoted, appears in the ancient sources for the first time—and does so as the object of a condemnation, alongside Marcellus of Ancyra—in the so-called \textit{Long-Lined Exposition} (Ἑκθεσις μακρόστιχος) of 345, cited in full by Athanasius in \textit{On the Synods}, and referred to in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{45} It is thus unlikely, it is argued, that Photinus emerged as a protagonist in the trinitarian debates at an earlier time than the 340s.

Eustathius’s name does not show up, moreover, among those of the exiles—such as Asclepias of Gaza, Marcellus of Ancyra, Lucius of Adrianopolis, and Paul of Constantinople—who were called back by Constantine II in 337 or 338.\textsuperscript{46} Similarly, when at the Council of Sardica (343) Athanasius, Marcellus, and Asclepias were reestablished in their episcopal sees, Eustathius’s name is again nowhere to be found in the sources, in spite of his friendship with Hosius of Corduba, who presided over the synod, and the proximity of Sardica to the place of his exile (whichever of the options for the latter is

\textsuperscript{44} For a detailed reconstruction of the different scholars’ positions see Declerck, \textit{Eustathii Antiocheni opera}, cclxxiv-cclxxxv, on which my outline is in any case dependent. Cavallera, \textit{Homilia Christologica}, 95 and Cavallera, \textit{Le schisme d’Antioche}, 66 lays out some of the chronological arguments for incompatibility. Those were accepted, among others, by Sellers, \textit{Eustathius of Antioch}, 66-67 and Spanneut, \textit{Recherches}, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{45} Ath. \textit{Syn.}, 26, 6.

\textsuperscript{46} See Simonetti, \textit{La crisi ariana}, 136-139.
chosen). Furthermore, the encyclical letter of the Eusebians summoned to Philippopolis around the same time as the westerners were gathering at Sardica seems to refer to Eustathius’s career as being over. Finally, a passage of Athanasius’s History of the Arians (ca. 358) appears to treat Eustathius as long gone.

These arguments have been shown, however, to be largely inconclusive, as a comparable number of points, of equal if not greater weight as those in favor of the idea that by the 340s Eustathius had already died, can be made against that notion. First, no mention is made anywhere in the sources of the fact that the Eustathian community headed until 362 by the priest Paulin was lacking a bishop: this would be explicable if Eustathius was alive somewhere. As Schwartz suggested, Eustathius might have died in 361, immediately prior to the election of Meletius to the Antiochene see. This possibility seems to be supported by the turn of phrase used by Theodoret in describing Meletius’s appointment: πρὸ γὰρ τῆς Μελετίου χειροτονίας Εὐσταθίου τετελευτηκότος (which, as Declerck writes, is admittedly no definitive indication of the amount of time that elapsed between the two events). Second, when Athanasius, in Apology for his Flight (356), mentions the demise of Lucius of Adrianopolis, he makes no mention of

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48 See Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, cclxxv-cclxxxvi, n. 446-447.
Eustathius’s death. Third, John Chrysostom refers in admiring terms to Eustathius’s incessant pastoral activities in spite of his failure to recover his see, until Meletius’s enthronement (a passage, however, that may have to be read as referring to the posthumous efficacy of Eustathius’s teachings, or as part of Chrysostom’s overall attempt to draw a strong connection between Eustathius and Meletius). Fourth, Socrates and (in dependence upon him) Sozomen, among others, report that Eustathius was recalled by Jovian and hid in Constantinople. There in 370 he allegedly ordained Evagrius. Persecuted anew by the anti-Nicenes, he was exiled by Valens to Vize, in eastern Thrace. Fifth and finally, Theodorus Lector affirms that Eustathius’s relics were returned to Antioch under Patriarch Callandion (479-484/485), one hundred years after Eustathius’s death, which thus occurred in the late 370s or early 380s. It is therefore evident that, when it comes to the discussion of chronology, the onus probandi is back on the shoulders of the deniers of the authenticity of Fr. 142.

3.2.2. The Incompatibility of the Theological Contents

Arguments against the Eustathian authorship of the excerpt have been based on the doctrine it expresses. According to Sellers, e.g., the distinction between nature and

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person raised by this fragment where it reads “For one thing is the person, and another
one the nature” is incompatible with what we have otherwise learned of Eustathius’s
 teachings. Similarly, Spanneut contended that “la terminologie de ces citations, où sont
distingués si parfaitement les termes de personne, nature et propriétés, est plus évoluée
que celle des œuvres d’Eustathe qui sont bien attestées.”54 These claims appear specious.
Declaring the theology of the fragment too “progressive” to be ascribed to Eustathius
means relying too heavily on our ability to form a comprehensive view of his theology
based on the precious and fragmentary little we possess of his works.

Those who deny the Eustathian authorship of Fr. 142 on the basis of its contents,
moreover, seem to have mistaken for tri-hypostatic the tri-prosōpic but mia-hypostatic
theology conveyed by this passage, ignoring the distinction it draws between
πρόσωπον, expressed in Syriac by parsopa, and hypostasis, expressed by qnoma (as the
term appears, e.g., in the works of Ephrem).55 Fr. 142 does not contradict the idea of the
existence of one sole hypostasis in the godhead, but rather specifies it and clarifies the
level—namely that of the πρόσωπον—at which individuality is to be envisioned and

54 Spanneut, Recherches, 82.

55 The term qnoma can acquire in Ephrem different meanings: that of “concrete thing” or “person;”
that of “material substance;” and that of “true essence” of something. Later East-Syriac Christology will
utilize the adjective qnomaya, built upon the noun qnoma, to describe the two kyane (“natures”) of Christ,
united under one parsopa: see e.g. Giwargis, Epistula ad Minam, in J.-B. Chabot, Synodicon orientale, ou, Recueil
de synodes nestoriens (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), 236, l.4 (I owe this reference to Prof. Lucas Van
Rompay). For seventh-century East-Syrians a kyana needs its qnoma, whereas two kyane qnomaye can be
united under one parsopa.
preserved. The terminology deployed in the fragment is therefore in no effective contradiction to any of the contents of the certainly authentic *Eustathiana*. Its greater degree of doctrinal specificity cannot be utilized as an argument to dismiss the excerpt: it should be used, rather, as an opportunity to deepen our understanding of Eustathius’s thought.

### 3.2.3 The Similarity with Gregory of Nyssa’s *To the Hellenes*

Much more robust an argument against the fragment’s authenticity is the philological criticism focused on the resemblance the passage bears to the abrupt incipit as well as to other bits of a treatise by Gregory of Nyssa whose full title runs in the most reliable manuscripts *How, Saying that There are Three Persons in the Godhead, We Do Not Say Three Gods: To the Hellenes from Common Concepts* (πῶς τρία πρόσωπα λέγοντες ἐν τῇ θεότητι οὐ φαµεν τρεῖς θεούς. πρὸς τοὺς Ἐλληνας ἀπὸ τῶν κοινῶν ἐννοιῶν), and which is commonly known as *To the Hellenes*.

The incipit of *To the Hellenes* reads as follows:

If the term “God” were indicative of the Person, then out of necessity when we speak of the three Persons we would be saying three Gods. But if the term “God” signifies the essence, when we confess the one essence of the Holy Trinity we rightly teach as doctrine that there is one God since the term “God” refers to one essence. Therefore it follows that God is one both according to essence and terminology, not three. Neither do we assert God and God and God (just as we say Father and Son and Holy Spirit, when we combine the terms signifying the Persons by the conjunction “and”), because the persons are not the same but different—they differ from one another according to the very significance of their names. To the term “God” which signifies the essence, because of a certain characteristic property pertaining to the essence, we do not add the conjunction
“and” so as to say “God and God and God.” This indeed is the essence of which the persons are constituted, and which the term “God” signifies. Wherefore, God is one and the same; the conjunction “and” is never employed between a thing and itself. Whether we say “Father-God and Son-God and Holy Spirit-God” or “God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit,” we combine them with the conjunction “and” according to the meaning of the terms of the Persons, such as Father, Son, Holy Spirit, so that there might be a Father and a Son and a Holy Spirit, that is to say a person and a person and a person; wherefore, there are indeed three persons. The term “God” is absolutely and in like manner predicated of each one of the persons without the conjunction “and,” so that we cannot say “God and God and God,” but conceive of the second and third term as being said with regard to the subsisting persons, propounding the second and third time without the conjunction “and” on account of there not being another and another God. For it is not because the Father preserves his otherness with regard to the Son that the Father is God, for thus the Son would not be God. For if because the Father is Father, for this reason the Father is God, it would follow that since the Son is not the Father, then the Son would not be God. If the Son is God, he is not God in that he is Son. Similarly, the Father too is not God in that he is Father. They are God because of their divine essence, the essence of the Father and the Son. Through the divine essence the Father is God and the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God.56

56Εἰ τὸ θεὸς ὄνοµα προσώπου δηλωτικὸν ύπήρχεν, τρία πρόσωπα λέγοντες εξ ἀνάγκης τρεῖς ἀν ἐλέγοµεν θεούς· εἰ δὲ τὸ θεὸς ὄνοµα οὐσίας σηµαντικόν ἐστιν, µίαν οὐσίαν ὁµολογοῦντες τῆς ἀγίας τριάδος ἕνα θεόν εἰκότως δογµατίζειµεν, ἐπειδή µίας οὐσίας ἐν ὄνοµα τὸ θεὸς ἐστιν. διὸ καὶ ἀκολούθως τῇ τε οὐσίᾳ καὶ τῷ ὄνοµατι εἰς ἐστί θεὸς καὶ οὐ τρεῖς, οὐδὲ γὰρ θεὸν καὶ θεόν καὶ θεόν φαµεν, ὡσπερ λέγοµεν πατέρα καὶ θεόν καὶ ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπεὶ τοῖς οὐσίαις τοῖς τῶν προσώπων σηµαντικοῖς συµπλέκειµεν τόν καὶ σύνδεσµον διὰ τῷ µὴ ταῦτα εἶναι τὰ πρόσωπα, ἐπείρια δὲ µάλλον καὶ διαφέροντα ἀλλήλων κατ’ αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν ὀνοµάτων σηµασίαν, τῷ δὲ θεούς οὐσίας δηλωτικῆς τῆς οὐσίας οὐ̄τὶ ἐκ τοῖς ιδιώμασι προσώπους αὐτῆς οὐ µὴ συνάπτοµεν τὸν καὶ σύνδεσµον ὥστε λέγειν ἡµᾶς θεοῦ καὶ θεον καὶ κεν, ἐπειτερ ἦ αὐτὴ ἐστίν οὐσία, ἢ ἐστὶ τὰ πρόσωπα καὶ ἢ σηµαινεῖ τὸ θεούς οὐσίας· διὸ καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς θεός· τῷ δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ εἰ δηλώσει τοῦ αὐτοῦ οὐ νῦν καὶ σύνδεσµος οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας αὐτοῦ, ἢ δὲ νῦν καὶ σύνδεσµος οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε· εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε· εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε· εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε· εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε. εἰ δὲ λέγοµεν πατέρα θεόν καὶ θεον καὶ θεόν ήγιον πνεύµα, ἐπειτερ ἦ οὐσίας οὐ συµπλέκεται ποτε.
The passages that have been pointed out as establishing an undeniable parallel are listed here in their narrowest form, presented by Declerck (who, however, compares Greek and French rather than Greek and Syriac):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parallel A</th>
<th>Parallel B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gregory of Nyssa, To the Hellenes, 19, ll. 1-3</strong></td>
<td><strong>Eustathius of Antioch, Against Photinus, Fr. 142, ll. 11-14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the noun “God” were indicative of a person, (then) saying three persons, we would by necessity be saying three Gods. But if the noun “God” is signifying of an essence [...] Therefore if the name of “God” were the marker of a person, (then) by saying three persons, we would by all means also be saying three Gods. But since (the name) is a marker of nature [...]

- Parallel B
Gregory of Nyssa,  
To the Hellenes, 21, l. 22-p. 22, l. 1

[...] ἀπὸ τινος ἰδιώματος προσόντος αὐτῇ λαμβανόμενον [...]  

[...] Taken from a certain property belonging to it [scil. the essence] [...]  

- Parallel C

Gregory of Nyssa,  
To the Hellenes, 22, ll. 1-3

[...] καθάπερ τὸ χρεµετιστικὸν καὶ τὸ γελαστικὸν ἰδιώµατα ὄντα φύσεων λεγόµενα σηµαίνει τὰς φύσεις  

[...] just as the ability to neigh and laugh, being properties that are said "of natures," indicate the natures  

- Parallel D

Gregory of Nyssa,  
To the Hellenes, 22, ll. 17-18

μηδενὸς λόγου καταναγκάζοντος ἡμᾶς τρεῖς λέγειν θεούς ἄσπερ οὐν οὐδὲ τρεῖς οὐσίας  

[...] since no reason obligates us to say "three gods" just like not "three essences" [...]  

Eustathius of Antioch,  
Against Photinus, Fr. 142, ll. 14-15

 [...] as it is taken from some property pertaining to a nature [...]  

Eustathius of Antioch,  
Against Photinus, Fr. 142, ll. 15-17

 [...] like laughter to the human being and barking to the dog—the properties that are said to pertain to natures are markers of natures—  

Since 1958, the year in which Müller produced his edition of To the Hellenes based on eight manuscripts, five more fragments of the work have come to light. Considering
that these, to my knowledge, have not yet been collated, it is impossible to determine whether they are going to change our understanding of the text as a whole. In light of these circumstances, it goes without saying that any speculations about the resemblance between Gregory’s work and the Eustathian fragments have to be treated as provisional.\footnote{See J. Leemans, “Logic and the Trinity: Introducing Text and Context of Gregory of Nyssa’s \textit{Ad Graecos},” in \textit{Gregory of Nyssa: The Minor Treatises on Trinitarian Theology and Apollinarism: Proceedings of the 11th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa} (Tübingen, 17-20 September 2008), ed. M. Berghaus and V.H. Drecoll (Supplements to \textit{VChr} 106; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011), 112-114.}

Identifying mia-hyposatism with the community of Marcellus of Ancyra (i.e. excluding from consideration mia-hyposatic thinkers of different stripes, such as Eustathius), Hübner’s overall historical argument relied on the one hand on the contents of the Marcellan <i>Exposition of Faith of the Deacon Eugene of Ancyra</i> (which Tetz dates to 371),<sup>60</sup> read as expressing a vetero-Nicene availability to engage in doctrinal dialog with the Meletians; and, on the other hand, on Gregory of Nyssas’s recorded contacts with the Marcellans (as testified by the collection of Gregory’s letters)<sup>61</sup> and his attempts to produce harmony at a council to be gathered in Ancyra, which Basil of Caesarea opposed (as the latter’s correspondence proves).<sup>62</sup>

Hübner suggested that the extant text form of <i>To the Hellenes</i> represented an abridged version of an original work in which Gregory used vetero-Nicene terminology and anti-tritheistic postures in order to attract the Eustathians toward the Cappadocian, pro-Meletian alliance—while covering his flank with anti-Photinian rhetoric. The studied terminological and ideological proximity of the treatise to vetero-Nicene positions would explain its later Eustathian, possibly pseudo-epigraphic circulation. Peter of Callinicus, having found it in the Antiochene archives of the Eustathians, would


<sup>61</sup>Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Epistula V</i>, 2.

<sup>62</sup>Bas. <i>Epistula C</i>.
have then mistaken it for a work by Eustathius himself. Hübner’s thesis is strengthened by the circumstance, remarked on by Ziegler, that Arianism and Sabellianism, which are normally anathematized as equally dangerous extremes in Gregory’s trinitarian argumentation, do not make any appearance in the treatise.63

The question of the relationship between Fr. 142 and *To the Hellenes* was taken up in Lorenz’s 1980 study, in which he vindicated Eustathius’s authorship of the excerpt while restoring it to its actual size through the addition of previously unknown sections.64 Lorenz is convinced that Eustathius, having been accused of Sabellianism, felt the need to emphasize the triadic element of his theology. Exiled to Thracia, he would have come into conflict with Photinus of Sirmium (in Pannonia). To explain Fr. 142’s similarity to some turns of phrase in *To the Hellenes* Lorenz posited, on the basis of the structure of the citations of *Against Photinus*, Gregory’s utilization of this work.65 The argument conducted in the remainder of this section of the dissertation rests on Lorenz’s historical reconstruction—as well as on other reassessments similar to his—of Eustathius’s Fr. 142 as authentic. It relies, moreover, on the commonsense consideration that Peter of Callinicus, whom Declerck himself—a denier of the authenticity of the


65 Ibid., 122-124.
excerpt—praises for his scrupulousness in handling patristic sources, would have been careful to avoid such a blatant misattribution.

Zachhuber, who also considers the fragment authentic, contemplated the possibility that *To the Hellenes* may be a later reworking of an original work of Eustathius on the part of his pupils, which they attempted to pass off as Gregory’s in order to boost their own “orthodox” credentials. Zachhuber himself eventually rejected this solution (which he admitted was not very economical), based on what he saw as clear markers of the Nyssen’s authorship, mostly identified in something akin to a literary Stimmung.\(^6\) Zachhuber analyzed the structure of the work: in the first part (1, 1-23, 3) Gregory cites Eustathian fragments in order to refine and expand their contents, so as to create a theological compromise; in the second part (23, 4-28, 8) he addresses three questions that had been raised about his discourse; and in the conclusion (28, 9-29, 3) he rebuts an objection. Throughout the work Gregory deals with Eustathian materials in a rudimentary manner, to the point that *To the Hellenes* can be read as a slightly revised draft of an oral presentation, aimed at bringing peace between the Eustathian and Meletian communities.

The Nyssen’s utilization of a work by Eustathius appeared outlandish to Declerck, who preferred to envision a later author who utilized fragments of Gregory’s *To the Hellenes* in a writing published pseudepigraphically as Eustathius’s. According to Declerck it is inconceivable that as inspired a theologian as Gregory could recycle unexceptional literary materials. Nevertheless, Staats has demonstrated, *contra* Jaeger, that Gregory of Nyssa in writing his *On the Christian Mode of Life* repurposed the so-called Messalian *Great Letter*, which is attributed to Macarius or to Simeon of Mesopotamia. No matter how talented an author the Nyssen may have been, in appropriating some of the contents of Eustathius’s *Against Photinus* he was doing nothing that he would not do again a few years later—nor, it goes without saying, anything exceptional for late ancient writing practices.

### 3.3 Fr. 142

#### 3.3.1 Text

What follows is a translation of the Syriac Fr. 142, drawn from Eustathius’s *Against Photinus*. I have divided the passage, which is edited by Lucas Van Rompay, into sections that follow Declerck’s subdivision of Fr. 142a into Fr. 142b, Fr. 142c, and other

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sections not covered by either of these two fragments, and I have tagged anew each
section and subsection.69

A. Maurinus, i.e. Photinus, along with his likened ones, libels us as though we called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit “three Gods,” whereby he acts foolishly in their regard; for, had we simply said “God and God and God,” rightly would they have accused us of declaring three Gods. But if it is the truth and a logical thing for us to call the Father “God,” the Son “God,” (and) the Holy Spirit “God,” nevertheless by (using) the (word) “God” we are not saying three by virtue of division. Even though God is professed of each subsistent person by virtue of their belonging to the one and the very same divine nature, nonetheless in “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” we recognize a fellowship, a property, and their mutual unity of nature.70

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69 Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, 200-201. Van Rompay also provides a French translation: “Or, Morinus ou (plutôt) Photinus nous accuse, avec ses adeptes, d’appeler le Père et le Fils et l’Esprit Saint trois dieux - commettant avec eux une grande folie. Car si nous disions simplement « Dieu et Dieu et Dieu », ils nous reprocheraient à juste titre de parler de trois dieux. Mais s’il est correct et logique (pour nous) d’appeler le Père « Dieu », le Fils « Dieu », l’Esprit Saint « Dieu », nous n’exprimions pourtant pas dans le (terme) « Dieu » (l’idée de) « trois » par division - même si par rapport à chaque personne hypostatique « Dieu » est proclamé, parce que (les trois) appartiennent à une seule et même nature divine - mais en (parlant) du Père et du Fils et de l’Esprit Saint, nous reconnaissions une parenté et une particularité et une union naturelle entre eux. Or, le nom de Dieu, s’il est significatif de la personne, en disant « trois personnes », de tout façon nous dirions aussi « trois dieux ». Mais puisqu’il est significatif de la nature, puisqu’il est pris d’une particularité qui appartient à la nature - comme le rire (appartient) à l’homme et l’aboiement au chien - et que les particularités qui appartiennent aux natures sont dites (être) significatives des natures, nous ne disons pas « trois dieux », parce que nous ne disons pas « trois natures ». Si d’autre part, nous appelons « Dieu » chacune des personnes de la nature divine, parce que (ce nom) est une propriété de la nature, de cette (nature) dont le nom de « Dieu » est connu, utilisé dans un sens propre - non pas que « Dieu » soit significatif de la personne, mais (que « Dieu ») appartient à une (seule) nature - (dans ces conditions) la personne elle aussi peut être appelée par ce nom, parce qu’elle appartient aussi à cette nature. Car autre est la personne et autre la nature. Si donc le (fait d’être) Dieu appartenait à la personne, en disant « trois personnes », nous dirions de toute façon aussi « trois dieux ». Mais puisqu’< (le fait d’être Dieu) appartient à la nature, du fait que > nous disons « une (seule) nature de personnes », nécessairement nous disons que Dieu est un seulement. Si maintenant il y a une (seule) nature, (et si) le (fait d’être) Dieu (appartient) à la nature, du (fait) que nous disons « une (seule) nature », il s’ensuit que nous disons que Dieu est un.”

70 [Russian text not provided]
**B.** Therefore if the name of “God” were the marker of a person, (then) by saying three persons, we would by all means also be saying three Gods. But since (the name) is a marker of nature, as it is taken from some property pertaining to a nature like laughter to the human being and barking to the dog—the properties that are said to pertain to natures are markers of natures—, we do not say three Gods because we do not say three natures.\(^71\)

**C.** But if we call “God” each of the persons of the divine nature by virtue of its pertaining to the same nature known (as) the name of God when it is used in the proper sense—‘God’ not being the marker of a person but belonging to one nature—, it is then possible also for the person to be called with this appellation, since it, too, pertains to that nature.\(^72\)

**D.** For one thing is the person, and another one the nature. Therefore, if divinity pertained to the person, as we profess three persons we would by all means be saying also three Gods. But, since it pertains to nature, as we profess one nature of the persons, by necessity do we profess that God is only one.\(^73\)

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71 See, for example, Eustathius, Opera, Fr. 142, l. 18 = Fr. 142b [= Fr. 142a.β] = Spanneut, Recherches, Fr. 83 = Cavallera, Homilia Christologica, Fr. 80). Schwartz, Der s.g. Sermo Maior, 60 retroverts as follows: Εἰ οὖν τὸ θεῖον ὄνομα δηλητικὸν ἐστι πρόσωπον, τοιαύτα λέγοντες πρόσωπα πάντως ἂν εἴσημον καὶ τρεῖς θεοὺς· ἐπειδή ἢδε δηλητικὸν φύσεως ἐστι τὸ ἀπὸ ἰδιωμάτως τινος ἐπὶ φύσεως ὄντος λαμβανόμενον, ὡς ἢ τὸ ἀνθρώπου μὲν γέλοιον, ἢ τὸ κυνὸς ἢ θαλαμώμοιο τὸν τὰ τὸν φύσεως ὑπήκοον ἰδιωματὶ λέγεται δηλητικά φύσεως, τρεῖς θεοὺς οὐ λέγομεν, δυστι οὐ τρεῖς φύσεις λέγομεν.

72 See, for example, Eustathius, Opera, Fr. 142, l. 11-18 = Fr. 142b [Fr. 142a.δ] = Spanneut, Recherches, Fr. 83 = Cavallera, Homilia Christologica, Fr. 80). Schwartz, Der s.g. Sermo Maior, 61 retroverts as follows: Ἐτερον μὲν ἢ τοιαύτα πρόσωπον, ἐτερον δὲ φύσεις, ει
E. If there exists one nature, and divinity pertains to nature, from our professing one nature there follows also that we profess God to be one.74

F. As for this nature, whose name is “God,” we understand that it always manifests itself in three persons, without being diminished by the absence of a person nor enriched by the addition of a person.75

The history of the editions of the fragment is intricate.76 Stefano Evodio and Giuseppe Simonio Assemani first remarked, in 1759, on the presence of Eustathian citations in the tripartite treatise Against Damian written around 588 by the miaphysite Patriarch of Antioch Peter of Callinicus (581-591).77 Shortly after 585 Peter had found himself engaged in a heated polemic with his fellow anti-Chalcedonian (as well as fellow Syrian) Damian, Coptic Orthodox Pope of Alexandria (481-605), who had been asked to refute a series of chapters composed by tri-theistic theologians.78 Tri-theists

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74 ἅρα προσώπου τὸ θεός ἦν, τρία λέγοντες προσώπα πάντως ἂν ἐποµεν καὶ τρεῖς θεούς· ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ὅτι μία ἡ φύσις λέγοµεν τῶν προσώπων, αναγκαίως ὅτι εἷς μόνον ὁ θεός.

75 ἄρα προσώπου τὸ θεός ἦν, τρία λέγοντες προσώπα πάντως ἂν ἐποµεν καὶ τρεῖς θεούς· ἐπεὶ δ᾽ ὅτι μία ἡ φύσις λέγοµεν τῶν προσώπων, αναγκαίως ὅτι εἷς μόνον ὁ θεός.

76 The history is told in Declerck, Eustathii Antiocheni opera, cviii-cix; cxxviii-cxxix; clxxxiii-clxxxiv.


treated the difference of hypostaseis as corresponding to one of natures, ousiai, and godheads. Faithful to the distinction between first and second ousia cited above, which John Philoponus had inherited from Aristotelian thought, tri-theist theology deemed the divinity shared within the godhead as something closer to a cognitive construct than to a substance of any kind.

The Treatise Against the Tri-theists that Damian of Alexandria had composed to rebut the views of these theologians was found defective in its trinitarian formulation by Peter of Callinicus, who reacted with a treatise Against Damian. In this polemical exchange, which recalls closely that between Eustathius of Antioch and Eusebius of Caesarea in the immediate aftermath of Nicaea, Peter was calling Damian a Sabellian, and Damian was accusing Peter of professing three Gods. The crisis brought about a thirty-year-long schism between the orthodox churches of Antioch and Alexandria, which ended only in 616, by the joint initiative of Athanasius of Antioch and Anastasius of Alexandria.


The first edition of fragments 142b and 142c, drawn from the indirect tradition of a Syriac trinitarian *florilegium* contained in a manuscript from the *quondam* British Museum (ms. BL Add. 14,532, f. 132v), was published in 1861 by Cowper along with a fairly obscure English translation. In 1883 J.P.P. Martin published the Syriac text and a Latin translation of the two fragments in Cardinal Jean-Baptist Pitra’s *Analecta Sacra*. Cavallera mistook part of the passage edited by Cowper, which belonged in reality to

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81 The same *florilegium* is contained in mss. BL Add. 12,155, BL Add. 14,532, BL Add. 14,533, and BL Add. 14,538.

82 B.H. Cowper, ed., *Syriac Miscellanies; or Extracts Relating to the First and Second General Councils, and Various Other Quotations, Theological, Historical, & Classical* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1861): “From the Epistle, ‘A Multitude of Ranks.’ For Eustathius, who was the pious pastor of Antioch, in the discourse against Photinus, that is to say Murinus, when he had before showed, that the Person of the Word is one, and his nature another, taught that the nature appears in three persons, to which your investigation before alleged adheres, which would leave the nature in a mere appellation, because he says that this is manifest in others, and that the beautiful Word of the Father is his Sister in part. Of holy Eustathius, Bishop of Antioch, from the discourse against Photinus, that is to say Murinus. ‘The name of God, therefore, if it be indeed intelligible, is of a person. When we say three persons, by all means also, they say, there are three Gods. Now because it shows that there is a nature, when from its own something above nature has been taken; as of a man indeed laughter, of a dog barking, but they are called properties of natures, exhibiting the natures. We do not say three Gods, because we do not say three natures.’ And again: ‘For one is the Person indeed, but the nature another. If, therefore, the person had been God, when we say three persons, by all means we say there are three Gods. Now, since we say that the nature of the person is one, of necessity we say that there is only one God.’”

83 J.B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra spicilegio solesmensi parata* (Paris: Ex publico Galliarum typographeo, 1883) II, 212 and 442. Declerck Fr. 142b (= Martin Fr. V): “Si nomen Deus personae significativum esset, tres personas dientes, tres etiam deos dicere ex necessitate debemus. At, cum sit naturae significativum deque naturae propiitatibus accipiatur, ut risus in hominem, ut latratus in cane; proprietatesque, utpote naturae signa, de natura praedicentur, tres esse deos non dicimus, ob eamdem rationem propter quam non dicimus tres esse naturas.” Declerck Fr. 142c (= Martin Fr. VI): “Aliud enim est persona et aliud natura. At, si personae essent quae sunt Dei, cum tres esse personas dicamus, tres etiam dicere deos necessario oportet. Cum autem unam dicamus esse naturam personarum, necessario dicere debemus unum esse Deum” (both translations from Pitra, *Analecta sacra*, II, 442; see also ibid., xxvi).
Damian of Alexandria's own voice in the *Long-Lined Letter*, for a third fragment, and edited it separately\(^8^4\).

Consulting mss. Vat. Syr. 108 and Berol. Sachau 201, Rudolf Lorenz was able to rectify this mistake, as well as to understand that Fr. 142b and Fr. 142c were in reality parts of a longer citation (= Fr. 142a). He published the latter as a whole for the first time, thus providing the broader context from which the author of the Syriac trinitarian *florilegium* had drawn his authorities. Lorenz also added the previously unpublished Fr. 143, and produced a German translation of both Fr. 142a and Fr. 143.\(^8^5\) A Latin

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\(^8^4\)Cavallera, *Homilia Christologica*, 96.

translation of Fr. 142a was offered by Van Roey within his partial reconstruction of Peter’s *Against Damian*,\(^6\) from which it was also possible to learn that it had been not Peter, but Damian himself, quoted by Peter, who had originally cited Eustathius’s *Against Photinus*. Damian had in fact quoted Eustathius in at least two loci: the *Treatise against the Tritheists* (where he assembled Fr. 142a, Fr. 142b, and Fr. 142c) and the *Many-Lined Letter* (Πολύστιχος ἐπιστολή, carrying Fr. 143 and some lines of Fr. 142c).\(^7\)

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3.3.2 Theological Contents

In spite of its highly technical contents, the theological views expressed by Fr. 142 are fairly clear. The nature (kyana, φύσις) of the godhead is signified by a name (šma, ὄνοµα) and identified on the basis of a set of properties (dilayata, ἴδια): the name “God” marks not each of the persons, but rather the nature in which they share. When applied to the nature, the name of God is used in the proper sense (maranait, κυρίως); when applied to each of the three individual persons (parsope qnomaye), it is still legitimately employed, but only as an appellation (kunnaya, προσηγορία). Each of the three persons is God, and may be named as such inasmuch as it shares in the one and same divine nature.

Thus, in response to Photinus’s accusation of tri-theism, Eustathius admitted to having called each person of the godhead “God,” but clarified that this affirmation was not meant to imply a partition within the godhead. Rather, it was a consequence of the Father’s, the Son’s, and the Holy Spirit’s partaking in the same nature. The divine, he explained, is inherent in the concept of that nature whose name is “God,” and not in that of a person: it is the nature, and not the person, that the name “God” denotes, and that divinity inheres to.
In the theological analysis of the fragment to which Lorenz attended, he remarked on its backwardness and failure to articulate a fully trinitarian doctrine. The relationship between unity and trinity is merely entrusted to the notion of the eternal manifesting of the one nature of God in three persons, without any regard for the added economic dimension of the history of salvation. The fundamentally monarchian views of the Council of Sardica (343), already set forth by Dionysius of Rome in the fight with his namesake of Alexandria, would thus find expression in this Eustathian fragment. The only difference would lie in the deployment of a “school logic” of peripatetic origin—whereby each of the persons is reduced to an “accident”—with the aim of seeking a way out of the specular accusations of Sabellianism and tritheism.

A similar theological assessment of the passage—which sees Damian as justified in his dispute with Peter—was offered by Simonetti. For him the conception of πρόσωπον expressed in the fragment, which he holds to be authentic, is consistent with Eustathius’s monarchian views, which indeed recognized three πρόσωπα of the divinity. Nevertheless, Simonetti proposed a reading in which the parșopa is identified with a signifying property of nature, and thereby depleted of any real substance. This interpretation is based on Eustathius’s mention of the human being’s laughter or the

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89 Lorenz interestingly sees this application of Aristotelian categories to the problem of unity vs. triadicity in God as a first step on the road that will be trodden by the Cappadocians.
dog’s barking: “for πρόσωπον—[Eustathius] himself clarifies—one must understand a ‘meaningful property of the nature,’ such as is laughter in the human being and barking in the dog; ultimately, only a manner of acting, of presenting oneself on the part of the godhead.”

I am unable to find textual support for such a reading, and suspect that we ought to recognize in this passage a fuller articulation of the substantiality of the three persons than Simonetti is prepared to read. In the passage in which laughing and barking are mentioned, in fact it is not the differentiation between the three persons (parṣope) that Eustathius is reducing to an “individual property” (dilaita) of their nature, but rather the appellation of “God” as shared by each of the three persons:

Therefore if the name of “God” were the marker of a person, (then) by saying three persons, we would by all means also be saying three Gods. But since (the name) is a marker of nature, as it is taken from some property pertaining to a nature like laughter to the human being and barking to the dog—the properties that are said to pertain to natures are markers of natures—, we do not say three Gods because we do not say three natures.

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90 Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 73.

91 As Lorenz remarks, these examples were scholastic: Porphyry in Isagoge had used human laughter and the neighing of horses as an example of the ἴδιον; barking was discussed by Porphyry in his Commentary on the Categories of Aristotle; and laughing, barking, and neighing were later used as instances of ἴδια by Ammonius and Elias: see Lorenz, “Die Eustathius von Antiochien zugeschriebene Schrift gegen Photin,” 118 and n. 51 and 52.

92; 3; ̄; 3̈; ܐ; ܘ; ܨ; ܐ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܐ; ܚ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܒ; ܝ; ܗ; ܘ; ܡ; ܬ; ܘ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܡ; ܬ; ܥ; ܢ; ܐ; ܕ; ܡ; ܢ; ܐ; ܒ; ܨ; ܠ; ܒ; ܨ; ลง
Evidence that Eustathius had less insubstantial an opinion of the Son than he is commonly credited with having held may be gleaned also from a passage in which Socrates of Constantinople declares not to understand what his feud with Eusebius of Caesarea was all about, considering that they both saw the Son as ἐνυπόστατος and ἐνυπάρχων:

Because of these circumstances, they [scil. Eusebius of Caesarea and Eustathius] both wrote their arguments as if [writing] against adversaries, and, though both declaring that the Son of God is subsistent [ἐνυπόστατον] and existent, and confessing that God is one in three hypostaseis, they could not—I do not know how!—agree with one another, and therefore did not manage in any way to remain at peace.\(^3\)

This passage should of course not be taken entirely at face value. It is highly unlikely that Eustathius ever spoke—except condemningly—of three hypostaseis.

However, this citation probably captures a historical kernel about Eustathius’s (or his pupils’) openness to the declaration of a certain substantial discreteness of the Father and the Son. More particularly, the utilization of ἐνυπόστατος might well derive from

\(^3\)Socr. Hist. ecle. 1, 23: Διὰ ταῦτα ἕκαστοι ὡς κατὰ αντιπάλων τοὺς λόγους συνέγραφον· ἀμφότεροι τε λέγοντες ἐνυπόστατον τε καὶ ἐνυπάρχοντα τὸν υἱὸν εἶναι τοῦ θεοῦ, ἔνα τε θεόν ἐν τρισὶν ὑποστάσειν εἶναι ὀμολογοῦντες, ἀλλήλως οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως συμφωνήσαι ὁμοίως ισχυν—καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἦσυχαζειν οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ ἤνείχοντο.
the use of the word that Eustathius made, e.g. in Fr. 142, in reference to the πρόσωπον of Christ.

Van Roey back-translated *parșopa qnomaya* into πρόσωπον ὑποστατικόν, rendered it in his Latin translation as *persona hypostatica*, and called it an “anti-Sabellian expression,” specifying that the adjective ὑποστατικόν was added in order to eliminate any ambiguity from usage of the noun πρόσωπον. He also remarked that he could not find the expression πρόσωπον ὑποστατικόν anywhere else.94 In my opinion, *parșope qnomaye*—which Lorenz translates as “einzelse Persone[n]” and Van Rompay as “personne[s] hypostatique[s]”95—should be back-translated not as πρόσωπα ὑποστατικά, which would indeed be a *hapax legomenon*, but as the attested expression πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα (or ὑφεστῶτα), with the meaning of “substantial persons.”96

Eustathius’s readiness to attribute substantiality to the πρόσωπον is noteworthy, as it represents the first observable signal in this direction within the mia-hypostatic alliance. It is all the more notable if we consider that, in a polemic against Photinus, Eustathius would have been expected to downplay the aspects of his doctrine that exposed him more gravely to accusations of tritheism on the part of his radical

96 The two Greek expressions are synonymous according to De Halleux, “‘Hypostase’ et ‘Personne,’” 335.
monarchian opponent. The unexpected presence of this phrase may then signify that after the Council of Nicaea a progressive vocabulary was already in place, in the milieus of its framers, which would help re-focus the discussion onto the articulation of the relationship between unity and multiplicity within the godhead.

Spanneut suggested that Against Photinus could be the work of Eustathius’s pupils. While I find it unnecessary to deny Eustathius authorship of the excerpt, it is nevertheless true that even if Fr. 142 were proven to be pseudepigraphic, the lexeme parșopa qnomaya would retain its position in the creation of a progressive area of compromise within the vetero-Nicene alliance. Whether the expression came out of Eustathius’s own quill, was thought up by thinkers influenced by him, or was received by Eustathius from a previous source makes no significant difference to the argument developed in this study. What is important is that its employment ipso facto widened the gap between the mia-prosōpic and tri-prosōpic perspectives within the mia-hypostatic alliance. At the same time, it reduced the distance separating the Eustathians from the Meletians’ neo-Nicenism.

\[^{97}\text{Spanneut, Recherches, 82-83.}\]
3.4 The Expression Πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον

3.4.1 Πρόσωπον

Greek trinitarianism never gave πρόσωπον the role and pregnancy that Latin theology had attributed to the term *persona*; it might in fact have even been the theological usage of *persona* that led to that of πρόσωπον, rather than, as would seem intuitive, the other way round.98 Indeed, no trinitarian usage of πρόσωπον is attested with any certainty before the middle of the third century. The term does appear to be employed in a trinitarian context in Origen’s *Commentary on the Song of Songs*:

> But those same (mountains) that are called here “high mountains,” in the plural, in other (places) are called “high mountain,” in the singular, as Isaiah says: “Go up on a high mountain, O you who bring good news to Zion. Raise your voice with strength, you who bring good news to Jerusalem” (Is 40:9). For that same one which (is understood) there as the Trinity because of the distinction of persons, is here understood as the only God for the unity of substance.99

Prestige does not question the authenticity of this text. On the ground of the overtly Nicene nature of the phrasing, however, Simonetti ascribes it to Rufinus, who translated Origen’s Greek text into Latin.100 Unfortunately the passage is not preserved

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98 On the issue of the legal origin of Tertullian’s use of *persona* see Prestige, *God*, 159.


among the extant Greek fragments of the *Commentary*. In light of what we know about Rufinus’s translation practices, and in particular of a recent study showing the liberty with which the Aquileian monk treated the Greek original of the *Commentary on Song of Songs*, this skepticism seems warranted. The same caution, I think, should be used with regard to the passage of Origen’s *Letter to Titus* in which the theologian bemoans the Sabellians’ mia-prosōpism, where Prestige again finds πρόσωπον almost certainly to be the basis for *persona*.

In the works of Clement of Alexandria, as well as in those of other writers, the notion is found that the Logos constitutes God’s face inasmuch as it provides a

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103 *Orig. Comm. Tit.*, 4, 695: sicut et illos qui superstitione magis quam religiouse, uti ne videantur duos Deos dicere, neque rursus negare Salvatoris deitatem, unam eandemque subsistentiam Patris ac Filii asseverant, id est, duo quidem nomina secundum diversitatem causarum recipiunt, unam tamen hypostasin subjacente, id est, unam personam duobus nominibus subjacentem, qui Latine Patripassiani appellantur. See Prestige, *God*, 161.
revelation of Him. At other times it is the Holy Spirit that is called a πρόσωπον of God. But the first attestation of the word in a specifically binitarian sense goes back to its anti-monarchian utilization on the part of the author of Against Noêtus. Tertullian, in Against Praxeas, similarly spoke of three personae, likely translating the Greek word πρόσωπα. On the opposite side of the trinitarian spectrum, the monarchian Callixtus of Rome wrote about one πρόσωπον of the godhead. The attestation of this Sabellian use of “one πρόσωπον” in heresiological sources leads to the belief that Sabellius himself must have utilized the expression. In fact, Hippolytus, Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, and John of Damascus are all in agreement about the fact that the

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104 Cl. Paed., 1, 7, 57, 2.
105 See e.g. Cyr. Thes., PG 75, 577.
Sabellians (whom they hardly distinguish from Sabellius himself) held mia-prosōpic views.

