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FROM NICAEA 325 TO CONSTANTINOPLE 381—ATHANASIUS, BASIL OF CAESAREA, GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS AND GREGORY OF NYSSA ON TÒ ἍΓΙΟΝ ΠΝΕΥ̃ΜΑ: PART ONE

...καὶ εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.

...and in the Holy Spirit.

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This article is Part One of a two-part series on what the church believes about the Holy Spirit. This article—Part One—has three sections. First, there is a brief examination of the question, "Why is the statement of the Nicene creed of 325 on the Holy Spirit so brief?" Second, there is a succinct excursus presenting the biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit has both deity and personhood. Third, there is the first installment of an examination of the work of four key fourth-century theologians on the subject of the Holy Spirit. This first installment examines the work of Athanasius; the other installments (constituting the whole of Part Two) examine the work of Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa. The objective of this examination of the work of these theologians is to understand how the church went from the inadequate statement about the Spirit in the Nicene Creed of 325 to produce the better statement about the Spirit in the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. In particular, the intention of this study is to show the part Scripture played as these theologians engaged with heretical views and as they articulated their doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

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Introduction

The Nicene Creed 325: Πιστεύομεν … εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα

The Nicene Creed of 325 has about a dozen words in the statement of belief (Πιστεύομεν) about God the Father (Θεὸν Πατέρα), it has around eighty words in the statement about the Son (καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ), but it has just five words in the statement of belief about the Spirit—καὶ εἰς τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.[1] This disparity begs for an explanation; however, that explanation might not be easily discovered.

To begin with, the statement about God the Father would have been considered as something of a given. To affirm His one-ness (monarchy) and the fact that He Himself is uncreated (and is the source of all that is creation) and that He was "un-generate" would not have been contested before, during, or after the council by most (or likely by any) of the council's attendees.[2] A brief statement on this point of belief is not surprising.

With respect to the affirmation of belief about the Son, it must be observed that this in large part was the issue the council had been called to address. The controversy had begun when Arius in 318 initiated a controversy concerning the personal status and nature of the Son.[3] Since this issue was the central issue debated in the council, it would naturally follow that the most extensive affirmation of belief in a creed published by the council was about the Son. In short, the council was called to address the Arian heresy and the creed expressly repudiated Arianism by affirming the consubstantiality of the Son; it just makes sense that more words were needed to express this affirmation.

So much for the affirmations concerning the Father and the Son; this still leaves the question of the brevity of the affirmation of belief in the Holy Spirit. Several explanations might be proposed. Some historical theologians have suggested that the theology of the Spirit had been neglected in the theologies of the third century. Kelly

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[1] Hanson suggests the Nicene Creed "dismissed the subject [of the Spirit] in six words καὶ εἰς τὸ ρνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον." R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 741. Hanson does not cite a source for this version of the creed.

[2] The doctrine reflected in this first statement was based of course on the Scriptural revelation about the God and Father (see Abner Chou's article, "One God in Nicaea, 1 Corinthians, and Deuteronomy: The Hermeneutic of the Biblical Writers and the Early Church," in this issue) which was uncontested by the theologians of the church from the second century on: "The doctrine of one God, the Father and creator, formed the background and indisputable premise of the church's faith." J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1978), 87.

[3] There are a number of good historical and theological surveys of the Arian controversy; these works are highly recommended: Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*: *The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Lewis Ayers, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); John Behr, *The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2, *The Nicene Faith*: *Part One: True God of True God* and *Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004); R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy*; Francis Young with Andrew Teal, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*: *A Guide to the Literature and Its Background*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); for a briefer survey, see Franz Dünzel, trans. John Bowden, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, (New York: T&T Clark / Continuum, 2007).

writes "Since Origen's day, theological reflection about the Spirit had lagged noticeably behind devotional practice."[4] Bray bluntly suggests that "the doctrine of the Holy Spirit" had settled into "relative oblivion" prior to the fourth century.[5] And Hanson notes, "The doctrine of the Holy Spirit emerged into the fourth century as a minor concern of the church's theologians."[6]