Eusebius of Caesarea is the first to offer greater detail, by reporting that the Sabellians spoke of a tri-hypostatic πρόσωπον.\textsuperscript{110} Prestige considers the phrase a Eusebian gloss and not a citation from Marcellus; similarly, he attributes Basil of Caesarea’s references in his \textit{Letters} to the weak tri-prosōpism of the Sabellians—who allegedly did acknowledge three πρόσωπα but saw them as theater masks\textsuperscript{111}—as a critical comment to be traced back to Basil’s own mind, and not as a citation from any Sabellian author.\textsuperscript{112} Unlike his fellow Cappadocians Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa, who utilized πρόσωπον interchangeably with hypostasis, Basil was clear in drawing a distinction between the two, while at the same time locating both on the side of plurality (in opposition to ousia, situated on the side of unity): “For it does not suffice to enumerate the differences of persons, but rather it is necessary to confess that each person exists in a true hypostasis.”\textsuperscript{113} Basing his analysis on \textit{Against Eunomius} and the \textit{Epistle}, Turcescu has shown a progression of stricture in Basil’s own utilization of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Euseb. \textit{Eccl. theol.}, 3, 6. Eusebius himself spoke of three πρόσωπα: see ibid., 3, 20, 63.
\item Bas. \textit{Epistula CCX}, 5; \textit{Epistula CCXIV}, 3; \textit{Epistula CCCLXIV}.
\item Οὐ γὰρ ἐξαρκεί διαφοράς προσώπων ἀπαραθηματικά, ἀλλὰ χρή ἐκαστὸν πρόσωπον ἐν ὑποστάσει ἀληθινῆ ὑπάρχον ὁμολογεῖν. Bas. \textit{Epistula CCX}, 5.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
term, which the bishop came to judge contaminated by Sabellianism and therefore in need of such qualifications as the association with perfection or with true subsistence.\textsuperscript{114}

According to Prestige, “[t]here does not seem to be any evidence whatever for the view that the term \textit{prosopon} was ever discredited in orthodox circles at any period of theological development. On the contrary, it provided a convenient non-technical and non-metaphysical expression to describe the permanent and objective forms or Persons in which the godhead is presented alike to human vision and to the divine self-consciousness.”\textsuperscript{115} Simonetti differently suggested that since the term was never completely detached from its original sense of “appearance,” it was perceived as less apt to express subsistence than \textit{hypostasis}. Origen’s own very likely refraining from ever using \textit{πρόσωπον} may thus indicate a rejection of the concept as too insubstantial.\textsuperscript{116} As a result, once \textit{hypostasis} gained widespread popularity as a way to indicate personal subsistence, the plural \textit{πρόσωπα} would have begun to be utilized by those seeking to strike a middle ground between outright mia-prosōpic and mia-hypostatic Sabellianism, on the one hand, and tri-hypostatic Origenism, on the other.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{114} L. Turcescu, “Prosōpon and Hypostasis in Basil of Caesarea’s \textit{Against Eunomius} and the \textit{Epistles},” \textit{VChr} 51 (1997): 374-395.
\textsuperscript{115} Prestige, \textit{God}, 162.
\textsuperscript{116} See Simonetti, “«Persona» nel dibattito cristologico,” 531-532.
\textsuperscript{117} Simonetti, “Sabellio,” 24.
3.4.2 Ἐνυπόστατος

The term *hypostasis*, whereupon the adjective ἐνυπόστατος is obviously compounded, had been utilized in writings both philosophical and of other kinds for a long time before Christian authors took it up. Although the word makes an appearance in the New Testament (Hebrews 1:3), it had been Origen who had introduced it into Christian theological discourse, in order to ensure that the separate subsistence of the Father and the Son be affirmed against those Christians who were so preoccupied with the defense of the divine monarchy as to deny the substantiality of their respective existence. In using the term, Origen, who drew no distinction between *hypostasis* and *ousia*, intended to indicate that the Father and the Son are separate not only in thought, but also in actuality. Since Origen’s times, *hypostasis* had become part of common theological vocabulary. In particular, the number of *hypostaseis* held to lie

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within the godhead may be considered to have marked, as recalled above, the identity of two opposing theological orientations—mia- and tri-hypostatic.

The term ἐνυπόστατος, understood in dichotomous opposition to ἀνυπόστατος, would come to assume a central place in Christological discussions in the remainder of late antiquity and the Middle Ages; in fact, from the fifth century on the only theological use of the term is Christological.\(^{120}\) The earliest usage of the term, however, clearly predates these discussion. Strikingly, unlike its seeming antonym ἀνυπόστατος, the term ἐνυπόστατος does not appear in non-Christian writings.\(^{121}\)

It may have been Origen himself who coined the word, considering its diffusion in theological texts of the fourth century that might have to be traced back to an Origenist influence. Leaving aside spurious fragments and texts attributed to Irenaeus and Origen,\(^{122}\) the expression is attested in two probably authentic Origenian fragments, in only one of which it is utilized in a binitarian technical sense.\(^{123}\) In this fragment, contained in a *catena* on Proverbs, Origen distinguishes between the wisdom that is

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\(^{120}\) This protects the claim for the authenticity of Fr. 142 from suspicions of interpolations later than the fourth century.


\(^{123}\) The other fragment (from Origen, Epistula ad Photium et Andream), in which ἐνυπόστατος is used doxologically, is contained in a *catena* on Deut 16:20 (PG 17, 28B).
bestowed upon the believers by the Holy Spirit and the true Wisdom, the “subsistent Son and Word of God” (ἐνυπόστατος Υἱὸς και Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ).\textsuperscript{124}

The only occurrence of the word *substantialis* as well as some of the several occurrences of *substantivus* in the Latin versions of Origen’s work may well have to be understood as translations of ἐνυπόστατος.\textsuperscript{125} In particular, Gleede sees in Origen’s reassurance to the effect that “the only-begotten Son of God is His substantially subsistent Wisdom” (unigenitum filium dei sapientiam eius esse substantialiter subsistentem) the translation of a phrase containing ἐνυπόστατος,\textsuperscript{126} which would constitute a parallel to the Greek fragment from the *catena* on Proverbs.

Gleede tracks usage of ἐνυπόστατος in such writers as the author of the pseudo-Athanasian *Dialogue on the Holy Trinity*, John Chrysostom, Romanos the Melodist, Asterius the Sophist, Didymus the Blind, and Epiphanius. For all these authors, ἐνυπόστατος means something along the lines of “true.” When applied to the Word, the attribute indicates that the latter “truly proceeds from [the Father], exists in him and is of

\textsuperscript{124} PG 17, 185B.

\textsuperscript{125} Gleede, *The Development*, 16. *Substantivus* occurs in *Orig. Princ.*, 1, 7, 1; *substantialis* in *Ambr. Exp. Luc.*, 1, 5, 61 (*cit.* in Gleede, *The Development*, 16, n. 36).

\textsuperscript{126} *Orig. Princ.*, 1, 2, 2.
equal glory and power, truly and undeniably God the Son, wisdom, power and word of
the Father.”

The binitarian technical usage of the word, on the other hand, follows a different
trajectory. The presence of the word ἐνυπόστατος has been understandably used to
disqualify the authenticity of a fragment attributed to the second-century author
Irenaeus of Lyon\textsuperscript{128} in which Christ is called “veracious type of the subsistent Word”
(τοῦ ἐνυποστάτου Λόγου τύπος ἀψευδής).\textsuperscript{129} The term is attested in a binitarian
framework also in the third-century Letter of Hymenaeus, the above-mentioned source for
the affair of Paul of Samosata,\textsuperscript{130} as well as in fourth-century works that place
ἐνυπόστατος Λόγος alongside the famous pair ἐνδιάθετος/προφορικός.\textsuperscript{131} It appears in
Socrates’s gloss to a passage of the Long-Lined Exposition of Milan (345), in which the
glossator declares the Son to be “subsistent Word of the Father, and God from God”
(ἐνυπόστατον Λόγον ὄντα τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ), thereby showing “an
accurate awareness of what the point of introducing this term into the trinitarian

\textsuperscript{127} Gleede, \textit{The Development}, 19.

\textsuperscript{128} Ir. \textit{Fragm.} (PG 7, 1240C).


\textsuperscript{131} Gleede, \textit{The Development}, 26-29.
discussion was: It was an Origenist way to secure the apologetic Logos terminology against its Marcellan “abuse.”

Meletius used the term ἐνυπόστατος in the famous homily that caused him to be removed from the Constantinopolitan see and exiled to Armenia, his land of origin. Meletius, who had briefly been the bishop of the Armenian city of Sebaste, had partaken, as a homoian, in the Council of Seleucia (359). Toward the end of 360, bishop Eudoxius’s transfer to Constantinople created a vacancy in the Antiochene see, to which Meletius was then consecrated, by virtue of Acacius’s good offices. However, in 361 he was called to take part, along with Acacius and George of Alexandria, in a “session of sermon-tasting on the part of the Emperor” on Proverbs 8:22. The identification of the ideological content of his homily, which is preserved, has spurred much scholarly debate. Whatever its intended theological orientation, Meletius’s sermon persuaded


Constantius to decree the first of his three exiles (the following two, under Valens, would be ordered in 365 and 369).

The passage of the Homily on Proverbs 8:22 containing the adjective ἐνυπόστατος confirms the picture of a fairly widespread usage of the term to indicate the subsistence of Christ as a separate entity:

And as <the Son is the> Father’s <wisdom> in the pattern of the wisdom which embraces human thoughts, and though he is certainly not a nonentity and non-existent, the Scripture made use of both terms, that of creation and that of generation, of “He created me” and “He begot me.” This was not to give the appearance of saying contraries about the same things and at the same time, but to show the subsistent and enduring existence of the Only-begotten through “created,” and his special and individual character through “begot.” For he says, “I proceeded forth from the Father and am come.” The very word, “wisdom,” however, is enough to exclude any idea of passion.

In spite of its relatively common use, however, the adjective had in my view an important additional characteristic, which conferred it an edge over the rival form ὑφεστῶς (a participle of ὑφίστηµι). The Greek prefix ἐν was capable of both retaining its literal locative sense (e.g. ἐγγάστριος, “in the womb”) and assuming a sense of possession (e.g. ἔντιµος, “having honor”), of approximation (e.g. ἐνερεύθης, 134 I replaced Williams’s “real” with “subsistent.”). 135 Apud Epiph. Adv. haer., 2, 73, 31, 6-7: καὶ ὡς κατὰ τὸ παράδειγµα τῆς σοφίας τῆς περιεκτικῆς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐνθυµηµάτων τοῦ πατρός, οὐ µὴν ἀνυπόστατος τε καὶ ἀνύπαρκτος, ἑκατέραις ταῖς λέξεσις ἑκατέραις ταῖς λέξεσιν ἐχρήσατο ἡ γραφή, τῇ τε τοῦ ἔκτισε καὶ τοῦ ἐγέννησεν, οὐχ ἵνα τὰ ἐναντία δοκῇ καὶ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγεσθαι, ἀλλ’ ἵνα διὰ µὲν τοῦ ἔκτισε τὸ ἐνυπόστατόν τε καὶ µόνιµον, διὰ δὲ τοῦ ἐγέννησε τὸ ἐξαίρετον τοῦ µονογενοῦς καὶ ἰδιάζον παρίστα. «ἐγώ, γάρ φησιν, ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐξῆλθον καὶ ἥκω». ἱκανὸν δέ ἐστι καὶ τὸ τῆς σοφίας ὄνοµα πάσαν ἐννοιαν πάθους ἀποκλεῖσαι (translation from F. Williams, The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Books II and III. De fide (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean studies 79; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 477).
“somewhat red”), and of emphasis (e.g. ἕνδηλος, “very clear”). At times, when
combined with a noun to form an adjective, ἐν was capable of holding, as a prefix, a
variety of meanings, based on the noun to which it referred (e.g. ἐνυδρος meaning
“water-dwelling” for an animal, “water-rich” for a country, “water-filled” for a
container, or “consisting of water” for a stream).136

Assuming that the behavior of the prefix ἐν—as perceived by educated fourth-
century Greek speakers—in conjunction with the adjective ύποστατος/ὑποστατός137 can
be accurately predicted on the basis of the meanings it assumes in most cases, in the case
of the adjective ἐνυπόστατος the semasiological diversity of the prefix conferred to the
word a certain ambiguity. Ἐνυπόστατος could in fact be understood as meaning both
“nestled within a hypostasis”/“having a hypostasis” and “subsistent”/“hypostatic.’

3.4.3 Some Additional Considerations

The import of the difference between these two acceptions (nestled within a
hypostasis”/“having a hypostasis” and “subsistent”/“hypostatic”) for our particular
problem is obvious. If each of the three πρόσωπα of the godhead is also a hypostasis in
its own right (namely, if ἐνυπόστατος means “subsistent”/“hypostatic”), it is difficult to

136 Gleede, The Development, 11 and E. Schwyzer, Griechische Grammatik auf der Grundlage von Karl
Brugmanns Griechischer Grammatik. Bd. II (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft 2.1; Munich: C.H. Beck,
1950), 456-457 (cit. ibid.).

137 Both orthographies are attested.
escape a tri-hypostatic outcome. On the contrary, if every πρόσωπον is simply nestled within a hypostasis, it can be conceived that one hypostasis will contain all three of them, thus preserving the integrity of mia-hypostatic doctrine.

Eustathius’s description of the Son as a πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον was a result of his unwillingness to attribute to Christ the status of a hypostasis tout court. Tri-hypostatism is thus clearly not the theoretical outcome Eustathius was trying to achieve by employing this phrase. On the other hand, if ἐνυπόστατον is simply understood as meaning “nestled within a hypostasis,” it adds no degree of subsistence to the existence of the Son. In that case, Eustathius might as well not have bothered qualifying the noun πρόσωπον with this adjective.

From a technical viewpoint, therefore, the innovation implied by the expression πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον is untidy: the expression is either incompatible with mia-hypostatic doctrine or superfluous. Linguistic constructs, however, often transcend in their usage the semasiological limitations of the parts of which they are compounded. It can be conceived—and I surmise that this was in fact the case—that the phrase would have assumed the commonsensical meaning of a somewhat “substantial person.” At the same time, the logical possibility of the second interpretation highlighted above (“nestled within a hypostasis”) may have afforded the phrase a certain degree of
amphibology, which may have helped its diffusion by reducing its perceived perilousness.

In conclusion, I would like to prevent a potential objection to the argument according to which the origin of the expression πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατος is to be sought in Eustathius’s work. As seen above, the adjective ἐνυπόστατος likely had its roots in the Origenian tradition. It could conceivably be argued that as such Eustathius, about whose general anti-Origenism there exists general agreement, should have abhorred it. However, the fact that Epiphanius, who in his Anchored Discourse and Chest of Medicines traced Arian subordinationism back to Origen138 (and in general leveled several charges against the Alexandrian theologian throughout his career), felt at ease in utilizing ἐνυπόστατος very liberally indicates that the adjective had by his time likely lost its exclusively Origenian valence.139 Although it is true that Epiphanius was writing in the 370s, this may well have also been the case three decades earlier, when Eustathius was composing his Against Photinus.


139 A similar argument could be made for the anti-Origenist Jerome (see Clark, The Origenist Controversy, 121-151), although his utilization of the expression is much more limited.
Lorenz dates the fragment, based on its contents, to 344-345.\textsuperscript{140} I find this degree of exactitude slightly puzzling, but do agree that, unless we wish to exaggerate implausibly Eustathius’s longevity, the work needs to have been composed in the early 350s at the latest. Such chronology would still make of Eustathius of Antioch the first thinker with the mia-hypostatic tradition who attempted to articulate a distinction between the three πρόσωπα of the godhead that was not merely insubstantial.

\textsuperscript{140} Lorenz, “Die Eustathius von Antiochien zugeschriebene Schrift gegen Photin,” 121.
4. Epistemic Shifts

4.1 The Council of Alexandria (362)

4.1.1. The Schism in Antioch

This chapter is devoted to the treatment of the problem of the number of hypostases offered by the council gathered at Alexandria by Athanasius in 362. While the opaque historical contours of the Council of Alexandria have been abundantly discussed, its significance not only for the unfolding of the fourth-century trinitarian disputes but also for the evolution of late ancient Christian thought at large still needs to be fully explored. This first section of the chapter will outline the wide intellectual and institutional contexts of the Council of Alexandria—in the first place the schism in Antioch and the theological traditions that confronted one another in that city—and provide historiographic background for my argument.1 In looking at the events of the schism of Antioch, I intend to scrutinize the circumstances within which there arose not

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only the need for such a meeting, but more importantly the conditions for the innovative solution contained in the *Tome to the Antiochenes*.

After attending extensively to a reconstruction of the events that unfolded at the council, I will propose an interpretation of the significance of the *Tome to the Antiochenes* issued by the Alexandrian synod, focused on lasting epistemic shifts. Without going as far as to admit, with Jerome, that this council “snatched the whole world out of the jaws of Satan,”\(^2\) I will argue that it constituted a milestone on the road toward the constitution of Christian theology as a discursive field.

The trinitarian debate was lively in Roman Syria, and in the course of the controversies Antioch is known to have witnessed at some point up to four claimants to the archiepiscopal see. Each of them had his own set of alliances as well as his share of control over urban masses, churches, and clergy.\(^3\) As seen above, soon after co-presiding over the Nicene council (325), Eustathius fell victim to the revenge of those adversaries whom he had conspired to shame. According to Chrysostom’s testimony, when Eustathius was deposed and exiled he begged his adherents not to precipitate a schism,


\(^3\)For an interestingly skeptical view of the trustworthiness of polemical literary sources related to the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century, and a claim that the religious reality in Antioch may have been more irenic than these portray it as being, see D.M. Gwynn, “Archaeology and the «Arian Controversy» in the Fourth Century,” in *Religious Diversity in Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Bangert and D.M. Gwynn (Late Antique Archaeology 6; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 243-245.
but rather to retain their faith while continuing to worship in communion with
whichever bishops were going to rule the Antiochene Church. These bishops,
approved—and often indeed appointed—by the Emperor and ordained by three fellow
members of the episcopal ranks, celebrated the liturgy in the cathedral, the octagonal
“Golden Church” whose construction had begun under Constantine, and which had
been dedicated in 341, at the time of the synod.\footnote{See Chr. Eust. [= PG 50, 604], 4.}

Whatever the historical accuracy and the significance of Chrysostom’s report, the
Eustathians, headed by the priest Paulinus after their eponymous hero’s exile, did
worship separately from the main assembly, but interestingly never made any
autonomous episcopal claims. They thus \textit{de facto} recognized the authority of the
officially appointed bishops—Paulinus of Tyre (a namesake of the Eustathian loyalist
presbyter: 326-330), Eulalius (331-332), Euphranius (332-333), Flacillus (333-342), and
Stephen (342-344)—until after the Council of Sardica (343). It is only at the time of that
gathering that the official schism was consummated, as a result of Stephen’s
excommunication by a group of western Nicene bishops with whom the Eustathians
were in communion. Even then, the Eustathians proceeded to no alternative episcopal

\footnote{This church stood on the island in the river Orontes. See Downey, \textit{A History of Antioch in Syria}, 342-345.}
ordination, contenting themselves with holding aloof from the community that
recognized Stephen.

Meanwhile, the Emperor-backed community had come to include a growing
majority of moderate pro-Nicene believers, who in spite of their creed recognized the
authority and attended the liturgical services of the various anti-Nicenes who one after
the other presided over the episcopal see. These Christians continued to be loyal to the
bishop even under the leadership of the homoian Leontius (known as “the Eunuch,”
344-357) and under that of Eudoxius (357-359), a leader who went so far in his anti-
Nicenism as to lose Constantius’s support for shifting from his erstwhile homoianism
into unabashedly heteroousian postures.

It was not until 360, the year of Meletius’s election as the successor of Eudoxius
and subsequent exile, that the moderate pro-Nicenes of Antioch, now galvanized by the
heroic resistance of their champion, broke communion with bishops of anti-Nicene ilk,
rejecting the leadership of the homoian Euzoïus (360-375/6). Paulinus’s followers, in
turn, refused to hold communion with these Christians, because of Meletius’s recent
subscription to the homoian creed at the Council of Constantinople (360) and his
original ordination by bishops whom they perceived as compromised by “Arianism.’

Thus, by 361 three separate communities had formed in Antioch: the orthodox
(viz. Empire-backed) church of Euzoïus, whose members worshipped in the cathedral;
the Meletian community, which, under the leadership of the presbyter Flavian, had withdrawn into the apostolic church of the old city,⁶ or outside of the walls of Antioch altogether;⁷ and the Eustathian group, to which Euzoius had granted the use of a small church inside the town.⁸

It was the conflictual situation in Antioch, among other things, that Athanasius of Alexandria set out to resolve in 362, by means of a council gathered in his episcopal city. About the disciplinary decisions of the council it is Athanasius himself who provides some information, in his Epistle to the otherwise unknown Rufinianus (information confirmed also by Lucifer of Calaris’s Altercation of an Orthodox and a Luciferian).⁹ Little is known, however, about the council’s work, since its synodal letter is lost. The precious little that is transmitted we owe to a document traditionally referred to as Tome to the Antiochenes.¹⁰ For a long time incorrectly considered to be the meeting’s

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⁸See Socr. Hist. eccl., 5, 1, 3.
¹⁰See Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 360-370; Segneri, Atanasio, Lettera agli Antiocheni; Martin, “Review of A. Segneri.” Both Socrates and Sozomen misrepresented the decision of the Council of Alexandria as prohibiting any talk of ousia or hypostasis unless it was for the purpose of condemning Sabellianism: see Socr. Hist. eccl., III, 7; Soz. Hist. eccl., V, 12.
synodal letter, the *Tome* was in reality composed by Athanasius in agreement with Eusebius, Asterius, and others after the council.

The document mentions as senders twenty bishops,\(^{11}\) adds to this list a certain number of bishops included in the generic expression “the rest,” and cites in the body of the text the presence of four deacons (Herennius and Agapetus as representatives of Lucifer of Calaris; and Maximus and Calemerus as representatives of Paulinus). Since this list clearly includes only those who remained in Alexandria to discuss the Antiochene situation after the end of the meeting, it is reasonable to suppose that there might have been quite a few churchmen in attendance.\(^{12}\) A five-member episcopal committee (composed of Eusebius, Lucifer, Asterius, Cymatius, and Anatolius) appears as the addressee. This committee was entrusted with conducting the negotiations aimed at overcoming, through a fundamentally diplomatic theological compromise, the highly conflictual situation that had come about in the Christian community of Antioch.

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\(^{11}\)“Athanasius and the bishops present in Alexandria from Italy and Arabia, Egypt and Libya; Eusebius, Asterius, Gaius, Agathus, Ammonius, Agathodaemon, Dracontius, Adelphius, Hermaeon, Marcus, Theodorus, Andreas, Paphnutius, another Marcus, Zoilus, Menas, George, Lucius, and Macarius.” Eusebius and Asterius are both senders in Alexandria and addressees in Antioch. Rufinus’s version of the events only reports the names of Athanasius, Asterius, and Eusebius, along with a mention of “those who were with” Asterius: see Ruf. *Hist. eccl.*, 10, 30. Duval, “La place,” suggests that Rufinus was using an official document, which he decided not to cite in its entirety but only for the names that interested him.

\(^{12}\)See Armstrong, “The Synod of Alexandria,” 212.
The *Tome* is indeed commonly presented in historical surveys as the product of an attempt to heal the rift between Meletians and Eustathians\(^{13}\). This enmity went by then beyond theological disagreement, and entailed among other things the resentment that the historically persecuted Eustathians felt toward Meletius’s history of about-faces, as well as their contestation of Meletius’s canonically irregular election. On the most basic level, the *Tome* demanded that those who wished to rejoin the Eustathian community of Antioch prove their condemnation of the Arian heresy, accept Nicaea, denounce those who treated the Holy Spirit as a creature and as separate from Christ’s *ousia*, and disavow Sabellius, Paul of Samosata, Valentinus, Basilides, and the Manicheans.

### 4.1.2 The *Constantinopolitanum ante litteram*?

In addition to advancing these requests, the *Tome* went into some detail about several theological matters. Because of the focus of this study, the commentary in this chapter will be limited to the trinitarian (as opposed to the Christological) section of the text, corresponding to chapters 5 and 6 and containing the discussion of the number of *hypostaseis* to be confessed within the godhead:\(^{14}\)

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\(^{13}\) See Barnes, “Athanasius and Constantius,” 156.

\(^{14}\) I am also not going to focus on the question of the Holy Spirit as treated in the *Tome*, although this was also an important part of the council’s deliberations.
And prohibit even the reading or publication of the paper, much talked of by
some, as having been drawn up concerning the Faith at the synod of Sardica. For
the synod made no definition of the kind. For whereas some demanded, on the
ground that the Nicene synod was defective, the drafting of a creed, and in their
haste even attempted it, the holy synod assembled in Sardica was indignant, and
decreed that no statement of faith should be drafted, but that they should be
content with the Faith confessed by the fathers at Nicaea, inasmuch as it lacked
nothing but was full of piety, and that it was undesirable for a second creed to be
promulgated, lest that drafted at Nicaea should be deemed imperfect, and a
pretext be given to those who were often wishing to draft and define a creed. So
that if a man propound the above or any other paper, stop them, and persuade
them rather to keep the peace. For in such men we perceive no motive save only
contentiousness. For as to those whom some were blaming for speaking of three
hypostaseis, on the ground that the phrase is unscriptural and therefore
suspicious, we thought it right indeed to require nothing beyond the confession
of Nicaea, but on account of the contention we made enquiry of them, whether
they meant, like the Arian madmen, subsistences foreign and strange, and alien
in essence from one another, and that each hypostasis was divided apart by itself,
as is the case with creatures in general and in particular with those begotten of
men, or like different substances, such as gold, silver, or brass;—or whether, like
other heretics, they meant three principles and three gods, by speaking of three
hypostaseis. They assured us in reply that they neither meant this nor had ever
held it. But upon our asking them “what then do you mean by it, or why do you
use such expressions?” they replied, Because they believed in a Holy Trinity, not
a trinity in name only, but existing and subsisting in truth, “both a Father truly
existing and subsisting, and a Son truly substantial and subsisting, and a Holy
Spirit subsisting and really existing do we acknowledge,” and that neither had
they said there were three Gods or three beginnings, nor would they at all
tolerate such as said or held so, but that they acknowledged a Holy Trinity but
One Godhead, and one Beginning, and that the Son is coessential with the Father,
as the fathers said; while the Holy Spirit is not a creature, nor external, but
proper to and inseparable from the ousia of the Father and the Son.

Having accepted then these men’s interpretation and defense of their language,
we made enquiry of those blamed by them for speaking of one hypostasis,
whether they use the expression in the sense of Sabellius, to the negation of the
Son and the Holy Spirit, or as though the Son were non-substantial, or the Holy
Spirit impersonal. But they in their turn assured us that they neither meant this
nor had ever held it, but “we use the word hypostasis thinking it the same thing to
say hypostasis or ousia;” “But we hold that there is one, because the Son is of the
ousia of the Father, and because of the identity of nature. For we believe that
there is one godhead, and that it has one nature, and not that there is one nature

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of the Father, from which that of the Son and of the Holy Spirit are distinct."

Well, thereupon they who had been blamed for saying there were three hypostases agreed with the others, while those who had spoken of one hypostasis also confessed the doctrine of the former as interpreted by them. And by both sides Arius was anathematized as an adversary of Christ, and Sabellius, and Paul of Samosata, as impious men, and Valentinus and Basilides as aliens from the truth, and Manicheus as an inventor of mischief. And all, by God’s grace, and after the above explanations, agree together that the faith confessed by the fathers at Nicaea is better than the said phrases, and that for the future they would prefer to be content to use its language.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ath. Tom. Ant.}, 5, 3-4; 6. Καὶ τὸ θρυληθὲν γοῦν παρὰ τινῶν πιττάκιον ὡς ἐν τῇ κατὰ Σαρδικὴν συνόδῳ συνταχθὲν περὶ πιστεὼς καλύπτετε κὰν ὄνομας ἀναγνωσκούσης ή προφέρεσθαι οὐδὲν γὰρ τοιοῦτον ὄσως εἶναι σύνοδος. ἡξίωσαν μὲν γὰρ τάς τινας, ὡς εὐθεῖας ὀνόμας τῆς κατὰ Νίκαιαν συνοδοῦ, γράφατε περὶ πιστεὼς καὶ ἐπεξειρόσθην γὰρ προστίτις· ἢ δὲ ἁγία σύνοδος ἢ ἐν Σαρδικῇ συναχθείσα ἡγανάκτησε καὶ ὄσως μηδὲν ἐπὶ περὶ πιστεῶς γράφωσθαί, ἀλλ’ ἀρκεῖοι τῇ ἐν Νίκαιᾳ παρὰ τῶν πατέρων ὀμολογήθησαν πιστεῦν διὰ τὸ μηδὲν αὐτῇ λείπειν, ἀλλὰ πλήρης εὐσεβεῖς εἶναι· καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲν πλὴν συνείσχεται ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος ἡ ἐν Σαρδικῇ συναχθεῖσα ἠγανάκτησε καὶ ἔρισαν µὲν µηδὲν πλὴν ἐπιζητεῖν πλὴν τῆς κατὰ Νίκαιαν ὀμολογίας, ἀνεκρίναµεν δὲ ὅτι δεῖ τοιοῦτον πλὴν περὶ πιστεῶς γράφεσθαι, ἀρκεῖοι τῆς πατέρων ὀμολογίας διὰ τὸ µηδὲν αὐτῇ λείπειν.
This section begins by rejecting the formula approved by the western bishops at the Council of Sardica (343), which Athanasius himself had omitted from the encyclical
letter reported about in his *Apology against the Arians*. The theology of Sardica, to which Marcellus and most of the westerners were attached, had never been particularly dear to Athanasius. Nevertheless, his resolve in asking the Eustathians to abjure that theological constellation was a striking departure from the ecclesiastical alliance to which he had until then largely adhered. According to a majority of scholars Athanasius was here acting in a merely opportunistic manner, and it is even possible that he would have signed off on the western creed of Sardica. Annick Martin reads the whole of the *Tome* as a reaction to the western profession of Sardica. According to her, this rejection of the Sardican confession was intended to distance Athanasius not only from Marcellus, but also from Paulinus. While this appears extreme, by preaching “one hypostasis” Sardica had indeed created for Athanasius a problem of association with

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monarchianism, while generating a meme around which a part of the pro-Nicene front had found it easy to coalesce.

The trinitarian section of the document (5, 3-4) is immediately followed by the report of a discussion between different parties that were present at the council (6, 1). Much attention has been devoted by scholars to the statement “we use the word hypostasis thinking it the same thing to say hypostasis or ousia” (ὑπόστασιν µὲν λέγοµεν ἡγούµενοι ταύτων εἶναι εἶπεῖν υπόστασιν καὶ οὐσίαν), which the section of the Tome cited above attributes implicitly to the mia-hypostatic party. Abramowski saw this sentence as implying that the tri-hypostatic opponents of those who are presented as having pronounced it did otherwise: the tri-hypostatic faction would have thus distinguished hypostasis from ousia. As a result, Abramowski read in this affirmation a prefiguration e contrario of the Cappadocian solution to the trinitarian crisis, which was destined to triumph at the Council of Constantinople (381) precisely by positing—as the traditional narrative has it—the conceptual and numerical distinction between ousia and hypostasis.20 Along similar lines, Karmann read in the doctrinal positions of the Meletians a prelude to Cappadocian neo-Nicenism.21

21 Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 283-305 and 399-400.
As evidence for the claim that the Meletians, allegedly present at the synod, were already familiar with the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, Abramowski adduced the fact that the formula was known to Marius Victorinus (275-363). It is important to observe that, although Abramowski did not state as much, and although her two claims have typically been critiqued or supported jointly by other scholars, the argument for the presence, at Alexandria in 362, of a precedent for the Cappadocian solution stands or falls irrespective of whether such a theological position is deemed to have been represented by Meletian bishops or by a different party.

Victorinus, writing between 361 and 362 in *Against Arius*, offered his trinitarian interpretation of the being-living-thinking triad. In doing so, he produced two statements that indubitably show acquaintance with a formulaic expression of the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*: “and therefore it was said that from one substance there exist three subsistences” (*et ideo dictum est de una substantia tres subsistentias esse*); “and that is thus said by the Greeks: “there exist the three *hypostaseis* from one *ousia*” (*idque a Graecis ita dicitur: ἐκ µιᾶς οὐσίας τρεῖς εἶναι τὰς ὑποστάσεις*).²²

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According to Pierre Hadot, Victorinus was here handling and repurposing a homoiousian source. Hübner differently proposed that this formula was borrowed by Victorinus from Apollinaris—a suggestion that Gemeinhardt rejected outright.\(^{23}\)

Simonetti critiqued Hadot’s proposal by noticing that at this time all homoiousians—just like their most direct antagonists, the heterousians—still distinguished three \textit{hypostaseis} as well as three \textit{ousiai}. At the same time, Marius Victorinus’s source could in no way be homoousian, as the homoousians affirmed one \textit{ousia} and one \textit{hypostasis}; finally, the homoians did not even admit usage of the term \textit{ousia}, and could therefore not be reasonably suspected of having inspired Victorinus.

Simonetti identified then the mysterious source for the distinction between one \textit{ousia} and three \textit{hypostaseis} in a passage from Porphyry quoted by both Pseudo-Didymus in his \textit{On the Trinity} and Cyril of Alexandria in \textit{Against Julian}. Already Plotinus had utilized the term \textit{hypostasis} to indicate the three supreme entities: the One, the Nous, and the World Soul. Basil of Caesarea, Simonetti concluded, must have used this Porphyrian

passage to propose his one *ousia/three hypostaseis* solution, with the important innovation of transforming the relationship between the three *hypostaseis* from one of subordination to one of coordination and equality. He also observed that bringing together of three *hypostaseis* and of the mention of *homoousios* in the *Tome to the Antiochenes*’ should not be taken to imply more than a diplomatic patching together of two disparate positions. The document had, in other words, no theoretical substance. Over the next sections I will propose a different interpretation.

### 4.1.3 Were the Meletians at Alexandria in 362?

The *Tome* presents its discussion of the meaning of *hypostasis* as the product of a negotiation between two theologico-ecclesial parties. While the first one is securely identified with the Eustathians, the identity of the so-called “second party,” whose presence is evoked in this document, has been the object of a decades-long quest. This search has also determined a flourishing of scholarly interpretations of Athanasius’s relationships to the claimants to the Antiochene see between his own third and fourth

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25 See also the decisive argument made in Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio,” 205 *contra* Abramowski: the Eustathians in the *Tome* are not represented as wishing to distance themselves from the distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* allegedly made by their opponents, but simply as showing their own defensive disavowal of too individualizing an understanding of *hypostasis.*
exiles. Could the members of the “second,” tri-hypostatic party questioned by Athanasius in Tome 5-6 possibly be allies of Meletius?26

Without explicitly denying validity to Abramowski’s reading of the statement quoted above, Simonetti remarked that, had the Tome to the Antiochenes 6 intended to attribute a proto-Constantinopolitan distinction between hypostasis and ousia to the tri-hypostatic party, the latter could not be identified with the Meletian alliance. As late as the following year (363), in fact, the Meletian Council of Antioch would understand homoousios as “similar according to the ousia” (ὁµοιος κατ’ οὐσίαν). Since similarity implies numerical distinction, Simonetti reasoned, surely the Meletians counted two separate ousiai—the Father’s and the Son’s—and the mia-hypostatic statement could not possibly be implying the exact opposite.27

Without subscribing to Abramowski’s reading, I would nonetheless differ from Simonetti’s argument on two different accounts. First, there is value to Stead’s claim that “similar according to the ousia” (ὁµοιος κατ’ οὐσίαν) can refer to a similarity of two entities inasmuch as they share the same ousia.28 In other terms, the term ousia in the homoiousian formula does not need to be understood in a numerically discriminating

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26 On the issue of the presence of the Meletians at Alexandria see Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 221-225; 228, n. 179; and 233, n. 189; and Segneri, Atanasio, Lettera agli Antiocheni, 53-59.


28 Zachhuber, “The Antiochene Synod,” 89 agrees with this line of reasoning.
sense. It should be incidentally remarked that, in spite of appearances, this conclusion is logically compatible with the fact that the Council of Antioch also surprisingly considered the Son as “from the ousia of the Father” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς), a statement contained in the Nicene Creed, and which anti-Nicenes had consistently rejected in the 340s and 350s.\(^{29}\)

Second, I find compelling the subtle analysis which Camplani offered of the Tome’s attribution to the tri-hypostatic party of an acknowledgment of the homoousios. In Camplani’s reading Athanasius is there simply recording the second party’s formal, ortholalic amenability to accepting the Nicaenum on the basis of its traditional authoritativeness. The coupling of such acceptance with the clarification that they confessed three undivided and subsistent hypostaseis led Athanasius to translate the Meletians’ position into his own theological categories, namely in terms of an unreserved embrace of the homoousios interpreted in the way in which he would have.\(^{30}\) The actual, historical Meletian position Athanasius misrepresented must have instead been similar to the one that party would articulate, in a startling turn, at the Council of Antioch in 363.

\(^{29}\)See Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 377.

\(^{30}\)Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio,” 210-211.
Already in October or November 363 Meletius would present to Emperor Jovian a text, subscribed by many eastern bishops, which contained an interpretation of the Nicene creed that squared its meaning with that of the *homoiousios* (arguably along the lines of what Athanasius himself had done, at his most generous, in *On the Synods*). As will be seen later, within a few months Meletius, the new champion of Nicaea, was going to gather twenty-four bishops and three priests from Syria, Palestine, and the broader East around his new ecclesiastical project of backing the *homoousios* from a homoiousian position at a council held at Antioch.

Karmann, followed by Tetz, saw in the mysterious second party an unequivocal reference to the Meletians, identified with those believers whom an earlier passage of the *Tome* describes as gathering at the Old Church of Antioch, and as in need of disavowing Arianism in order to be received into the fold of the Eustathian community:

> As many then as desire peace with us, and especially those who assemble in the Old (Church) and those again who are seceding from the Arians, call to yourselves, and receive them as parents their sons, and welcome them as tutors and guardians; and unite them to our beloved Paulinus and his people, without requiring more from them than to anathematize the Arian heresy and confess the

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31 See Morales, *La théologie trinitaire*, 318. The text of the Meletians’ confession to Jovian is found in *Socr. Hist. eccl.*, 3, 24, 14-16.

32 Admittedly, there is no telling whether in the spring of 362, when the Council of Alexandria took place, the Meletians were already in the condition of bringing to its full logical consequences the identity between the *homoousios* and the *homoiousios*.

faith confessed by the holy fathers at Nicaea, and to anathematize also those who say that the Holy Spirit is a Creature and separate from the *ousia* of Christ.\(^{34}\)

One of the fundamental problems with the interpretation of chapters 5 and 6 of the *Tome* concerns the reliability of the details of Athanasius’s account. Tetz, who read the council as a genuine attempt at a rapprochement on Athanasius’s part between Meletians and Paulinus, was convinced that these chapters contain elements that go back to a debate actually held in Alexandria, and in particular to the positions of the Eustathians.\(^{35}\)

Simonetti, however, has demonstrated that Athanasius’s rendition of the discussion contains a great deal of rewriting, as revealed by features such as the characteristically Athanasián usage of the word ταυτότης and of the expression ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός,\(^{36}\) as well as the lack of any occurrence of πρόσωπον, a signature term of the Eustathian alliance.

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\(^{34}\) *Ath. Tom. Ant.*, 3, 1: Πάντας τοίνυν τοὺς βουλοµένους εἰρηνεύειν πρὸς ἡµᾶς καὶ µάλιστα τοὺς ἐν τῇ Παλαιᾷ συναγοµένους καὶ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν Ἀρειανῶν προσκαλέσασθε πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς καὶ ὡς µὲν πατέρες υἱοὺς προσλάβεσθε, ὡς δὲ διδάσκαλοι καὶ κηδεµόνες ἀποδέχασθε καὶ συνάψαντες αὐτούς τοῖς αγαπητοῖς ἡµῶν τοῖς περὶ Παυλῖνον µηδὲν πλέον ἀπαιτήσῃ παρ’ αὐτῶν ἢ ἀναθεµατίζειν µὲν τὴν Ἀρειανὴν αἵρεσιν, ἀναθεµατίζειν δὲ καὶ τοὺς λέγοντας κτίσµα εἶναι τὸ πνεῦµα τὸ ἁγιὸν καὶ διηρηµένον ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ (translation from NPNF 4, 483).


\(^{36}\) *Ath. Apol. sec.*, 3, 22 (where there appears the expression ταυτότης τῆς φύσεως); cit. in Simonetti, “Il concilio,” 356, n. 9, where also ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός, though already present in the Nicene Creed, is declared typical of the Alexandrian bishop’s theological language.
In contrast to Marcellus of Ancyra, who referred to the Father and the Son as being “one and the same thing, one person” (ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτό, ἐν πρόσωπον), the Eustathians in fact used πρόσωπον as a key term to express multiplicity in the godhead. Basil of Caesarea had heavily attacked the three πρόσωπα preached by Sabellianism, presenting them as a crypto-Jewish device.\(^{37}\) Athanasius, who was attempting to get rid of the polemics surrounding the number of hypostaseis, was certainly not looking for another technical term that, once used to express triplicity, would lead to the same kind of contention. Camplani, also rebuffing Tetz’’s theses, provided multiple further examples of Athanasius’’s tendency to reproduce the opinions of the convened participants in terms closer to his own than to theirs, in particular with regard to the previously neglected representation of the views of the party other than the Eustathian.\(^{38}\)

In my opinion it is possible to question whether the lexical peculiarities highlighted by Simonetti and Camplani force us to deny the existence of any correspondence between the debate at the Alexandrian council and Athanasius’’s representation thereof, and all the less so to conclude that the debate was fabricated out of whole cloth. As an example, the possibility should be considered that Athanasius, who at the council was acting as a dominus in domo sua, may have had an easy time

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\(^{37}\)See Bas. Epistula CCX, 3.

\(^{38}\)Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio,” 206-209.
imposing his theological idiosyncrasies and linguistic preferences upon the parties he had gathered during the actual unfolding of the debate. Even more easily, Athanasius may have ventriloquized in *Tome* 5-6 real participants in the debate with his own doctrinal vocabulary.

According to Camplani (with whom Morales agrees), Athanasius deployed in the *Tome* a proleptic procedure.\(^{39}\) The bishop described in the document the terms of the debate not as they occurred at the council, but as he wished that the two Antiochene parties conduct it during negotiations that would lead to an overcoming of the differences. In Gemeinhardt’s concurring words, “[d]er *Tomus* ist [...] nicht das Protokoll einer tatsächlich geführten Debatte: Er sollte vielmehr von der Bischofskommission vor Vertretern beider Gemeinden verlesen und von diesen akklamiert werden.”\(^{40}\)

Whether the significance of the summary of the debate in *Tome* 5-6 is seen as analeptic or proleptic, I find it unlikely that Athanasius’s reconstruction of the debate had no historical anchorage whatsoever in some kind of exchange between representatives of the two parties at the council over which he had just presided. The question of how much historical reliability to accord to his account is a separate one, and remains difficult to answer.


The absence of any reference to Meletian envoys in the Tome has constituted the greatest difficulty for arguments in favor of the identification of the “second party” with a Meletian delegation actually present at the Council of Alexandria. The possibility has been raised that the “second party” was composed of non-Antiochene ex-homoians from Egypt, who were in communion and doctrinal consonance with the Meletian community in Antioch. These might have acted as placeholders for the Antiochenes. Considering that such church leaders would have had in all likelihood to hail from Egypt, and would therefore have been Athanasius’s personal foes, it seems to me better to dismiss this speculation.\(^{41}\) If it is implausible that Athanasius would extend an invitation to the Council of Alexandria to any Meletian bishops, because Meletius’s career had unfolded entirely within the homoian movement. It seems even more unlikely that he would consult with those Egyptian homologues of Meletius with whom he had personally clashed throughout his career.

In my opinion the presence of Meletius’s emissaries, though unverifiable, should not be excluded \textit{a priori}, notwithstanding the admittedly powerful argument from silence. While Zachhuber’s idea that Meletius was never interested in reconciliation with Athanasius is probably correct, this does not need to mean that he necessarily refrained from sending representatives. Yeum suggested that Athanasius omitted the names of the emissaries.

\(^{41}\)See Camplani, “Atanasio e Eusebio,” 212.
Meletian participants in the Council of Alexandria because he had previously declared, in his History of the Arians, that the heterodox should not partake in synods.\textsuperscript{42} I would like to suggest that the signatures of Meletians partaking in the council may have been erased as a result of the Eustathian transmission of the text.

I will attend briefly to the demonstration of this logical possibility, leaving for another occasion the production of a full-fledged argument in its favor. The Tome to the Antiochenes is extant in three different recensions, for convenience dubbed “brief,” “middle,” and “long.” The brief recension cuts off at 5.3, the middle recension ends at 8.3, and the long recension adds 8.3-9.3. Now, the manuscript tradition has transmitted Athanasius’s works in a series of collections. Opitz (along with his collaborators, Lietzmann and Schwartz, and continuators, Brennecke, Heil, and Stockhausen) is to be thanked for having made order, based on both archival and philological arguments, in the massive body of manuscripts transmitting Athanasius’s works, as well as for establishing relationships between different editions and collections of works.\textsuperscript{43}


Opitz discovered that in antiquity the Athanasian writings were organized in two big corpora, one apologetic and one doctrinal. The apologetic corpus is attested in only one textual form, represented by a collection known as a, probably produced in Constantinople and dating as far back as the beginning of the fifth century. The doctrinal corpus is attested in multiple textual forms, represented by collections x (previously known as W), y (previously known as RS), and b. Collection b is also known as the “Antiochene corpus,” as it was compiled in the archives of the Eustathian community in Antioch; its transmission is problematic inasmuch as it is attested with fifth-century Nestorian interpolations as well as later, late-fifth-century miaphysite corrections to the latter.\textsuperscript{44} X dates back to the sixth century, is also of Constantinopolitan origin, and was compiled based on Alexandrian manuscripts. Upon x was based the collection y (to which belong mss. BKAOEFMSHG), which is dated to 600-750 and represents an attempt at bringing together all of Athanasius’s works. Collection y introduces into x

elements found in a late-fifth-century miaphysite revision of b. Finally, in the twelfth century y was supplanted by a comprehensive edition produced by Nicolas Doxopater.\textsuperscript{45}

It is in the Eustathian milieus that, before the Antiochene schism was mended, collection b was assembled. Both manuscripts attesting the Tome are to be traced back to collection b: ms. Z (= Vaticanus graecus 1,431), which contains the text of the Tome up to 9.3, and presents in the end an aberrant text; and ms. Σ (= BL Or. 8606, copied in Edessa in 723),\textsuperscript{46} which also contains the complete recension of the Tome but omits the mention of the sender. From the recension of the Tome going back to collection b there depend also 1) the recension contained in ms. R (belonging to collection a), which omits 5, 3-9, 3; 2) the accreted, so-called Alexandrian recension, attested by the ten manuscripts belonging to collection y; and 3) the Syriac version, which gives a faithful rendition of the Antiochene Greek recension.\textsuperscript{47}

This textual transmission enables the supposition that a reference or subscription of members of the Meletian alliance was originally contained in the Tome, and has since

\textsuperscript{45} Stockhausen, “Praefatio,” xi-lxviii.

\textsuperscript{46} See Pinggéra, K., “Syrische Tradition,” in Gemeinhardt, Athanasius Handbuch, 398.

fallen out as the product of a voluntary, ideological scribal omission during its copying in the archives of the Eustathian community. Comparable alterations of canonical texts of recent composition are known to have been performed in Antioch. As Camplani has shown, the re-organizers of the Antiochene archives at the time of Meletius modified the contents of the Eastern creed of Sardica (343) that is reflected both in the Latin and in the Syriac translations of the collection of documents of which this creed was part. It is therefore conceivable that the transmission of the Tome would have undergone a similar operation. Further study—taking into account also the destiny of the controversial signatures of the Apollinarists in the Alexandrian manuscript tradition—will be needed to provide support for this hypothesis or lay it to rest.

4.2 The Effects of the Council

4.2.1 Ineffectiveness of the Council

Whether or not Meletian representatives were present at Alexandria, the council has been traditionally understood as intending to bring about a rapprochement between

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this faction and the Eustathians. Moreover, a historiographic consensus ascribes its eventual failure to achieve reconciliation to the rash action into which Lucifer sprang when arriving at the city on the Orontes directly from the Thebaid.49 Having found it impossible—as one ancient authority charitably reports—50 to mediate between the two communities, Lucifer proceeded to ordain Paulinus into the episcopacy with the aid of two other bishops, variously identified either as Cymatius of Paltos and one Anatolius—possibly of Beroea—or as Cymatius of Gabala and Gorgonius of Germanicia.51

Lucifer also rejected the subscriptions made by his own delegates at Alexandria, and resolutely refused the three-*hypostaseis* terminology that the *Tome* had conditionally deemed acceptable. His behavior was different from that of his colleague and fellow partisan Eusebius of Vercellae, who, after reaching Antioch from Alexandria and witnessing the conflictual situation, appears to have held an ambiguous position. According to Socrates, he condemned Lucifer privately, but took no official stance in

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favor of either Paulinus or Meletius;\textsuperscript{52} in Rufinus’ divergent report, Eusebius preferred to communicate with both communities.\textsuperscript{53}

The interpretation of Lucifer’s actions hinges in part on whether Athanasius’s convocation of the Alexandrian council 362 is understood as being consistent with the spirit of the gathering of the vetero-Nicene bishops exiled in the Thebaid. In summoning the meeting in Alexandria Athanasius may well have been acting on a recommendation of the exiles. But Eusebius and Lucifer may with equal likelihood have been caught by surprise by Athanasius’s organization of the Council of Alexandria, as Simonetti suggests.\textsuperscript{54} If the latter is the case, and no collaboration took place between Athanasius and the vetero-Nicenes exiled to the Thebaid, it is possible, as Armstrong affirms, that “the policy with which Eusebius was charged was a party rather than an oecumenic affair,” and that “he was to help forward the recapture of the churches by the

\textsuperscript{52}See Socr. Hist. eccl., 3, 9.

\textsuperscript{53}See Ruf. Hist. eccl., 10, 31

uncompromised orthodox, rather than to reunite all the more moderate parties by a statesmanlike toleration.”55 Part of the plans of the Council of the Thebaid would have been also the unequivocal reaffirmation of the identity between hypostasis and ousia.

Lucifer’s decision to journey to Antioch—instead of participating in the Council of Alexandria—and his ensuing consecration of Paulinus (362) are commonly blamed for the failure of Athanasius’s attempt at a reconciliation with the Meletians. These actions, however, could be read, following Armstrong’s interpretive line, not as an abrupt initiative by the Sardinian bishop, but as an integral part of a rigorist, strictly pro-Eustathian strategy agreed upon between Eusebius and Lucifer, and possibly aimed at undermining Athanasius’s action. In Armstrong’s assessment, “[t]o Eusebius and Lucifer Julian’s edict was an occasion for the recovery of the power of their party: to Athanasius [...] it was rather a golden opportunity for reunion against Arianism and the restored paganism of the Emperor.”56 Nevertheless, Armstrong still interpreted the Tome to the Antiochenes as the product of a council aimed fundamentally at excluding the Meletians. The episcopal meeting in his opinion recognized the Eustathians as the only orthodox group, while recommending the Meletians’ admission to their communion on

the most favorable terms that could be conceived within the boundaries of vetero-Nicene orthodoxy (a compromise Eusebius and Lucifer were not willing to accept).\textsuperscript{57}

More extremely yet than Armstrong, Elliott saw in the \textit{Tome to the Antiochenes} a purely sectarian document. He found proof of the \textit{Tome}'s doctrinal intransigence in Paulinus's very subscription to the document:

I, Paulinus, hold as true what I received from the fathers: that the Father exists and subsists as perfect, the Son subsists as perfect, and the Holy Spirit subsists as perfect. Hence I accept the foregoing interpretation concerning the three \textit{hypostaseis}, and the one \textit{hypostasis} or \textit{ousia}, and those who hold to it. For it is orthodox to hold and confess the Holy Trinity in one divinity.\textsuperscript{58}

Far from presenting an image of Athanasius at the peak of his career as a balanced statesman and a peacemaker, according to Elliott the \textit{Tome} works “as an introduction to the last years of that career, during which he tried to keep the orthodox Christians in Antioch divided.” “In 362,” he writes, there was a difference between a Nicene believer and a Nicene crank, and Athanasius was a member of the latter, very small, group.”\textsuperscript{59} He argued moreover that “the document was never meant to make

\textsuperscript{57} See Armstrong, “The Synod of Alexandria,” 221.

\textsuperscript{58} Ἐγὼ Παύλινος οὕτως φρονῶ, καθὼς παρέλαβον παρὰ τῶν πατέρων· ὄντα καὶ ὑφεστῶ τα πατέρα τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστῶτα υἱὸν τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστηκὸς τὸ πνεῦµα τὸ ἅγιον τέλειον. διό καὶ ἀποδέχομαι τὴν προγεγραµµένην ἐρµηνείαν περὶ τῶν τριῶν ὑποστάσεων καὶ τῆς μιᾶς ὑποστάσεως ἤτοι οὐσίας καὶ τοὺς φρονοῦντας οὕτως. εὐσεβὲς γὰρ ἐστι φρονεῖν καὶ ὁµολογεῖν τὴν ἁγίαν τριάδα ἐν µιᾷ θεότητι. (translation from P. Amidon, “Paulinus’ Subscription to the «Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” \textit{JThS} (2002): 53, n. 1).

unity easy for the two orthodox groups in Antioch. The same may be said,” he added (somewhat puzzlingly), “for the list of heretics to be anathematised: how many can have heard of Basilides? How many lay people would have found the Nicene Creed useful, when it was such a trial to their bishops?”

By the same token, Athanasius would have been uncertain himself about the meaning of the Christology that was being approved by the Council of Alexandria, “but still intent on pushing it forward in Antioch, because it would promote confusion and division among Catholics there.”

Similarly, according to Hanson it is not Lucifer but Athanasius who should be blamed for the failed attempt at reconciliation, since the conditions laid out in the Tome showed intransigence toward Meletius and an attempt to insert a wedge between him and his followers. Elliott proposed that Meletius’s later refusal to enter communion with Athanasius in Antioch in 363—which will be discussed below—was the product of the latter’s agreement with Lucifer’s consecration of Paulinus. This assertion can only be made, I think, if one glosses over the ancient historians’ reports about the negative

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60 Elliott, “«Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” 5.
61 Elliott, “«Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” 3, n. 25.
62 See Hanson, The Search, 644.
reaction of Eusebius of Vercellae, an ally of Athanasius’s, to Paulinus’s consecration upon arriving in Antioch, and about Lucifer’s resulting disgruntlement.⁶³

Elliott contested the idea that Athanasius—who in his *Letter to the Africans* had declared that “hypostasis is essence, ousia, and means nothing else than simple being”—could be credited with having tried to signal to his followers that “ousia and hypostasis could be used in different senses,” a concession that Hanson had made in the context of an otherwise fairly critical assessment of Athanasius’s relationship to the Antiochene Church.⁶⁵ Athanasius’s choices, for Elliott, “were to make [this concession] or to allow Paulinus and his supporters to drift into heresy,” namely into the monarchianism of Marcellus of Ancyra.⁶⁶ Athanasius chose the latter option, causing the vetero-Nicene front to spin into sectarianism.

This statement has little historical justification, considering that at the time about which Elliott is writing Marcellus of Ancyra was probably still in communion with Athanasius, and almost certainly with Paulinus. More generally, the whole of Elliott’s

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⁶³ Elliott, “«Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” 3: “When Eusebius of Vercellae arrived in Antioch after the council in Alexandria he did nothing to improve the situation, and went home. Lucifer was upset by something after Eusebius’ arrival, and went back to Sardinia in a rage.” This is surprising in light of Elliott’s acknowledgment that Socr. *Hist. eccl.*, 3, 9 mentions Lucifer’s griping about Eusebius’s disapproval of his ordination of Paulinus.

⁶⁴ *Ath. Epistula* XV.

⁶⁵ Hanson, *The Search*, 644.

⁶⁶ Elliott, “«Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” 6 and n. 30.
interpretation seems questionable. Unlike him, I find it reasonable to posit that by the early 360s the ecclesiastical strategies of the vetero-Nicene exiles and of Athanasius were starkly divergent in spite of their common participation in the pro-Nicene front. In my opinion, the Tome is thus best read as a document of compromise not aligned with the rigorism of Lucifer.

Rufinus himself, in his report about the Council of Alexandria, indicates that a more moderate party faced there the opposition of an intransigent faction with regard to the issue of the return to the fold of the Nicene community of those who had fallen into perceived “Arianism.” 67 The intransigent faction wanted to prevent anybody who had been at any point in communion with the heretics from readmission to the community. 68 As we know from the Tome, a more conciliatory line prevailed in the end. Paulinus’s signing of this document, thus, indicates the opposite of the consequences that Elliott draws from it. It shows that in spite of his vetero-Nicenism, Paulinus was moving in a conciliatory, non-sectarian direction in which the western vetero-Nicenes were unwilling to go.

Indeed, at a later time, as a result of Paulinus’s willingness to compromise with the Meletians upon the latter’s return from exile—sanctioning that whenever either of

67 According to Armstrong, “The Synod of Alexandria,” 212, Eusebius, Asterius, Herennius, and Agapetus are four among those.
the claimants to the episcopal see would die his community would pledge not to replace him, but to accept the surviving leader as its own—, a minority of inveterate Eustathians, allies of Lucifer, splintered off from Paulinus’s community, thus creating a fifth ecclesiastical party in Antioch.69 There appears to be value to Armstrong’s assessment of a variance of attitudes between the western exiles on the one hand and Athanasius (and, one can assume, his closest Egyptian allies) on the other. Nevertheless, at the same time that the Council of Alexandria attempted to prepare the ground for diplomatic advances to the Meletians, it was also aiming at the healing of a fracture internal to the trans-regional vetero-Nicene front.

4.2.2 Getting a Bishop for Antioch

Armstrong saw the presence of Maximus and Calemerus as representatives of Paulinus at the Council of Alexandria (Tome 9) as a sign of the latter’s already attained episcopal status at the time at which the discussions in Alexandria were taking place. The canonical rule stated in fact that representatives could be sent by bishops only, and not by mere priests. Nor does the Tome’s phrasing allow one to imagine that the pair might have just constituted a delegation heard by the assembly, without participating in the council: the document places them on the same level as the legates of Lucifer and Apollinarius of Laodicea, and indicates that they were co-signatories.

To the objection according to which, had Paulinus been a bishop by the time of the council, he would have been cited among the addressees of the Tome along with the other bishops who were at Antioch (Eusebius, Lucifer, Asterius, Cymatius, and Anatolius), Armstrong responded that Paulinus, being already the bishop of a party, could not be a member of a conciliatory committee. If the Tome does not mention that Paulinus should be bishop, Armstrong also explained, this was because its authors knew that he had already been consecrated. Simonetti objected, in turn, to this reconstruction—convincingly to my mind—on the basis of the testimony of Rufinus (as well as Socrates and Sozomen, who depend on his account) stating that Eusebius learned about Paulinus’s election only upon reaching Antioch, after the council in Alexandria had concluded.

But if Paulinus was in fact not the bishop of the vetero-Nicene community of Antioch in 362, finding somebody fit for the job must surely have been a concern of Athanasius’s at the council. The synod in fact had been summoned to deal both with the divisions within the Antiochene community and with the reappointment of bishops to sees that had gone vacant during the years of Constantius II. The fact that Antioch lay well outside of Athanasius’s official jurisdiction was unlikely to prevent the ambitious

71 Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 371, n. 53.
Alexandrian church leader from maneuvering to impose there a candidate of his own liking, had the reconciliation that the Tome was promoting come to fruition. The issue of whom Athanasius had in mind for the post has also clear repercussions for settling the questions of Athanasius’s relation to both parties and of the Meletian envoys’ presence at the council.

Scholars have traditionally held that Athanasius supported Paulinus’s candidacy to the Antiochene episcopate. Athanasius, it is commonly claimed, could not have possibly been resigned to letting Meletius be the bishop of the city on the Orontes. According to Elliott, Athanasius was immensely loyal to Paulinus, as his indifference to the pleas of Basil of Caesarea (about which more will be said below) demonstrate.

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73 See e.g. Brennecke, Studien, 178; Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 415-416 and 468.
74 See Ath. Epistula I and Epistula II.
75 See Elliott, “«Tomus ad Antiochenos,»” 3.
A minority of scholars, to the contrary, observe that no evidence exists that Athanasius at the Council of Alexandria intended for Paulinus to become bishop of Antioch. It was instead Meletius, it is argued, who was the designated bishop. In particular, in recent years Zachhuber has proposed a highly innovative interpretation of the political dynamic involving Athanasius and Meletius. According to Zachhuber, we can find in Athanasius’s Festal Epistle 36 signs that at least until the Meletian synod of Antioch in 363 Athanasius was hoping for a reconciliation. On the other hand, as we learn from Basil’s Letter 258 to Epiphanius and Letter 89 to Meletius, the latter in Antioch had rejected the advances of the Alexandrian bishop.

Clearly distinguishing Meletius’s activities and goals from those of Basil of Caesarea, Zachhuber thus claimed that, at least until 370, it was Meletius who was opposing an agreement with Athanasius, as he worked independently to build an alternative pro-Nicene network. Athanasius, to the contrary, only rejected Meletius once the celebration of the Council of Antioch in 363 and Meletius’s refusal to confer with him in that same year made it evident that no immediate mending of the Antiochene schism was on the Meletian agenda. Accordingly, in Zachhuber’s reconstruction, at the time of the Council of Alexandria (362) Athanasius was still

courting Meletius, and was amenable to a reconciliation that would place the now-homoiousian leader on the episcopal throne of Antioch.  

Theologically, for Zachhuber, the neo-Nicene theoretical edifice, while more formulaically indebted to Meletius than to Athanasius, owes its contents to the proposal advanced by Athanasius himself in On the Synods. In his study of Athanasius’s trinitarian theology, Morales similarly argued that in shaping the solution that would be adopted at Constantinople the Cappadocians, though certainly drawing upon homoiousian and Meletian tendencies, found substantial inspiration in Athanasius’s balanced theological approach.

According to this interpretive line, the contents of the synodal letter of the council that the Meletians celebrated at Antioch in 363—with their significant

78 Zachhuber, “The Antiochene Synod,” 100: “[W]hile it is often thought that neo-Nicenism when it originated in the 360s was separated from Athanasius by a different trinitarian theology but interested, in principle, in a rapprochement with the latter, the opposite seems to apply. There is every reason to believe that Meletius and his followers are, in 363, very close to Athanasius as far as their trinitarian thought is concerned. There is, on the other hand, no indication that they were, at that point, interested in any kind of a Nicene alliance integrating the Alexandrian Pope.”


combination of the formula’s “similar according to the ousia (ὁµοιος κατ’ οὐσίαν) and “from the ousia of the Father” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός)—were also acceptable for Athanasius, and created in fact a link with the latter’s treatise On the Synods. The utilization of the expression ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρός—a concept that, though accepted by first-generation “Eusebians,” had subsequently been rejected by the anti-Nicenes of the 340s and 350s—was the remarkable sign of a Meletian Nicene re-orientation.

4.2.3 The Council of Antioch of 363

In probable dependence on the homoiousian Sabinus of Herakles, Socrates, our main source for this council, sees opportunism as the main reason why bishops who had been present at the Council of Constantinople of 360 (churchmen such as Eusebius of Samosata, Pelagius of Laodicea, and possibly Acacius of Caesarea) resolved to underwrite the homoiousian creed promoted by Meletius. According to Zachhuber, it was instead a recrudescence of neo-Arianism that led to this re-compacting of a solid front around Nicaea. Be this as it may, the innovative potential of the formula

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81 See Ath. Syn., 41. This is the reading of Zachhuber, “The Antiochene Synod,” 89.
promoted by the Council of Antioch (363) was such as to cause a real revolution within the thought system of the homoiousian alliance.

In the third Council of Sirmium (358), which Basil had managed to gather with Constantius’s support, and again in the Council of Seleucia in Isauria (359), the homoiousians had repeatedly disavowed the *homoousios*, in keeping with the eastern tradition that had expressed itself in such doctrinal documents as that of the Dedication Council of Antioch (341). But Athanasius’s initiative, taken in the mid-350s, to make the *Nicaenum* into the centerpiece of the problem had obtained too much success for Meletius to be able to continue to ignore it. At Antioch (363) a widened homoiousian front for the first time made it so that the *homoousios* could receive an interpretation in accordance with the views to which they had been able to attract ample segments of the former Eusebian alliance (while still disavowing, of course, its competing vetero-Nicene interpretation).

In Zachhuber’s reading, the only real objection that the Meletians held, prior to the synod of 363, with regard to the creed of Nicaea concerned the *homoousios*—and not the number of *hypostaseis*. There never existed, he explains, a principled opposition to the mia-hypostatic theology that Nicaea allegedly upheld. Proof of this lies also in the fact that the creed of the Council of Antioch (363) makes no mention of the problem of
the number of hypostaseis: the bishops who convened there “felt Nicaea to be capable of interpretation in this regard.”

An alternative way of reading the Meletian operation of the Council of Antioch of 363 is as a fully political, and theologically insubstantial, response to the call to doctrinal harmony uttered at the Council of Alexandria—an invitation that bore the mark of approval of the recently elected Emperor Jovian, who had acceded to the throne on June 27, 363. According to this reading, the synod’s tactical acceptance of the homoousios as expressing something “similar according to the ousia” (ὁµοιος κατ᾽ οὐσίαν) made no real doctrinal sense. Though recognizing that Athanasius’s offer of unification held little attraction for Meletius inasmuch as it asked him to embrace vetero-Nicenism and submit to Paulinus’s authority, this reading interprets the Council of Antioch as a sign that Meletius preferred not to reject the Alexandrian’s invitation outright.

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87 Simonetti, “Ancora sul concilio,” 16-18. Zachhuber’s thesis lies at the antipodes from Simonetti’s. The two perspectives, in my opinion, can be fruitfully integrated by imagining that Meletius was running on a parallel course to Athanasius’s all along; the latter’s enticements, on the other hand, were really never more than invitations to rejoin the vetero-Nicene fold under the authority of its Antiochene representative Paulinus.
In support of his proposal, Zachhuber emphasizes the fact that Basil of Caesarea made no mention of Paulinus’s consecration as an impediment to reconciliation between Athanasius and Meletius in his Letter 258 to Epiphanius or in Letter 89 to Meletius. But this argument may, in my view, be less strong than it appears. When writing those letters Basil was in fact still attempting to effect a reconciliation between Meletius and Athanasius; to mention an act that must have been the cause of much fury for the Meletians would have been counterproductive. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to imagine that allegiance to Paulinus prevented Athanasius from sacrificing Paulinus’s episcopal ambitions if reconciliation with the Meletians was at stake. In fact Athanasius would have probably had few qualms about disappointing Paulinus, had he seen this move as capable of bringing about a coalition between the two factions.88

On the other hand, this does not need to mean that Lucifer’s abrupt ordination of Paulinus—regardless of what Athanasius’s feelings about it were—did not bother Meletius, and did not play a role in the latter’s decision to go his own way. But if Athanasius had definitively recognized Paulinus as bishop of Antioch—as is normally assumed based on Basil’s Letter 214—it would be impossible to explain Basil’s claim, found in his Letter 89 to Meletius, that Athanasius was ready to enter communion with

88 For exponents of a contrary position, which attributes the responsibility of the failed meeting between Athanasius and Meletius to the former’s allegiance to Paulinus, see Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 418, n. 164.
the latter other than as an unlikely, because easily disprovable, lie. We know, moreover, that when Epiphanius came to Antioch in 374, Paulinus had only the Tome to the Antiochenes to show as proof of his communion with Athanasius; this circumstance suggests that the Alexandrian bishop had not produced any statement expressing recognition of Paulinus.  

Athanasius was exiled for a fourth time between the end of 362 and the beginning of 363 by Julian’s order. After learning, at the end of August, about Julian’s death (which had occurred on June 26, 363), and after writing to Jovian referencing the Nicene council and opposing the interpretation of its creed that the Meletians provided, on September 6 Athanasius set out to meet the new Emperor Jovian in Antioch. He did not find him there, but in Hierapolis.  

The conference with Jovian was successful, inasmuch as the Emperor conceded that Athanasius should return to the Alexandrian episcopal throne. This decision should be seen not as a specific pro-vetero-Nicene resolution, but as part of a broader initiative on Jovian’s part whereby those bishops whom Constantius had banned and who had not come back to their sees during Julian’s reign were being granted a right to return.  

After meeting with the Emperor in Hierapolis, Athanasius left for Antioch, where he stayed until February 363. Within a  

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90 According to Soz. Hist. eccl., VI, 5, 1, however, he did find him in Antioch.  
91 See Brennecke, Studien, 178-181; Stockhausen, “Praefatio,” lxxxviii.
year he was back in Alexandria, strengthened by the imperial support for his archiepiscopacy.  

After this meeting, Athanasius appears to have been prepared to enter communion with Meletius, as a famous message instructs us. The note, contained in the first part of the second of two surviving leaves of an otherwise lost Coptic codex, *Berolinensis* 11,948, should perhaps be identified with the letter that according to the *Festal Index* Athanasius sent from Antioch. On the other hand, it is also possible that the message is simply part of the Athanasian correspondence from Antioch. Arguments against this being a festal letter were originally advanced by Camplani, who, however, now accepts that it could be an attachment to the *Festal Letter 36*.  

In its first part the leaf contains Athanasius’s account of his stay in Antioch. The second section—which could represent the continuation of the first or be the beginning of a new text altogether—contains the first lines of a report about the ineffective four *Petitions* through which the anti-Nicenes of Alexandria, headed by Lucius, had

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93 See *Index festale*, 36.

attempted to lure Jovian into supporting their cause (a text carried by the Athanasian
collections and originally preserved in the *History of Athanasius*).\(^{95}\) Whether or not some
kind of interregional coordination was in place, the sending of the *Petitions* was part of a
broader mobilization against Athanasius’s efforts. This included also the heterousian
embassy of the bishops Candidus and Arrianus—respectively from Lydia and Ionia—,
who visited Jovian in Edessa in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent him from lending
support to Athanasius’s cause.\(^{96}\)

The Athanasian Coptic fragment reads as follows:

… on many [days] … your remembrance. Therefore I exhort you: if they publish
the writings, do not reproach anybody and do not mock those who at some point
spoke while being hostile against us. For this kind of setting-right that has
happened is not from you nor from men at all, but rather it is from God that it
has happened. And it behooves each one to leave back to God the things that
have happened from God, so that, while you appeared considerate, the grace
from Him might abundantly fall back upon the Church. I am writing these things
to you from Antioch. I have returned from the court, and I have seen the
philanthropic king and thanked the Lord of all. Greet each other with a holy kiss.
Those who are with me greet you, above all the bishops who have much suffered
with us. I pray that you all be well together, brethren beloved and whom I love.\(^{97}\)

cristiane del primo millennio 34; Milan: Paoline Edizioni, 2003), 99-102.

\(^{96}\) See Philost. *Hist. eccl.*, 8, 6.

\(^{97}\) For a record of the papyrus see W. Beltz, “Katalog der koptischen Handschriften der Papyrus-
Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin,” *APF* 26 (1978): 111. The fragment was edited by M. Pieper,
and again by L.-T. Lefort, *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte* (CSCO 150-151; Scriptores Coptici 19-20;
Leuven: L. Durbecq, 1955), xii, n. 34, who, incorrectly considering (as *Trismegistos*, too, still does: see
http://www.trismegistos.org, TM number 108404) the document lost, limited himself to emending Pieper’s
edition based on the latter’s reproduction of the text. My translation is based on Camplani’s edition of the
fragment (“Atanasio e Eusebio,” 243), which reads: "... ςας ἐμνήσθησίσαν... οἱ... ως... ἔρισαν".
Athanasius expresses in these lines his discomfort with the fact that those same people who had been his enemies until a short time before are now about to publish a writing in which they will recant their previous positions. Barnes and Camplani see in this an allusion to the ex-homoian homoiousians who have partaken in the Meletian Council of Antioch. Nevertheless, overall the message is fairly irenic and appears to indicate that Athanasius was hoping for a reconciliation even after the synod of 363.

Such a chronology would assume that the Letter from Antioch was composed sometime between the celebration of the Meletian council and the publication of its writings. It was therefore Meletius, now in Antioch, who obstinately refused the advances of Athanasius (who died in 373).

What happened upon Meletius’s return to Antioch in 378 is unclear, but it appears that an agreement was reached between him and Paulinus, such that the survivor would be recognized as the bishop of Antioch by both communities. Be this as it may, Meletius’s pro-Nicene stand was strengthened even further at the Council of 

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98See Barnes, Athanasius and Constantius, 160; Camplani, Le lettere festali, 485.
Antioch of 379. Eventually the Emperor Theodosius, who never recognized Paulinus, invited Meletius to the Council of Constantinople of 381, over which the bishop initially presided.

4.3 The Novelty of the Tome

4.3.1 Scholarly Interpretations of the Document

The word *hypostasis*, which lies at the center of the discussion in *Tome* 5-6, is not characteristic of the theological language of Athanasius, who repeatedly claimed to reject philosophical vocabulary altogether in favor of exclusively scriptural language, or of the significations intended by the scriptures for words that also held, or had since come to hold, philosophical meanings.⁹⁹ It has been recognized that Athanasius’s theology, while influenced by academic logic, works largely within the matrix of biblical inter- and intra-personal metaphors: the Savior is υἱός (Son) in relation to ὁ πατήρ (the Father), Logos in relation to the supreme Nous, etc. Athanasius emphasized the limits of the biblical metaphors he used, drawn as they were from the physical cosmos, in contrast to the impassibility and indivisibility of the divine essence.

A technical usage of *hypostasis* in the sense of the specification of a divinity composed of three subsistent entities is admittedly found in three works attributed to

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⁹⁹ See Morales, La théologie trinitaire, 41-46.
Athanasius: On “All Things Have Been Committed to Me by the Father” (Lk 10:22);100 the Festal Epistle 36;101 and the Discourse of Salvation to the Virgins.102 However, the relevant passage in the commentary on the Lucan verse is most likely interpolated, and the authenticity of the other two works is disputed. On the basis of an examination of all other occurrences of hypostasis, and of the related verb ὑφίστηµι, in the entire corpus of Athanasius’ authentic works, Morales—opposing Brennecke’s claim that the Alexandrian bishop was a representative of the one-hypostasis front103—came to the conclusion that he was a defender of neither mia- nor tri-hypostatic theology.104

For the sake of communion with the mia-hypostatic party, Athanasius refrained from speaking of three hypostaseis in his writings. Already Alexander of Alexandria, whose deacon Athanasius had been and who was most certainly an Origenist of the tri-hypostatic kind, had given up for similar reasons the mention of three hypostaseis in his confession of faith rendered to the Council of Antioch (324). In light of these considerations, it is not necessary to adhere to Abramowski’s claim that it was the Nicene declaration, allegedly implying a mia-hypostatic stance, that required

100 See ibid., 46-58.
101 See ibid., 58-64.
102 See ibid., 65-67.
104 Morales, La théologie trinitaire, 77.
Athanasius to finally comply and relinquish tri-hypostatic language altogether.\textsuperscript{105} At the same time, Athanasius’ participation to a theological tradition that was widespread in the Greek East has been cited to explain the fact that his reluctance to speak explicitly of three hypostaseis never translated into a systematic condemnation of tri-hypostatic language.\textsuperscript{106}

Dörrie, referencing Socrates’ discussion of the confused history of the term hypostasis, summarized the agreement accomplished by Athanasius at the Council of Alexandria as the end point of a long history of referential ambiguity.\textsuperscript{107} According to this scholar, Athanasius was able to stabilize the meaning of hypostasis by privileging the signified of “realization” (Realisierung) over that of “reality” (Realität).\textsuperscript{108} In so doing, the bishop theoretically sanctioned a clear rejection—spelled out, as seen before, in the Tome

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\textsuperscript{105}See Abramowski, “Trinitarische und christologische Hypostasenformeln,” 41.
\textsuperscript{106}Morales, La théologie trinitaire, 77.
\textsuperscript{108}Dörrie, “Hypostasis,” 81-82.
\end{flushright}
itself—of the declaration of the Council of Sardica (343), where, influenced by the common Latin translation *substantia*, the western church leaders had understood *hypostasis* as “reality.”¹⁰⁹ (With what appears like a large dose of speculation, Dörrie also considered it “completely probable” that the philological researches necessary to reach the compromise promoted by Athanasius were conducted on the basis of writings preserved in the Alexandrian Serapeon.) As Gleenslade summarizes, in agreement with Dörrie’s posture, at Alexandria

> [t]he eastern terminology was now sympathetically reviewed, instead of being dismissed out of hand, and it was seen that the term *hypostasis* could be, and was being, used in two senses, one in which it was equivalent to *ousia*, substance, so that there could be only one *hypostasis* of God (the Nicene and western use), the other in which it was distinguished from *ousia* and employed to designate the three Persons of the Trinity (the eastern use).¹¹⁰

As I will argue presently, Dörrie’s evaluation apprehends part of the shift taking place in the two decades preceding the events at Alexandria, and finding in Athanasius’s action at the council an accomplished expression. Dörrie’s reading is therefore instructive at least inasmuch as it runs counter to the common opinion about the intellectual value of the gathering of Alexandria, whose theological proposal is normally reduced to a diplomatic compromise of no intellectual substance.

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¹⁰⁹ Dörrie, “Hypostasis,” 78.

Studies of the council that Athanasius convened in Alexandria (362) have in fact focused almost exclusively on the purely diplomatic logic that would allegedly undergird the Tome to the Antiochenes, a logic captured effectively by Amidon’s words: “[T]he two parties at variance used each the other’s preferred language to subscribe a document which endorsed the language of both as compatible within the doctrinal framework of the creed of one of them.”¹¹¹ From the theological standpoint, the gathering is commonly deemed to have advanced the discussion in no way: after all, the synod was content with ruling that speaking of one or three hypostaseis was indifferent as long as “one hypostasis” not be given a monarchian meaning (à la Sabellius), or “three hypostaseis” a tri-theistic one (à la Arius). What is more, it was, according to this reconstruction, this purely diplomatic attempt at patching together two seriously disparate positions that doomed the synod to ineffectivity.

4.3.2 The Significance of the Document

Leaving aside the question of who is responsible for the ineffectiveness of the solution envisaged in the Tome, I instead propose to read this document as revealing important epistemic shifts within the trinitarian controversies and in late ancient theology writ large. The Tome was of course no deus ex machina, but rather a document

¹¹¹ Amidon, “Paulinus’s Subscription,” 74.
symptomatic of a diffused historical dynamic, and one wherein such dynamics can be observed with clarity. Three important shifts, in particular, can be identified.

a) Firstly, the Tome achieved logical and terminological commensurability between the different theological positions of Eustathians and Meletians by virtue of both their technical formulations in terms of one vs. three hypostaseis. In doing this, the document put to work the progress that chapter II showed to have been heralded in the Long-Lined Exposition, at the end of the back-and-forth of conciliar declarations of the 340s.

b) Secondly, and more originally, the Tome achieved mutual understanding on the part of both groups of the logical issue on which they were disagreeing, viz. the degree of subsistence attributed to the Son. The development observed in the Tome allowed for a gradual re-focusing of the debate onto a shared labor of conceptualization of the role subsistence played in the relationship between singularity and multiplicity within the godhead. This understanding harnessed the awareness of the need for a technical expression described in point a. A designation of the bi- (or tri-)unity of God steering away from both the extremes of unconditional unicity and of dyo- (or tri-)theism also depended, as disagreeing factions came to recognize, on the correct terminological definition of the degree of subsistence of the Son.
This development is consistent with the theoretical move encapsulated by the innovative Eustathian formula *parșopa qnomaya/πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον*, as discussed in chapter III. The Eustathian elaboration of a specific terminology of compromise centered on *hypostasis* had paved the way for a new configuration of the trinitarian controversy in terms of a discussion about where the bar of subsistence should be set: was Christ a separate ἐνέργεια (as Marcellus had it), a distinct πρόσωπον (*à la* Eustathius), a different *hypostasis* (as the Eusebians and the homoiousians thought), or his own *ousia* (*cum* the heteroousians)? Correlatively, a discussion was sparked about the numerical definition of each of these technical terms (e.g., should one or three *hypostaseis* be confessed?).

It must have been also on the basis of the progressive theological reflection expressed by Fr. 142 that the Eustathian party was able to justify *ad intra* its willingness to compromise on a tenet—the unity of the revealed facet of the godhead—otherwise crucial to their identity. Even if the phrase πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον makes no appearance in the *Tome*, the theological resources that it presupposed were available to the Eustathians and arguably to their ally Athanasius.

The Council of Alexandria (362) therefore put to the use of vetero-/neo-Nicene conciliation the Eustathians’ ongoing effort, testified to by Fr. 142, to enable their theology to keep up with the challenges coming from the latest developments in the
eastern dioceses. Most notably, the neo-Nicene party had been rapidly gaining ground in response to the imperial empowerment of homoian and, in some locales, heteroousian leaderships; this situation required of the vetero-Nicenes a conceptual update as well as strategic planning.

As seen above, Abramowski saw in the debates reported as having taken place at the Council of Alexandria of 362 a crucial turn on the winding path to Constantinople. The Eustathians’ statement, reported in the Tome, to the effect that they identified ousia and hypostasis prefigured e contrario, in her reading, the Basilian solution of distinguishing ousia from hypostasis on the model of the Aristotelian distinction between first and second ousia. The Council of Alexandria thus allegedly offered Basil of Caesarea’s solution to the dispute avant la lettre.

I would propose instead that it is through the processes highlighted here that the Tome prepared the formation of an ample trans-partisan front that, through the Cappadocian contribution, led to the cessation of hostilities shortly after 381. If, as is widely admitted, for a long time the notion of hypostasis was not at the center of the controversy, after the Council of Alexandria the term gained center stage in trinitarian elaborations, and it is the strife thereupon that laid the foundations for the

112 If I am understanding correctly, J.T. Lienhard, “Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?,” in Barnes and William, Arianism after Arius, 76 interprets that it is the Meletians who are identifying there hypostasis and ousia, without providing further explanations as to how he arrives at this conclusion.
Constantinopolitan settlement. Along the same lines, instead of making the
disambiguation of *ousia* and *hypostasis* out to be the logic secretly driving the course of
the controversy, we should see the number of *hypostaseis* and the correlative difference
between *hypostasis* and *ousia* as a question upon which the attention of actors began to
converge after a certain point as a result of shifts within the epistemic domain. It is in
this effort of reconceptualization and lexical clarification that the *Tome* laid the
foundations for—rather than, *cum* Abramowski, anticipated nearly *verbatim*—the
Cappadocian solution.

c) Thirdly, and most innovatively, the Tome produced a formal affirmation of
compatibility between two different formulations in spite of their substantial ideological
divergence. By putting to work the theoretical advancements summarized in *a* and *b* for
the activation of the process described in *c*, the *Tome* constituted an observable step in
the progression toward a novel manner of debating theological ideas, one based on the
expression of disparate positions operating on the same conceptual level and on the
identification, sharing, and contraposition of theological labels. The new epistemic
regime constituted by these shifts was destined to endure in late ancient theology.