However, in the comment quoted above Kelly acknowledges that the Spirit was included in the church's "devotional practice," and if this "devotional practice" included the church's worship and rites such as baptism, then the suggestion that the Spirit had been "neglected" in the prior centuries seems less credible. Indeed, as far back as Irenaeus in the second century, the "rule of faith" had affirmed "the faith in one God, the Father Almighty, who has made the heaven, the earth, the seas, and all things in them; and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who was made flesh for our salvation; and in the Holy Spirit, who has proclaimed through the prophets, the plans of God and the comings of Christ, both of the birth … and his coming again…"[7] The "rule of faith" was most likely related to the baptismal formula of Matthew 28:19 and was likely the confession of belief made by those submitting to the rite of Christian water baptism.[8] Thus the "worship and religious experience of the Church and the continually practiced custom of baptizing into the Triple Name prevented the intellectuals from omitting the Holy Spirit altogether from their calculations."[9] Thus, in fact "the Spirit was not totally neglected before the doctrinal debates of the fourth century. Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, for example, had significant things to say

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[4] Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 255.

[5] Gerald Bray, *God Has Spoken: A History of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 620. To be fair, Bray also notes that the Holy Spirit "did not disappear from view altogether." Bray further notes that Eusebius of Caesarea had written about the Spirit but "he clearly promoted a subordinationism that made the Spirit less than fully God." Bray, *God Has Spoken*, 621; see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines,* 255. Bray (*God Has Spoken*, 621) also notes the contribution of Cyril of Jerusalem on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Cyril—with an eye to the validity of the baptismal formula (*Catechetical Lecture* 16)—taught that the Spirit "had the same dignity of status as the Father and the Son, and that he spoke the Word of God through the prophets of both Old and New Testaments"; but while Cyril confessed that the Spirit was subsistent with the Father and the Son, he never fully affirmed the consubstantiality of the Spirit (Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines,* 256).

[6] Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 739.

[7] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 1.10.1; cited in and quoted here from Everett Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2015), 4. For more examples where Irenaeus mentions the three—God Almighty/God the Father, and the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit, see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 4.33.7 and Irenaeus, *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, 6, quoted in Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith*, 5–6. The reader should note that even this brief quotation indicates how close Irenaeus came to the final form of the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.

[8] See Tomas Bokedal, "The Rule of Faith: Tracing Its Origins," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 7, no. 2 (2013): 233–55; The "rule of faith" also "provided a 'road map' for the proper interpretation of Scripture." Paul Hartog, "The 'Rule of Faith' and Patristic Biblical Exegesis," *Trinity Journal* 28 (Spring 2007): 66. "The rule was often associated with Scripture and the apostolic tradition transmitted through Scripture. The rule was an epitome, the essential content, of the Scriptural tradition, an abstract of the plan of salvation." Ferguson, *The Rule of Faith*, 39. For more on the relation of the "rule of faith" to baptism, see Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 433.

[9] Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 739.

about the Holy Spirit."[10] It is true that the controversy over the person and nature of the Son—a controversy begun by the heretical notions of Arius, notions opposed by Alexander and his young associate Athanasius[11]—did dominate the proceedings at Nicaea in 325. Thus it might be conceded that the focus on the Son at Nicaea "precipitated a certain forgetfulness of the Holy Spirit."[12] It could therefore be argued that since there was no one advocating heretical notions of the Spirit (as Arius was advocating heretical notions of the Son),[13] there was no need to elaborate when it came to the statement of belief about the Spirit. Thus, while there must have been at least enough interest in the Spirit for this brief affirmation of belief to be included at all—however brief—there was not yet enough controversy to require elaboration on belief in the Spirit.

To expand on that line of thinking, it may be suggested that on the one hand there was enough of a shared understanding of the referent of τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα—the bishops at Nicaea must have had some notion and to some degree a shared notion—of who or what was being referenced by the words τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα that further elaboration was considered to be unnecessary. On the other hand, a counter argument to that might be that the brevity of this affirmation of belief perhaps reflected a serious divergence of opinion about τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα, that—if not openly discussed among bishops assembled at Nicaea in 325—prevented them from elaborating on the person and nature of the Spirit as they had on the Son. In short, either there was such accord regarding the Spirit that elaboration was unnecessary (as with the statement of belief

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[10] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 133. Indeed, Mark DelCogliano suggests in a "brief survey of pre-fourth century pneumatology" ("General Introduction," in *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind*, eds. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres [Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011]) that the fourth century debates were a "third stage" in the church's theological reflection on the Holy Spirit, (see pages 7, 11, 13). The other stages DelCogliano posits are: (1) the first and second centuries including the works of a few of the apologists and Irenaeus and (2) the third century including the works of Tertullian and Origen (both of which employed the "Trinitarian order"—Father, Son, and Spirit—but both of which were subordinationist. DelCogliano, "General Introduction," 12–13.