4.3.3 From Traditions to Memes: Building Ἀκρίβεια

Within the newly constrained framework that resulted from his own attribution
of a foundational status to Nicaea beginning in the mid-350s, Athanasius at the Council
of Alexandria could ingeniously represent the alleged quibbling over the number of hypostaseis as the only obstacle remaining on the way to reconciliation between essentially compatible varieties of pro-Nicenism. He thus reduced the conflict that was besetting the pro-Nicene front into a confrontation between two related and comparable formulae. As was already remarked, in order to make a quest for compatibility within the pro-Nicene front possible, commensurability had to be achieved first.

By identifying the one-vs.-three-hypostaseis problem as the crux of the divergence between Eustathians and Meletians, Athanasius accomplished an intellectual and diplomatic master stroke. An exploration of Athanasian agency in the Tome and in the Council of which this document is an expression needs to look further than the bishop’s fictionalization of the questioning of the two parties, where such agency has been justly recognized. Athanasius was not simply solving a problem by means of deceit: he was fabricating a problem—or, more exactly, fictionally presenting its nature—in order to be able to pose as its solver. In his narrative, his own thorough questioning of the two parties had allowed the overcoming of a marginal difference, leading to a substantial theological achievement.

The Tome appropriated for the aim of ecclesial mediation the theoretical resources developed by the Eustathians, and through a swift re-alignment to the left of Paulinus’s followers gave rise to a third way to Nicenism: a position in danger of being
accused neither of crypto-monarchianism (such as Marcellus’ and Paulinus’ theologies) nor of crypto-homoianism (such as Meletius’ views).  

Consequentially, Athanasius’ political sleight of hand at the council was tantamount to the arbitrary distillation of the difference between two incommensurable, geo-culturally embedded theological traditions—the idiosyncratically Antiochene “Eustathianism” and the cosmopolitanly eastern “Meletianism”—into one tangible point of objective disagreement. The Tome to the Antiochenes thus ultimately marked the beginning of a shift from the confrontation between geo-cultural theological traditions, such as those outlined by Ayres, differing from one another in their epistemological presuppositions and intellectual procedures (what Ayres terms their “theological grammar”), to the global exercise of disagreement over mutually understandable and recognizable memes (such as “one hypostasis” or “three hypostaseis”). The memes into which the traditions were recombined and distilled could be more easily represented and negotiated, and facilitated processes of labelling and self-identification among the various theologico-ecclesial factions.

The innovations described in the previous pages manifest a tendency congruent with Athanasius’s pushing of the homoousios to the center of the debate in the mid-350s,

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113 The idea that Fr. 142 affected the Eustathian theologico-ecclesial alliance after 362 was already proposed by Lorenz, “Die Eustathius von Antiochien zugeschriebene Schrift gegen Photin,” 121.
and with the development of an emphasis on exactitude (ἀκρίβεια) within the trinitarian debates. As seen above, it was Athanasius who with his On the Decrees of the Nicene Synod (355 or 356) had for the first time in the disputes assigned centrality to the homoousios. In works composed before On the Synods, i.e. prior to his learning about the homoiousian position, Athanasius had simply maintained, without further technical specifications, the existence of a relationship of resemblance between the Father and the Son. His transformation of Nicaea into the touchstone of orthodoxy around the year 355 imposed new limits upon the debate, and forced all parties to reckon with its formulation.

Scholars have debated the direction in which influence ran in the theological developments of the 350s. Was the Athanasian privileging of homoousios a reaction to the rising tide of homoianism and to the increasing emphasis being placed on the Son’s unbegottenness on the part of anti-Nicene theologians? Or should, vice versa, the anti-Nicene emphasis on exactitude (ἀκρίβεια), emerging above all from the writings of the heteroousian Eunomius of Cyzicus, be considered a response to the pro-Nicenes’ resolve to focus their energies on the defense of one particular formula? Interestingly Athanasius appears to present matters in precisely such terms, when in On the Decrees he

argues that the “Arians” themselves had created, before the pro-Nicenes, a term 
(age[n]netos) that was not scriptural, and which they held up as the standard of correct 
belief.  

According to Vaggione, Athanasius 

by allowing some flexibility in technical language [...] was able to reach out to 
Meletius and others who shared a similar narrative theology, and to give 
homoousios that “healthful” sense which would allow it to become the symbol of 
a comprehensive settlement. Thus a word originally chosen for its precise 
univocal meaning was able to leave the realm of the periti, and become the 
symbolic vehicle of a religious vision truly capable of “inflaming the imagination 
and piercing the heart.”  

But the flexibility in technical language advocated by Athanasius could be better 
described as an expression of the same underlying development that gave rise to 
Eunomius’s demand for terminological precision, namely the focus on technical terms 
and on their correct numerical articulation. The events of the 350s and 360s to which the 

115 On the role of the word agen(n)ētos in the course of the Trinitarian controversy, and on the 
graphic confusion between agenētos and agennētos, see G.L. Prestige, “Ἀγέν[ν]ητος and γε
tradition philosophique et dans la littérature chrétienne du II siècle,” RSR 13 (1926): 431-443; and G.L. 
Prestige, “Ἀγέν[ν]ητος and Cognate Words in Athanasius,” JThS 34 (1933): 258-265. See also Hanson, The 
Search, 202-207; and M.F.G. Parmentier, “Rules of Interpretation Issued against the Heretics (CPL 560),” 

116 R.P. Vaggione, Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 
2000), 285. Vaggione also writes (ibid., 300) that “[w]ith the departure of the unifying hand of the state, the 
non-Nicene jurisdictions found it increasingly difficult to articulate the positive sense in which they believed 
the Son to be like the Father—some said it was in the will, others in the nature, still others in a shared 
capacity to create. For Eunomius these positions shared only one thing in common: they all led sooner or 
later to homoousios. The practical result for Eunomius and his followers was that they were forced to become 
more explicitly sectarian: they refused to accept either the baptism or the ordination of most other non-
Nicene.” See also ibid., 330.
Council of Alexandria was integral brought the focus not on the acceptance or rejection of *homoousios* (or *age[netos]* *per se*) but more broadly on a type of theological project that valued the production of signifiers allowing for the recombination of wide ideological fronts and geographically-based intellectual traditions, all endowed with their epistemic rules and ways of going about the production of knowledge.

The *homoousios* was defended, in Ayres’ words, “not by reference to a detailed understanding of what the term implies in itself, but by arguing that it is an important cipher for other terms and phrases.” 117 Beyond the question of priority, what is most interesting for our purposes is that very process of ciphering, which I would equate with formularization, partaken in by ideologically disparate actors at this juncture of the controversy. As remarked by Barnes, around the year 360 the object of theological debate switched radically, and condemned the discussions of the two previous decades to obsolescence. While up to that point the debate had revolved around the question of whether or not Christ was a creature, we could say that, thanks to the reconceptualization of the debate brought about by the ciphering just referenced the trinitarian discussion now began in earnest.118

117 Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 142-143. See also Ayres, “Athenasius’ Initial Defense.”

118 See Barnes, *Athenasius and Constantius*, 132.
5. The Recombination of the Pro-Nicene Front

5.1 The Divided Tradition of the “Undivided Monad”

5.1.1 The Mia-Hypostatic Tradition

In a long series of publications, Joseph Lienhard has proposed to do away with several of the categories underlying traditional accounts of the trinitarian controversies—dichotomies such as “Arian” and “Nicene,” “Alexandrian” and “Antiochene,” “Eusebian” and “Athanasiian.” In Lienhard’s judgment, when the necessity arose for Christians to put exact words to their belief in Christ, they found themselves in disagreement. They had at their disposal, among others, the words ὑπόστασις, οὐσία, and ὕπαρξις—the first two of which, as Prestige has shown, were roughly synonymous.¹

The fundamental divide within the Christian theological field, Lienhard argues, was the one concerning the first of these terms, and separating a mia-hypostatic tradition from a dyo- or, later, tri-hypostatic one.² “These terms signal a profound

¹ Prestige, God, 179-196.

difference in theology, one that touched not only the way God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—was understood, but also the way Christ’s person and saving work were described.”

The mia-hypostatic tradition was represented by Athanasius, Marcellus, and the western theologians, and expressed itself at Nicaea in 325 and at Sardica in 343. The dyo- or tri-hypostatic view found expression, e.g., at the Council of Antioch of 341, and Eusebius of Caesarea was the author who came closest to formulating its ideal type, centered on the coexistence of a first principle (the Father) with a subordinated, created second principle (the Son).

In the different yet not incompatible taxonomy proposed by Simonetti, the mia-hypostatic tradition represents a radical strand within the broad theological front that has been traditionally called “monarchian,” whose linchpin was the defense of monotheism; the moderate side, responsible for the affirmation of the term homoousios at 56-66. The Marcellan corpus can be found in M. Vinzent, Markell von Ankyra: Die Fragmente und der Brief an Julius von Rom (Leiden: Brill, 1997). On Marcellus see also T.E. Pollard, “Marcellus of Ancyra, a Neglected Father,” in Fontaine and Kannengeisser, Epiktasis, 187-196; Logan, “Marcellus of Ancyra and the Councils of AD 325;” Id., “Marcellus of Ancyra on Origen and Arianism,” in Bienert and Kuhneweg, Origeniana Septima, 159-163; Id., “Marcellus of Ancyra, Defender of the Faith against Heretics—and Pagans,” in Studia Patristica XXXVII. Cappadocian Writers. Other Greek Writers. Papers Presented at the Thirteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1999, ed. M.F. Wiles and E.J. Yarnold (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 550-564. See also Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 62 and 66.

1 Lienhard, Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra, 38. The soteriological implications alluded to in this sentence are teased out ibid., 41-42 and 45.

4 Ibid., 28-46 (approximately the same as Id., “The ‘Arian’ Controversy”).
the Council of Nicaea, was instead averse only to the most divisive outcomes of tri-hypostatic theology, and not to tri-hypostatism per se.\(^5\)

Lienhard portrays the mia-hypostatic tradition as being unenthusiastic about Origen, concerned with the defense of monotheism, and suspicious of any affirmation of plurality within the godhead. “[I]t seems to be a theology,” he writes, “that developed, insulated from the influence of Origen (or, in the West, Tertullian), out of an older, monarchian tradition.”\(^6\) The most important exponent of this intellectual trajectory, which is the same that Ayres has identified as a theology of the “undivided monad,” has traditionally been considered to be Marcellus of Ancyra.

### 5.1.2 Marcellus of Ancyra

Marcellus has been called in scholarship a “Constantinian” theologian.\(^7\) Setting aside this disputed evaluation of his degree of loyalty to the Emperor’s ecclesio-political project, the fundamental aspects of Marcellus’s theological views remain fairly clear. He distinguished himself within the “monarchian” front for envisioning, as the apologists

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\(^5\) Simonetti, “«Persona» nel dibattito cristologico,” 533.


had before him, a two-staged articulation of God’s Logos, whereby the latter, after dwelling in the Father, was set forth with a cosmogonic function. What differentiated Marcellus, in turn, from the typical representatives of so-called “Logos-theology” was his conception of the Logos as little more than an impersonal faculty of the Father. Even when set forth, the Word of the Father remained in Him—and vice versa.

Moreover, and most importantly, Christ at the end of his cosmological and soteriological mission will surrender to God and return to dwell within him as he did in the beginning. In light of this only provisional substantiality, according to Simonetti Marcellus’s inclusion of the Logos in his account was the product of an attempt at a theological update, aimed at coping with the attacks of Origenist thinkers, and of the “Arians” in particular. Similarly, Ayres believes that Marcellus’s thought underwent an evolution after his composition of Against Asterius, which was excerpted extensively by Eusebius of Caesarea.

Be the matter of an evolution in Marcellus’s thought as it may, Ayres is certainly correct in pointing out that his statement to the effect that the Logos’s relationship to the Father resembles most closely that of a person’s reasoning faculty to her- or himself—a belief underlying the ancient writer’s exegesis of the expression “let us make”

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8 Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 66.
9 Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 62.
(ποιήσωµεν) in Gen 1:26 as an inner dialogue of God’s—should not lead to the conclusion that he, like Sabellius, credited Christ with no separate subsistence whatsoever.\textsuperscript{10} Nevertheless, it is certain that Marcellus’s primary preoccupation with the defense of God’s unity effected a drastic reduction in the degree of independence he was willing to attribute to the Son.\textsuperscript{11}

The careful reconstructions of the contours of Marcellus’s theology pursued in recent decades have led scholars to locate this champion of vetero-Nicenism, who was marginalized by older historiography, increasingly toward the center of the in-fieri fourth-century theological mainstream. Much has been gained, in particular, from the emphasis that Lienhard has placed on the relationship that tied Marcellus to Athanasius, which, as he has demonstrated, was in fact such that the Alexandrian bishop never broke communion with the Ancyran.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Ayres, \textit{Nicaea and Its Legacy}, 62-63. For Hanson, \textit{The Search}, xix, to the contrary, Marcellus’s theology “could quite properly be called Sabellian.” Sabellius, however, had modified the erstwhile monarchical view that the Father and the Son are one and the same, by claiming that the Father had become Son.

\textsuperscript{11} As Stead, \textit{Divine Substance}, 228 remarks, Marcellus’s example can be understood on the basis of the Platonic doctrine that the rational part of the soul equals the true person, but its stringency is not complete inasmuch as reason does not exhaust a person’s existence.

\textsuperscript{12} Lienhard, “Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?” Lienhard, “Two Friends.” Athanasius and Marcellus met possibly as early as in 355 (Council of Tyre), and with certainty by 341 (Council of Rome), and their mediated communion was secured by the shared communion with Eustathius’s community.
5.1.3 The Diversity of the Mia-Hypostatic Tradition

Less work has been directed toward discerning the vetero-Nicene alliance to which Marcellus belonged—a front that approximately overlapped with Ayres’s tradition of the “undivided monad”—for the diverse and highly composite front that it was, and of highlighting the differences that ran between the theological trajectories that comprised it. Recognizing the existence of greater variance than previously acknowledged within the vetero-Nicene front, and identifying an area of greater theological dynamism in the 360s and 370s between vetero- and neo-Nicenism, may allow us to better understand how there could have existed any room for negotiation and for attempts at restoring communion between two parties—the Eustathians and the Meletians—whose positions appear otherwise mutually exclusive.

In reviewing Sara Parvis’s monograph on Marcellus, Simonetti questioned her claim that Marcellus of Ancyra and Alexander of Alexandria, in spite of their dissensions, were in agreement about the fundamental issue at stake in the disputes, viz. the non-temporal origins of the Logos. That, Simonetti remarked, was hardly the key element of the controversy, which would have to be sought, rather, in the Logos’s personal vs. impersonal status, a topic on which Alexander and Marcellus held opposite views.13

Whether the degree of personality of the Logos is indeed to be considered the crux of the trinitarian debates remains a matter open for questioning, as is any effort to distill a logic from the whole of these controversies. It is important to ensure, however, that questions of intellectual consonance continue to be asked, and that the voluble index of communion and ecclesiastical affiliation not be used arbitrarily as the exclusive criterion for evaluating the developments in the trinitarian controversies. Specifically, in the context of the pre-Constantinopolitan legacy of Nicaea, paying attention to doctrinal pronouncements may make it possible to complicate diachronically the image of a cohesive trajectory of the “undivided monad” that included supporters of both Marcellus and Eustathius.\textsuperscript{14}

Among the many merits of Lienhard’s studies has been, as mentioned above, their insistence on Marcellus’s lasting integration in the ranks of the eastern vetero-Nicene alliance: as late as 371 he was in communion with Paulinus, Athanasius, and likeminded bishops in Greece and Macedonia.\textsuperscript{15} It is indeed very likely that, as Lienhard argued, Athanasius never formally rejected Marcellus. By the early 360s, however, Athanasius, interested as he was in expanding the trans-regional pro-Nicene front beyond the cohort of his traditional allies and in sharpening its political efficacy, must

\textsuperscript{14}See Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 62-69.

\textsuperscript{15}See also Barnes, Athanasius and Constantius, 93 and n. 39 (289).
have lost interest in the outrancière cause of the Marcellans. Considering that throughout his career he had avoided as best he could any talk of hypostasis, Athanasius must have been even less keen on furthering the agenda of these intransigent defenders of the notion that God’s unique hypostasis also manifested itself through one, and only one, πρόσωπον.

The Marcellans of strict observance cherished too much the insubstantiality of Christ as a manifestation of the Father for there to be any realistic hope that they might be involved in the theological rapprochement with the Meletians, in which Athanasius was greatly invested. Assessing the potential for the beginning of a novel phase of the controversy that could lead at last to its resolution, Athanasius upon returning from his third exile was more interested in the ideological heirs of Eustathius, with their conditional amenability to dialogue with the homoiousians, than in what the epigones of Marcellus had to offer him.

On the contrary, the recent conceptual innovation of a “subsistent person,” likely developed by Eustathius in the context of anti-Photinian polemics, provided an important resource for the trinitarian developments of which the Council of Alexandria was an expression.

By implicitly setting the conditions for the synonymy of πρόσωπον and hypostasis (namely that the πρόσωπον be understood as hypostasized), the Eustathian
fragment demarcated the theoretical framework wherein compatibility between mia- and tri-hypostatic theologies could be conceived: a vetero-Nicene perspective, even at its most compromising, could not accept the existence of three hypostaseis defined just any which way, but only with some definitional stipulations. The Eustathian tradition can be seen then as a laboratory in which the problem of the Son’s subsistence was innovatively thought through more dynamically, and with attention to technical terminology.

Through Athanasius’s action at the Council of Alexandria, as I have proposed in chapter V, the Eustathian language of three πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα was implicitly reinterpreted in terms formally compatible with the Meletian preaching of three hypostaseis. The present chapter attempts to show that this reinterpretation produced historically significant outcomes in the mid-370s. The excerpt from the Eustathian Against Photinus thus constitutes the witness to an early source for the development of an ideological area of compromise with the homoiousians within the vetero-Nicene alliance in the 370s, an area that in the virtual trinitarian parliament of the fourth century may be called conciliatory. Echoes of this compromising attitude may be observed in the 370s in an exchange Jerome entertained with the Meletians (portrayed in his Letter 15); in a letter of George of Laodicea; in Epiphanius’s Medicine Chest; and in a letter written by the Ancyran clergy in 375.
5.2 The Testimony of Jerome

5.2.1 Jerome in (and around) Antioch

The first of the passages to which I wish to draw attention comes from a letter that the Latin Christian intellectual Jerome of Stridon wrote to Pope Damasus (who occupied the Roman see between 366 and 384) around the year 376. Some time at the beginning of the 370s, the monastic community in Aquileia (on the Adriatic coast) to which Jerome belonged broke up. Jerome consequently decided to make his way from northern Italy to the Holy Land alongside some of his eremitic companions. He did not reach Jerusalem, the original goal of his pilgrimage; he himself recounts arriving to Syria in seriously ill conditions, and finding shelter there at the residence in Antioch of his friend Evagrius, who may have even travelled eastwards with him.

Under Evagrius’s patronage Jerome remained some time in Antioch (probably between 374 and 375), postponing his journey to Jerusalem and delving into literary,  

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18 Hier. Epistula III, 3, 1.
philosophical, and theological studies.\textsuperscript{19} A few months later, in the second half of 375,\textsuperscript{20} he entered into an ascetic practice, whose rigor historians have questioned,\textsuperscript{21} outside of the city—either in its desert outskirts of Chalcis-on-Belus or in an estate Evagrius possessed in Maronia, along the road that connects Chalcis to Antioch.\textsuperscript{22} While in his hermitage, Jerome continued to read and attend to his correspondence. He undertook the study of Hebrew\textsuperscript{23} and, for the sake of communicating with the natives in what he defined as their \textit{semisermo} (quasi-language), Syriac.\textsuperscript{24}

In Syria Jerome also deepened his acquaintance with the trinitarian problems that were tearing at Christianity in Antioch and in the east more broadly. Although some part of Jerome’s literary production is occupied by heresiological polemic and a

\textsuperscript{19}On Evagrius see F. Cavallera, \textit{Saint Jérôme, sa vie et son œuvre} (2 vols.; Études et documents 1; Leuven and Paris: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense and Champion, 1922), 153-154, 158-162, 300-301.


\textsuperscript{22}See Rebenich, \textit{Hieronymus}, 85-90.


\textsuperscript{24}The evaluation of Jerome’s knowledge of Aramaic and Syriac in D. King, “Vir Quadrilinguis? Syriac in Jerome and Jerome in Syriac,” in \textit{Jerome of Stridon, His Life, Writings and Legacy}, ed. A. Cain and J. Lössl (Farnham and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2009), 209-223 makes only a very passing reference to his stay in the Syrian desert.
strenuous defense of his version of Christian orthodoxy (the clearest example being his *Altercation between a Luciferian and an Orthodox*), he was no great theologian in his own right. It is no happenstance that in the ninety pages devoted to Jerome by the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* his trinitarian or Christological thought makes almost no appearance; and it was very likely his limited theological stature that induced Cavallera to desist from the purpose of writing the announced second volume of his monograph on the saint, which was supposed to be devoted to theological doctrine. To stick with the generous evaluation given by Fürst, “[a]ls er in den kirchlichen und dogmatischen Streit verwickelt wird, versucht er so weit wie möglich seine Unabhängigkeit und seinen orthodoxen Ruf zu wahren, ohne sich auf die spekulative-philosophischen Implikationen der in Frage stehenden Lehrmeinungen einzulassen.”

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Jerome’s stance on the trinitarian problem was probably on the one hand a product of his life-long frequenting of western clerical circles, which were by nature vetero-Nicene. On the other hand, this tendency must have been reinforced by his friendship with, and patronage by, the above-mentioned Antiochene Evagrius, who was a *curialis*, a member of the highly ranked Antiochene family of the Pompeiani. After joining the imperial service, Evagrius had received the priestly ordination from Eusebius of Vercellae. Upon Constantius II’s death (361) he had followed Eusebius as the latter returned to Italy from his exile, and had ended up spending twelve years in the west, working in the service of Damasus of Rome. When Evagrius came back to Antioch, in 373 or 374, it was only natural for him to join the Eustathian community, in spite of an impassioned letter from Basil of Caesarea, expressing regret at his refusal to share communion with the Antiochene Meletians. In due time, at Paulinus’s death (388), Evagrius was ordained as his successor.

Thus on trinitarian matters Jerome’s leanings were probably generically vetero-Nicene, and his sympathies probably lay with the Eustathian party. He was eventually

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to become a partisan of Paulinus, to be ordained a priest by him, and to travel with him and Epiphanius of Salamis to Constantinople to attend there the great Council of 381. In the mid-370s, however, Jerome was still deferring on the question of the Antiochene schism to Pope Damasus, to whom, as the worldwide head of the Church, he repeatedly pledged allegiance.

Jerome’s apparent failure to take a definitive stand in favor of communion with the Eustathians may well have had to do with his acquaintance with the Meletian affiliation of the majority of the ascetics who lived in the Syrian desert. His cautious non-partisan ship, in any event, did not suffice to shield him from their attacks. As Jerome would write in a letter announcing to the Chalcidian priest Mark his imminent departure from the desert, during his Syrian eremitic stint he was beset by theological adversaries, who constantly troubled him by demanding new declarations of faith on a daily basis:

I am not allowed (to have) even a corner of desert. Every day I am demanded to provide an (exposition of) faith, as though I had been born again without (one). I confess as they want: they are not satisfied. I subscribe: they do not believe. One thing only (would) satisfy (them): that I withdraw from here. I am on the point of leaving.  


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5.2.2 The Schism of Antioch between East and West

It is in this context that Jerome resolved to write to Pope Damasus from his hermitage. In order to make plain the context of this address, however, some further historical background will have to be laid out. The events of the year 362, discussed in chapter IV, gave rise to a new phase of the trinitarian controversy, in which the city of Antioch was to become a central battlefield. At this time the west was out of communion with any bishop of Antioch; Alexandria retained its communion with the Eustathians; and the eastern dioceses in general were in communion with the Meletians.

Nevertheless, it is important to remark that while eastern and western bishoprics may have been divided over the schism in Antioch, not for that reason were they out of communion with each other as a whole. As Greenslade remarks,

[m]ediate communion was possible. Basil seems to have been in communion with both Athanasius and Meletius, though Athanasius was in communion with Paulinus. […] The logical consequence that if bishop A wants fellowship with

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bishop B, who is not in communion with bishop C, then A must break with C, was not pressed except by such purists as Lucifer of Cagliari [...] 33

In the summer of 371 Basil of Caesarea resolved to elicit a western intervention in the Antiochene controversy in favor of his ally Meletius. Part of Basil’s hope in this machination may have also been that Damasus would induce the western Emperor Valentinian the Great to pressure his brother Valens, Emperor of the east, into softening the persecution of the pro-Nicenes. 34 At that time the Roman Pope had not yet made explicit his preference for any of the Antiochene contestants. Besieged as he was by local difficulties, in particular his ongoing battle with the rival Ursinus, 35 Damasus appears to have been able to pay little attention to ecclesiastical developments in the east.

33 Greenslade, Schism, 165. The lax praxis that Greenslade is describing would invalidate a historical reasoning such as the following: “Paulinus, who added an explanation to the Tome (11, 2) clarifies his position by confessing the Trinity in one theotes and anathematising two heretics: Sabellius and Photinus. By the fourth century, rejecting Sabellius’ teaching represented no commitment at all; Marcellus himself had done it in the Contra Asterium. But Paulinus’ anathema against Photinus is more interesting. If he is in communion with Marcellus at the time he wrote the Tome then Marcellus must have abandoned any loyalty to his erstwhile disciple, too” (Lienhard, “Did Athanasius Reject Marcellus?,” 75).

34 See Amand de Mendieta, “Damase,” 263. It is to be noted, however, that this hope was expressed for the first time in Epistula CCXLIII, 1.

35 Ursinus had been a loyalist of Liberius at a time when Damasus was still flirting with the anti-Pope Felix. See A. Lippold, “Ursinus und Damasus,” Historia 14 (1965): 105-128; C. Carletti, “«Damasus et Ursinus... asperrime conflictabant»: luoghi, strategie, protagonisti di una guerriglia urbana nel IV secolo,” in Scritti di storia per Mario Pani, ed. S. Cagnazzi, M. Chelotti, A. Favuzzi, F. Ferrandini Troisi, D.P. Orsi, M. Silvestrini and E. Todisco (Dipartimento di Scienze dell’Antichità dell’Università di Bari, Sezione storica. Documenti e studi 48; Bari: Edipuglia, 2011), 75-88.
In requesting Damasus’s intervention, however, Basil of Caesarea had some reasons for optimism. There existed the recent precedent of the welcoming reception that Pope Liberius had extended to the eastern bishops sent to Rome by the homoiousian synod of Lampsacus (365); and Basil himself, while still a priest in Caesarea, had benefited from the favorable intervention of Lucifer of Calaris and Eusebius of Vercellae in the conflict that had opposed him to the quondam bishop of the Cappadocian metropolis. According to Schwartz Basil thought it reasonable that the Pope might prefer to support Meletius rather than Paulinus, considering that the partisans of Lucifer of Calaris, who had consecrated Paulinus (362), were causing a lot of strife in Rome with their loud intransigence about readmitting to communion those who had subscribed to the homoian formula of the Council of Ariminum (359).

However, in light of the extremely tenuous historical relationship between the Luciferians of Rome and Lucifer himself, as well of the late dating of the beginning of Luciferian activities in Rome (around 380), there appear to be enough grounds to doubt

36 See Taylor, “St Basil the Great,” 188.
39 See Simonetti, “Appunti per una storia dello scisma luciferiano,” 71-76; Id, “Lucifero di Cagliari,” 21-23. On Lucifer and his anti-“Arian” activities see also Marcello, La posizione di Lucifero di Cagliari; L.M. Gastoni, “La battaglia antiariana di Lucifero e il suo coinvolgimento in alcuni scismi del tempo,” in La Sardegna paleocristiana tra Eusebio e Gregorio Magno: atti del Convegno nazionale di studi, Cagliari, 10-12 ottobre
this suggestion. Basil was probably aware that much diplomatic work would be needed in order to pull Damasus in the direction of supporting the homoiousian alliance.

Having been elected only the previous year (370) to the see of Caesarea, moreover, Basil knew he could hardly hope to stir Damasus of Rome into action by writing to him personally. He thus wrote to Athanasius of Alexandria (Letter 66), asking him to send a letter to the Pope. Understandably, Athanasius was not fully won over by Basil’s initiative. Basil’s support for Meletius was in fact incompatible with his own loyalty to Paulinus, dating from his visit to Antioch in 346—when he was not recognized as bishop of Alexandria by the Antiochene bishop Leontius—\(^{40}\) and solidified after Meletius’s discourteous refusal of communion during Athanasius’s later stay in Antioch (363). The Alexandrian bishop was interested enough, however, to dispatch to Basil the Alexandrian priest Peter, who shared his own allegiance to Paulinus.

At that time Basil was also engaged in talks with Dorotheus, a trusted deacon of Meletius’s who had just been sent to Caesarea. Through Dorotheus’s proxy, Basil made to Meletius, likely already exiled in Armenia, a request similar to the one he had had

delivered to Athanasius: he should write to Pope Damasus asking him to intervene in favor of his own alliance in order to resolve the schism at Antioch.\textsuperscript{41} The terms in which Meletius was to write were contained in an additional message.\textsuperscript{42} Whatever the terms in which Meletius responded through Dorotheus (they are unclear), Basil decided at this point that it was best for him to write directly to Damasus.\textsuperscript{43}

In his missive to the Pope, which he again entrusted to Dorotheus, Basil described the horrors of the schism in Antioch and pleaded that a western delegation be sent to take care of the problem. Basil also ordered Dorotheus to go first to Athanasius, and entrusted him with an additional message in which he asked the Alexandrian bishop to provide the messenger with his own letter of support for Basil’s initiative, addressed to Damasus.\textsuperscript{44} In this letter he explained the need for the westerners to anathematize Marcellus of Ancyra, thus freeing the name of the Nicenes from any shadow of association with Sabellianism. After reading Basil’s letter for Athanasius, Dorotheus asked that the Caesarean bishop add an explicit message of support for Meletius, which he had strategically omitted from the note. Basil complied, composing

\textsuperscript{41} Bas. \textit{Epistula LXVIII}.  
\textsuperscript{42} Bas. \textit{Epistula CCXLII}.  
\textsuperscript{43} Bas. \textit{Epistula LXX}.  
\textsuperscript{44} Bas. \textit{Epistula LXIX}.  

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an additional, separate message in which he stated that the whole east desired Meletius to be the bishop of Antioch.\textsuperscript{45}

As seen in chapter IV, this notion was scarcely true, inasmuch as it could in actuality lie no farther from Athanasius’s views about what a reconciliation of the Antiochene schism should have looked like after Meletius’s refusal to meet with him in 363. Upon receiving the dispatch, Athanasius appears to have prevented Dorotheus from going to Rome.\textsuperscript{46} As a result, Basil’s letter to the Pope was never delivered. Instead, Athanasius sent Dorotheus back to Basil along with the Milanese deacon Sabinus, entrusting them both with a copy of the letter \textit{We Indeed Believe (Confidimus quidem), a Damasian document of condemnation of the homoian Milanese bishop Auxentius which Sabinus had just brought to Alexandria, promulgated by a Roman synod held sometime between 368 and 372.\textsuperscript{47} Upon receiving the document-carrying pair, Basil kept Sabinus

\textsuperscript{45}Bas. \textit{Epistula LXVII}. This is the reconstruction of Cavallera, \textit{Le schisme}, 141; M. Richard, “Saint Basile et la mission du diacre Sabinus,” \textit{AnBoll} 67 (1949): 187; Simonetti 1975, \textit{La crisi ariana}, 420 and n. 65. An alternative reconstruction according to which it was Athanasius himself who sent Dorotheus back asking Basil to make his position more explicit, and \textit{Letter 67} was written as a result, is found in R. Devreesse, \textit{Le patriarcat d’Antioche depuis la paix de l’Église jusqu’à la conquête arabe} (Paris: Gabalda, 1945), 27; Taylor, “St Basil the Great,” 193.

\textsuperscript{46}See Taylor, “St Basil the Great,” 193 and n. 22.

with himself and sent Dorotheus again to Meletius with a letter in which he indicated that, in order for Athanasius to be prompted into any sort of intercession with Rome, Meletius was to first give a sign of conciliatory good will, offering to the Alexandrian that communion which he had previously denied him. 48

Basil also asked Meletius to write to the western bishops just like he himself was doing (in a letter addressed to “the holy brethren the bishops of the West” and in a personal missive of response to Valerius of Aquileia), 49 and invited him to send Dorotheus back to him. Meletius never did offer his communion to Athanasius, but when Dorotheus returned to Caesarea he was carrying, in compliance with Basil’s instructions, a synodal letter 50 signed by thirty-two eastern bishops and written by Meletius himself on the blueprint which Basil had provided. 51 Basil promptly sent

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48 Bas. Epistula LXXXIX.
49 Bas. Epistula XC and Epistula XCI.
50 That is Epistula XCII in Basil of Caesarea’s epistolary.
51 Bas. Epistula CCXLI. On Meletius’s composition of this letter see Cavallera, Le schisme d’Antioche, 185, n. 1; Pouchet, Basile le Grand, 534.
Sabinus off to the west, entrusting him with his own letters as well as the eastern synodal missive.

Meanwhile in Alexandria Athanasius had fallen ill and died (373). On his deathbed he had contravened all canonical regulations by consecrating as his successor Peter, the priest who was seen above visiting Basil as his envoy. The Emperor Valens ordered Peter’s arrest and elected in his stead the anti-Nicene Lucius. Nevertheless, Peter managed to escape and find protection in Rome. There Damasus sheltered him for five years, and Peter could intercede with the Pope on Paulinus’s behalf. It was thus possibly also under Peter’s influence that Damasus reacted dismissively to the eastern letters carried by Sabinus, giving a full display of the sense of unlimited ecclesiastical authority to which he believed the see he occupied entitled him.52

After a year-long wait, in 374 he sent to Basil the Antiochene priest Evagrius, whose western sojourn, begun in 363, was nearing its end, and who was now Syria-bound. Evagrius carried with him no written response from Damasus, but only the epistles that the easterners had sent to the west, and which were now being returned. Along with the letters, Evagrius delivered a displeasing message, reported by Basil in a missive to his friend Eusebius of Samosata:

52 A discussion of the motivations for Damasus’s gesture can be found in Taylor, “St Basil,” 198-199; Simonetti, La crisi ariana, 423.
The priest Evagrius, the son of Pompeianus the Antiochene, who set out at some point for the west with the blessed Eusebius, has now come back from Rome, demanding from me a letter carrying exactly the same words written by them (he also brought mine back to me as not having pleased the strictest among those over there), and that an embassy of reputable men be immediately sent, so that they may have a fair pretext to visit us.\(^{53}\)

It is unclear whether the latter suggestion had been formulated by Damasus or was offered by Evagrius himself in a personal effort to alleviate the harshness of the response. Regardless, Basil obviously did not receive the western reaction well, and he put an end to the negotiation in a letter to the community of Antioch and in one addressed to Evagrius himself.\(^{54}\) In the latter he bemoaned Evagrius’s failure to enter communion with the Meletians in Antioch (something Dorotheus had reported to him), defended his own conduct, and adduced an excuse for his inability to organize the solicited delegation at that time. Nevertheless, in 374, in the wake of the Thracian exile of his friend Eusebius of Samosata in 374, Basil addressed a new letter to the bishops of Gaul and Italy (two out of the three existing western prefectures, which included also Illyricum), and entrusted it to Dorotheus, who was by then a presbyter.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{53}\) Bas. *Epistula CXXXVIII*, 2: Ὁ πρεσβύτερος Εὐάγριος, ὁ υἱὸς Ποµπηϊανοῦ τοῦ Ἀντιοχέως, ὁ συναπάρας ποτὲ ἐπὶ τὴν δύσιν τῷ µακαρίῳ Εὐσεβίῳ ἐπανῆκε νῦν ἐκ τῆς Ῥώµης, ἀπαιτῶν ἡµᾶς ἐπιστολήν αὐτὰ τὰ παρ᾽ ἐκείνων γεγραµµένα ἔχουσαν αὐτολεξεὶ (ἀνεκόµισε δὲ ἡµῖν εἰς τοῦπίσω τὰ παρ᾽ ἡµῶν, ὡς οὐκ ἀφείνεται τοῖς σκέψεστεροις τῶν ἐκεί), καὶ προεβέβαιν τινὰ διὰ ἄνδρον ἀξιολόγων ἡδή κατεπείγεσθαι, υπὸ τοῦ εὐπρόσωπων ἐχειν ἀφοµήν τοὺς ἄνδρας τῆς ἐπισκέψεως ἡµῶν.

\(^{54}\) Euseb. *Epistula CXL* and *Epistula CLVI*, respectively.

\(^{55}\) Euseb. *Epistula CCXLIII*. 

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This time Dorotheus did bring back, in 375, a reply from Damasus. As far as we are able to tell based on the bits that a fragment called *By This Grace (Ea gratia)* has preserved, Damasus’s response contained vague expressions of sympathy for the plight of the Eastern pro-Nicene, as well as a trinitarian confession.\(^5^6\) Unlike the declaration *We Indeed Believe*, which spoke of one *substantia* (a term commonly translating *hypostasis*), the confession of faith contained in *By That Grace* referred to one *ousia*.\(^5^7\) Basil may then have wishfully judged it to constitute an implicit disavowal of the mia-hypostatic theology so dear to the Eustathians.\(^5^8\)

Nevertheless, the text studiously avoided any tri-hypostatic language and, although it did condemn the trinitarian views traditionally associated with Marcellus of Ancyra, it did not refer to him by name. Furthermore, the document warned the easterners against neglecting canonical orders in all matters pertaining to ecclesiastical ordinations, as well as against granting communion to those who had obtained their consecration illicitly—a warning that could easily be read as directed against Meletius, who had traded the episcopal see of Sebaste for that of Antioch in spite of the Nicene canons’ prohibition.

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\(^{5^6}\) The fragment is edited in Schwartz, “Über die Sammlung,” 20-21; Field, *On the Communion*, 14-16.

\(^{5^7}\) “*Unius substantiae*” was also Lucifer of Calaris’s translation of *homoousios*.

\(^{5^8}\) See Bas. *Epistula CCXIV*, 4.
According to Taylor, if this warning were an attack on Meletius it would be “veiled to the point of utter obscurity” by reason of its general nature: he judges it more reasonable to read it as a pastoral response to Basil’s description of the “confusion and collapse of discipline” in the east. However, the fact that the same canonical pretext will be used in the so-called Damasian Tome only two years later in a more patently anti-Meletian manner represents in my opinion a powerful argument against Taylor’s soft reading:

We regard as foreigners from our communion those who have migrated from churches to churches until they have returned to those cities in which they were first established. But if one was ordained in place of a living one while the other was migrating, he who left his city should vacate the dignity of priesthood until his successor rests in the Lord.

In light of these considerations, it is appropriate to interpret By This Grace as a document that heralded no significant change in Damasus’s pro-Eustathian, anti-Meletian posture with regard to the schism in Antioch. At most, the letter exhibited a slightly higher degree of diplomatic skill in dealing with Basil and his entourage than the Pope had used before.

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59 Taylor, “St Basil the Great,” 203.

60 Eos quoque qui de ecclesiis ad ecclesias migraverunt tamdui a communione nostra habemus alienos, quamdiu ad eas redierint civitates in quibus primum sunt constituti. Quod si alius, alio transmigrante, in loco viventi est ordinatus, tamdui vacet sacerdotii dignitate qui suam deseruit civitatem, quamdui successor eius quiescat in Domino.

61 This view is closer to that expressed by Amand de Mendieta, “Damase,” 267-268; Id., “Basile de Césarée,” 129; and E. Schwartz, Zur Geschichte des Athanasius (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1959), 369.
In the meantime further division had befallen the Antiochene community by the hand of one Vitalis. The latter was a layman whom Meletius had consecrated priest as a reward for the activism he had shown after the bishop’s return from the exile meted out to him by Julian.\textsuperscript{62} Reportedly as the result of a rivalry that opposed him to his fellow Meletian priest Flavian,\textsuperscript{63} Vitalis seceded from the community and rose to the status of leader of the Antiochene branch of Apollinaris of Laodicea’s communion. Apollinaris himself consecrated him—very contentiously—bishop of Antioch in 375.\textsuperscript{64} Fresh from this ordination, Vitalis journeyed to Rome to obtain an acknowledgment of his orthodoxy from the Pope, to whom he delivered a written declaration of faith. Damasus in exchange gave him a letter for Paulinus that is known as the \textit{Damasian Tome}. The Roman bishop, however, was quick to change his mind, and sent a second letter to Paulinus, expressing his new sentiments, as well as a third one, known as \textit{Through My Son (Per filium meum)}, which required any members of Vitalis’s community who wanted to enter communion with the Eustathians to subscribe to the Nicene Creed as well as to pronounce an implicitly anti-Apollinarist Christological formula.


\textsuperscript{63}See Soz. \textit{Hist. eccl.}, 6, 25.

\textsuperscript{64}E. Mühlenberg, \textit{Apollinaris von Laodicea} (FKDG 23; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 51-53 dates the ordination to 376.
5.2.3 Jerome’s Letter 15

Jerome’s Letter 15 was composed in the midst of these events. The document has attracted a great deal of interest on the part of historians for a variety of reasons. The letter is of the consulting (ἀναθετικός) genre, and, as mentioned above, is addressed to Damasus. As Conrig indicates, the absence of any reference to the pair’s previous acquaintance, along with—as we shall see—the Pope’s repeated failure to respond, suggests that the two had in fact never met before the time of Jerome’s writing. The letter opens with an introduction composed in a highly ornate style. In convoluted prose, Jerome announces his intention to ask advice from the holder of Peter’s chair about the debates by which Christianity in the east is rent.

There follows a section in which the author expresses synthetically the ideology of papal primacy to which he subscribes, declaring his absolute loyalty to the bishop of Rome. The last lines of this section introduce Damasus to the specifics of the theological problems with regard to which Jerome is consulting him, and in the third section he...


recounts a run-in with the Meletians which exemplifies these problems. The fourth (and last) section of the letter shows Jerome pleading with Damasus to give him a response on the issue of whether he should recognize three hypostaseis. Through sarcastic expressions, he makes no mystery of his aversion to the formula, but promises to subscribe to it if the Pope sanctions it.

Damasus left Jerome’s missive unanswered. In a new, shorter message addressed to the bishop of Rome (Letter 16) Jerome disavowed again all Antiochene episcopal candidates, writing that “they all declare to cling to [him]” (tibi haerere se dicunt), but “either two are lying, or all of them” (aut duo mentiuntur aut omnes). He therefore requested from Damasus that he “indicate to [him] through [his] letters with whom [he is] to hold communion in Syria” (ut mihi litteris tuis, apud quem in Syria debeam communicare, signifes). This letter too, however, remained unanswered. 67 In what we can imagine to have been a disheartened state of mind, Jerome resolved to abandon the desert, as he announced in the above-cited letter to the priest Mark, who had asked for a written confession of faith in order to placate the hostility of his local monastic adversaries. 68

67 See Conrig, Hieronymus als Briefschreiber, 199, n. 272.
68 See Hier. Epistula XVII.
In light of Damasus’s support of Paulinus and rejection of Meletius, Jerome’s demeanor in Letter 15 has proven difficult for latter-day readers to decipher. The contested dating of the letter is critical for an interpretation of its contents. It is typically believed that the epistle must have been composed between 375 (when Jerome made his way to his hermitage) and 377 (the year in which he left the desert for Antioch). Cavallera and Lawler date it to 376. In an earlier publication, however, Lawler himself, writing along with Mierow, had warned that its current dating, along with that of other letters, relied on the somewhat debated chronology of Jerome’s permanence in the desert. Cain dates Letter 15 to “around 377,” providing no additional explanation.

Greenslade’s introduction to his translation of the text contains a detailed reflection concerning the various problems posed by its chronological contextualization. His reasoning has as its point of departure the assumption that Jerome’s request for guidance could be considered genuine, viz. bereft of any scheming or ill faith, only if the letter had been written before he received the news—through Evagrius’s frequent visits—of Damasus’s recognition of Paulinus, contained in the

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70 Lawler and Mierow, The Letters, 196.
72 Greenslade, Early Latin theology, 305-306.
document *Through My Son*, and possibly even in a previous, non-extant letter. But the chronology that places *Letter 15* in the years 376-377 precludes this possibility. If Damasus’s *Through My Son* was known to Jerome before he composed his missive to the Pope, Gleenslade argues, then Jerome must have either not considered it a sufficiently definitive statement, or feared that Basil’s embassies might induce Damasus to falter. In the latter case we would have to imagine that Jerome’s professed uncertainty as to Damasus’s position on the Antiochene schism was a studied pretense, possibly deployed in coordination with Evagrius.

In order to salvage Jerome’s integrity, Greenslade proposes a complete re-dating of the chronology of his Syrian stay. The new timeline would place him in Antioch in 373 and in the desert the following year, thereby enabling a composition of *Letter 15* that would pre-date the delivery of *Through My Son* (commonly dated to 375) or Jerome’s acquaintance therewith. This solution is similar to Taylor’s, according to which “Jerome’s letters are proof that at the time when he wrote them no clear sign of Roman favour had been accorded to any of the rival claimants to the see of Antioch, or at least none had yet become known to the ascetics of Chalcis.”

The main obstacle Gleenslade finds to this reconstruction is the fact that *Letter 15* treats Vitalis as a fourth contestant vying for the episcopacy in Antioch: Apollinaris, in

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73 Taylor, “St Basil the Great,” 263.
fact, did not ordain Vitalis bishop until 375. But since Vitalis’s activities obviously predate his ordination, it is conceivable, as Gleenslade himself notes, that Jerome simply meant to mention him as the leader of an ecclesiastical faction. Finally, Gleenslade considers Damasus’s failure to respond to Jerome’s Letter 15 to be a potential proof of its 374-375 dating, on the conjecture that the Pope either was still undecided as to which community he should grant his approval to, or figured that Jerome would hear about the decision contained in Through My Son before he would be able to receive whatever personal response Damasus could draft.

This is not the appropriate context to take up again the entire vexed question of the chronology of Jerome’s early post-Aquileian years. Nevertheless, the attempt to utilize the Antiochene reception of Through My Son as a decisive document for determining the degree of sincerity of Jerome’s appeal to Damasus in Letter 15 is in my eyes problematic. Since his arrival in Antioch Jerome had been in the company of Evagrius, who had just come back from his mission in Caesarea. It is difficult to imagine that he would not be aware of Damasus’s Eustathian leanings even before moving to the desert. In addition, besides the impossibility that Jerome would lend support to a community that he deemed at best crypto-Arian (in Letter 15 he calls the Meletians “offspring of the Arians”), Evagrius’s commitment to Paulinus must have resulted in Jerome’s own, as Gleenslade himself admits.
Somewhat similarly, according to Lawler

[w]hen Jerome wrote his first letter to Damasus, he was, so it would appear at least, not well informed on the actions taken by various personages of the Church with regard to the Antioch situation. Damasus was well aware of the controversies in the East, and he and others had for some time been trying to heal the open split. Jerome’s letter to Damasus also seems to reflect a somewhat imperfect understanding of all the points at issue in the doctrinal/semantic dispute.\footnote{Lawler, “Jerome’s First Letter,” 551.}

Nonetheless, it does not seem necessary to accuse Jerome of deceitfulness. It is likelier that, though fully set in his philo-Eustathian vetero-Nicenism, he thought it best, both rhetorically and disciplinarily, to address the Pope from a stance of ignorance, without making any assumption about a matter with regard to which Damasus had never expressed himself in an absolute or definitive way.

I will cite now from Letter 15:

And since on account of my sins I have come to this wilderness that separates Syria from the border of barbarism, nor can I, since such great expanses divide us, always solicit from your holiness “the holy thing of the Lord,” therefore here I follow your colleagues, the Egyptian confessors, and I, small vessel, take refuge under loading boats. I do not know Vitalis, I reject Meletius, I ignore Paulinus. Whoever does not gather with you, scatters; that is, whoever is not of Christ is of Antichrist (Mt 12:30). So now—woe is me!—, after the Nicene faith, after the Alexandrian decree (of 362)—the west being equally in agreement—, a novel expression of three hypostaseis is requested from me, a Roman man, by the Campenses\footnote{Both J. Labourt, ed., \textit{Saint Jérôme : Lettres. Tome I} (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949), 47 and Cavallera, \textit{Saint Jérôme}, I, 53 render campenses as “campagnards”; G. Bardy, “St. Jerome and Greek Thought. A Monument to St. Jerome,” in \textit{A Monument to Saint Jerome: Essays on Some Aspects of His Life, Works and Influence}, ed. F.X. Murphy (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1952), 88 similarly translates as “peasants.” The study by W. Jülicher, “Campenses,” in \textit{Realencyklopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft. Band III, Halbband 6}, \textit{Campanus ager-Claudius}, ed. W. Kroll, A. Pauly and G. Wissowa (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1899), 1443 provides} (scil. the Meletians), offspring of the Arians. Which apostles, pray
tell, affirmed such things? Which new Paul, master of the gentiles, has taught these doctrines? I ask how they think three hypostaseis can be understood. “Three subsistent persons,” they say. I respond that so do I believe. The meaning does not suffice (for them): they demand the very name, for I know not which venom hides in the syllables. I exclaim: “If somebody does not confess three hypostaseis as three subsistent entities, namely three subsisting persons, may he be anathema,” and since I do not proclaim the words, I am judged a heretic. But if somebody, understanding hypostasis as ousia, does not proclaim one hypostasis in three persons, he is a stranger to Christ. And, by virtue of this confession, I am burnt with the branding iron of “unionism” just as much as you.76

Lawler provides an interpretation of this passage that it is worth quoting in full:

In writing to Damasus Jerome seems to have been unaware of the fact (or perhaps chose to ignore it) that the Alexandria Synod of 362, which had been presided over by Athanasius, had admitted that the term hypostasis could be used in the meaning of «person,» and that therefore one could rightly speak of three hypostases. Moreover, Athanasius’ Tomus ad Antiochenos, written in the name of the Alexandria Synod, had urged the opposing sides not to press the matter of one or three hypostases, since arguments merely over words should

support for this reading. Similarly, according to Freemantle, “[t]he Meletians were so called because, denied access to the churches of the city, they had to worship in the open air outside the walls” (P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds., A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. Second Series. Vol. VI: Jerome: Letters and Select Works (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893), 19, n. 4; see also the remarks in Labourt, Saint Jérôme : Lettres, 164. However, Downey, A History of Antioch in Syria, 411 and n. 83 explains that the nickname comes from the military area (campus) across the Orontes near which the Meletians had been reduced to celebrating their services.

76Hier. Epistula XV, 2, 2 - 3, 2: Et quia pro facinoribus meis ad eam solitudinem commigravi, quae Syriam iuncto barbariae fine determinat, nec possum sanctum domini tot interiacentibus spatiis a sanctimonia tua semper expetere, ideo hic collegas tuos Aegyptios confessores sequor et sub onerariis naubus parua naucula delecto. Non noui Vitalem, Meletium respuo, ignore Paulinum. quicumque tecum non colligit, spargit, hoc est, qui Christi non est, antichristi est. Nunc igitur — pro dolor! — post Nicenam fidem, post Alexandrinum iuncto pariter occidente decretum trium ὑποστάσεων ab Arrianorum prole, Campensibus, nouellum a me, homine Romano, nomen exigitur. Qui ista, quaes, apostol! prodidere? Quis nouus magister gentium Paulus haec docuit? Interrogamus, quid tres hypostases posse arbitrerrur intelli; 'Tres personas subsistentes' aiant. Respondemus nos ita credere: non sufficiet sensus, ipsum nomen efflagitant, quia nescio quid ueneni in syllabis latet. Clamamus: "Si quis tres hypostases ut tria ἑν ὑπόστασε, hoc est ut tres subsistentes personas, non confitetur, anathema sit" et, quia vocabula non edicimus, heretici iudicamur. Si quis autem hypostasim usiam intellegens non in tribus personis unam hypostasin dicit, alienus a Christo est et sub hac confessione uobiscum pariter cauterio unionis inurimur.

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not be allowed to divide those who think alike. But the decision of 362 itself had
given rise to misunderstandings, and it was not yet that the formula was fixed by
Basil of Caesarea: μία οὐσία, τρεῖς υποστάσεις.\textsuperscript{77}

Pépin recognized instead in Jerome’s attitude toward the Meletians, as expressed
in this anecdote, his characteristic uncompromisingness;\textsuperscript{78} and Simonetti proposed a
reading not distant from Pépin’s.\textsuperscript{79} My reading differs from those just cited. Far from
either purposefully ignoring or unwittingly revealing ignorance of the Alexandrian
synod, in my view Jerome’s response is perfectly in line with the resolution of that
gathering, which had decreed that if the tri-hypostatic party abjured tri-theism, the mia-
hypostatic party would be ready to recognize their proliferation of hypostaseis as
legitimate.

Fürst considers Jerome to have been “[o]hne tieferen Einblick in die überaus
verworren dogmatische und kirchenpolitische Situation […] und in Verkennung der
aktuellen dogmengeschichtlichen Entwicklung.”\textsuperscript{80} Similarly, for Gleenslade Jerome

\textsuperscript{77} Lawler, “Jerome’s First Letter,” 550-551.

\textsuperscript{78} J. Pépin, “Attitudes d’Augustin devant le vocabulaire philosophique grec. La langue latine langue
de la philosophie,” in \textit{La langue latine, langue de la philosophie. Actes du colloque de Rome (17-19 mai 1990)} (CEFR
161; Rome: École française de Rome, 1992), 299, n. 69. On this passage see also Gemeinhardt, “Apollinaris of
Laodicea,” 286. On Jerome’s uncompromisingness with regard to those he considered heretics see e.g. his
\textit{Altercation of a Luciferian and an Orthodox}, on which see Y.-M. Duval, “Saint Jérôme devant le baptême des

\textsuperscript{79} The reading of the episode proposed in Simonetti, “«Persona» nel dibattito cristologico,” 537-538
is not distant from Pépin’s.

\textsuperscript{80} A. Fürst, “Hieronymus: Theologie als Wissenschaft,” in \textit{Theologen der christlichen Antike: eine
“lectures the Pope, although he can hardly have had time yet to grasp the subtleties of Greek trinitarian theology and terminology, if he ever did.”\textsuperscript{81} I would claim, to the contrary, that Jerome is giving proof of a solid comprehension of the latest conciliatory developments in eastern vetero-Nicene theology. Though clearly holding fast, personally, to the equation between \textit{ousia} and \textit{hypostasis}, and therefore upholding the unity of \textit{hypostasis},\textsuperscript{82} Jerome was ready to accept the notion of three \textit{hypostaseis} on the condition that \textit{hypostasis} be understood as synonymous with \textit{persona subsistens}, an expression that should in all likelihood be back-translated as πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον.\textsuperscript{83}

Jerome was willing to push the Eustathian trinitarian views to their most conciliatory extreme, to the point of recognizing three \textit{hypostaseis} if these were understood as πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα, for the sake of producing a profession of faith acceptable to the tri-hypostatic Meletians. In fact, until the latter showed the intransigence that gained them the appellation “offspring of the Arians,” they could be charitably considered, \textit{cum} the Council of Alexandria, “orthodox.” This appeasing conduct is consonant with the unprejudiced manner in which, in asking Damasus for advice, Jerome referred to the Antiochene pro-Nicene episcopal leaders as on a par with

\textsuperscript{81}Gleenslade, \textit{Early Latin Theology}, 306.

\textsuperscript{82}See Hier, \textit{Epistula XV}, 4-5.

\textsuperscript{83}The alternative possibility exists of seeing \textit{persona subsistens} as a rendition of πρόσωπον ὑφεστώς.
one another in their claims, in spite of what must have certainly been his own philo-
Eustathian leanings.

But this conciliatory development must not have been limited to Jerome. The
locutionary context of *personas subsistentes* in the passage from *Letter 15* quoted above
shows that the phrase was part of a debating strategy more commonly employed by the
Meletians in their dealings with the vetero-Nicenes. Jerome writes in fact: “I ask how
they think three *hypostaseis* can be understood. “Three subsistent persons,” they say. I
respond that so do I believe.” The exchange appears to indicate that in the mid-370s the
Meletians of Antioch, or of its surroundings, knew the members of the Eustathian
communion to be susceptible to the appeal of an equation between πρόσωπον
ἐνυπόστατον and *hypostasis*, and, as seen from the continuation of the report, counted
on their willingness to accept that equivalence as a facilitating factor for the further step
of embracing tri-hypostatism.

Confirmation of this strategy comes from a letter of the (by then) homoiousian
George of Laodicea, quoted by Epiphanius in his *Medicine Chest*, a work composed
between 374 and 377. In these lines George reassures his presumably vetero-Nicene
readers about the orthodoxy of those easterners who “call the individualities of
subsistent persons (πρόσωπα ὑφεστῶτα) *hypostaseis*” while acknowledging that these
are not three first principles:
The easterners, as I said, call the individualities of subsistent persons “hypostaseis.” They do not mean that the three hypostaseis are three first principles, or three Gods, for they condemn anyone who speaks of three Gods. Nor do they call the Father and the Son two Gods; they confess that the godhead is one, and that it encompasses all things through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. <But> though they confess one godhead, dominion, and first principle, they still acknowledge the persons in an orthodox manner through the individualities of the hypostaseis.84

The passage shows that readiness to posit an equivalence between πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα (or ύφεστώτα) on the one hand and hypostaseis on the other—clearly while bending the common meaning of hypostaseis toward that of πρόσωπα, rather than the other way around—had become by the mid-370s widespread enough among at least some sectors of the vetero-Nicene alliance that homoiousian propaganda could rely on its acceptance in order to promote their tri-hypostatic views.

The notion of a subsistent person (which may have been at this point expressed interchangeably as πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον or ύφεστώς) is repeated in the letter with which Jerome announced to the priest Mark that he was abandoning the hermitage, in a context in which he made his trinitarian stance clear:

I am called a heretic while I preach the consubstantial trinity; I am accused of Sabellian impiety while I pronounce three subsistent, true, integral, and perfect persons with unceasing voice. If (I am accused) by the Arians, so be it; if by the

84 Epiph. Adv. haer., 4, 73, 16, 1: Τὰς ἰδιότητας ὡς προειρήκαµεν προσώπων ύφεστώτων ύποστάσεως ὀνοµάζουσιν οἱ ἀνατολικοί, οὐχὶ τὰς τρεῖς υποστάσεις τρεῖς ἀρχὰς ἢ τρεῖς θεοὺς λέγοντες. ἀναθεµατίζουσι γὰρ εἰ τις λέγει τρεῖς θεοὺς, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν δύο θεοὺς λέγοντιν ὁμολογοῦσι γὰρ μὲν εἶναι θεότητα, ἐμπεριέχοντας δὲν’ υἱόν ἐν πνεύµατι ἁγίῳ τὰ πάντα, ὁμολογοῦντες <δὲ> μίαν θεότητα καὶ μίαν βασιλείαν καὶ μίαν ἀρχὴν ὡς τὰ πρόσωπα ἐν ταῖς ἰδιότητι τῶν υποστάσεων εὐσεβῶς γνωρίζουσι (italics mine; translation adapted from Williams, The Panarion, II, 461).
orthodox, those who argue with a faith of this kind have ceased to be orthodox. Or, if they prefer, let them condemn me as a heretic with the west, a heretic with Egypt, namely with Damasus and Peter.85

The *personae* confessed by Jerome should again be rendered in the Greek in which those verbal exchanges likely occurred not as *hypostaseis*, but as *πρόσωπα*. The use of the phrase *subsistentes* [...] *personae* thus constitutes a second example of Jerome’s reference to his common usage of the expression *πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα*. Although it could legitimately be argued that the technical nature of the utilization of the phrase is diluted by the fact that *subsistentes* is used alongside two more adjectives, *veras* and *integras* can also be understood as epexegetical expansions upon *subsistentes*, used to illustrate the full meaning of the *terminus technicus*.

Remarkably, based on these reports, it appears that if the Eustathians refused to cross the boundary separating recognition of the legitimacy of tri-hyapostatism when held by a member of a different theological tradition—as established by the Council of Alexandria—from embracement of that doctrine *tout court*, the Meletians intolerantly cried “heresy.” As had already been the case in the early 360s, the Eustathians’ attitude toward the Meletians was one of greater amenability than the latter were willing to display.

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85 Hier. Epistula XVII, 2: Hereticus vocor homousiam praedicans trinitatem; Sabellianae inpietatis arguor tres subsistentes, veras, integras personas indefessa voce pronuntians. Si ab Arrianis, merito; si ab orthodoxis, qui huiusmodi arguunt fidem esse orthodoxi desierunt aut, si eis placet, hereticum me cum occidente, hereticum com Aegypto, hoc est cum Damaso Petroque, condemnent.
5.3 The New Pro-Nicene Front of the 370s

5.3.1 Epiphanius's Nicenism

The second testimony to the area of Eustathian theological compromise comes from Epiphanius of Salamis (315 ca.-403), who in his *Medicine Chest* preserved for Christian posterity knowledge about, and excerpts drawn from the works of, a great array of Christian heretics. His heresiological activities aside, Epiphanius is known to readers of ancient Christian literature more for his protagonist role in the second phase of the Origenist controversy and for his contribution to the Apollinarist dispute than for his positions on trinitarian matters.

Epiphanius was by nobody’s account an ingenious theological mind. Both his *Anchored Discourse*86 (late 373 or early 374) and his *Medicine Chest* (374-377) express theological views that lack the originality contained in the systems of Christian maîtres à penser like Basil of Caesarea or Athanasius. Nonetheless, his views are worthy of historical examination. They provide at the very least a glimpse into the way a bishop of a lesser eastern locale with personal ties to Egypt, where Athanasian loyalty was predominant, may have reconciled his ecclesiastical affiliation with views that were open to a more substantial understanding of triadic logic within the Christian godhead.

In his commentary on the Anchored Discourse, Kösters distinguished the theological inclinations of the vetero-Nicene Epiphanius who wrote the Anchored Discourse from those of the neo-Nicene bishop who authored the Medicine Chest. It is an undeniable matter of record that not long after Athanasius’s death (373) Epiphanius began to undergo a transition from the mia-hypostatic faith to the tri-hypostatic formula propounded by the Meletians. What is still in need of analysis is the theoretical basis that allowed for the Cypriot bishop’s evolution from mia- to tri-hypostatism without ever compelling him to cease standing in communion with the Eustathians.

After becoming bishop of Salamis, in 366, Epiphanius had communicated with Paulinus, the Eustathian bishop, seeking to twart Meletius’s claims to the Antiochene see. Epiphanius himself gives us an account of the events that led him to this decision. By his own declaration, he had chosen Paulinus after being shown an autographous Athanasian exemplar of the Tome to the Antiochenes carrying the subscription of the vetero-Nicene claimant:

For I visited Antioch and had a meeting with their leaders, one of whom was the bishop Vitalis, a man of the most godly life, character and conduct. And I advised and urged them to assent to the faith of the holy church, and give up the contentious doctrine. But Vitalis said, “But what quarrel is there between us?” For he was at odds with a respectable and eminent man, the bishop Paulinus,

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87 See Kösters, Die Trinitätslehre, passim. On Epiphanius’s staunch homoousianism, at least at this point in his career, see D. Fairbairn, “The Synod of Ancyra (358) and the Question of the Son’s Creaturehood,” JThS 64 (2013): 111-136; and Y.R. Kim, Epiphanius of Cyprus: Imagining an Orthodox World (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 88-90.
and Paulinus was at odds with Vitalis, whom I had summoned. I hoped to reconcile the two; both appeared to be preaching the orthodox faith, and yet each of them disagreed (with the other) for some reason—for Vitalis had accused Paulinus of Sabellianism. And thus, when I arrived at Antioch I had refrained from full communion with Paulinus, until he convinced me by submitting a document which, on a previous occasion, he had stated his agreement with the blessed Athanasius to clear himself. For he brought a signed copy of this and gave it to me. It contains a clear statement about the Trinity and the mind of Christ’s human nature, composed by our blessed father Athanasius himself. I append this statement; it is as follows: “A copy of the document written by Bishop Paulinus. I, Paulinus, bishop, believe as I have received from the fathers that there is a perfect existent and subsistent Father and a perfect subsistent Son, and that the perfect Holy Spirit is subsistent. I therefore receive the above account of the three hypostases and the one hypostasis or ousia, and receive those who so believe; for it is godly to believe and confess the Trinity in one Godhead […] I therefore condemn those who say that the Holy Spirit is a creature made by the Son. I further condemn the heresies of Sabellius and Photinus, and every heresy, for I am content with the creed of Nicaea and with all that is written above.”

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88Epiph. Adv. haer., 6, 77, 20, 3-21, 9: ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀντιοχέων γὰρ γενόµενοι τοῖς ἀκραίµοσι αὐτῶν συντετυχήκαµεν, εν οίς καὶ Βιτάλιος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ὑπῆρχεν, ευλαβέστατος ἀνὴρ τῷ βίῳ καὶ τῇ καταστάσει καὶ τῇ πολιτείᾳ. ἐλέγοµεν δὲ συµβουλεύοντες καὶ παρακαλοῦντες συµφωνῆσαι τῇ πίστει τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας καὶ ἐᾶσαι τὸ φιλόνεικο ῥῆµα. ὁ δὲ Βιτάλιος ἐλέγε· τί γάρ ἐστι τὸ ἀνὰ µέσον ἡµῶν; εἶχε γὰρ οὕτω στάσιν πρὸς αἰδέσιµόν τινα καὶ ἑπίσηµον, Παυλῖνος τὸν ἐπίσκοπον, καὶ Παυλῖνος πρὸς τὸν εἰρηµένον Βιτάλιον, ὑφ' ἡµῶν µετακληθέντα. βουλόµενοι τοιοῦτοι ἀµφοτέρους εἰς εἰρήνην συµβιβάσαι (ἀµφότεροι γὰρ ἐδόκουν ὀρθόδοξον πίστιν κηρύττειν καὶ ἑκάστος διάστασιν εἶχε διὰ ταύτα πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀνὴρ καὶ ἑπίσηµον, Παυλῖνος τὸν ἐπίσκοπον, καὶ Παυλῖνος πρὸς τὸν Παυλῖνον τελείας κοινωνίας, ἕως ὅτε µετὰ ἐκθέσεως ἡµᾶς ἐγγράφου ἔπεισεν, δι' ἧς ἡδη πρότερον ἀπολογίας χάριν πρὸς τὸν µακαρίτην Ἀθανάσιον ἐποιήσατο τὴν συγκατάθεσιν. προσήνεγκε γὰρ καὶ ἐπέδωκεν ἡµῖν ταύτης τὸ ἀντίγραφον µεθ' ὑπογραφῆς, σαφῶς περὶ τριάδος ἔχον ὁµοῦ καὶ περὶ νοῦ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐνανθρωπήσεως, χειρὶ αὐτοῦ τοῦ µακαρίου πατρὸς ἡµῶν Ἀθανασίου, ἢν ἐκθέσιν καθυπέταξεν, καὶ ἐστίν ἢδη «Ἀντίγραφον ψευδής» καὶ ἔστω γὰρ Παυλῖνος τοῦ ἐπισκόπου. Ἐγὼ Παυλῖνος ὁ ἐπίσκοπος οὕτω φρονῶ καθώς παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τῶν πατέρων, ὧν καὶ ὑφεστῶτα πατέρα τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστῶτα υἱὸν τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστῶτα τὸ πνεῦμα τῷ ὑδάτι τέλειον. ἐφ' ἡµῖν πρὸς τὸν Παυλῖνον πληρώσεις παρελάβησα ὑπὸ τῶν πατέρων, ὧν καὶ ὑφεστῶτα πατέρα τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστῶτα υἱὸν τέλειον καὶ ὑφεστῶτα τὸ πνεῦμα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τῷ ἐν Νικαιᾷ ὁµολογηθεῖσαν πίστιν, καὶ ὡς ἔστω γὰρ ἐστὶν φρονεῖν καὶ ὁµολογεῖν τὴν τριάδα ἐν ἕνῃ θεότητι. [...] ὅθεν ἀναθεµατίζω τοὺς αθετεῦντας τὴν ἐν Νικαιᾷ ὁµολογηθεῖσαν πίστιν καὶ μὴ ὁµολογοῦντας ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἢ ὁµοούσιον εἶναι τὸν ἰδία τῷ πατρὶ ἀναθεµατίζω δὲ καὶ τοὺς λέγοντας τὸ πνεῦμα τῷ ἰδίῳ κτίσμα διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου γεγονός. ἐτὶ δὲ ἀναθεµατίζω τὴν Ἁλεμβελλίου καὶ Φωτεινοῦ καὶ
Paulinus’s political weakness, in comparison to Meletius’s extensive influence in the east, may have also been attractive to the ambitious Cypriot bishop. Epiphanius later visited Paulinus in Antioch in 376 and as late as 382 journeyed with him to Rome to plead with Pope Damasus in favor of the Eustathian cause. He expounded a boldly mia-hypostatic theology in his Anchored Discourse, a fairly unsystematic doctrinal letter addressed to the Christians of Syedra in Pamphylia in response to their call for aid against the local pneumatomachians. When he did sketch in that work an actual triadic articulation within the godhead, he rooted it in an onomatological theory distinguishing between mononymic and homonymic names, in which the distinct names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are regarded as guarantors of the three entities’ separate subsistence.

Epiphanius’s surprising change of heart with regard to the number of hypostaseis is reflected in Basil of Caesarea’s Letter 258 to him:

Therefore, in the first place pray, then exhort them also with all your strength, after they have cast out ambition from their souls—both for the restoration of strength to the Church and for the crushing of the insolence of the enemy—to effect a reconciliation among themselves. And another thing also has encouraged my soul greatly—the addition which has been made by your integrity to your πάσαν αἵρεσιν, στοιχών τῇ πίστει τῇ κατὰ Νίκαιαν καὶ πάσι τοῖς προγεγραµµένοις» (translation very slightly adapted from Williams, The Panarion, 599-600).

90 See Epiph. Anc., 6, 5.
91 See Epiph. Anc., 6, 8; 8, 4. See also Kösters, Die Trinitätslehre, 121-129 and 332-347.
other noble and accurate theological pronouncements, namely, that we must confess the three hypostaseis. So let also the brethren at Antioch be informed of this by you; but surely they have somehow already been so informed. For manifestly you would not have accepted communion with them had you not made sure of this matter on this part most particularly.\textsuperscript{92}

Epiphanius’s belief in three hypostaseis is also expressed in Medicine Chest in six different passages.\textsuperscript{93} In discussing the Marcellans, for example, he criticizes their views in the following terms:

And while the recesses of [Marcellus’] thought are known [only] to God, his pupils and converts, either not knowing his mind or [indeed] reporting his true [ideas], did not want to confess the three hypostaseis, as is the truth, namely that one is the godhead, one the glory, the trinity which is homoousios and which does not differ in its own glory [...].\textsuperscript{94}

Interestingly for our purposes, in Medicine Chest Epiphanius accompanied the expression of one ousia and one hypostasis of the godhead, which he had employed throughout Anchored Discourse, with the affirmation of “three subsistente πρόσωπα [...]


\textsuperscript{93}Epiph. Adv. haer., 2, 25, 6, 4; 5, 69, 80, 3; 6, 72, 1, 3; 6, 73, 34, 2; 6, 73, 36, 4; 7, 78, 24, 5.

\textsuperscript{94}Epiph. Adv. haer., 6, 72, 1, 1: καὶ τὰ μὲν κρύφα τῆς ἐννοίας θεόν ἐγνωσταν, οἱ δὲ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ γεγονόσες καὶ κατηχηθέντες, ἢ τὴν ἑκείνου ἐννοίαν ἀγγοοῦντες ἢ [μὴ] τὰ ἑκείνου ἀλήθη διηγοῦμεν, οὔτε τὰς τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις ὁμολογεῖν ἤθελον, ἢ ἐχεῖ ἢ αὐταίρια, σι διὰ ἐστὶν ἡ θεότης, μια δοξολογία, ὁμοούσιος οὖσα ἡ τριάς καὶ οὔτε ἀναλαμβάνοντα τῆς ἰδεώς δόξης [...].
from the triple hypostasis" (ἐνυπόστατα τρία πρόσωπα [...] εξ υποστάσεως ούσης τριτῆς).95

Epiphanius had used the adjective ἐνυπόστατος eighteen times in the Anchored Discourse, and, as Young Richard Kim indicates, "he seemed to use it as a term to indicate the real, essential existence of the persons of the Trinity, in particular as a foil to Sabellian modalism (in opposition to ἀνυπόστατος/ν)."96 Kim emphasizes that through use of the adjective ἐνυπόστατος Epiphanius intended to instill the notion “that each individual divine person together necessarily comprises one hypostatic God.”97

At least in the case of its usage in conjunction with πρόσωπον, however, the primary purpose of the term appears to have been not that of metonymic representation of the whole of the godhead, but of ensuring the substantiality of the three members of the trinity. Epiphanius’s shift toward unconditional acceptance of three hypostaseis, which was to enthuse a homoiousian like Basil, was thus prepared and enabled by the “enhypostatic” understanding of the πρόσωπον that he held even during his mia-hypostatic period. In this sense, his about-face testifies to the success of the propaganda strategy that we have seen employed above by the Antiochene Meletians and by the

96Kim, Epiphanius of Cyprus, 131, n. 132. Epiph. Anc., 25, 2; 31, 3; 34, 8; 35, 1; 36, 4; 38, 2; 39, 3; 39, 4; 39, 5; 39, 6; 54, 5; 55, 8; 67, 7; 68, 2; 83, 4.
97Ibid., 131.
homoiousian leader George of Laodicea, hoping to overcome the limiting *proviso* whereby the “three *hypostaseis*” language was deemed acceptable, within the progressive eastern mia-hypostatic perspective, only if *hypostasis* would be understood in the sense of πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον.

**5.3.2 The Marcellans**

To my knowledge, the only other fourth-century occurrence of the technical phrase πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον (or ὑφεστώς) is in a document of the second Marcellan generation, from the same years in which Epiphanius and Jerome were writing. In 375 eleven pro-Nicene Egyptian bishops were exiled to the Palestinian locale of Sepphoris, whence they sent a letter to the Marcellan clergy of Ancyra. The response of the Ancyran presbyters is preserved by Epiphanius. Lienhard sees in this letter a document of the mia-hypostatic party, and an exception to the loss of significance that the categories of mia-hypostatic and dyo- (or tri-)hypostatic theology underwent after 361.

Nevertheless, the document anathematizes some long-held Marcellan teachings, showing that the new, hostile political circumstances had required even die-hard monarchians to proceed to a theological update, of which the naming of the persons of the trinity as “subsistent” was an integral part. The document contains in fact a

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98 On this letter see Leinhard, “Ousia and Hypostasis,” 116-117.

profession of faith that condemns those who deny the existence of three “subsistent [...] persons” in the following terms:

[we] condemn [...] those who do not say that the holy trinity consists of three not circumscribable, subsistent, *homoousios*, co-eternal, and perfect πρόσωπα.¹⁰⁰

Although the adjective ἐνυπόστατον is used here alongside others, it is difficult to imagine that the Ancyran clergy proceeded unthinkingly to the attribution of substantiality to the πρόσωπα of the various members of the trinity, which Marcellus had fought to keep expressed even by one sole πρόσωπον. It is noteworthy, moreover, that “subsistent” is the only adjective of the series clearly to go in the opposite logical direction from that of the monarchian defense of the unicity of God: “*homoousios*” and “co-eternal” stand as descriptors of the mutual interfusion of the respective πρόσωπα of the Father and the Son, whereas “not circumscribable” and “perfect” are generic expressions of divinity. It is therefore likely that the formulation contained in this profession of faith was influenced by πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον as a technical formula. This progressive Eustathian meme had made its way into the writings of the representatives of one of the most conservative theological outlooks of the fourth century.

5.3.3 The Recomposition of the Vetro-Nicene Alliance

Since the events of the period 363-366 (the two years marking respectively the Meletian Council of Antioch and a homoiousian delegation to Pope Liberius which had officially subscribed to the Nicene homoousios), the theological front that stood behind the banner of Nicaea was extremely composite, bringing together vetro- and neo-Nicenes. Historiography on the trinitarian controversies has typically contented itself with highlighting the distinction between these two fronts. On the left side of the spectrum, within the pro-Nicene movement, stood the homoiousians, into whose internal political and intellectual dynamics this study has chosen not to inquire.

To their immediate right was the vast and heterogeneous vetro-Nicene camp, which included such varied groups as Marcellans, Eustathians of various kinds (both schismatic Luciferians and Paulinians), and Athanasians. Using a brief survey of the fourth-century reception of the πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον meme as a guiding index, I have attempted to delve more deeply not only into the plural consistency of the vetro-Nicene front, but also into its internal dynamics and the historical vanishing point towards which its multiple trajectories led. The evidence points toward the achievement, by the mid-370s, of a recombination of the theological traditions internal to the vetro-Nicene front.
The Eustathian conciliatory effort inaugurated by the Paulinian subscription to the Tome to the Antiochenes did not exhaust the vetero-Nicene landscape in the 370s. On the most conservative side of this camp there remained a rigorist faction which persisted in its rejection of any form of compromise with the Meletians. In Antioch these were intransigent Eustathians who, under the influence of Lucifer of Calaris, had broken communion with the community of Paulinus; but similar elements survived also elsewhere in the east, e.g. in Alexandria and Ancyra. In Ancyra they, inspired by Marcellus’s doctrine, did not feel the need to revise his theology past the update that he himself had conducted when presenting a profession of faith to the Council of Rome in 341.

To the left of this formation stood the vetero-Nicene mainstream, which remained at peace with the deliberations of the Council of Alexandria of 362, in spite of the Meletians’ continued aloofness. To their more progressive theological stance, which included the concept of three πρόσωπα ἐνυπόστατα, we may also liken the positions of the second-generation Marcellans from Ancyra about whose letter Epiphanius reports. Those members of this alliance who were more prone to compromise may have gone so

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101 Eponents of this tendency I would consider Jerome, Athanasius, and possibly Vitalis after his conversion from Meletianism to vetero-Nicenism to be exponents of this tendency.
far as to accept tri-hypostatism—as Epiphanius is known to have done—without for that reason having to revoke communion with one bishop and grant it to a different one.

If this attempt at highlighting ideological nuances and fluidity within the Eustathian quarters is accepted, the need arises to re-evaluate more precisely the intellectual milieu that produced such works—commonly dubbed “Eusthalian,” and some of them bearing the markers of the pseudepigraphic production characteristic of persecuted minorities\(^2\) as the *Refutation of the Hypocrisy of Meletius and Eusebius of Samosata*; the deacon Eugene of Ancyra’s *Exposition of Faith to Athanasius*; and the *Pseudo-Athanasian Catholic Epistle, Great Speech on Faith, and Epistolary with Liberius*.\(^3\)

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The new configuration described by the loose intellectual taxonomy that I have attempted to sketch had institutional implications that cannot be outlined here. The limited aim of this chapter has been to illustrate a series of dynamic lines of intellectual development within the vetero-Nicene camp which would allow us to shed light on interstices of engagement, compromise, or defection between the vetero- and the neo-Nicene alliances. In so doing, I also hope to have shown that the focus on technical terminology which the previous chapters deployed for the sake of drawing conclusions about broad epistemic changes may also be fruitfully put to work for smaller-scale intellectual-historical reconstructions.
6. The Trinitarian Controversy in Edessa

6.1 Introduction

The time of great theological dissension that struck Christianity in the fourth century did not spare the Syrian city of Edessa. Here, too, the representatives of the different Christian theologico-ecclesial alliances were engaged in that confrontation over the definition of the Son’s relationship to the Father.

Edessa in the early fourth century exhibited a diverse religious landscape. Ephrem in his writings taunted a whole array of heretical groups. To the sixteen items contained in the bipartite taxonomy he drew up in his *Hymns against Heresies* we need to add the presence of a Jewish community, as well as that of denizens devoted to Greco-Roman and local cults. The interactions and degree of overlapping among these

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communities, as well as their relations to Ephrem’s own faction, are mostly beyond recovery. It is certain, however, that even before the beginning of the heated debates over Arius’s teachings the camp of Edessa’s self-identified Christians contained communities of different orientations, perceiving themselves as separate from one another. Presumably only one of them (the so-called “Paluṭians”) split into the groups that would play an active role in the convulsive events of the trinitarian strife. Upon canvasing the battlefield of Christian conflict in fourth-century Edessa, then, its boundaries have to be broadened to include a greater array of interactions than the trinitarian clashes alone.

Although the connections between theological developments in non-“Paluṭian” and “Paluṭian” kinds of Christianity in Edessa are well worth exploring, this chapter will center on the events that marked the battle over the trinity in the city, focusing in particular on the involvement of the episcopate. Neither classical treatments nor recent reassessments of the fourth-century trinitarian controversies have devoted particular

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attention to Syriac sources. Through the discussion of testimonies typically excluded from presentations of the Blessed City, as well as of some new prosopographic data, I hope to integrate the traditional scholarly treatments of the trinitarian disputes, and to show the importance of a more thorough investigation of Edessa’s participation in the discussions that absorbed the attention of church leaderships for over sixty years.

The evidence available for this undertaking is admittedly scarce. What is known about the controversy in other parts of Syria, and in the eastern provinces in general, may help shape an idea of the ecclesial scenario at Edessa. Nevertheless, the forming and breaking of alliances affected (and was in turn affected by) local developments in different ways, and the alternate fortunes of the various groups sometimes followed divergent patterns in the various corners of the Empire. Sections 2 through 5 of the present chapter will be devoted to a reconstruction of the unfolding of these debates. The city revered as the cradle of Syriac Christianity will reveal a surprising degree of doctrinal variety within the fold of what would come to be seen as the mainline brand of Christianity.

An account of the Syrian trinitarian controversies was already offered, in the fifth century, by the church historian Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Theodoret, one of our main sources for these events, belonged to an establishment that attempted to preserve and consolidate the achievements of ecclesiastical unity inherited from the previous
generation of church leaders, who with the aid of Roman power had brought an end to the hostilities about the *homoousios*. Theodoret’s *Church History*, with its attempt—described above—to reintegrate the Eustathian tradition into a project allowing the legitimization of Meletius’s political action, needs to be read as an example of *histoire engagée*. In Theodoret’s work, ideological concerns and expectations about the contemporary institutional outlook and geo-ecclesiological positioning of the church of Syria are written back into the narrative of fourth-century events. Sections 6 through 8 of this chapter will combine a recounting of the exile of the Edessene pro-Nicenes with an analysis of the ways in which Theodoret dealt with these events in his *History*.

### 6.2 Before the Controversies

Ancient sources draw an indirect connection between Edessa and the earliest developments of the teaching of Arius. The first link attested concerns Lucian of Antioch (ca. 250-311/312), Arius’s teacher, who is reported to have received his earliest religious instruction in the Blessed City. There he would have studied under one Makarios, an

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exegete of the Scripture. Our three informants on this detail of Lucian’s biography (the Suda, Symeon the Metaphrast, and an anonymous Life of Constantine) are all reliant upon an older account of his martyrdom. This text, thought by some to have been written in the immediate aftermath of Lucian’s execution, had its terminus post quem more conservatively established as 425 by P. Franchi de’ Cavalieri (who, however, admitted to its utilization of previous local accounts, composed in greater proximity to Lucian’s death). The historicity of the report about Lucian’s early religious education in Edessa, which made its way unquestioned into the writings of A. von Harnack, was rejected by L. Duchesne on no clear grounds, and by G. Bardy because of what he considered “le caractère essentiellement syriaque de la communauté édessénienne,” in contrast to Lucian’s heavily Greek outlook.  