For more on the theology of the Spirit in the centuries before Nicaea 325, see these works that indicate the Holy Spirit was not "neglected" in those centuries: J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, *Message of the Fathers of the Church: The Holy Spirit* (Eugene, OR; Wipf and Stock, 1984, 2002); Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*: *A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912).

[11] For the details see the works cited in footnote 3 above.

[12] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 133. "This forgetting is all the more explicable if we consider that the question of Christ's divinity was wrapped up with how God and creation relate and how Jesus Christ, as somehow 'divine' and Creator while also a human creature* mediates this relation. The framework structured by the Father-Son and God-world binaries did not readily extend itself to the consideration of the third [member] of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit," Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 133. *This is an unfortunate choice of words; in the opinion of this writer, Anatolios should have said "while taking a human nature."

[13] At one point after the council, Athanasius briefly mentioned Arius' views on the personal status and nature of the Spirit. Athanasius cites Arius' in *Thalia* as affirming that "'the essences of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, are separate in nature, and estranged, and disconnected, and alien, and without participation of each other;' and, in his own words, 'utterly unlike from each other in essence and glory, unto infinity.'" Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 4, trans. John Henry Newman, rev. Archibald Robinson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 309; see Allison, *Historical Theology,* 434. However, Hanson cautiously writes "From such scanty evidence no firm conclusions can be drawn." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 744.

regarding the Father), or there were so many incongruent views that a more precise statement was not possible.

There does not seem to be enough evidence to argue convincedly either way, and it could be that there is some truth to both of these notions. Nevertheless, it seems that the bishops gathered at Nicaea in 325 had a pretty good idea about the place of the Spirit in the triad—a triad that the "devotional practice" of the church had affirmed since the second century—so a statement about the Spirit was included. However, since they were focused on the issues raised by Arius about the Son—that being the heresy *de jour* that commanded their attention—it seems that at that time they did not raise, or address (or elaborate on) issues related to the Spirit.

Indeed, as events turned out even with the precise statement of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father, the creed of Nicaea 325 did not end the controversy over the person and nature of the Son; that controversy in one form or another occupied the defenders of the Nicene Creed 325 for another half century until the Council of Constantinople in 381 (see Part Two). This also likely contributed to the ongoing (relative) inattention regarding the status of the Spirit. Hanson suggests that at least until about AD 360, while that debate about the Son was going on, there was still no parallel debate about the Spirit.[14] Only when certain heretical notions of the Spirit arose—surprisingly, (see below) among those who affirmed the Nicene doctrine of the consubstantiality of Son—did the church turn its attention to the inadequacy of the statement of belief about the Spirit in the creed of 325.

The reasons for the brevity of the statement may never be fully explained, but the fact was (and is) this statement about the Spirit was inadequate because the "creed does not, of course, say whether the Spirit is God or not."[15]

The Bible Teaches That the Holy Spirit Is God

Before going further, it would serve the purpose of this issue of *The Master's Seminary Journal* to include a brief survey of the Bible's teaching about the deity of the Holy Spirit. This is to answer the question, "What might an evangelical believer today reasonably and biblically mean when affirming, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit'?"

The Scriptures indicate that the Holy Spirit is a Person—as are the Father and the Son—and that He is God—deity. Three passages in the New Testament make the case (more or less) indirectly for the deity of the Holy Spirit. The first is found in Acts 5 in the account of the incident with Ananias and his wife Sapphira (cf. Acts 5:1–6). In this situation as the Apostle Peter was rebuking Ananias for his duplicity, Peter indicted him for lying and charged Ananias with lying "to the Holy Spirit" (5:3);[16] but in the same speech Peter advised Ananias: "You have not lied to men

[14] "When we examine the creed and confessions of faith which were so plentifully produced between the years 325 and 360, we gain the overwhelming impression that no school of thought during that period was particularly interested in the Holy Spirit." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God,* 741.

[15] The statement here is from Hanson (*Christian Doctrine of God*, 741) and he is referencing "the Dedication Creed" of Antioch 341—but it equally applies to the creed of Nicaea 325.