7 See Suda, A, 685 (s.v. Λουκιανός ὁ µάρτυς); Symeon the Metaphrast, Vita Luciani, 1; and Vita Constantini, 1. On the anonymous Vita Constantini of the eleventh-century Codex Angelicus Graecus 22 (D.3.10) see J. Bidez, Philostorgius Kirchengeschichte mit dem Leben des Lucian von Antiochien und den Fragmenten eines Arianischen Historiographen (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 21; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1913), lxxxviii-xcii. The short sentence about Lucian’s stay in Edessa contains a textual riddle, to which P. Franchi de’ Cavalieri, “Di un frammento di una Vita di Costantino nel Codice Greco 22 della Biblioteca Angelica,” SDSD 18 (1897): 105-106 offered a solution. 


Now, so many decades later, this categorical denial is in need of a reassessment. Bardy’s characterization of Edessa’s environment as thoroughly Syriac-speaking does not capture the whole picture. Despite the scarcity of documentation about the second half of the third century, research has shown that, although Edessa remained a largely Semitic center, by 250 Greek cultural and linguistic influxes were at work in the city. Both Syriac and Greek “were in use in ordinary life, but [...] Greek will always have maintained its status as the language of public life, both secular and ecclesiastical.” Nor had the Edessene Christian community remained untouched by this Hellenization. The

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30 (2011): 107-108 accepts the report as historical with no discussion (but ibid., 107, n. 26 he mistakenly locates it in Philost. Hist. eccl., 6, 1, probably meaning to refer, instead, to the sixth section of Bidez’s edition of Philostorgius’ work, where the anonymous Vita Constantini is edited).


12 Millar, “Greek and Syriac in Edessa and Osrhoene, CE 213 to 363,” 110.
teaching of the second-to-third-century Christian author Bardaisan is undeniably a product, among other things, of Greek culture, and epigraphic evidence also points to Christian usage of Greek (though a somewhat rudimentary type thereof) in the third century.\textsuperscript{13} While we possess no definitive evidence that Lucian did indeed study in Edessa, he certainly could have found there a more Hellenized kind of Christianity than Bardy suspected.

The second connection concerns Eusebius of Emesa (ca. 300-ca. 359), whose writings, expressing moderate subordinationist views characterized by insistence on the term “unbegotten,” testify to an involvement in trinitarian discussions. About half a century after Lucian’s alleged schooling under the elusive Makarios, Eusebius, an Edessene native, received in the Blessed City his first Christian and Greek instruction.\textsuperscript{14}


This must have occurred in the latest years of the episcopacy of Qōna (whose achievements are recorded in 311/312), and/or under the latter’s (possibly immediate) successor Sha’ad.

These scattered reports provide no particular insight into the theological views preeminent among the “Paluţians” in the generation preceding the outbreak of the controversies. While it would be tempting to make the phantom-like Makarios into a forefather of Arianism, adding another link to the chain of direct intellectual filiation that treats Lucian as an “Arius vor Arius” would be an exercise in futility. Similar

_Cyrrhus: a Syrian in Greek Dress?,” in From Rome to Constantinople. Studies in Honour of Averil Cameron, ed. H. Amirav and R.B. ter Haar Romeny (Late Antique History and Religion 1; Leuven, Paris and Dudley, Mass.: Peeters, 2007), 121 asks if Eusebius’s taking up “the culture (paideia) of the Hellenes with a teacher in Edessa” was “simply a move from Christian to pagan literature, or also from Syriac to Greek.” See also his discussion of Eusebius’ education in Millar, “Greek and Syriac in Edessa and Osroene, CE 213 to 363,” 107-108.

15 See Chr. Ed., 12; and G. Fedalto, Hierarchia ecclesiastica orientalis. Series episcoporum ecclesiarum christianarum orientalium (2 vols.; Padua: Messaggero, 1988), II, 803. Qōna’s name is turned into Nōna by Barh. (see Chron. Eccl., 1, 20, ed. in J.B. Abbeloos and T.J. Lamy, Gregorii Barhebraei Chronicon Ecclesiasticum (Leuven: Peeters, 1872), I, 63 (textus)-64 (versio, where he becomes Nonnus)), and into Yōna by Michael the Syrian (see Chron., 6, 10, ed. in J.-B. Chabot, ed., Chronique de Michel le Syrien (Paris: Leroux, 1899), IV, 120, col. 1, lines 6-7 (textus) and 203 (versio); and G.Y. Ibrahim, ed., The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex of the Chronicle of Michael the Great (Texts and Translations of the Chronicle of Michael the Great 1; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009), 123, col. 1, lines 6-7).

16 For a slightly misguided discussion of Eusebius’s Edessene background (linked to his knowledge of the Abgar legend; to his anti-Marcionite, anti-Manichaean, and anti-pagan polemic; and to his valuing of asceticism, sexual renunciation, martyrdom, and education) see R. Winn, Eusebius of Emesa: Church and Theology in the Mid-Fourth Century (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 21-31.

reasoning applies to the case of Eusebius of Emesa. To be sure, by the time of his Edessene stay (in the early 320’s, or shortly before) discussions over Arius’s teaching had already extended beyond Egypt, as the Alexandrian presbyter’s Letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia indicates. However, it would be useless to speculate about the theological orientation of the bishops during whose tenure Eusebius dwelt in the city on the basis solely of the later developments of his thought. Eusebius’s mature theology, in all likelihood, was more importantly influenced by the mentorship of the “Collucianist” Patrophilus of Scythopolis and of Eusebius of Caesarea, with whom he later studied, than by that of his Edessene instructors.\(^{18}\)

What these ancient reports do suggest, rather, is a certain degree of integration of Edessa in the wider theologico-ecclesial net of Syria and the East (or, in the case of Lucian, at least the possibility thereof as perceived by the authors of the accounts on which his now-lost Life relies). This integration is also illustrated by the careers of Lucian and Eusebius, who went on to perfect their Christian education elsewhere, and eventually rose to an important status within the Church. Beyond the subsequent global division across ecclesiastical party lines, these testimonies show the “Paluṭian” community in Edessa to have harbored a kind of theological teaching similar to that known in other eastern Christian centers, and as potentially receptive to the ferments that were to bloom into the full-fledged trinitarian debates of the following decades.

6.3 During the Controversies: The Years of Aithallah and Barses

6.3.1 324-346: Aithallah

The early events of the trinitarian strife in the Blessed City, in the long period during which the eastern provinces of the Empire were under the rule first of Constantine (April 310-May 337) and then of Constantius II (May 337-November 361), remain mostly vague. More than twenty years (324/325-345/346) of the stretch of time covered by Constantine’s and Constantius’s offices were dominated in Edessa by the

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19 Including the phase of his incumbency as co-Augustus first with Constantine II and Constans, from 337 to 340, and then with Constans only, from 340 to 350.
episcopal tenure of bishop Aithallah. It was perhaps the tradition, whose historicity we have no way to judge, of Aithallah’s presence at the Council of Nicaea\textsuperscript{20} that led to his being credited with having composed a \textit{Letter on Faith} addressed to the Christians of Persia.\textsuperscript{21}

This treatise, which was probably originally composed in Syriac (and not, as at times argued, in Greek) but preserved in Armenian translation, was attributed to Aithallah by such discerning scholars as Arthur Vööbus, Ignacio Ortiz de Urbina, and Robert Murray, but its authenticity has now been disputed for almost half a century.\textsuperscript{22}


\textsuperscript{21}For further information about Aithallah see \textit{Excursus} n. 1 in Fiano, “The Trinitarian Controversies,” 122-123.

The profession of faith that the treatise reports and expounds expresses views perfectly congruent with the Nicene-Constantinopolitan dogma, couching them in language typical of the more ancient Syriac creedal tradition. Matthieu-Georges de Durand dates it to the last decades of the fourth century, and David D. Bundy attributes it to a period between 410 (the date of the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, of whose creed the first two articles of the treatise are reminiscent) and 428-431.23

Since this document cannot reliably help us shed light on the trinitarian leanings of the Edessene episcopate of Aithallah’s time, we have to content ourselves with the supposition of the bishop’s initial generic agreement with the tenets of Nicaea. It remains difficult to track Aithallah’s doctrinal evolution in the two decades that followed. Some indication could come from the circumstance that his name appears

amid the spate of signatures appended to the “Dedication creed” of the “synod in encaeniis” of 341.24

As previously discussed, this declaration, which was indebted to Eusebius of Caesarea and the Origenist tradition did not refrain from condemning antimonarchianism. It proclaimed a three-hypostaseis theology, making use of the weak term συµφωνία to describe the unity of the persons. It insisted on the Son’s status as revealer of the Father, and it made no mention of the consubstantiality between the two, which had been trumpeted at Nicaea. As such, it represents a fairly unspecific formulation, representative of “a conservative theology of conciliation,” which was destined to attain widespread support among bishops of Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine.25 We are not informed whether the creed was interpreted and popularized in Edessa from a staunchly Eusebian or a more pro-Nicene perspective.26 If historically authentic,

24See Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum collectio, II, col. 1307 and n. 2.


however, Aithallah’s signature suffices as a warning not to imagine the Edessene episcopate as stuck in a conservative, vetero-Nicene maintenance of the *homoousios*.

**6.3.2 361-363: Barses’s Earliest Years**

Of Aithallah’s immediate successor (Abraham, 346-361) little more is known than his name.27 Michael the Syrian reports the names of two predecessors of his, Ḥabsai and Barnai, a piece of information unconfirmed by other sources and, as far as I have been able to tell, unreported by any prosopographic tool.28 At Abraham’s death, in 361, Constantius II intervened heavily in the ecclesial politics of the Blessed City by transferring Barses from Carrhae to Edessa.29 At the time of this appointment to the

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28 See Mich. Syr. *Chron.*, 7, 4, edited in Chabot, *Chronique*, IV, 135, col. 3, line 23 (*textus*) and I, 270 (*versio*); and Ibrahim, *The Edessa-Aleppo Syriac Codex*, 138, col. 3, line 23. No mention of the two bishops is made in Devreesse, *Le patriarchat d’Antioche*, 290-291; Fedalto, *Hierarchia*, II, 803; or Guillén Pérez, “El patriarcato,” 327-378, 354. On the name of Ḥabsai (حِبْصاء), in its widespread variant Ḥapsai (حَبْصَاء), see H.J.W. Drijvers and J.F. Healey, *The Old Syriac Inscriptions of Edessa and Osroene: texts, translations and commentary* (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 1999), 100-101; on Barnai (بَارَنَاء) See ibid., 99. See also H.J.W. Drijvers, *Old-Syriac (Edessean) Inscriptions* (Semitic Study Series 3; Leiden: Brill, 1972), 65. Generally speaking, there seems to be a great deal of usefulness to the enterprise of cross-reading the Syriac chronicles (e.g. the *Zuqnin Chronicle*) with the other sources available for the reconstruction of the history of Christian Edessa. The entries of Barhebraeus about Edessa [nr. 20], as well as the references to the city in Michael the Syrian’s *Chronicle* (see Chabot, *Chronique*, I, 203, 270, and 277), e.g., would be worth examining against the account of the *Chronicle of Edessa*, with which they are only in partial agreement.

29 See ibid. (lemma 24): “And in the same year bishop Barses came from Carrhae to Edessa by order of the king.” According to Soz. *Hist. eccl.*, 6, 34, Barses had been ordained bishop not of a particular diocese,
Edessene see Barses, later an adamant homoiousian, was still an exponent of the homoian alliance, spearheaded by Acacius of Caesarea, which had solidified at the Council of Constantinople in 360.30

Evidence about Barses’s theological views during the time between his election (361) and his exile as a pro-Nicene (373) is virtually non-existent. Theodoret of Cyrrhus—who does provide information about Barses’s later relegation—is no help, as the first mention of the bishop in his Church History occurs on the occasion of his deposition. The church historian, in his attempt to present Barses as a paragon of “orthodoxy,” zealously whitewashes the bishop’s trinitarian record, omitting his uncomfortable homoian past.


30 See Brennecke, Studien, 199. For an account of the events of the Council of Constantinople of 360, whose deliberations make no mention of the Nicene homoousios, see Peltier, Dictionnaire, 1, col. 362-372 (“Constantinople (Conciliabule de), l’an 360”); on the significance of the council see Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 164-166. My reconstruction of Barses’ episcopal career differs from that of U. Possekel, “The Transformation of Harran from a Pagan Cult Center to a Christian Pilgrimage Site,” ParOr 36 (2011): 304, according to whom “the fact that Barses was later exiled from Edessa by Valens (in 372) on account of his firmly pro-Nicene position […] excludes the possibility that the ‘imperial command’ was based on any Neo-Arian tendencies Barses may have shown.”
This being the case, a profile of Barses’s theological persona in the early years of his episcopal term will have to be sketched by means of a tentative comparison with Meletius of Antioch. With him Barses shared the fate of appointment as a homoian to the see of a Syrian bishopric (Edessa for the former, Antioch for the latter) and removal therefrom by reason of his homoiousian views.\textsuperscript{31} The two bishops’ journey from homoianism to homoiousianism—and therefore to what, as the latter began to command widespread support in the East, came to be termed “orthodoxy”—should not be a surprise in the unsteady ecclesiastical landscape of the 360s, which was so inhabited by protean theologico-ecclesial alliances.\textsuperscript{32}

An additional element to consider is the essential heterogeneity of the historical categories of homoianism and homoiousianism, whose magnitudes do not lend themselves to direct comparison. The former was a true theological coalition (though one destined to splinter soon into different streams), which had taken a clearly antagonistic stance on radical subordinationism. The latter, on the contrary, was a cross-partisan political movement interested in seconding the Emperor’s global project of

\textsuperscript{31} A similar transition from homoianism to homoiousianism may be observed in the career of Acacius of Caesarea (who, however, assumed anti-Nicene positions again at the time of Valens).

\textsuperscript{32} Sight should still not be lost of the complex, nonrandom nature of the doctrinal developments observed in the most critical historical moments: see for instance A. Martin’s treatment of the narrow passage from the profession of faith of Sirmium (357) to the homoian creeds of the years 359-360 in Martin, “Review of A. Segneri.”
Christian unity through the elimination of the “extreme” wings on both sides. The homoian alliance hosted bishops of the most divergent theological tendencies, ranging from sympathizers of Nicaea (the so-called homoian “right”) to its most outspoken opponents (the so-called homoian “left”).

The theologico-ecclesial trajectory of Barses of Edessa may indeed have resembled Meletius’s closely. External evidence could have something to contribute to the establishment of the chronology of Barses’s change of heart. A letter of Constantius’s cousin and successor, Julian (November 361-June 363), dated to 362/363 (one or two years after the beginning of Barses’s tenure), apprises us about imperial persecution of the anti-Nicenes in Edessa. According to this document “the members of the Arian church” (οἱ δὲ τῆς Ἀρειανικῆς ἐκκλησίας) of Edessa, reveling in their wealth, had laid hands upon “the followers of Valentinus” (τοῖς ἀπὸ τοῦ Οὐαλεντίνου), committing

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33 According to M. Simonetti, “Alla ricerca dei cosiddetti Omei,” Cassiodorus 2 (1999): 41-49, the difference between homoians and homoiousians was eminently political, and is not to be sought in any specific set of beliefs. Simonetti affirms that Eudoxius, champion (along with Euzoïus) of the homoian alliance in the 360s, shared with Eunomius the view of the Son as a creature, though, for both, a creature superior to all other creatures, and the first among them. Eudoxius, according to Simonetti, differed from Eunomius exclusively for his obstinacy in adhering to the intentionally ambiguous formulation of the homoian Council of Ariminium (359), summoned by Constantius II. Simonetti, “Ancora sul concilio,” 5-6, by reason of the merely political nature of the designation “homoian,” recommendeds use of the term only with reference to the events of 359-360.

34 For usage of “right”/“left” terminology with reference to members of the homoian front see Karmann, Meletius von Antiochien, 134, 144, and 464.
outrageous acts against them, and thus inducing Julian to order the confiscation of their funds.\(^\text{35}\)

Although it is doubtful that Julian’s hostility toward the Αρειανική ἐκκλησία translated into benevolence for the pro-Nicenes, his epistle testifies to a definite expansion of the sphere of influence of the homoians in the city at the very beginning of Barses’s episcopacy, and, with some likelihood, to some halt brought to it by the Emperor’s championing of the rights of the Valentinians.\(^\text{36}\) This leads to a series of questions about Barses. Was he at that time already to be counted among the ranks of the pro-Nicenes? And, if not, was the anti-Nicenes’ aggression against the Valentinians an act of institutional violence, avowed by the city’s ecclesial establishment, which he headed?

Barses does not appear among the signatories of the synodal letter addressed to Jovian and issued by the Council of Antioch (363),\(^\text{37}\) which had seen the presence of bishops from both close-by Syrian dioceses and far-away Palestinian and Asia Minor locales. This would suggest—albeit, granted, through an argument from silence—that, two years after his consecration, Barses was still cleaving to the substantially anti-Nicene


\(^{36}\) For further discussion of Julian’s letter see *infra*. This is the only occurrence of the lexeme ἀρειανικός in Julian’s works.

version of the homoian creed to which he had subscribed in 360, and which had gained him his see the following year.

If this is the case, at the time of Julian’s intervention the Edessene episcopate itself might still have been homoian. It stands to reason that the anti-Valentinian abuses might have to be traced back somehow to the ecclesiastical establishment Barses led. But if so, should a correlation, or even a causal link, be seen between his nimble doctrinal realignment and Julian’s intervention some time before, or the advent of Jovian (June 363-February 364)? Perhaps Barses—surely a lower-profile church exponent than Meletius—was simply one of those bishops of smaller cities who “seem to have avoided too strong or open a commitment to changing parties and were able to negotiate a position that enabled them to withstand changes in ecclesiastical and imperial regimes.”38 Be that as it may, he appears to have shifted “right” at some point of his career. He thus entered into the communion of that growing homoiousian, pro-Nicene eastern front that had found at Antioch (363) its doctrinal expression, and whose most illustrious local exponent was no doubt the politically savvy church leader Meletius.39

38 Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 169.
6.3.3 363-373: Barses’s Edessa

Shortly after adopting his punitive measures against Edessa, Julian died. His successor, Jovian, recalled the clerics exiled by Julian, and appears to have shown at least at the beginning some sympathy for the pro-Nicene front. It is possible that during his brief reign the “orthodox” continued to gain momentum in Edessa. The “orthodox” found an authoritative voice in Ephrem after he relocated to Edessa, in 363, as a result of Julian’s defeat and the Roman surrender of Nisibis to the Sassanians. Ephrem, whose beliefs have been likened to the homoiousian second formula of the “synod in encaeniis” of 341, nevertheless always retained the Nicene Creed as his theological compass. A study of the specifics of Ephrem’s doctrinal beliefs lies outside the scope of this chapter. Here it will suffice to say that, although Ephrem is rightly credited with

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playing a pivotal role in the development of a pro-Nicene strand of theology in the Blessed City, his relentless advocacy was scarcely a triumph. In his later compositions, in fact, the poet still lamented the silence of his fellow partisans in the face of the homoians. His *Nisibene Hymns* 26-31—notwithstanding the title of the collection to which they belong—describe the situation in Edessa as one of great inter-Christian conflict, though they express a hope for reconciliation along with the certainty belonging to the “wronged and injured party,” “the true Christians,” to whom their opponents should submit.

On two occasions Ephrem refers to a current, unresolved split in the Christian community of Edessa that has lasted six years. G. Bickell proposed to see the beginning of this period in 364, the year of the accession to the throne of Valens (March 364-August 364). According to the *Life of Rabbula*, the fifth-century bishop of Edessa brought all the “Arians” back into communion with the “orthodox” Church. Evidently, after Rabbula’s death, the presence of an anti-Nicene faction was still remembered as having posed a serious threat to orthodoxy at as late a time as that of his episcopacy (411-435).

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45 Shepardson, “Christian Division,” 34.

378), since “[a]nte [...], tempore Joviani, Arianis tanta audacia non fuisse videtur.” He therefore dated Nisibene Hymns 26-31 to the year 370. In light of a passage in Ephrem’s Nisibene Hymn 28 in which the ecclesial fabric of Edessa is said to have been rent and patched up twice in the past, Bickell also admitted the possibility of a previous schism having unfolded under Constantius II. One should add that the sexennial breach of communion decried by Ephrem, which could have begun as early as 357 (i.e. six years before his immigration to the Blessed City), must have been prepared by a time of dispute that consumed a community that was still institutionally united.

Relevant to this discussion is the interpretation of a phrase contained in Julian’s letter quoted above. Frustrated by the behavior of the “Arians,” Julian ordered the seizure of “all their property, namely, that which belongs to the church of the Edessenes” (αὐτῶν τὰ χρήματα τῆς Ἐδεσσηνῶν ἐκκλησίας ἅπαντα). It is difficult to discern whether this expression reflects a heavily split scenario, in which every faction possessed its own set of properties, or one in which mutually hostile Christian groups were still sharing the same ecclesiastical estate. In big cities, different trinitarian groups could gather in different churches. Whether this was the case for Edessa, it is hard to tell.

48 See ibid., 22; and Eph. Carm. Nis., 28, 4.
49 See Bickell, S. Ephraemi Syri Carmina nisibena, 22.
The question could also be asked whether mutually hostile groups’ utilization of the same facilities meant that they were still communicating with each one another and recognizing one and the same bishop, who was elected from time to time as a result of oscillations in the power balance. The use of this phrasing, instead of a straightforward reference to the properties of the “Arians,” may suggest a lack of distinction in Julian’s time between the property of the “Arians” and that of the Edessene Church.

If not simply the product of Julian’s insufficient information, this lack of differentiation may be due either to the local church being in “Arian” hands, or to the circumstance that the anti-Nicenes, though a powerful and belligerent minority, were at the time institutionally indistinguishable from the Edessene Church, and did not exclusively own any properties that the Emperor could seize. Finally, the wording could also indicate a punishment exacted upon the whole of Edessene Christianity, with no factional discernment, as a result of its vociferous fractiousness. The general antipathy Julian reportedly showed toward the city on another occasion, along with his reprimand of the Christians of Edessa in general contained in the letter, may point in this direction.51

50 On the issue of conflicts over ecclesiastical property as part of fourth-century trinitarian discussions see D.H. Williams, “Ambrose, Emperors and Homoians in Milan: The First Conflict over a Basilica,” in Barnes and William, Arianism after Arius, 127-146; and Martin, Athanase, 142.

51 The Emperor is said to have hastened past Edessa on his way to Persia in order to avoid this pertinaciously Christian city: see Soz. Hist. eccl., 6, 1; Socr. Hist. eccl., 6, 18; and Theod. Hist. eccl., 3, 21. In
The chronology is further complicated by Ephrem’s references to an antagonism between the churches of Carrhae and Edessa. After the transfer of Barses away from Carrhae in 361, and Vitus’s appointment in his place, controversy broke out in this small community. Ephrem, in his Nisibene Hymn 31, intervened in the dispute by voicing his appreciation for Vitus, a “shepherd” mistaken for a “wolf” by the “wolf”-loving Carrhaeans. Ute Possekel understood this image as indicating that “Vitus himself was being accused of holding unorthodox views” (an allegation she considers unfounded in light of Vitus’s full integration in the Basilian milieus). Within this reading, however, the “wolves” who led the Carrhaeans astray would have to be identified with vetero-

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Zos. Hist. nov., 3, 12, however, we read that Julian was presented by Edessene envoys with a crown outside of Batnae (Sarug), and visited the Blessed City on his way to Carrhae. On the basis of the above-mentioned reports conflicting with this account H. Sudhaus, De ratione quae intercedat inter Zosimi et Ammiani de bello a Juliano imperatore cum Persis gesto relations (Bonn: C. Georg, 1870), 7-8 (followed by R.T. Ridley, ed., Zosimus. New History (Byzantina Austroliensia 2; Canberra: Australian Association of Byzantine Studies, University of Sydney, 1982), 56 in his translation) emended οἱ Ἐδεσηνοί (“the Edessenes”) into οἱ ἐγχώριοι (“the inhabitants”), with reference to the Batnians. L. Mendelssohn, Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci: Historia Nova (Leipzig: Teubner, 1887), 129 proposed an emendation (and the reconstruction of a lacuna) going in the same direction. On Julian’s religious politics see Fatti, Giuliano.


Nicene preachers, opposing from the “right” the homoiousian tendencies that Vitus shared with Ephrem.55

But since there is no evidence even for the presence of such a faction in Edessa, it would a fortiori be difficult to imagine its existence in the limited ecclesiastical scenario of Carrhae. More probably, Vitus had to face the opposition of a powerful anti-Nicene congregation that had at some point taken over the local Church. A rift had thus been created between the Carrhaean episcopate and the “orthodox” Edessene community headed by Barses, by now a pro-Nicene hero, lauded by Ephrem for his forbearance in the face of adversity and libelous accusations.56 Since Edessa as a whole is praised in Ephrem’s hymns dealing with Vitus’ tribulations (Nisibene Hymns 31-33), and since Ephrem only made his way to the Blessed City in 363, it is fair to assume that at least for some time, after Barses’s “defection” the pro-Nicenes became the majority group in Edessa.

The success of the “orthodox,” however, was short-lived, as they were forced out of power and probably outnumbered by their direct opponents during the reign, and

55 Neither in Possekel’s nor in my interpretation of this passage (which Possekel, “The Transformation of Harran,” 306 quotes in extenso) can the signifier “wolf,” applied by Ephrem both to those who led the believers astray and to what the latter saw in Vitus, assume a fixed meaning (such as “anti-Nicene”). The term will have to assume, rather, a relative meaning, indicating somebody deemed “unorthodox” by somebody else: in my reading, the anti-Nicene opponents of Vitus for Ephrem, and Vitus himself in their eyes.

56 See Eph. Carm. Nis., 29, 5-10; 33, 8.
partly through the responsibility, of Valens, Julian’s successor. Under his reign the position of the anti-Nicenes in Edessa must have been strengthened by renewed imperial support for the homoian initiative, which was aimed at promoting a political solution to the trinitarian conflict. The extent and general significance of Valens’s intervention in ecclesial matters is debated, and it is hard to establish what exactly it might have meant for Edessa.

Hanns Christoph Brennecke has shown that the traditional image of Valens as a fierce persecutor of the upholders of Nicene beliefs is unwarranted, and that it is rendered questionable even by contemporary sources. In the early years of his reign Valens is reported to have been conciliatory toward the pro-Nicenes.\(^57\) According to Brennecke, the Croatian Emperor—just like Constantine and, toward the end of his life, Constantius II before him—was primarily interested in the unity of the imperial Church. With this goal in mind, he pragmatically stuck to the deliberations of the synod of Constantinople of 360 and to the homoian leadership that embodied them, and acted against anybody who would jeopardize the ecclesial harmony by openly condemning these doctrines or bishops.\(^58\) Valens’s pragmatism can be seen with particular clarity in

\(^{57}\) Theod. *Hist. eccl.*, 6, 12, 1-4, resolved to *chercher la femme* behind this political evolution, attributed to Valens’ wife, who was under the ascendency of Eudoxius, the Emperor’s lapsing from his initial faithfulness to the “apostolic dogmas” into the snares of the “Arian deceit.”

his attitude toward Cappadocia, where he entertained civil relations with Basil of Caesarea, as well as toward Egypt, where in 366, dreading an outburst of political violence, he revoked Athanasius’s exile, ordered by himself few weeks earlier, and returned the bishop to his see.59

Nevertheless, beginning with the bloody repression of some Alexandrian pro-Athanasian riots in 373, the Emperor’s attitude toward the opponents of his intentions of reunifying the church under the banner of homoian doctrine does appear to have become less lenient. In 375, at a time of shortage of manpower and military difficulty, Valens is believed to have punished pro-Nicene monks by drafting them into the army, and to have had no qualms in having the deserters beaten with cudgels.60

Also in Edessa the pro-Nicenes are reported to have suffered from Valens’s stance on ecclesiastical issues. According to several reports, in 372 the pro-Nicene Christians defiantly gathered together outside the city walls, at the shrine of St. Thomas, under the guidance of bishop Barses. On that occasion the courage of a woman reportedly helped prevent a brutal intervention on the part of the imperial army.61

59 See Ayres, Nicaea and Its Legacy, 169.


following year (373) the “Catholics” had to flee the city because of their opponents’ persecutions,\textsuperscript{62} and Valens went so far as to exile Barses, having him sent first to the Syrian island of Aradus, then to Oxyrynchus, and finally to the fortress-island of Phēnō, in the southern-Egyptian diocese of Syene.\textsuperscript{63}

6.4 \textit{Theodoret and the Exile of the “Orthodox”}

6.4.1 Theodoret’s Historiographic Practice

Ancient sources are poor informants about the procedural aspects of Barses’s deposition and exile. Was he tried and deposed by a synod, as law and custom required,\textsuperscript{64} or is Theodoret correct in his attribution of the decision (including the choice of ever more remote sites of relegation) to the Emperor himself? Barses’s progression of confinement makes him one of those exiles who were “relégués dans un premier temps en un endroit, puis jugés trop actifs et contraints à plus d’isolement encore.”\textsuperscript{65} The reiterated choice of an island, commonly regarded “comme l’espace répulsif par

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Chron. \textit{Ed.}, 31.
\item See Theod. \textit{Hist. eccl.}, 6, 16.
\item Blaudeau, “Introduction,” in \textit{Id.}, \textit{Exil et relégation}, 14.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
priorité,” comparable “aux limites du monde,” is particularly significant, and certainly a consequence of what must have been perceived as the bishop’s great charisma. Barses’ activism and integration in the ranks of the homoiousian movement are testified by two letters of Basil of Caesarea addressed to him, in one of which mention is made of a visit Barses is about to receive from a Basilian emissary, named Dominus.  

Shortly after Barses’s exile, the prefect Modestus assembled the presbyters and deacons of the city, addressing them about their duty to enter into communion with the new (unnamed) anti-Nicene bishop appointed by Valens. Having received a refusal from the presbyter Eulogius, who headed the group, Modestus exiled him, his colleague Protogenes, and several of their comrades. Initially the deportees were headed for Thrace, but after repeated demonstrations of sympathy received along the way they were split into pairs and sent to a series of different locations.  

Eulogius and Protogenes wound up in Antinoopolis. Here they made the acquaintance of the local bishop, whom they found to be of the very same theological persuasions as themselves (ὁµογνώµων). This figure probably needs to be identified with Arion, whose election had been confirmed by Athanasius himself around 346, and

66 Ibid., 13.  
67 See Bas. Epistula CCLXIV and Epistula CCLXVII.  
68 This could be considered an instance of the typical situation of traveling to one’s destination for exile, where “le proscrit se retrouve, à intervalles réguliers, en terre de connaissance, auprès de fidèles ou dans ses propriéties foncières familiales” (see Blaudeau, “Introduction,” 14).  

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who had signed on that occasion the synodal letter of Sardica (343). The existence of a long-standing tradition of pro-Nicenism in the Antinoite episcopate is confirmed by the presence of the name of Tyrannus, bishop of the city, amid the signatories of the canons of Nicaea, as well as among the subscriptions of a pro-Athanassian letter addressed to the bishops gathered at the first Synod of Tyre (335).

At the time of the exile of the homoiousians Eulogius and Protogenes, there persisted of course a lack of communion between Meletius, de facto leader of the homoiousian alliance in Syria, and Acacius’s old foe Athanasius. This rift, however, was—at least in Theodoret’s irenic reconstruction—no obstacle to Eulogius and Protogenes establishing communion and cordial relations with bishop Arion. The two exiles, in the report of the church historian, thought they had hit on good fortune by landing under the authority of somebody they considered a doctrinally like-minded bishop. Indeed, confinement often proved to be a powerful instrument for networking

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69 We learn as much from Ath. Ep. fest., 19, and Apol. sec., 49, 3, n. 195. J. Bouffartigue, in Bouffartigue, Martin, Pietri and Thélamon, Théodoret de Cyr, 246, n. 1, identifies with Arion the bishop encountered by the two Edessene. See Ath. Epistula XIX; Barnes, Athanasius and Constantius, 96; and Martin, Athanase, table on p. 781, cit. by Bouffartigue.

70 See Turner, Ecclesiae Occidentalis monumenta, I, col. 40-41; and Cuntz, Gelzer and Hilgenfeld, Patrum Nicaenorum nomina, 80.

71 See Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum collectio, II, col. 1144C. On other attestations of the episcopal see of Antinoopolis (through the names of Lucius and Ammonius) see Camplani, Le lettere festali, 301. See also the new information contained in the Historia Episcopatus Alexandriæ, whose edition was announced in A. Bausi and A. Camplani, “New Ethiopic Documents for the History of Christian Egypt,” ZAC 17 (2013): 215-247.
and for intellectual exchanges among theologically close, yet not perfectly consonant, exponents of geographically non-contiguous dioceses. This was the case for Meletius himself, who through his exile came in contact with members of Basilian circles.

Theodoret’s narrative is the only source for these events, and, as was noted above in my treatment of Eustathius, is not always historically reliable. If, however, as J. Bouffartigue suggests, Theodoret drew upon a local source for the redaction of the chapters dealing with Edessa in his Church History dealing (IV, 16-18) this would add trustworthiness to his narrative.72 His snapshots are also a product of the geo-ecclesiological context in which he found himself acting as a church leader, in which he sided with the Antiochene episcopate. As remarked by Schor, “[w]hat Theodoret found lacking in Antioch and Syria of the 360s was a system of inter-see cooperation. […] In some regions of the Empire these disputes were more centralized, thanks to traditions of episcopal hierarchy. Egypt, for instance, already accorded a high prerogative to the titular primate, the bishop of Alexandria. Syria, however, lacked such a tradition, and to Theodoret the contrast was clear.”73 As Schor further notes, Theodoret’s first mention of Alexandria reminds the reader that its power stretched over “not only Egypt, but the

72 See Bouffartigue, Martin, Pietri and Thélamon, Théodoret de Cyr, II, 240, n. 2.
73 Schor, “Theodoret,” 537.
adjacent regions of Libya and Thebaid as well” (a statement which might have relied on the sixth Canon of Nicaea).

In his treatment of the exile of Barses, Theodoret draws a connection between the Egyptian experience of late-fourth-century Syrian church leaders and their attempts at implementing centralizing policies back in the Syrian context. Theodoret’s statement according to which Phoenicia, Egypt, and Thebes were under the spiritual ascendency of Barses’s legacy may assume, in the context just outlined, expansionistic overtones.

6.4.2 Eulogius and Protogenes’s Exile: Theodoret’s Representation of Antinoopolis

A similar interest seems to be at play also in Theodoret’s account of Eulogius and Protogenes’s deportation to Antinoopolis. Located in the Thebaid, this center was the fourth (or fifth) Egyptian city of Greek foundation (after Naucratis, Alexandria, Ptolemais Hermio and, possibly, Paraetonium). Emperor Hadrian had established it in

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74 Theod. Hist. eccl., 1, 2.
75 Syria-to-Egypt was not the only direction that exile under Valens could take: in 373 the Emperor tortured and then exiled to the pagan city of Heliopolis, in Syria, nineteen Alexandrian supporters of the pro-Nicene Peter, who vied for the succession on Athanasius’ see, which the homoians had meant for Lucius.
130 on the east bank of the Nile, across the river from Hermopolis, on the site of a past Egyptian settlement.\textsuperscript{77}

Since its foundation, Antinoopolis had been a bulwark of Greek culture in Middle Egypt, endowed with the municipal institutions typical of a Hellenistic city.\textsuperscript{78} Many of its first colonists had been chosen from among the men and women of Greek descent living in the Greek foundation of Ptolemais, which had remained almost entirely impervious to the penetration of Christianity, and where Hellenistic traditions were still held dear. Other colonists were either veterans or Greek settlers from the nomes, two categories which at the time were still heavily Hellenized.

The Antinoites were granted the right of \textit{ἐπίγαμία} (intermarriage) with Egyptian women, probably in order to attract colonists also from areas such as the Fayum and Oxyrhynchos, where exogamy was not banned.\textsuperscript{79} In the long run this privilege paved the way to Egyptianization. After the year 330 no mention is found of the city’s typically Hellenistic organizational structure. This process of de-Hellenization is attested by the amount of Coptic papyri and inscriptions found in the city. Protogenes and Eulogius, therefore, were parachuted into a center where a political and cultural transition was

\textsuperscript{77}E. Kühn, \textit{Antinoopolis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Hellenismus im römischen Ägypten} (Göttingen: Kaestner, 1913), 8 sets “das offizielle Gründungsdatum von Antinoopolis” as October 30th, 130 CE. On the circumstances of the foundation of the city see ibid., 4-8 and 12-19.

\textsuperscript{78}See ibid., 90-117.

underway, and whose Hellenistic glories were slowly giving way to more Egyptian (and Coptic-speaking) civic institutions and modes of life.

When they began to partake in the assemblies of the local church, so the account goes, the two presbyters realized that these meetings gathered no crowds. As they had to find out to their dismay, the inhabitants of the city were Hellenes (Ἐλληνες). Without losing heart, the two resolved to rectify this deplorable situation. Eulogius, who was a hermit, locked himself into a small house, interceding day and night for the souls of the Antinoites. Protogenes, evidently more prone to the vita activa, chose a different strategy. He had “learned the letters of Eunomius, and had practiced to write fast.” Thus, having found a fit place and having proclaimed it a school (διδασκαλεῖον) and a teaching hall (παιδαγωγεῖον), [he] appointed himself a teacher of boys, taught [them] to write fast, and imparted to them the divine words at the same time. 

80 L. Parmentier, “Eunomius tachigraphe,” RevPhil 33 (1909): 238-245 has shown, against all the emendations this text has undergone throughout its editions, that this lectio difficilior is correct: the tachygraphic system taught by Protogenes was precisely that invented, or systematized, by the loathed Heteroousian adversary. The strategy of attracting the youth to the catechesis by teaching them the marketable skills of shorthand writing could provide some hint to the demographic Protogenes targeted: the prospect converts must have been already literate in Greek. On the socio-linguistic status of Demotic, Coptic, Greek, and Latin in late ancient Egypt see A.K. Bowman, Egypt after The Pharaohs. 332 BC-AD 642. From Alexander to the Arab Conquest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 157-164; and J.N. Adams, Bilingualism and the Latin Language (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 527-541.

81 Protogenes’ teaching curriculum and the models that inspired him are unfortunately unrecorded. It is conceivable that he would have taken as an example whichever educational institutions might have existed in Edessa at his time — possibly the School of Edessa, a center of learning of Greek philosophy and Hellenized Christian theology that would rise to fame in the fifth century, and for whose foundations different datings have been proposed. See H.J.W. Drijvers, “The School of Edessa. Greek Learning and Local Culture,” in Centres of Learning. Learning and Location in pre-Modern Europe and the Near-East, ed. H.J.W. Drijvers and A.A. MacDonald (Brill’s studies in intellectual history 61; Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1995), 58 (dating its beginnings to the half of the second century); E.C.D. Hunter, “The Transmission of Greek Philosophy via the School of Edessa,” in Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond, ed. C. Holmes and J. Waring (The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, economies and cultures,
He explained to them also the Davidic songs, and prepared [them] to learn thoroughly the useful [teachings] of the apostolic doctrine.  

The image of Antinoopolis painted by Theodoret is, thus, that of an almost purely pagan center, where the two Edessene presbyters performed the first large-scale attempt at evangelization, as well as—possibly—at promoting literacy. A short review of the extant documentation about literacy and the spread of Christianity in the city, however, appears not to entirely support this picture.

As William Vernon Harris writes, the significance of the account of Protogenes’s opening of a school “is unclear, because it may imply that Antinoopolis, now a relatively important place, had previously not had a school at all.” While it is hard to know whether this was indeed Theodoret’s intended claim, it is certainly impossible to conceive that a city like Antinoopolis, where a gymnasion had been active for over two centuries, lacked a school. The city must also certainly have included one institute, if

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400-1500 42; Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2002), 227-229; and A.H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom. The School of Nisibis and Christian Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 42-43. Bettio, “Scuole e ambienti,” 60-61 makes the interesting suggestion that a school was founded in the fourth century by the growing “Catholic” community of Edessa, which was faced with the challenge of Manichaeism.

82 Theod. *Hist. eccl.*, 4, 18, 2-3.


not more, in which those who would later work in courts and government offices would
be taught shorthand writing. The papyri do in fact offer clear evidence of a tachygraphy
tradition predating Protogenes’s arrival.85

Papyrological findings also suggest that the Christian presence in the city dated
back at least to the third century, and possibly to the second.86 This information is
confirmed by Eusebius of Caesarea’s testimony.87 Nor had Christianity in Antinoopolis
waned by the time the Edessenes were exiled there. The late-fourth-century Letter of

II. The Hellenistic Gymnasium,” in Brill’s New Pauly: Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World, ed. H. Cancik, M.

85 Among the six fragments of a shorthand manual (both syllabary and commentary) found in
Antinoopolis (see H.J.M. Milne, Greek Shorthand Manuals: Syllabary and Commentary, Edited from Papyri and
Waxed Tablets in the British Museum and from the Antinoë Papyri in the Possession of the Egypt Exploration Society
(London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1934)), there is one (Pap. 3) written “in a fine, sloping, semi-cursive
hand of the 3rd century” (ibid., 9). The other five date to the fourth or fifth century. For another fourth-
century Old Testament papyrus see G. Nachtergaele and R. Pintaudi, “Deux parchemins bibliques
d’Antinoë,” in Antinoopolis I. Scavi e materiali, ed. R. Pintaudi (Florence: Istituto Papirologico G. Vitelli, 2008),
122-128. See also D. Minutoli, “Recupero e restauro dei papyri nelle campagne di scavo 2003-2008 ad
Antinoe,” in Pintaudi, Antinoopolis I, 75-99.