[16] All quotations from Scripture are from the *New American Standard Bible* (Anaheim, CA: Lockman, 1995).

but to God." (5:4).[17] To state the obvious, Peter here equates lying to the Holy Spirit as lying to God.

Another text that makes the case for the deity of the Holy Spirit is found in Matthew 12:31 where Jesus teaches that "any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven people, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (12:31). If the definition of blasphemy as "evil, slanderous, or defamatory speech about God" is accepted,[18] then this is an indication that Jesus considered the Holy Spirit to be God.

In the Apostle Paul's discussion of true and false wisdom in 1 Corinthians 2:6–16, he explained how it was that he was able "to speak wisdom among those who are mature" (2:6). It was because he spoke "God's wisdom" (2:7), a wisdom "which none of the rulers of this age has understood" (2:8). He further explained how he had received that wisdom: "For to us God revealed [it] through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God" (2:10). And he went on to explain that this Spirit-revealed wisdom from God was truly God's wisdom because "the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (2:11). The completed thought is, Paul knew God's wisdom because the Spirit who is God was the one who revealed God's wisdom to him.[19]

In addition, a number of texts apply certain perfections and attributes of God to the Holy Spirit. For instance, the Holy Spirit possesses: "eternality (Heb. 9:14); glory (1 Pet. 4:14; cf. Isa. 42:8; 48:11); holiness (Ps. 51:11; Isa. 63:10–11; Matt. 1:18; Rom.1:4); omnipotence (Gen. 1:1–2; Luke 1:35; Rom. 1:4); omnipresence (Ps. 139:7–10; cf. Jer. 23:24); omniscience (Isa. 40:13; 1 Cor. 2:10–11)."[20]

Other texts ascribe actions to the Holy Spirit that are "the actions of God" such as "creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 33:4), inspiration [of the Scriptures] (2 Pet. 1:20–21), regeneration (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5)[21] and sanctification [and glorification of those who are justified, Rom. 8:30b] (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2)."[22]

Also, the Spirit is referred to in a number of texts that indicate He is to be regarded as the equal of the other two persons in the Trinity. For instance, "in relation to the Father he is called: 'his Spirit' (Num. 11:29; Rom. 8:11); 'your [Holy] Spirit' (Ps. 139:7; 51:11); 'the Spirit of God' (Gen. 1:2; Matt. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:11)"; the Spirit "'of our God' (1 Cor. 6:11) … [Spirit] of the living God" (2 Cor. 3:3) and [Spirit] '…of the Lord God' (Isa. 61:1)."[23] And significantly in "relation to the Son he is

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[17] As will be seen this passage was prominently referenced by the church fathers surveyed below.

[18] L. Bretherton, "Blasphemy," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Martin Davie, Tim Grass, Stephen R. Holmes, John McDowell and T. A. Noble (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2016), 125. On "The Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit…" see also John MacArthur, ed. *Essential Christian Doctrines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021), 195.

[19] See Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 258. "In a different tradition from Athanasius to Barth this verse [1 Cor 2:11] has been understood, rightly, as indicating that in Barth's words, 'God is known through God alone.'" Thiselton is citing Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 2, no. 1, section 27, 179, and referring to Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion*, 1.22 (PG, 26:581), 258.

[20] MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrines*, 190.

[21] It is argued, "only God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit can give new spiritual life to those who were previously dead in their sins (Rom. 8:2, 6, 10–11). Regeneration directly addresses this gracious act of God." MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrines*, 193.

[22] MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrines*, 190.

[23] MacArthur, 190.

called: 'the Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7) and [Spirit] 'of Christ' (Rom. 8:9; 1 Pet. 1:11; cf. Phil. 1:19)" as well as "'the Spirit of his Son' (Gal. 4:6)."[24]

There are other texts that

> associate the Holy Spirit with the other members of the Godhead [such as] Matthew 28:19, the baptism instructions; 1 Corinthians 2:10–13, the Father (God) and the Spirit complement each other equally in the revelation, illumination, and interpretation of God's Word; 2 Corinthians 13:14, all three members of the Godhead are mentioned and set on equal footing in this Pauline Trinitarian benediction; Revelation 1:4–6, this Johannine Trinitarian invocation links the Father, the Spirit, and the Son together as coequals. In John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7 the Spirit is called "another Helper" (Gk. *allos*, "another of the same kind"), where the other Helper in view is Jesus, a member of the triune Godhead.[25]