86 For the third century see J.W.B. Barns, C.H. Roberts and H. Zilliacus, The Antinoopolis Papyri (3
vols.; London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1950-1967), I, 23-24 (fragments of Matthew); I, 24-26 (2 John); I, 26-
28 (fragments of the Acts of Paula and Thecla); and II, 6-8 (Oratio dominica). For the second century see ibid.,
vol. I, 1-2 (fragments of Greek Psalms); and, on the religious origin of the fragments, H.I. Bell, Cults and creeds
in Graeco-Roman Egypt (New York: Philosophical Library, 1953), 81. Barns, Roberts and Zilliacus, The
Antinoopolis Papyri, passim presents many Jewish papyri from Antinoopolis, possibly as early as the second
century.

87 See Euseb. Hist. eccl., 6, 11, 3. See also J. Leitch and J.E.T. Wilsch, Handbook of the geography and
statistics of the Church (London: Bosworth and Harrison, 1859), 59 and 196; A. Calderini and S. Daris,
Dizionario dei nomi geografici e topografici dell’Egitto greco-romano (5 vols. in 6 tomes; Milan: Cisalpina
Goliardica, 1972-), t. I, fasc. 2, 68-114; Suppl. I, 39; Suppl. 2, 18-19; Suppl. 3, 17-18; and Suppl. 4, 16-17; and
Fedalto, Hierarchia, II, 639-640.
Ammon indicates the existence of a Pachomian monastery. The Historia Monachorum in Aegypto narrates the visit of the pilgrims in 394 to the anchorite Elias (mentioned also by Sozomen) on a mountain nearby. Palladius, who spent four years in Antinoopolis between 406 and 412, mentions—probably with some exaggeration—the presence, by then, of twelve women’s coenobia in the city, and of 1200 Christian cave dwellers in its surroundings. Additionally, although Christian archeological evidence in Antinoopolis refers to a later period, it has been suggested that the destruction of a pagan architectural complex in the city, to be possibly dated to the fourth century, may also be a consequence of Christian, and more specifically monastic, religious intolerance. The seeds of this flourishing of Christian piety could hardly have been planted for the first time only twenty or thirty years before, at the time of the exile Eulogius and Protogenes.

88 See Ammon, Epistula XXXIV.
89 See Hist. mon., 7.
6.4.3 Theodoret’s Rhetoric

All this evidence casts doubt on the objectivity of Theodoret’s portrayal of Antinoopolis, at the time of the arrival of the two clerics, as a thinly evangelized hotbed of paganism. The role of rhetoric in the historian’s account of the relegation of the “orthodox” should therefore be acknowledged. Theodoret describes the exile Eulogius and Protogenes as a journey from a known that has become unknown (the familiar diocese of Edessa, suddenly turned hostile) to an unknown that turns out to be known (the exotic and far-away exile destination of Antinoopolis, whose bishop is discovered to be one of their own). The two were called to turn the extreme periphery to which they were forced to travel into a new center for the propagation of the Christian faith.94

More specifically, Theodoret implicitly presents the frontier mission in Antinoopolis as an apprenticeship for the Syrian episcopal service of Protogenes. After engaging in a far-reaching mission of evangelizing at Antinoopolis, Protogenes was asked to perform the same kind of healing labor in Carrhae. This small and ancient locale in Osrhoene, where Julian reportedly sacrificed in the temple of the moon god,95 is described by Syriac works like the Acts of Sharbel and the Teaching of Addai as a cesspool

94 See Blaudeau, “Introduction:” “privé d’une part au moins de sa liberté, mais non de sa libertas, le condamné n’a d’autre solution que de s’approprier à la fois son nouvel état et l’endroit où on l’a repoussé. […] la périphérie devient centre, le lieu de la mort pressentie celui où gagner l’immortalité ou la sainteté.”

of vice and godlessness ("a barren spot filled with the thorns of Hellenic superstition," as Theodoret puts it). In the 360s Carrhae did host a Christian community, but this was, as Possekel explained, "a somewhat fragile one, which struggled to overcome several obstacles, such as the city's long history as a pagan cult center, a devastating inter-Christian controversy and a vulnerable geo-political situation."97

Theodoret's account makes another connection between the ecclesiastical realities of Syria and Egypt. The influence of the Alexandrian archbishopric over the monastically populated region of Thebaid, where Antinoopolis is located, offered him a model for his representation of Antioch's dominion over the church of Osrhoene.98 Theodoret's keenness to represent the centralizing model of the Egyptian episcopal polity as reproduced in Syria, on a smaller scale, after the return of the pro-Nicene exiles, can be observed in his portrayal of the relationship between Edessa and Carrhae.99

98 On the geo-ecclesiologically meaningful relationship between Antioch and the see of Rome in the later phase of the trinitarian controversy see the detailed treatment of Meletius' communion with Damasus in Field, On the Communion. See Haar Romeny, A Syrian in Greek Dress, 9, n. 10; and Petit, Van Rompay and Weitenberg, Eusèbe d'Émèse, xxv, n. 11.
99 The existence of a rivalry between Edessa and Carrhae, in which the religious and civic dimensions were intertwined, is hinted at in T.M. Green, The City of the Moon God. Religious Traditions of Harran (RGRW 114; Leiden, New York and Köln: Brill, 1992), 76, where the author interestingly connects the claims to apostolic foundation for Christianity in Edessa to the Edessenes' will to counter "Harranian claims to the great antiquity of the devotion to the Moon god." On the competition between the two cities see J.B.
In the context of increasing ecclesial fragmentation sketched in chapters III, IV, and V, Meletius, as Theodoret sympathetically recounts, had in fact begun to weave the threads of a more tightly knit pro-Nicene network. Laying the foundations for closer cooperation between episcopal sees of that theological orientation, he appointed bishops in many Syrian dioceses in 379-380.

In this context Eulogius, who was Protogenes’s teacher, rose to the episcopal rank of Edessa, the largest and most important church of Osrhoene. In his capacity as bishop of this see he would attend the Council of Antioch in 379 (where the Meletians reestablished communion with Damasus of Rome and other western bishops communicating with Paulinus) and, more importantly, that of Constantinople in 381. At the same time, Eulogius’s aide was consecrated bishop of Edessa’s younger-in-faith sister, Carrhae, where he succeeded to Vitus.


100 On Eulogius’ presence at Antioch in 379 see Field, On the Communion, 20 (and for the emendation of “Eulogius episcopus de Mallu civitate” into “Eulogius episcopus Edessae” in the list of subscriptions to the anti-Arian, anti-Apollinarian Western documents undersigned by the Eastern bishops in that council see ibid., 205-214). See also Schwartz, “Über die Sammlung des Cod. Veronensis LX,” 23. On Eulogius’ participation in the Council of Constantinople of 381 see Theod. Hist. eccl., 5, 8; Schulthess, Kanones, 115; Turner, Ecclesiae Occidentalis monumenta, II, col. 442-443; Id., “Canons Attributed to the Council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, together with the Names of the Bishops, from Two Patmos MSS POB’ POΓ,” JThS 15 (1914): 168; and Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum collectio, III, col. 526CD and 569A.

The derivative nature of the episcopal authority over Carrhae, which was treated as a satellite of Edessa, is clear from Theodoret’s text, where he states that “Eulogius conferred to Protogenes, his companion in hard service, the charge of Carrhae, as a healing physician for an ill town.” Ephrem himself, in his Nisibene Hymns, testifies to Edessa’s missionary efforts toward Carrhae, evidently predating Eulogius’s appointment.

It is difficult to determine exactly what place Edessa occupied in Meletius’s (or Theodoret’s) ideal model of Antiochene supremacy in the East. By the time Theodoret was writing, the elites of Edessa had produced the Teaching of Addai, in which the origins of Christianity in the Blessed City were explicitly linked to Antioch and the Roman Empire. Not long thereafter, these or contiguous milieus would express their expansionistic ambitions in the literary corpus associated with bishop Rabbula. An examination of the geo-ecclesiological dimensions of Edessa’s involvement in the trinitarian controversies will thus also take into account its relation to the ideological profile of the later, fifth-century groups that, expanding on a document that predated them by about a century, produced the Teaching of Addai (a text sprinkled with anti-

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Arian statements). The *Teaching* may in fact represent the ripe fruit, and the later literary crystallization, of regional processes of ecclesiastical centralization and increasing connection between church hierarchies and imperial power, which had found a crucial catalyst in the fourth-century trinitarian controversies.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter has followed the inner development of the “Paluṭian” line of Christianity in Edessa during the fourth-century trinitarian controversies. It has highlighted its receptivity to intellectual and institutional stimuli of different kinds by examining its possible links to a variety of ecclesiastical environments. Some of these personal connections were the result of travel for study purposes; others, of regional processes of ecclesiastical integration; others yet, of the vagaries of exile. Through highlighting these encounters, I have intended to survey the development of Edessene intra-ecclesial institutional structures, explore the city’s participation in the solidification of wider doctrinal alliances, and trace the first steps of the construction of a local memory embedded in ecclesiastical propaganda.

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104 See Addai, 37; 39-40; 52; and 55.

From this survey a more complex image begins to emerge, showing Edessa as fully taking part, though from its idiosyncratic position, in ampler ecclesiastical trends which were influenced by imperial politics. In addition to contributing this portrait of an ideologically diverse Christian center, heavily affected by the doctrinal factionalism characteristic of the fourth century, I hope this study will have suggested the usefulness of pursuing citywide explorations of late-ancient theological debates, while also taking into account the sedimentation of local ecclesiastical traditions in ancient sources.
7. Beyond “Two Powers in Heaven:” Re-reading b. Ḥagigah 15a

7.1. Introduction

As seen at the beginning of this dissertation, linking “Arianism” (including so-called “neo-Arianism”) and Judaism was a *topos* of pro-Nicene rhetoric. Some Christian writers, such as Ephrem and Athanasius, were keen on conflating their opponents’ subordinationism with what they saw as Judaism’s strict monotheism. Others, like the Cappadocian fathers, famously saw in “Arianism” an indefinite *tertium genus*, indefensibly lying in-between Judaism and Christianity. For all these orthodox authors, the association between Judaism and their theological foes was rhetorically expedient.¹

Perhaps with these very heresiological accounts in mind, some contemporary scholarship on the alleged relationships between Jewish intransigence about the unity of God and the theological postures adopted by different groups in the course of the trinitarian controversies—mainly monarchians, “Arians,” and heteroousians—has reified the entities at hand, pursuing at times improbable genealogies linking them back

to Jewish origins or influences. Efforts to trace back any of the varieties of fourth-century Christian trinitarianism to the effects of a putatively greater embrace of the Jewish legacy have produced questionable historiographical proposals.

In contrast to these attempts, this chapter will presuppose that both binitarianism and opposition to it were always available logical options within the late ancient monotheistic complex, and therefore cannot function as meaningful indexes of influence and relations within the intellectual Christian-Jewish continuum. In an effort to locate the late ancient parting of the ways elsewhere than in specific theological constructs, this chapter will deal with one of the main sources for the study of so-called Jewish binitarianism in late antiquity, as expressed by the famous phrase “two powers” (שתי רשויות).

The phrase was first systematically investigated by Alan Segal, and is known in the Talmud and in rabbinic literature at large as a catchword for various forms

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of heresy (נצרות). I will deal here exclusively with the locus classicus for the study of the expression שלושת השתי in rabbinic sources: the story of the encounter between the first-century tanna Elisha b. Abuyah and the angel Metatron, a story transmitted in different forms by a cluster of texts including the Babylonian Talmud (from now on “Bavli”) and, among other Hekhalot literature texts, 3 Enoch. The story is similar in all these attestations: it includes Elisha’s ascent to a mystical realm, his view of the angel Metatron, and a reaction containing the famous syntagm “two powers” (שלושת השתי, also translatable as “two authorities” or “two sovereignties”).

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5 Hekhalot literature is a fluid collection of Hebrew and Aramaic mystical texts from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

7.2 The Sugyah

There is no lack of scholarship on the figure of Elisha’. This chapter does not, however, deal with his historical or even literary figure, but rather with the ideological features of the Bavli’s account of his fateful encounter with Meṭatron. In treating the version contained in b. Ḥagigah 15a, therefore, my analysis will circumvent questions of relative priority between the Bavli and 3 Enoch that have largely occupied scholars. For the present purposes, it will suffice to repeat the judgment of Ra’anan Boustan, according to whom the relationship between b. Ḥagigah 15a and 3 Enoch is as an example “of ideological convergence that illuminates the continuing diversity of Jewish literary

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7 Studies of Elisha b. Abuyah typically disavow an attempt at gaining insight into this historical figure: see Y. Liebes, תורת האלילים (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1990) (which I have been unable to consult); A. Goshen-Gottstein, The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The rabbinic Invention of Elisha b. Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

culture in the sixth to eighth centuries, precisely during the period of accelerating rabbinization.”

The text is attested in a variety of forms by different Bavli manuscripts.

According to Philip Alexander

[The textual variation at T. B. Hagiga 15a seems too great to be accommodated within the canons of classical textual criticism, or explained as arising through the accidental corruption of an Urtext. The story has been deliberately reworked: we are dealing with different recensions—different recensions which are equally Talmud!]

For the sake of the following translation I have consulted a mss. synopsis of b. Hagigah II (= דורשיין). This presented the text as carried by some among the extant manuscripts containing this pereq (= II), as well as the printed text of an incunabulum (a Spanish print of ca. 1480) and of two books from the 1500s (a Pesaro edition of 1514 and a Venetian one of 1521), based on mss. no longer extant or not available to the producers of the synopsis. I am providing below the original passages, presented sequentially and followed by my own synoptic translation.


10 Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 54.

11 Kindly produced upon my request by the Saul Lieberman Institute for Talmudic Research (Jerusalem, Israel), which I wish to thank.
Vilna edition

אחר קצץ ביטויים עליה התphants אכמרים על העץ החזיר את השכ鹌 מפי המילים, ואילו זה רישום יד שנאה היד

רשואות זו להכתיב, ותורות רוחא, ולא ניתן Sözיה עליתון של אפקות שהדרשו, או אחר היד, אלא מת manhית ספירות של ימי זוראה, על המילים, ואילו זה רישום יד שנאה היד של השכ鹌 מפי המילים, ואילו זה רישום יד שנאה היד של השכ鹌 מ피

Vaticanus Bibliotheca Apostolica Hebr. 134

München Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Hebr. 6

München Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Hebr. 95

Vaticanus Bibliotheca Apostolica Hebr. 171

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12 This is the text as printed in the editio princeps (ed. Bamberg, Venice, 1519/1520-1523).
Oxford Bodleian Opp. Add. fol. 23 (366)

In the table that follows, I have subdivided the text into more or less arbitrary diegetic units.

<table>
<thead>
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<tr>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoots. Of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).</td>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoots. Of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).</td>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoots and of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin (and) do not say before the messenger (vel: angel).” It was a messenger.</td>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoots and of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin (and) do not say before the messenger (vel: angel).” It was a messenger.</td>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoots and of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).</td>
<td>a Aḥer cut the shoot and of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).</td>
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</table>
(vel: angel), ‘It was a mistake.’ Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?’ (Qoh 5:5) mistake.” Why should God be angry at what you say and destroy the work of your hands?’ (Qoh 5:5) mistake” (Qoh 5:5).

| b What is this (in reference to)? He saw Meṭaṭrōn, that authority had been given to him to sit down to write the merits of Israel. | b What is this (in reference to)? He saw Meṭaṭrōn, that authority had been given to him one hour a day to sit down and write the merits of Israel. | b What did he see? He saw Meṭaṭrōn, that authority had been given to him one hour a day to sit down and write the merits of Israel. | b What did he see? He saw Meṭaṭrōn, that authority had been given to him one hour a day to sit down and to write the merit of Israel. | b What did he see? He saw Meṭaṭrōn, that authority had been given to him one hour a day to sit down and to write the merit of Israel. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| c He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no sitting, and no competition, | c He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no standing, and no sitting, and no | c He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no standing, and no sitting, and no | c He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no standing, and no sitting, and no jealousy, |

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13 I correct here יָסָר יְסָר into חֲדָא.

14 Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 60 seems to consider this the product of a scribal error (יָסָר for יָסָר), which, though plausible, seems unverifiable; for that reason I have retained יָסָר in my translation (as he does too, ibid.).
and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

no jealousy, and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

jealousy, and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

jealousy, and no competition, and no weariness, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

no jealousy, and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!"

Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!

perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities in heaven!

They led Metatron out and punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

They led Metatron out and punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

They led Metatron out (and) punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

They led Metatron out (and) punished him according to the sixty fiery lashes.

They immediately led Metatron out (and) punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

They seized Metatron and punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

They told him: “Why is it that, when you saw him, you did not rise before him?”

They told him: “Why is it that you saw him and did not rise before him?”

They told him: “Why is it that you saw him and did not rise before him?”

They told him: “Why is it that you saw him and did not rise before him?”

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I interpret גמירי as גמירי א. For this translation (as opposed to that of ‘weariness’) for סימריע (similar to that of the Syriac root סימריע, ‘to fold,’ ‘to double,’ ‘to duplicate’) see M. Kister, "מסורות של הדינמיקה לברций הדינמיקה של פסיפוסו: פרשנות ופשיזם ולשון, מסורות ופשיזם ולשון," *Tarbiz* 82 (2003): 66, n. ה. While it is possible to translate סימריע as weariness, a different solution would necessarily have to be envisioned for ms. Munich 95, where סימריע follows יָאִים, and a meaningless polyptoton would thereby be engendered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>f Authority was given to him to erase the merits of Aḥer.</th>
<th>f Authority was given to Meṭatron to uproot the merit of Aḥer.</th>
<th>f Authority was given to him to destroy the merits of Aḥer.</th>
<th>f Authority was given to Meṭatron to uproot the merits of Aḥer.</th>
<th>f At that point authority was given to him to destroy the merits of Aḥer.</th>
<th>f And authority was given to him to destroy the merits of Aḥer.</th>
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<td>h</td>
<td>He said: “Since I have been driven out from that world, let me go enjoy in this world.”</td>
<td>He said: “Now since (this situation) has no remedy, let me go and enjoy this world.”</td>
<td>He said: “Since I have been driven out from that world, let me go enjoy in this world.”</td>
<td>He said: “Since (this) has no remedy, let me (lit. him) go and enjoy in this world.”</td>
<td>He said: “Since I have been driven out from that world, let me go draw enjoyment from this world.”</td>
<td>He said: “Since I have been driven out from that world, let me go draw enjoyment from this world.”</td>
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<td>i</td>
<td>Aḥer went into evil ways. He went and</td>
<td>He saw a prostitute (and) propositioned</td>
<td>He went into evil ways.</td>
<td>He went into evil ways and he saw a prostitute (and)</td>
<td>He went into evil ways. He found a</td>
<td>He went into evil ways. He went (and)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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She said to him: “And are you not Elisha b. Abuyah?” He uprooted a radish from (its) bed on a Sabbath and gave (it) to her. She said: “He is Aḥer (i.e. another).”

And she said to him: “And are you not Elisha b. Abuyah? For your name was famous in the whole world.” He uprooted a radish from the earth and gave (it) to her. She said to him: “You are Aḥer (i.e. another).”

She said to him: “And are you not Elisha b. Abuyah? For your name was famous from one end of the world to the other.” He uprooted a radish from (its) bed on a Sabbath (and) gave (it) to her. She said: “You is Aḥer (i.e. another).”

She said to him: “Are you Elisha b. Abuyah? For your name was famous from one end of the world to the other. Pay a denarius and show <your> flesh. And he showed (his) flesh. (She) said to him: “He is Aḥer (i.e. another).”

And during her sexual intercourse she passed gas.19 He said:

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18 I take this (אbestos for אבישר) to be an instance of hypercorrection.

19 See the similar story of R. Ele'azar b. Durdia in b. 'Avodah Zarah 17a, which appears to be influential upon this version of the Elisha b. Abuyah narrative (see M. Balberg, "介质 אבישריא לאמרו: קרא: מיהו ירша יריעה be-sifrut 'erit 22 (2008): 198, n. 34):
As already observed, the texts diverge to a fairly significant extent from one another. Whereas it will be impossible to solve text-critical problems in this chapter, both Menahem Kister’s and Alon Goshen-Gottstein’s fairly eclectic reconstructions and their respective apparatuses can be consulted with profit. My focus in this chapter is neither on the transmission of the text nor on its original form or on the amoraic sources it utilizes, but rather on the ideology that shaped the re-writing of one of the recensions in which it is attested, viz. the one contained in the printed Vilna edition. While the other recensions of the text will be occasionally drawn upon for comparative purposes, an exhaustive treatment will have to be deferred.

They said about Eleazar ben Durdia that there was no prostitute in the world with whom he did not have intercourse at least once. He heard that there was one particular prostitute in a town near the sea who would receive a purse full of dinars for her services. He took a purse full of dinars and went to her, crossing over seven rivers. During intercourse she passed gas. She said: Just like this gas will never return to its place so too Eleazar ben Durdia will never have his repentance accepted (lit.: will never return).

7.2 The “Cutting of the Shoots”

I cite again the standard text from the Vilna edition:

אבר קציץ ב büתינו ביעל הצמח אופר אל תן את פקר חובה לא תשחת את בשרך מי זה צומחך ואוזרשא לי
רשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל עלים ב ורשוא אל 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a Aber cut the shoots. Of him Scripture says, “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).

b What is this (in reference to)? He saw Meṭatron, that authority had been given to him to sit down to write the merits of Israel.

c He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no sitting, and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!”

d They led Meṭatron out and punished him with sixty fiery lashes.

e They told him: “Why is it that, when you saw him, you did not rise before him?”

f Authority was given to him to strike out the merits of Aber.

g A heavenly voice came out and said: “‘Return, ye backsliding children (Jer 3:22)’—except Aber.”

h He said: “Since I have been driven out from that world, let me go enjoy this world.”

i Aber went into evil ways. He went and found a prostitute, and propositioned her.

j She said to him: “And are you not Elisha’ ben Abuyah?” He uprooted a radish from (its) bed on a Sabbath and gave it to her. She said: “He is Aber (i.e. another).”
The sugyah connects back to the recounting of a famous tale, contained in the tosefta and in the mishnah and reported in b. Ḥagiga 14b: the episode of the four masters—Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Elisha b. Abuyah and Rabbi 'Aqiva—who entered the pardes (mystical orchard). As the story has it, Ben Azzai looked and died; Ben Zoma looked and went mad; Ḥer peeked and cut the shoots; and 'Aqiva was the only one to depart in peace.

Just as the author has done for the brief descriptions of the earthly lots of the previous three mystics and for the Biblical quotes that accompanied them, at the beginning of our sugyah in b. Ḥagiga 15a he asks for an explanation of the expression “Ḥer cut the shoots” and of a verse in Qohelet, traditionally referred to him, which warns against the sinful consequences of some unspecified manner of speaking.

The notion that Elisha in the mystical orchard “peeked and cut the shoots” (הציץ בנטיעות והציץ) and that his ensuing fate was in some way a fulfillment of the contents of Qoh 5:5 is found already in t. Ḥagiga II, 2:

Elisha peeked and cut the shoots. Of him Scripture says, “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5).21

The specific meaning of the phrase “cut the shoots” is debated. Many commentators read it as a symbol for the severing of Elisha’s connection with the

people of Israel.²² Others see in it an allusion to the dismantling of the rabbinic “fence around the Torah” (ערץ להוה), built in order to protect it against trespasses (m. Avot 1:1).²³ Goshen-Gottstein interprets the expression as referring to the transgression of the precepts of the Torah. This interpretation was initially shared by Gerschom Scholem, before he suggested—somewhat cryptically—that the cutting of the shoots may refer to the vegetation of the pardes. Ephraim Urbach sees the phrase as connected to Elisha’s undue recounting of his mystical experience, whereas Neumark, Mopsik, and Abrams tie it to various heretical theological postures. Peter Schäfer sees a clue for grasping its meaning in the treatment of the episode contained in the Jerusalem Talmud (henceforth “Yerushalmi”), where the cutting of the shoots is associated with a sin against the Torah or against the youth who study it.²⁴

This quest for hints to the meaning of the expression in the mishnah and the tosefta is arduous due to the scantiness of contexts. Additionally, while some of these

²² This image is curiously resonant of the root imagery in Rom 11 (I owe this thought to Prof. Joel Marcus).


interpretations may be relevant, their validity cannot be extended past those two collections, as there is nothing to suggest that the amoraim, let alone the stammaim, had a better insight than we do into the meaning that those who coined the phrase attributed to it. For these reasons, I will limit my comments about this syntagm to the meaning that the Bavli created for its connection to the story of Elisha’ b. Abuyah.

From a formal standpoint the sugyah in the Bavli is structured as an answer to the question contained in b: what is the real-life referent of the statement contained in a and quoted from the mishnah: “Aḥer cut the shoots. Of him Scripture says, “Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin” (Qoh 5:5)? The response, insofar as the first part of a is concerned, is provided at the end of the sugyah, where, after a diegetic progression, we learn that Aḥer physically “uprooted a radish” (j). “Aḥer cut the shoots” (a) in the pardes is thus for the stam another way of saying that he “uprooted a radish” on the Sabbath when he visited a prostitute (j). This connection secures an inclusio between Aḥer’s final action and the incipit of the discussion.25

7.3 The Citation of Qoh 5:5

Recognizing in Aher’s uprooting of a radish (j) the answer to the question as to what it might mean that he “cut the shoots” (a) carries an interpretive bonus. Since the

25 J.L. Rubenstein, Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 71 is an exception.
question “What is this (in reference to)?” (b) follows both statements (“Aḥer cut the shoots” and “Of him Scripture says, ‘Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin’”), it appears reasonable to seek an explanation for the second statement in the sentence that provides a clarification for the first.

Other textual forms of the sugyah quote Qoh 5:5 in its entirety:

אַל תֹּאמַר יֵנְפִּלְךָ לַמַּלְאָךְ יָכִי הָאֱלֹהִים עַל קוֹלֶךָ לֶאָב יִהְיֶה חָרָב וְלֹא תִדֹּר מִשֶּׁתִּדּוֹר וְלֹא תְשַׁלֵּם (Qoh 5:4: “It is better for you not to make a vow than to make one and not to fulfill [it]”), the ambiguity of the term מלאך (“angel”/“envoy,” a semantic range shared with the Greek ἄγγελος) and a certain referential vagueness for the word שגגה (“mistake”) allows a statement that in Qohelet meant something along the lines of...
“and do not tell the (Temple) messenger that (your vow) was a mistake” to be read as
“and do not tell the angel that (what you saw) was a mistake.”

Aṣṭute as Alexander’s reading is, however, it clashes with the fact that at no point in Ḥagiga 15a is Elisha’ said to have believed, let alone declared before Meṭaṭron, that his vision had been a mistake. Quite to the contrary, his fault lies in having trusted his eyes too much. Nonetheless, the link with מלאך is too appropriate to the context to be discarded outright; adjudicating the term’s relevance here may requires further inquiry, for example by looking at other passages in rabbinic literature in which Qoh 5:5b was exegeted in reference to angelic creatures.

What can be excluded, however, is that focusing on Qoh 5:5b was the only way in which recipients of the mishnah or the tosefta’s passages could understand the link. A look at the way in which y. Ḥagiga, 77b elaborates on the same tradition will suffice:

Aḥer peeked and cut the shoots. Who is Aḥer? Elisha’ b. Abuya, who would kill the great ones of Torah. They say that he would kill every pupil whom he would

26 I hope I am interpreting correctly Alexander’s slightly cryptic proposal, according to which the sugyah “makes the sugyah refer specifically to Aḥer’s mistaking of Meṭaṭron as a second power” (Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 56).

27 It would also be unlikely that Qoh 5:5b was read as a recommendation not to believe one’s own vision in order not to find oneself in the situation of having to tell an angel that what one had seen was a mistake.
see excelling in the Torah. And not only that, but he would go to the school house and see children in front of their teacher and he would say: “What are these ones sitting doing here? The profession of this one is builder, the profession of this one is carpenter, the profession of this one is hunter, the profession of this one is tailor. And since they would hear so, they would leave him (scil. the teacher) and they would go away. Of him Scripture says: “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin etc” (Qoh 5:5), for he destroyed the work of his own hands.28

The text here states explicitly that the crux of the connection between Elisha’s story and the verse cited in the mishnah lies in Qoh 5:5c (“Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?”). Qoh 5:5b (“And do not say to the messenger: ‘It was a mistake’”) is patently ignored, whereas Qoh 5:5a (“Do not let your mouth lead you into sin”) is treated simply as a call for the verse, its lemmatic role clearly marked by the presence of the shorthand ‘וגו (“etc.”)).29

Therefore, at least for one recipient of the tannaitic tradition the connection between Elisha’s story and Qoh 5:5 did not revolve around Qoh 5:5b. Irrespective of the strength of this connection for the mss. that do carry Qoh 5:5a-b, in those recensions (such as Vilna’s) where the verse is truncated at Qoh 5:5a it becomes unnecessary to imagine an implied connection to Qoh 5:5b. It is therefore possible that in the Vilna version that connection is embodied by Qoh 5:5a, and that we need to look in the sugyah

28 Italics mine.

29 It could also be imagined, with no detriment to my argument, that Qoh 5:5a is seen here as expressing in a general way the destruction that the authors perceive to be more poignantly and specifically described by Qoh 5:5c.
for a narrative element fulfilling the part of Qoh 5:5 that warns against the sinful consequences of a wrong form of speech.\(^{30}\)

### 7.4 When Did Aḥer Become a Sinner?

As signaled above, the structure of inclusio between \(a\) and \(j\) observed in the sugyah with regard to the cutting of the shoots extends also to the identification of the meaning of Qoh 5:5a. Aḥer’s uprooting of a radish is both the literal instance of “cutting of the shoots” to which the mishnah refers and the transgression for which his actual self (his “flesh,” בשר, in the language of the Hebrew Bible) was responsible, and to which an instance of straying speech has led him.\(^{31}\)

If this is the case, it is safe to say that Aḥer does not transgress until he uproots the radish on a Sabbath. It is this trespass that turns him into a transgressor. By establishing a connection between the cutting of the shoots and the uprooting of the radish on a Sabbath, the ba’al ha-sugyah forcibly reduces the cryptic and perhaps esoterically tinted meaning implied by the Scriptural citation in the original context of

\(^{30}\) A potential objection can be preempted here. One could say that if the centrality of the connection with Qoh 5:5b is discarded it becomes impossible to justify the fact that mss. Munich 95 and Vatican 171 cite Qoh 5:5a-b rather than stopping at Qoh 5:5a or citing the verse in its entirety. Indeed, these mss. are central to Alexander’s claim that it is Qoh 5:5b and not Qoh 5:5a that the sugyah intended to use as a peg for its discussion. But the fact that mss. Munich 6 and Vatican 134 cite the whole verse without Qoh 5:5c performing there (by anybody’s account, I believe) any exegetical work indicates that not too much should be read into the choice (which may even be scribal) to extend the citation of the verse past its exegetically crucial bit.

the mishnah and of the tosefta to a celebration of halakhic observance. In this
hermeneutical move, which assigns a physical sense to the “cutting of the shoots,” a
strong ideological agenda turns a cryptic theosophic dictum into a matter of Sabbath
regulations.

In an ironic reduplication, the prostitute whom Elisha’s propositions cannot
believe her eyes, just as he had balked before his own vision. Witnessing Elisha’s
theatrically performed transgression, she now does not so much recognize him as other
(אחר) from the pious Rabbi Elisha b. Abuyah she previsoulsy had known, as
performatively bestow that title upon him on the stam’s behalf. In Mira Balberg’s words,

On the one hand the prostitute functions precisely as an agent of the established
order: by asking “And are you not Elisha b. Abuya?” she defines the borders of
sound, homotopian existence: Elisha b. Abuya is not supposed to go to a
prostitute. But after he performs an act entailing a profanation of the Sabbath,
she recognizes the essential change that has occurred, i.e. she absolutely shares
(and it makes no difference whether she is gentile or Jewish) in “our” view of the
borders. Moreover, it is her who bestows upon Elisha b. Abuya his new name,
Aḥer. The naming establishes her [...] as a privileged cultural agent of rabbinic
society [...] 32

It is only from this moment on, through the prostitute’s verbal declaration, that
Elisha will become an outcast to the rabbinic community. 33

32 Balberg, “לעוטיפה הטרוטיפיה בין” 200.
33 The “hagiographic” cycle the Bavli devotes to Aḥer, with an abundance of tales about his “post-
lapsarian” period, portrays him as tragically belonging to the rabbinic community even as an
excommunicated outcast.
If the interpretation proposed above stands, the ending of the story yields important insight into its middle section. Assuming that until the uprooting of the radish Aḥer was no transgressor forces us to identify his sin elsewhere than in the proposal that there may exist two sovereignties in heaven (c). In this regard this chapter registers its bounded consonance with the results of the comparative study of b. Ḣagigah 15a and 3 Enoch published by David Grossberg. According to Grossberg, the two narratives about the encounter between Elishaʿ b. Abuyah and Meṭṭron contained in b. Ḣagigah and in 3 Enoch display a primary emphasis on orthopraxy and orthodoxy respectively, an emphasis that reflects the concerns of those responsible for editing the narratives.34

Grossberg argues that

the Bavli account of Elishaʿ is a unified tale whose underlying theme is Elishaʿ’s tragic failure to observe the praxis of Torah rather than his fall into a conjectured doctrinal heresy. By “Torah praxis” I mean the practical precepts and prohibitions of the classical rabbinic literature (such as observing the Sabbath) in contrast to theoretical justifications for those practices or the beliefs of those who observe them (such as belief in divine unity). Nowhere are Elishaʿ’s beliefs emphasized. Even his famous exclamation upon seeing Meṭṭron in heaven, “Perhaps, God forbid, there are two powers!” is not best read in its literary and cultural context as a statement of personal belief.35

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[...] The crux of the Bavli narrative is not what Elisha said about two powers. Instead, it is the fact that the events occasioned by what he said caused him to go out and sin by violating the rabbinic practice of Torah. The moral is Elisha’s obligation to observe the Sabbath and the laws of modesty, not what he may or may not believe about the subtleties of the unity or multiplicity of the godhead. That these critical elements of the Bavli narrative – both the proof-text and the transgression – are entirely absent from 3 Enoch reflects the respective concerns of the editors of each of the texts.³⁶[...]

[T]he narrative is best read as presenting the heavenly proclamation not as an instance of divine judgment distinct from Metatron’s vengeance but rather as a functional consequence of it. In other words, I would suggest that the narrative is not set up in such a way as to indicate that the heavenly voice’s proclamation of “’Return backsliding children’–except Aḥer!” should be read as a punishment at all. Indeed, the phrasing of this proclamation is opaque and ambiguous [...].³⁷

Grossberg’s insights are in my view important. His theory, however, leaves unaccounted-for the passage in which Elisha produces his notorious exclamatory about the two powers in heaven, and does not illuminate the sense of the portrayal of Metatron as busy writing the merits of Israel. Even more importantly, Grossberg’s reading cannot explain the very presence of the vision in the sugyah. If all the editor of the sugyah was trying to convey is the importance of orthopraxy, why involve Metatron at all? The sugyah is too artfully crafted for us to imagine that half of its content may be merely vestigial.

Grossberg’s position was anticipated in part by Alon Goshen-Gottstein, who portrayed Aḥer as a radical antinomian. Running contrary to a scholarly tendency to

³⁶ Ibid., 121.
³⁷ Ibid., 133.
consider the expression “perhaps, God forbid” (שמא חס שלום) in c as the product of a gradual softening of Elisha b. Abuya’s blasphemous language on the part of the literary or even scribal tradition, Goshen-Gottstein argued that the phrase has here the same function it generally fulfills in the Talmud: indicating a momentary wavering on the part of a rabbi, who immediately corrects himself by uttering a correct judgment.

Building on Goshen-Gottstein’s insight, Grossberg claims that the attribution of שמא חס שלום to the tanna himself was already in the original teaching, and was not the product of later interventions. According to Grossberg’s reconstruction, in the Bavli this phrase functions simultaneously as an exclamation of worry and fear that something might be true and an implicit acknowledgement that it is not true. The exclamation implies that because Metatron is sitting, someone might see him and falsely conclude that there are two powers in heaven. Correctly reading the Talmudic idiom “perhaps, God forbid” means that there is no reason, at this stage in the Bavli narrative, to think that Elisha committed any misdeed.

In the third of three as yet unpublished lectures delivered at Yale University, Daniel Boyarin, retaining part of Goshen-Gottstein’s intuition but using it—as it were—

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40 Ibid., 127.
41 Ibid., 130.
contra him, proposes that precisely the dubitative value of the standard Talmudic
expression served to enhance the portrayal of the binitarian belief as
dangerous. If Elishaʿ is punished for the faltering of one sole instant, the belief in two
authorities in heaven must be a truly grave sin.

While adopting the standard view, held also by Schäfer, that “Meʿatatron clearly
assumes here a very high position in heaven, in fact so high that Aḥer mistakes him for a
second God,”43 Boyarin connects the reference to sitting contained in both b. Ḥagiga 15a
and 3 Enoch to the enthronement scene in Daniel 7:13, and the mention of רשות
(ἐξουσία in the LXX) that the “One like a Son of Man” is given in that Biblical
book.44 For him, moreover, Meʿatatron is never abased, but only made the object of some
heavenly theater for the purpose of ensuring that humankind make no more mistakes
about the structure of the godhead.

Boyarin considers Elishaʿ not a heretic or somebody external to the rabbinic
community, but rather a pious rabbi who has been tasked with embodying the dangers
one, no matter how observant of the Torah, incurs when worshipping an exalted angel.

Indeed,

[I]ocating this ‘heretical’ interpretation right at the heart of the rabbinic academy
and indeed among some of its leading figures strongly suggests that these views

44 Boyarin, “The Quest.”
had been current in the Jewish circles from which the Rabbis emerged and the views were eventually anathematized by them and driven out.

In what follows I will offer an interpretation of this Talmudic discussion that attempts to do justice both to its orthopractical focus, rightly acknowledged by Goshen-Gottstein and Grossberg, and to the undeniable centrality of Aḥer’s mystical vision, emphasized by Boyarin, Schäfer and many others.

Stringing together the concern with the mitzvot and the theological aspects of the sugyah, I will propose to read the latter as a sophisticated reasoning on the illegitimacy of theological discourse and on the relationship between that discourse and the rabbis’ soteriological model, which entails observance of Scriptural and halakhic precepts and is tied to the possibility of repentance (חזרה). This reading, I hope, will account equally for the role of the “mouth” (discourse) and of the “flesh” (orthopraxy) in the verse quoted at the beginning of the sugyah (Qoh 5:5: “Do not suffer your mouth to cause your flesh to sin”).

7.5 חזון and Vision: The Rabbinic Rejection of Theology

The text (b) reads: “He saw Metatron, that authority had been given to him to sit down in order to write down the merits of Israel.” It is impossible to decide if the

45 In referring to this discursive mode, painted as alien by the rabbi, as “theology” I intend to set apart for this term a restrictive and historically individuated sense, signifying a specifically Christian manner of intellectual inquiry (the one within which epistemic shifts were observed in previous chapters). This meaning is to be distinguished from the larger sense, in which it is used in chapter 1, and in which it may describe any instance of engagement with the divine.
narrator is implying that, in addition to seeing the heavenly figure, Elishaʿ was also provided with all the contextual information we receive. It can be presumed that if Meʿatron is portrayed as writing, Aḥer must have perceived that it was Israel’s merits that he was writing down. What the rabbi was clearly not informed of, however, was that the angel had specifically received the permission to sit down in order to perform this task, which had been delegated to him by God.⁴⁶

Meʿatron’s sitting prompted Elishaʿ’ s citation of a traditional teaching which he had learned (c): “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no sitting, and no competition, and no turning of the back, and no proliferation.” From this teaching, describing activities and states of being precluded to the creatures that crowd the heavenly court, the tanna drew the obvious conclusion that the being he saw seated could not be one of those creatures. His status had to be different: he had to be divine.

Elishaʿ’ s reasoning is here based on an implicit syllogism: 1) [Major premise] No creature can sit in God’s presence (= information conveyed by the traditional teaching); 2) [Minor premise] Meʿatron is sitting in God’s presence (= information conveyed by the vision); 3) [Conclusion] Meʿatron is not a creature. At this point Elishaʿ makes a final and for him fatal inference, to wit that Meʿatron, too, must be an

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⁴⁶ I prefer to translate למסות את יד רשמה למסות את הנספח (in the clause מכתב למסות, in b) as a purpose clause rather than an asyndeton, which is how it has been generally translated (‘to sit and to write down’). The sole, specified purpose of Meʿatron’s sitting was to write the merits of Israel.
independent celestial sovereignty (רשותא). Although the outcome of Elisha' b. Abuya's misprision is theological, the narrative highlights primarily not this ill-conceived theological conclusion but the process whereby he arrives at it, mistaking as he does for a sovereignty (רשותא) what was simply an instance of permission or of delegated authority (חזא מיטטרון דאתיהבא ליה רשותא) (רשותא).