These texts that indicate the Spirit is to be regarded as the equal of the other two members of the Trinity also serve to indicate that He is a person just as they are persons. For instance, a key text is Matthew 28:19—the baptismal formula. In this formula, as a confession of one's faith it would make little sense to consider the Spirit an impersonal force or influence and the Father and Son as persons—especially since a candidate was to be baptized in the singular "name" (ὄνομα) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[26] Another text, John 14:16 records the promise of Jesus: "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, so that He may be with you forever." Here Jesus promised to send "another Helper" (ἄλλον Παράκλητον) to the disciples. Jesus' use of the term ἄλλον with Παράκλητον has the sense of "another Comforter similar to Himself,"[27] and since Jesus was a person, it may be presumed that the Holy Spirit must be a person as well.[28]

Finally, if "personhood" is "determined by the possession of three basic characteristics: (1) cognition/intellect, (2) volition/will, and (3) emotion/affection," one needs only to consider the following three collections of texts to appreciate that Scripture recognizes the Spirit as a person.

> Examples of his cognition/intellect: he knows, and he counsels and imparts wisdom (Isa. 11:2); he possesses a mind (Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 2:10–13); he inspired Scripture and provides truth (Acts 1:16; Heb. 3:7; 10:15; 1 Pet. 1:11; 2 Pet. 1:21; cf. John 14:17, 26; 15:26; 16:13; 1 John 4:6); he testifies (John 15:26; 1 John 5:7–8).

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[24] MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrines*, 190.

[25] MacArthur, 190.

[26] Leon Morris notes: "we should notice that the word *name* is singular; Jesus does not say that his followers should baptize in the 'names' of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but in the 'name' of these three. It points to the fact that they are in some sense one." Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 748.

[27] Richard C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1880), 357.

[28] See Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 876.

> Examples of his affection/emotion: he experiences joy (1 Thess. 1:6); he grieves over sin (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30); he loves (Rom. 5:5; 15:30; Gal. 5:22).
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> Examples of his volition/will: he contends with sinners (Gen. 6:3; Acts 7:51); he directs believers and distributes spiritual gifts (Acts 16:6–7; cf. 1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 2:4).[29]

However, it must be admitted that the bishops of Nicaea probably did not see these texts as (more or less clear) proof texts for the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit as these texts are seen by evangelical theologians in the twenty-first century. The rest of this article (and Part Two) will explore how the church moved on from the inadequate statement of belief about the Spirit in the Nicene Creed of 325 to the more adequate (if even then not yet fully adequate) statement of belief about the Spirit in the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.

Getting to Constantinople in 381: Part One – Athanasius on the Holy Spirit

As noted above, the debate over the person and nature of the Son did not end after 325. Indeed, some events such as the Council of Sirmium 357 (and its creed, which came to be known as "The Blasphemy of Sirmium")[30] seemed to portend a victory for Arianism at the time. Over the decades of the fourth century ever newer (and more tenacious) versions of "Arian-like" doctrines (such as those of the "Neo-Arians," Aetius and Eunomious)[31] continued to appear. But through the relentless work of men like Athanasius and the Cappadocians (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa), Nicene orthodoxy regarding the consubstantiality of the Son not only survived but in time began to prevail.[32]

The controversy over the Spirit, however, was something of a delayed reaction waiting both a widespread (if not thorough) acceptance of Nicene orthodoxy regarding the Son and the rise of notions about the Spirit that were incompatible with Nicene orthodoxy. In comments which are perhaps a bit too sanguine, Bray asserts "with the resolution of the Christological problems thrown up by Arianism," Nicene orthodoxy "began to prevail" and "raised the question of the identity of the Spirit."[33] "If the Father was fully God, which almost no one had ever doubted, and the Son was equally divine, what could be said about the third person of the Trinity."[34] Bray indicates that the "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381" would finally address that question.[35] But that came about only because—as is so often the case—some

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[29] MacArthur, *Essential Christian Doctrines*, 186.

[30] Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 345.

[31] Hanson, 598–636.