This mistaken theological formulation is the result of a collision between two distinct domains of knowledge, to which the major and minor premises of Elisha's implicit syllogism respectively go back: the authoritative tradition of the rabbis on the one hand and personal theosophic experience on the other. What this sugyah primarily intends to proscribe is thus not binitarian beliefs per se, but rather the inappropriate bringing together of two epistemic domains—tradition and vision—that are separately legitimate avenues of attaining religious knowledge. The epistemological misprision on Elisha's part is evident in the paradoxical logic underlying his exclamation: since an authoritative tradition teaches that no sitting is allowed in the heavens, and since an entity is indeed sitting there, the latter must be of such a kind that an authoritative tradition would not apply to it. Elisha' incorrectly draws conclusions from a teaching
introduced by גמירא/גמירי in a domain to which such teachings were never meant to be applied.47

The anxiety expressed by our sugyah, then, is unlikely to simply concern the legitimacy of visionary experience: it concerns, rather, failure to observe the epistemic boundaries within which the objects of such visions are to be kept. The Bavli as a whole, insofar as such a generalization is permissible, does not appear to hold principled objections to Hekhalot-like visionary experiences. The whole second pereq of tractate Hagiga, which contains the narrative at hand, takes as its point of departure the mishnah’s prohibition of esoteric teaching, only to proceed to describe wild speculations of precisely that kind. According to Peter Schäfer, however,

the Talmudic Sugya on ma‘ase bereshit can be read as a polemic against the ascent apocalypses and Merkavah mysticism. It adopts some major components of this literature but neutralizes and marginalizes them: the knowledge of the cosmological structure of the world, more precisely of the heavenly realm, and the attempt to use this knowledge in order to ascend to heaven and to get closer to God. The “science of the cosmos” that is preserved and propagated in certain circles [...] does not really matter; what is important is God’s perpetual love for Israel, and for Israel alone, and Israel’s proper response. Furthermore, the attempt to ascend to heaven, propagated in the very same circles, does not lead

47 In relation to the the legitimacy of celestial sitting, Menachem Kister has recently identified two different trends within rabbinic literature (Kister, “מטטרון,” 82). One claims that no sitting whatsoever is permitted in heaven, while another considers that select non-divine figures are allowed to sit, whether because of their honor or because of a function they perform. Taking into account the results of Kister’s study, within the framework I have proposed the contents of the sugyah could be logically reduced to a demonstration of the risks involved in applying a traditional teaching aligning with the latter, more restrictive line of thought to a mystical vision of the heavens (where the former, more permisive custom is followed).
anywhere. Not only can God not be seen, but the misguided undertaking of the heavenly journeys also misses the true purpose of Israel’s destiny in the world.

Our sugyah displays toward theosophic visions the same attitude the pereq that contains it has shown toward apocalyptic and mystical teachings: without making an effort at suppressing those dimensions of religious experience, the rabbis attempt to marginalize them by limiting their epistemological purview significantly. The disavowal of theological discourse implicit in the episode of Aḥer’s encounter with the angel is a consequence of this tendency.

If the rabbis’ censure in this sugyah had been meant to fall directly on binitarian statements, the citation of the traditional teaching introduced by גמירי גמירא would arguably be a very uneconomical way to express it. Had Elisha’s been merely a sin of binitarianism, he could have been portrayed more simply as being misled by his vision of Metatron into confessing a second God, without any reference to sitting. It is indeed possible that the original narrative recounted Elisha’s lapse into binitarianism simply as a result of his encounter with the angel, without any reference to the latter’s sitting.

Alexander, followed by Boyarin in his Shaffer lectures, sees as adventitious the presence of the traditional teaching concerning behaviors that are inappropriate in the heavenly realm. According to him the original narrative is contained in ms. Munich 95, which contains a fairly cryptic version. Since no mention is made of the angel’s sitting, what his sin may be in this manuscript is difficult to tell. Here Elisha’s slip into
binitarianism is simply a result of a vision of the glowing appearance of Mešatron.48 In this recension we read in b-c:

   He saw Mešatron, that authority had been given to him to write the merits of Israel.

   He said: “It is taught (as a tradition) that above there is no standing, and no sitting, and no jealousy, and no competition, and no weariness, and no proliferation. Perhaps there are—God forbid—two authorities!”

   Then the author of the text in ms. Vatican 134, according to Alexander, tried to make sense of this narrative by seizing upon the mention of sitting in the quotation introduced by the גמירא/גמירי and by identifying Mešatron’s fault with that action. Alexander deemed that ms. Vatican 134 had a preferable text to the one received by the Vilna edition for two reasons: 1) prosodically, it presents a lectio facilior:49 by his scanning the passage reads, with perfect parallelism:

   לא עמדו והלא ישיב
   לא קצאה והלא מיתר
   לא רוכז והלא ע痱

   ; 2) ideologically, Vatican 134 offers a lectio difficilior: Why would standing be proscribed, when it appears to be what Mešatron should have done? Thus, precisely

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48 While I have no position on this, I will note that the supporting argument presented in Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 62, n. 23 is unconvincing, because the lectio (a phrasing that according to him switches the focus from Mešatron’s sitting to his appearance) is carried also by textual recensions that do specify that Mešatron was sitting while writing the merits of Israel (e.g. mss. München 6, Vatican 171, Oxford 23), making that into the origin of Elisha’s blasphemy.

because the mention of “standing” in the teaching as quoted in ms. Vatican 134 made the story contradictory, that mention was suppressed by the ms. used by the Vilna edition (and, I would add, by Vatican 171).^{50}

Alexander also proposed that, before being integrated into the narrative of ms. Munich 95, the teaching introduced by גميرא/גמירי was simply meant as a denial of the notion that God and angels could possess body parts or could be capable of passion.^{51}

Building on his proposal, Boyarin speculatively reconstructed the text of the proto-sugyah as saying: “He saw that Meṭaṭron had been given sovereignty [ראה] to sit and write the good deeds of Israel. Perhaps, God forbid, there are two sovereignties [שני רשויות]!” This allows Boyarin to bring b. Hagiga 15a and 3 Enoch together to the point of ideological consonance and to claim that the “sitting” is central to the story of the apotheosis of Meṭaṭron^{52} without having to jettison Alexander’s theory about the extrinsic origin of the teaching introduced by גميرא/גמירי.^{53}


^{51} Ibid., 60-61. Boyarin, “Beyond Judaism,” 347 and n. 68 has provided an explanation, offered to him privately by Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, whereby each of the elements that the traditional teaching lists as absent from the heavenly court finds its raison d’être as a “Platonic” polemical statement referring to a different verse in the HB that could lend itself to an anthropomorphic reading.

^{52} It is impossible to deny the compelling amount of evidence suggesting that the motif of sitting plays an important part in the mistaken perception of Meṭaṭron’s status as unduly elevated in this narrative. Enoch, a scribe and a witness of God’s judgment in Jubilees 4:23, is portrayed as sitting down in heaven writing in 2 Enoch 23:4-6.

^{53} This claim is crucial to Boyarin’s establishment of continuity between b. Hagiga 15a and 3 Enoch on the one hand and the Jewish apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic tradition on the other, within a fruitful
As far as my analysis is concerned, the existence of a vast pre-history and of a dense cluster of cognate recensions for the text of the sugyah under examination does not contradict the possibility that some of the elements of the passage may have been retained and re-signified in the hands of editors. The latter may have been less interested in the original meaning of the passage and more invested in the teaching’s ability to be credibly presented as traditional (thanks to the preface גמירה/גמירי and other features) and incorporated into his ideological construction. The meaning that the editor of b. Hagiga 15a seeks to shape differs both from that conveyed by the short anti-anthropomorphemic list contained in the traditional teaching and from the original sense of the pre-Bavli Elisha’ narrative before the insertion of that list. The materials the redactor of our sugyah received did not bind him to any specific organization. In a sense, the more dramatic the narrative variance, including in relation to the configuration of the story in the Yerushalmi, the easier it will be to argue for clear intentionality behind the choices made by our redactor.

The expression גמירא/גמירי ("they have learned") is found over a hundred times in the Bavli. In b. Menaḥot 62b the word is explained by Rashi to be equivalent to "from Sinai" (מסיני). Whether or not "from Sinai" should be equated with "a law [given] to Moses on Sinai" (הלכה למשה מסיני), this latter category, as Christine Hayes explains, is applied to a law that does not require logical justification and that, because of its authoritativeness, is most often not subject to debate. Halivni has argued that the identity between הלכה למשה מסיני and גמירא/גמירי is not always operative, adducing multiple examples of usages of גמירא/גמירי in which no halakhic implication can be detected. Nevertheless, he seems to have worked with a fairly narrow definition of הלכה למשה מסיני, an expression that, as Christine Hayes has demonstrated, can instead appear in haggadic contexts as well. The identity between הלכה למשה מסיני and גמירא/גמירי is therefore not yet fully disproven.

Be that as it may, it is not truly necessary to determine with exactitude whether, in attributing a halakhic tradition to a tanna, our sugyah specifically understands it as הלכה למשה מסיני. The expression could be used here to express a variety of concepts, including a) an ancient and reliable tradition; b) a tradition rooted in a reading of the Torah and not based on rabbinic innovation; c) a tradition that can be formally categorized as הלכה למשה מסיני.

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What appears certain is that an aura of traditionality is attached to the teaching repeated by Elishaʿ due to the formula by which it is introduced.57

In any event, the term גמירה/גמירה is utilized in our sugyah as it is often employed in the Babylonian Talmud, viz. to establish a contrast between the traditional teaching it introduces and a product of experience, observation, or analysis. The tradition introduced by גמירה/גמירה retains its validity; at the same time, by being marked as opposed to—at least in this case—incontrovertible observation, its authoritative value is irremediably fractured and thus distanced from the truly authoritative voice of the stam, even when a compromise formation is eventually achieved.

The particular teaching introduced by Elishaʿ b. Abuya appears to be treated similarly to cases in which in the Bavli גמירה/גמירה conveys lore of some kind. An example can be found in b. Berakhot 59a:

I wish to thank Sarit Kattan-Gribetz for this effort of logical disambiguation.

Interestingly, in the parallel of our sugyah contained in Merkavah Rabbah (edited in Schäfer, Synopse, 246) the expression גמירה/גמירה is replaced by תנו רבנן, a phrase that in the Talmud has the role of introducing a tannaitic teaching (a baraita or a teaching from the tosefta). Further research could investigate the reasons that may have led the stam to portray a tannaitic sage as repeating a traditional teaching and faultily applying it to a theosophic vision. This editorial choice might reflect an intention of mild erosion of the authoritativeness of a mode of inquiry based on the repetition of traditional teachings, set up in parallel to the critique of mystical journeys observed above. Further motives may include tensions between “masters of the Talmud” and the reciters (tannaim) contemporary to them, or as possible connections between the latter and the producers and transmitters of Hekhalot-like literature containing the kind of cosmological, apocalyptic, and theosophical contents that end up in our pereq. On this set of issues see M. Vidas, Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014).
And with regard to ruḥot: What are ruḥot? Abaye said: “A hurricane.” And Abaye (further) said: “It is taught as a tradition that a hurricane cannot happen at night, but lo, we see that it does!” It is the one that began during the day. And Abaye said: “It is taught as a tradition that a hurricane does not last two hours, to fulfill that which was said (Nah 1:9): ‘Disgrace will not rise twice,’ but lo, we see that it does!” It stop(ped) in the middle.

As in b. Hagiga 15a, the contents of the authoritative traditional teaching here do not comport with empirical reality, and a third statement has to be brought in to reconcile the two apparently conflicting propositions by taking into account an element of exception for which the original teaching did not allow. In the case of b. Hagiga 15a, the solution is the only one that is found capable of accounting logically both for the vision and for the teaching. Its contents, however, turn out to be blasphemous. While the quest for logical reconciliation between a traditional teaching and an empirical observation is harmless when dealing with meteorological phenomena, that is hardly the case when the most intimate realm of the divine is at issue. The application of traditional teachings to mystical experiences leads to a form of religious discourse that comes dangerously close to asserting precise knowledge about intra-divine dynamics. The rabbis have no patience for this sort of intellectual undertaking.

In summary, the first part of my interpretive proposal is that the sugyah primarily expresses intolerance not of one or another theological construct,
but of theological discourse as such. The latter is criticized because it diverts one from the type of discourse the rabbis promote and through which their authority is exercised. To be sure, binitarian beliefs are depicted as undesirable and disavowed. Nevertheless, they are not made the object of explicit proscription, but rather used narratively as the pretext for unleashing a chain of dramatic consequences sufficient to dissuade anybody from theologizing. The problem this sugyah tackles is then not so much theological, as epistemological and more broadly discursive.

7.6 Soteriology

There is almost a farcical overtone to the mechanical chain of reactions that will ensue from Elisha’s “two powers in heaven” declaration. The story does not provide an interpretable set of credible and well-integrated interactions out of which a coherent interpretation may be drawn, but rather shows an irreversible domino effect of infelicitous and arguably tragi-comic consequences. On what we can imagine as an heavenly stage, Metatron and his angelic tormentors theatrically go through the motions of a punishment performed exclusively for Elisha’s edification—so that the notion may be reinforced upon him that the demoted angel is no God.58

58 This was already the interpretation of some rishonim: see e.g. Hananel ben Hushiel, commentary ad loc. (חל ה ששם נבר הל הורローンו כל אלה תורה לאנליש שים עלollarו) and Todros b. Joseph Abulafia, Sefer Otzar Ha-kavod, commentary ad loc. (כך הראה לא אלייש שאר מי רוח את המבואר והמורחב Desde אלה שאר אליישא א涞יו).
Elisha’s merits are subsequently effaced, but not as a concession to Mešatron’s alleged petty vengefulness (no rage or request to take revenge are recorded). That Mešatron needs to receive רשותא (which can mean “permission”) to erase Elisha’s merits should not mislead us: the sentence לאיתיהבב לאיתיהבב היא רשותא למחות ומחותא דאהר, ensuring that the angel’s previous recording of Israel’s (and hence also Elisha’s) merits be fully undone for this one member of the people. The expression is also needed to inculcate again the notion that Mešatron is not allowed to perform the function of soteriological scribe except by the granting of a special permission. It could even be speculated that the same words are used so that in the comparison between אתיהבב לאיתיהבב היא רשותא למחות ומחותא דאהר and אתיהבב לאיתיהבב היא רשותא למחות ומחותא דאהר the absence of any mention of sitting after the punishment may stand out.

The erasure of Elisha’s merits is thus no Mešatronic initiative, but rather an act of divinely-commanded annihilation of the capital of mitzvot that Elisha had accrued through the rabbinic system of justification. Elisha’s recognition of a second sovereignty leads him unwittingly to an affiliation with the angel, mistaken for a cosmocratic and soteriological figure. God is now going to make Elisha pay for his misprision by allowing him to experience an alternate regimen of justification wherein deliverance is indeed entrusted to an angel. Elisha’s inevitable damnation will tragically bear witness
to the inefficacy of such a soteriological system. He whom God had entrusted to preside
over the account of Israel’s salvation, and whom Elisha’ mistook for an independent
guarantor of his own deliverance, by erasing his merits becomes, in a coup de théâtre,
responsible for his perdition. The stylized and polemical representation of the
bureaucratic ease with which Elisha’s record of mitzvot is made into tabula rasa,
implicitly suggesting that its writing had been a similarly perfunctory act, may even call
to mind—it is difficult to say with how much relevance—a biting parody of the
workings of the Pauline doctrine of justification.⁵⁹

It is at this point that a bat qol comes out, officially communicating Elisha’s
exclusion from the possibility of repentance. This heavenly voice does not come to

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⁵⁹ In addition to this polemic against models of religious justification based on something other
than the mitzvot, several elements in the text—none of them decisive—could suggest the presence of
polemical anti-Christian undertones: Elisha’s association with a prostitute and plucking of a plant on the
Sabbath (for this theme in relation to rabbinic literature see M. Kister, “Plucking on the Sabbath and
Christian-Jewish Polemic,” Imm 24-25 (1990): 35-51) would thus cast his affiliation with a lesser deity as
comparable to that of Jesus’s disciples; and, above all, the “bringing out” and lashing of a soteriological
figure, which could be read as a parody of the incarnation and passion of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I
would urge caution: prostitutes are notoriously ubiquitous in the Bavli; and the uprooting of the radish finds a
verbatim parallel—שתר יד פוגלא ממשרא—in a thematically unrelated context in b. ṬAvodah Ṭarah 10b, in
which it symbolizes destruction. Most importantly, in relation to the flogging of Meṭatron, the angel Gabriel
is lashed in uncensored editions of b. Yoma 77a, and Kiel, “Reimagining Enoch,” has demonstrated the
influences on our text on the part of Zoroastrian and Manichaean reports about the Iranian hero Yima in the
context of syncretistic Sasanian culture on the representation of Meṭatron in our text. K. Hermann, “Jewish
Mysticism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Merkavah Mysticism in 3 Enoch,” in Boustan, Himmelfarb
and Schäfer, Hekhalot Literature in Context, 107-108 intriguingly suggests that the negative judgment received
by Jesus in the Bavli, which agrees with the Sasanian context of the composition of the work, constitutes the
basis for this Talmud’s negative interpretation of Meṭatron. Much of the validity of these connections rests
on broader debates about the presence of references to Jesus and Christianity in the Talmud. For an
overview see J. Maier, Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche
declare that Elisha’s heretical statement is too great a sin for him ever to be able to repent: this is not the rabbinic equivalent of the Gospels’ unpardonable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mk 3:29 pars.). It communicates, rather, that, being under the soteriological aegis of Meṭatron, he is no longer bound by the authority of the rabbinically mediated system of mitzvot and teshuvah, nor can he enjoy its benefits. His inability to “return” stems from his having been placed outside of the legal machinery wherein the possibility of teshuvah is strictly connected to the acceptance of rabbinic authority. It is perfectly fitting that such a message be delivered by a bat qol, which embodies a form of direct relationship with the divine about which the Talmud repeatedly records a sentiment of at best ambiguity, and at worst competitiveness, on the part of the rabbis.60

Grossberg claims that, as in the famous story of the oven of Aknai,61 in which a bat qol endorsed Eli’ezer’s halakhic authority in a dispute but “the proclamation of a heavenly voice is considered less authoritative than the proclamation of a majority of rabbis,” “in the case of Elisha the narrative implicitly showcases the heavenly voice’s lack of authority.” He adds:

60 See M.N.A. Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2; Reihe 36; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), 107-108.

61 See b. Bava Metzi’a 59b; see also b. Ḥullin 44a.
It is made very clear as the story continues that Elisha could still have repented regardless of what the heavenly voice declared. Rabbi Meir repeatedly pleads with Elisha to repent and Elisha stubbornly holds to his erroneous belief that he cannot. And, although Elisha goes to the grave without repenting, he is forgiven after his death by the intercession of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yohanan. Elisha is forgiven and thus the conclusion of the narrative clearly belies the implications of the heavenly voice’s declaration.62

Although the literary connection between the sugyah and the “Aḥer cycle” is undeniable, the gem-like text of b.Ḥagigah is so narratively self-enclosed and purposefully designed that I would avoid interpreting any of its characters in light of the treatment they might receive elsewhere.

Elisha’ b. Abuya is not condemned by reason of his alleged binitarianism, but inscribed, as a result of his participation in a dangerous kind of religious discourse (theology), within a soteriological system alternative to that of halakhic observance, and forced to experience in his own flesh its ineffectualness. It is undeniable that his theologizing has led Elisha’ to place excessive trust in the independent cosmocratic and soteriological function of the angel Meṭatron. But the structure of the sugyah is such that its focus is not on the disavowal of binitarianism, but on the straight line that can lead from dabbling in theological discourse to the rejection of rabbinic authority.

If our text were simply, as Grossberg writes, “a cautionary tale warning the reader not to abandon the praxis of Torah even if it seems to you that a heavenly voice

implies that you should” the story-line chosen to get that message across would be quite deficient, as Meṭaṭrôn’s presence would be fully inexplicable. Moreover, if the sugyah were about the rabbinic struggle with competing Jewish forms of binitarianism or of celebrations of an exalted Son of Man figure—whether this struggle is understood entirely within rabbinic and para-rabbinic circles, or as rabbis engaged with actual outsiders—elements such as the insistence on the writing and the erasure of merits and the logical process by which Elisha’ reaches his mistaken conclusion could not be explained. Rather, I am suggesting that at the center of the narrative there deliberately lies an opposition between theology and Torah observance, between an idle inquiry into the inner workings of the divine and a virtuous adhesion to the rabbinically-mediated system of precepts—or, as Grossberg puts it, between orthopraxy and orthodoxy.

7.7 The Sin of Aḥer

After hearing about his fate from the bat qol, the outcast Elisha’ b. Abuya, uttering no words of despair, draws the appropriate legal consequences from this divine decree, resolving to begin to enjoy life. Before he can even embrace a prostitute, she formalizes his highly theatrical act of uprooting a radish, certifying that this makes him

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63 Grossberg, “Between 3 Enoch,” 137.
64 See Schäfer, Jewish Jesus, 103-149; Boyarin, “Beyond Judaisms,” 323-365, part. 326, n. 6.
other (Aḥer) than he whom she knew him as. On this highly poetic note the narrative breaks off.

The present section of this chapter gives a closer look at the transgression of the Sabbath committed by Elishaʿ at the end of the sugyah, in an attempt to approach it in light of rabbinic halakhah and within the context of b. Ḥagigah. The rabbis, seeking a way to make actionable the Scriptural commandment to observe the Sabbath, asserted that the Torah had prohibited any מלאכה (a term that can be translated, with some awkwardness in the usage, as “work”) whose performance was necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle. The tannaim identified forty-nine categories of such work proscribed on the Sabbath (אבות מלאכה, “fathers of work”—e.g. קציר, “reaping”), and extended the ban to activities that expressed the same ultimate goal as those actions (תולדות מלאכה, “offspring of work”—e.g., honey-harvesting from reaping).

At the same time, the rabbis limited the Torah’s ban on work to the kinds of work that are described by the expression “thoughtful work” (מלאכת חשבת). That is, the above-mentioned 39 actions were only forbidden if they constituted such “thoughtful work.” The definition of “thoughtful work” hinges on the fulfillment of six criteria, defined as follows:

65 Ex 35:33. See b. Shabat 49b; b. Beitzah 13b.
1) “intention” (כוונה): the work needs to be performed intentionally or, if it is performed unintentionally, its unintended outcome needs to be known as inevitable, according to the principle of פסוק רישא (“[he who] cut the head [of a chicken not in order to kill it, but to let his child play with the head]”);

2) “improving” (ممתקך): it needs to be performed for a constructive purpose;

3) a “work that is necessary for its own sake” (מלאכה הצריכה לנוסח): it needs to be performed in order to achieve the same result for which it was performed in the construction of the Tabernacle;

4) “according to its usual manner” (דררה): it needs to be performed in the manner in which it normally is;

5) “persistent” (מתjejerימי): it needs to be such that its outcomes may be foreseen to persist for a reasonable amount of time;

6) “the full work” (המלאכה כללה): it needs to be performed by one single agent if that is the way in which it is normally performed.

To be sure, the rabbis multiplied prohibitions on kinds of actions that did not meet all of these criteria, but they recognized that these bans were the product of their own legislating and distinct from the mandates that they read in (or into) the text of the Torah. The distinction between prohibitions declared by the Torah (מגדיריהו) and by the rabbis (מרבנן) was legally consequential. The conscious transgressor (מזיד) of the Torah
prohibition of a “thoughtful work” was considered punishable by excision (כרת), or, if the trespass was committed in the presence of two warning witnesses, by stoning (סקילה), whereas the involuntary transgressor (שוגג) needed to bring a sin offering (קורבן חטאת).

On the other hand, when it came to rabbinic prohibitions the voluntary transgressor of a thoughtful work was only punished with a beating for rebelliousness (מכת מר薸ות), while the involuntary transgressor of a rabbinic prohibition was not liable at all. Additionally, in cases of doubt leniency could be used with regard to rabbinic norms about the Sabbath, whereas those coming directly from the Torah had to be treated with stringency. By the same token, in some cases a gentile could be asked to perform on behalf of a Jew a work prohibited by the rabbis, but the same could not be licitly done for a work prohibited by the Torah.

Criteria n. 2 and n. 3 cited above as given by the rabbis for the fulfillment of the Torah’s definition of “thoughtful work” are particularly relevant to a discussion of Aher’s uprooting of a radish on the Sabbath. The criterion of “improving” entails that, in order to be prohibited by the Torah as “thoughtful work,” any activity—including a destructive one—needs to be performed with a constructive intent. When a destructive act is not done with such an intent the Torah allows it, as it is not considered “improving” (criterion n. 2 above), but rather “destroying” (מקלקל, its opposite). For example, tearing down a wall on the Sabbath simply to get rid of it would be allowed by
the Torah, whereas tearing it down in order to clear an area so that one may later build on it would be prohibited. It remained understood by all that any work falling under the category of “improving” was in any case rabbinically prohibited.

The criterion “work that is necessary for its own sake” stipulates that, in order to be prohibited by the Torah, an action needs to be performed for the same purpose for which it was performed during the construction of the Tabernacle. When a work is not performed for that same purpose, the Torah allows it, as it is not considered a “work that is necessary for its own sake,” but rather a “work that is not necessary for its own sake” (מלאכה שאינה צריכה לזרם). For example, the extinction of a fire on the Sabbath for the purpose of the creation of embers would be prohibited by the Torah, whereas extinguishing the same fire in order to save oil would be permitted. It remained understood by all that any work falling under the category of “work that is not necessary for its own sake” was in any case prohibited by the rabbis.

That a work needed to be one “that is necessary for its own sake” in order to be prohibited by the Torah was not recognized by R. Yehudah, a tanna whom the Bavli portrays as engaging in a dispute with R. Shim’on on the topic. R. Yehudah’s view, however, appears in this case to have carried little weight not only among later Talmudic commentators and legal scholars, but in the Bavli itself: R. Aba, a third-generation amora, ruled in the opposite direction to R. Yehudah’s opinion, saying that
the performance of a “work that is not necessary for its own sake” on the Sabbath was permitted by the Torah.66 R. Shim’on’s position won the day, although Jewish law eventually came up with a compromise whereby a greater degree of stringency was applied to the rabbinic prohibition of a “work that is not necessary for its own sake” than is normally exercised for rabbinic prescriptions of cessation (שבות) on the Sabbath.

Interestingly, one of the main sources for the notion of a “work that is not necessary for its own sake” is preserved only five folios before the sugyah of Meṭatron. There the gemara takes up a curious statement by the mishnah (m. Ḥagigah 1:8). This statement articulates with rare bluntness and a surprising degree of self-awareness the relationship between the halakhic tradition developed by the rabbis and the commands of the Torah.

The dissolution of vows flies in the air and has nothing to lean on. The laws of the Sabbath, festal-offerings, and acts of sancta violation are as mountains hanging by a strand, since they are little Scripture and many laws. Civil cases, temple services, purities and impurities, and forbidden relations, have upon what to lean, and it is they that are the bodies of the Torah.

66 See b. Shabat 141a.

67 Both the text and the translation of the mishnah are taken (and the latter slightly adapted) from M. Bar-Asher Siegal, “Mountains Hanging by a Strand? Re-Reading Mishnah Ḥagigah 1:8,” JAJ 4 (2013): 235. The translation of the gemara is mine. For the establishment of this new text of the mishnah see ibid., 244-255.
As Halivni has explained, the bodies of the Torah (גופי תורה), its essence, are identified with the third category, *viz.* with that body of halakhic traditions that stand on the firmest textual ground. At the same time, as Martin Jaffee remarks, the Torah is treated here “as a synthetic category that encompasses in its purview both halakhic judgments of Sages and scripturally grounded textual interpretations.”

The *gemara* takes up one by one, as per its custom, the *mishnah*’s clauses. When it comes to discussing the rules of the Sabbath we read (*b. Hagigah* 10b):

> הלקות שבת מיכתב כתוב עליה כעין לקר נא אמא אמא רבי אמא המחברות מוכתב ומיי
> עליון אפיוןTambahל רבי חמא המחברות מוכתב Не agreeing with R. Aba. For R. Aba said: “He who digs a hole on the Sabbath and only needs the earth is not liable for it.” Who’s view is this one like? Like (that of) R. Shim’on, who said: “As for a ‘work that is not necessary for its own sake,’ one is not liable for it.” You (could even) say (that it is like the view) of R. Yehuda, (according to whom a work that is not necessary for its own sake is prohibited). (For) there (viz. in *b. Shabat* 93b, where Tosafot, ibid., 94a, s.v. את הממות) identified R. Yehudah as the *tanna qama* who had prohibited carrying a dead person—or even a minimal part thereof—out into the public domain on the Sabbath in spite of that being a work not necessary for its own sake, he (scil. the corpse-carrier) was “improving,” (whereas) here he (scil. the hole-digger) is “destroying” (and everybody agrees that all instances of “destroying” are permitted by the Torah). What (does) “like mountains hanging by a strand”

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70 הפ GIVEN >> אמא הממות-[ ויבי מוכתב עליה כעין לקר נא אמא אמא רבי אמא המחברות מוכתב ומיי
> עליון אפיוןTambahל רבי חמא המחברות מוכתב Не agreeing with R. Aba. For R. Aba said: “He who digs a hole on the Sabbath and only needs the earth is not liable for it.” Who’s view is this one like? Like (that of) R. Shim’on, who said: “As for a ‘work that is not necessary for its own sake,’ one is not liable for it.” You (could even) say (that it is like the view) of R. Yehuda, (according to whom a work that is not necessary for its own sake is prohibited). (For) there (viz. in *b. Shabat* 93b, where Tosafot, ibid., 94a, s.v. את הממות) identified R. Yehudah as the *tanna qama* who had prohibited carrying a dead person—or even a minimal part thereof—out into the public domain on the Sabbath in spite of that being a work not necessary for its own sake, he (scil. the corpse-carrier) was “improving,” (whereas) here he (scil. the hole-digger) is “destroying” (and everybody agrees that all instances of “destroying” are permitted by the Torah). What (does) “like mountains hanging by a strand”
(refer to)? (To the fact that) the Torah prohibited “thoughtful work,” but “thoughtful work” is not written.

The conclusion to which the gemara comes is that the expression used by the mishnah to describe the status of rules about the Sabbath is justified insofar as the narrowing down of prohibited work to “thoughtful work” is not made explicit anywhere in the Torah. The “work that is not necessary for its own sake,” the gemara concludes, is that to which the mishnah must have meant to refer by the hermeneutically terrifying image of a mountain hanging by a strand.

This sugyah as a whole betrays a great deal of anxiety about the solidity of the relationship between the proliferation of rules on the basis of midrash halakhah, on the one hand, and a Scriptural anchorage, on the other. The gemara’s rebuttal to the mishnah is forceful: “They (scil. the rules of the Sabbath) are indeed written” (מכתיב כתיבן). Rashi interprets the gemara’s eventual concession to the mishnah that the notion of מלאכת מחשבת is not provided in the Torah (ומלאכת מחשבת לא כתובה) as referring to its derivation by a thin heqesh between two verses placed in proximity to one another (Ex 35:2: שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים תֵּעָשֶׂה מְלָאכָה וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי יִהְיֶה לָכֶם קֹדֶשׁ שַׁבָּת שַׁבָּתוֹן לַיהוָה כָּל הָעֹשֶׂה בוֹ מְלָאכָה יוּמָת; Ex 35:33: וּבַחֲרֹשֶׁת אֶבֶן לְמַלֹּאת מְלֶאכֶת בְּכָל לַעֲשׂוֹת עֵץ וּבַחֲרֹשֶׁת).71

71 Underlying mine.
The admission that one specific part of traditional rabbinical teaching concerning Sabbath regulations is only loosely anchored in the Scripture seems to allow the gemara to do damage control, effectively limiting the reach of the mishnah statement to that particular case only. The rabbinic anxiety about the possibility of abusing legal authority is temporarily kept at bay. At the same time, the validity of teachings about “thoughtful work” is proudly restated: had it not been for this fine interpretive strand, R. Aba’s hole-digger would have been liable, and not exempt as he is thanks to the rabbinic notion of a “work that is not necessary for itself” (upheld by the majority of the rabbis) or the equally rabbinic category of “destroying” (both, as seen, applicable to his case). We find at work in this sugyah in b. Hagigah 10b a dynamic similar to what Christine Hayes described as “amoraic discomfort with and reduced exercise of some aspects of rabbinic authority, coupled with hyperbolic and rhetorical assertions of that very authority.”

Such coupling of discomfort and assertion of authority is to be found again five folios later, in the sugyah of Aḥer. It may well not be coincidental that Aḥer is shown performing a demonstrative act that technically qualifies as “work that is not necessary for its own sake.” While this might appear too captious a reading, a similar detail would not have been lost on ancient readers of the Talmud. Support for the idea that the editor

intended to characterize the uprooting of the radish as falling under this legal category, which had been the object of disquisition only five folios earlier, comes from an otherwise inexplicable narrative detail. After picking the vegetable, Aḥer gave it to the prostitute (j). Had he kept it, it could have been presumed that he was going to eat it, thus making his work one “necessary for its own sake” and therefore qualifying as “thoughtful work.” But Aḥer’s decision to immediately rid himself of the radish guarantees his lack of liability from the viewpoint of the Torah.73

The prostitute who witnesses the scene, unschooled in legal subtleties, is fully convinced of the transgressiveness of his act, and consequently bestows upon him the title of “other.” Nevertheless, the rabbinic legal interpretation whose validity was anxiously explored in b. Ḥagigah 10b reinscribes Aḥer into the community—by saving him from the excision (כרת) that would result from the performance of “thoughtful work” on the Sabbath—at the same moment that he crosses the borders of that community and transgresses a rabbinical prohibition (as the “work that is not necessary for its own sake” is still forbidden by the rabbis, and punished with a beating for rebelliousness). We can already observe here, in nuce, the development of the paradoxical memory to which the figure of Aḥer will be entrusted in Talmudic sources.

73 It would of course be different if the prostitute were said to have eaten the vegetable herself.
7.8 Conclusion

Citing Schäfer’s treatment of the figure of Meṭaṭron in 3 Enoch,74 Grossberg submits that

the representation of Elisha’s sin as a belief in two powers in this narrative reveals an editorial awareness of a potential similarity of such a belief to Christian doctrine. It might thus reflect a need to deal with questions of heresy and orthodoxy that may not have been as pressing to the editors of b. Hagigah. Perhaps for this reason, Elisha’s failure in 3 Enoch is presented as a failure in orthodoxy.

In my divergent reading, which is limited to one particular recension of b. Hagigah, the issue of correct belief is not only present to the mind of the ba’al ha-sugyah in the Bavli, but consciously thematized as such. However, such thematization is expressed through a resolute disavowal not of “heterodox” belief, but of styles of religious inquiry that aim at exact knowledge about the divine realm.

The passage’s undeniable concern with the observance of commandments as mediated through rabbinic jurisprudence, recognized by Grossberg, is thus couched within a contrast between legitimate and illegitimate ways of intellectual inquiry and, ultimately, of religious discourse. The variety of discourse the text disavows, namely that of theology, is in turn linked to a soteriological system based on direct relationship with the divine, and incompatible with the normative claims of the rabbinic academy.

74 P. Schäfer, Origins of Jewish Mysticism (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 324-327.
In conclusion, the sugiyah of Aḥer points to the possibility that the crystallization of particular modes of intellectual inquiry, connected to a restricted “horizon of the questionable,” was understood by the rabbis themselves as marking their separate religious identity more significantly than, or at least as significantly as, potential disagreement over particular theological constructs, including important ones such as the existence of a second heavenly sovereignty. Such a result supports the thesis, proposed in this dissertation, that the late ancient “parting of the ways” between Christianity and Judaism can be re-thought as a break between ways of knowing and the respective elite communities that practiced them: while on the Christian side a highly technicalized theological discourse developed, the rabbinic academy’s tolerance for theosophy stopped before the gate of the development of a full-fledged analytical theological discourse.
Conclusions

While Christianity and Judaism stand today as two discrete religious traditions, considerable effort was needed to sever them in ancient times. Much archaeological and literary evidence suggests that for a significant time after Jesus’s death the borders dividing the two communities remained permeable. In the field of early Christianity, scholarship has highlighted the struggles of authority that underlay Christian writers’ efforts to tighten the boundaries of religious identity. With little to differentiate the two groups, ancient Christian authors used the tools of heresiology to distance themselves from the “other” and from various forms of perceived hybridity. Historians of Judaism, for their part, by showing that the rabbinic religion solidified much later and less thoroughly than previously thought, have lent support to the idea that Christianity and Judaism continued to intertwine well into the late Roman Empire.

The very historiographic deployment of the category of “Jewish Christianity,” which describes a hybrid entity based on preconceived notions of Judaism and Christianity as stable identities, has been shown to be inadequate to capture adequately phenomena that do not fit neat models for the description of ancient religious identity.

Scholarly models for the interpretation and modeling of ancient Christian-Jewish relations have shifted from early historiographies inspired by supersessionist theology;
to the view, predominant in the second half of the twentieth century, of a definitive parting of ways that allegedly occurred as early as the first or second century CE; to the present emphasis on the lack of historical evidence for such an early separation, summarized by the notion of “the ways that never parted.”

This project has examined the role of the fourth-century Trinitarian controversies in the parting of ways between Christianity and Judaism. My study has located these disputes, which concerned Christ’s divine status and role as a mediator in God’s interaction with the created universe, within the lasting Christian-Jewish continuum described above. At the same time, I have suggested that these theological discussions illuminate the emergence of clearer partitions between Christianity and Judaism in the fluid religious landscape of the late Roman Empire.

The unevenness in the length and depth of the respective treatments of the Christian and Jewish case studies in this dissertation, beyond obviously reflecting the disciplinary location of its author, deserves to be brought to the fore here, as it is the product of a series of meaningful asymmetries in the object of inquiry. The most fundamental aspect to mention in this regard concerns the nature of the case studies I have pursued.

For the Christian side, the study of the trinitarian controversies in Roman Syria and more broadly in the eastern Roman Empire has illustrated some epistemic shifts at
work within theological discourse. The excursus on Paul of Samosata included in chapter 1 has shown the early signs of some of the broad institutional tendencies that were to accompany the processes of dogmatization in the course of the fourth-century trinitarian debates. Chapter 2 has indicated that, through the promulgation of opposing conciliar documents, the foundations were laid for a logicization, technicalization, and dogmatization of the dispute. Chapters 3-5 have followed the path to this historical achievement by tracking a particular meme (the notion of a πρόσωπον ἐνυπόστατον) from its emergence in the works of Eustathius of Antioch, via its implicit reception at the Council of Alexandria of 362, to its history of effects within the pro-Nicene front in the 370s.

Though very selective in its thematic focus, this research has covered multiple literary works, dealt with many actors of different theological leanings, and spanned a good part of the geography of the ancient Christian world. On the other hand, the Jewish case study has consisted in the close reading of one single short passage, selected because of its privileged status among the few sources available for the study of Jewish binitarianism in late antiquity.

This unevenness is to a great extent the product of an unbalance in the nature of the sources. Within the Christian field the fourth century yielded abundant theological production. On the Jewish side of things, interest in divine figures of mediation—such
as exalted patriarchs, personified attributes of the divinity, or chief angels—surfaces in the Hebrew Bible and is ubiquitous in first- and second-Temple-era literature. Moreover, the theme of divine sonship was to be revived in early medieval Jewish reflection and later Kabbalistic thought. Nevertheless, the selective preservation typical of rabbinic literature in late antiquity has left us only a few traces of belief in a second divine figure—and even those traces are often very difficult to date.

On a deeper level the asymmetry in the treatment is also a reflection of the theoretical framework selected, that is, of the choice to consider Christianity and Judaism as traditions undergoing a process of “individuation,” of progressive precipitation away from the continuum to which they originally co-belonged. This choice has led me to discuss in depth the (by definition) unparalleled process of individuation undergone by one of the two traditions, through the development of epistemic tools in the service of debates about God and His relationship to humankind. To use a fairly coarse simile, the progressive description pursued in chapters 1-5 could be looked at as an embryological process, whereby each epistemic shift, each step towards the definition of clearer rules for speaking about the divine, took Christian intellectual culture closer to assuming the shape in which it was to partly crystallize, at least as far as some of its markers were concerned, around the beginning of the fifth
century. As it grew closer to assuming that shape, the Christian intellectual tradition also
grew away from interfusion with Judaism.

My claim is not that a concern with a clear conceptualization of the divine was
unique to Christian thinkers, or not shared by Jewish authors. Jewish sources exhibit a
supreme preoccupation with God and His activities—sometimes famously going even
so far as to scrutinize His daily schedule. What I propose is, rather, that around the
fourth century, and crucially through the developments of the trinitarian controversies,
Christians’ manners of inquiring into the same issues that occupied the religious
imagery of Jews began to assume so idiosyncratic a form that they ended up cohering,
one century later, into a very distinctive discursive mode and set of intellectual practices.

Yet another of the asymmetries of the dissertation resides in the level on which
the historical analysis has operated in each of its two parts. While in the chapters
devoted to Christianity a broad dynamic is observed of which the actors involved may
have only had partial awareness, chapter 7 has set out to seek the intentional organizing
principle of the sugyah concerning Elisha’ b. Abuya’s encounter with the angel Meṭaṭron
(b. Ḥagigah 15a). It has found the editors’ agenda not in the specific prohibition of the
holding of heterodox opinions about the godhead, but in a ban issued more generally
against the pursuit of a particular style of intellectual inquiry.
This style, which I have assimilated to Christian theology because of the importance it places on definitional statements (such as “there are two sovereignties in heaven”), is represented in the Bavli as the product of the merging of two elements: visions and reverence for traditional teaching. In addition to presenting these two intellectual pursuits as highly problematic when combined with one another, the sugyah suggests the intriguing possibility of the existence of connections, in the ideological system underlying the edition of the text, between alien ways of knowing and alien paths to salvation.

Further avenues for research include the investigation of the relationship between the parallel yet asymmetric epistemic changes illustrated by this study and the interrelated development, within the Christian and Jewish traditions, of divergent yet coherent hermeneutics in relation to agreement and disagreement within the religious polity.¹

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Biography

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