[32] "The three theologians were responsible, building on the foundation which Athanasius had laid, for establishing finally that the Son … must not be in any sense subordinated to the Father." "All the Cappadocians maintained that in becoming man, the Son of God betrayed no inferiority in divine status or compromised his divinity." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 730, 732. See Allison, *Historical Theology*, 238–40; Bray, *God Has Spoken*, 273–87; Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 639–737.

[33] Bray, *God Has Spoken*, 610.

[34] Bray, 610.

[35] Bray, 610.

heretical notions compelled the church to search the Scriptures to accurately articulate true doctrine.

The remainder of this article (Part One) will begin a study (extended in Part Two) of four fourth-century theologians: Athanasius, and the three Cappadocians—Basil of Caesarea (alternatively, Basil the Great), Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.[36] In large measure these theologians are the men who (in combating heresy) articulated the doctrine of the Holy Spirit that led to the expanded affirmation of belief concerning τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα in the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. The focus of this study is not just to determine that each one of these theologians affirmed the deity of the Spirit—they all did (in their own terms); rather this study is an examination of how each of these theologians regarded and employed Scripture in articulating their doctrine and in combating those who denied the deity and consubstantiality of the Spirit.

Athanasius: His Method and Use of Scripture in *Orations against the Arians*[37]

It will be helpful to begin by understanding something about Athanasius' regard for Scripture and his hermeneutical method when confronting his main theological opponents—the Arians and later the Pneumatomachians. Michael Haykin writes, "Athanasius [was] a theologian steeped in the Scriptures." "His broad knowledge of the Scriptures served Athanasius in good stead" when engaging with his opponents in the several controversies.[38] Commenting on Athanasius' method in responding to the dangers of Arianism, Archibald Robinson notes that Athanasius "went back to the authority of Scripture and the Rule of Faith. He was influenced *positively* by the Nicene formula … [which] found in Athanasius, a mind predisposed to enter into its spirit to employ in its defense, the richest resources of theological and biblical training, of spiritual depth and vigor…"[39] In other words, Athanasius knew well, and put his greatest confidence in, the Scriptures; but he also knew the tradition and upheld the validity (and hermeneutical value) of the "rule of faith."[40] The Scriptures were the source of his doctrine, the "rule of faith" informed and sustained his commitment to that truth (being itself faithful to the teaching of Scripture), and these led to his commitment to the rightness of the theology behind the words (correctly understood) of the Nicene Creed of 325. In short, the Nicene Creed of 325 was the correct expression of Scriptural truth and the rule of faith.

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[36] The first installment of this part of the study is here, in Part One of this two-part series, and deals with Athanasius. Part Two will have three more installments, one each for Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa.

[37] Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, 308–447.

[38] Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God*: *The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), 63. "But the main and paramount source of his doctrine is the Bible." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 422.

[39] Archibald Robinson, "Prolegomena," in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 4, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), lxviii–lxix; emphasis in the original.

[40] See discussion, definition, and sources at footnotes 7 and 8.

This characterization accords well with the insights of Frances Young in her analysis of Athanasius' use of Scripture in his *Orations against the Arians*.[41] Young observes that "It is now generally accepted that Athanasius' *Orations against the Arians*, written in the 340s, effectively constructed "Arianism."[42] That is, it was Athanasius' rebuttal of Arian teaching that "sharpened up the issues" between Nicene orthodoxy and Arianism, "refuting [the latter's] basic principles and challenging 'Arian' exegesis of key texts."[43] In the first part of *Orations against the Arians* Athanasius engaged with "the scriptural texts that emerged in the controversy"; his objective was—not so much to prove Arian exegesis was wrong but—to show how these texts were "susceptible to opposing interpretations."[44] However, instead of proceeding directly to his own "correct" exegesis of Scripture texts, "Athanasius first [set] out the basic shape of Arian doctrine, then [summarized] his own overall approach and [contrasted] the two."[45]

Young calls "the basic shape" and "overall approach" of the two sides "frameworks."[46] Young cites the work of James Ernest,[47] who suggests that Athanasius understood Scripture as a "unified whole" that reveals a "biblical metanarrative," even a "controlling metanarrative."[48] Young summarizes this "metanarrative" as encompassing "creation, fall, redemption, and union with the divine by participation in the truly divine son … the fundamental story into which we are drawn by scripture, and which only makes sense if the redeemer embodies absolutely the divine nature into which we may be adopted."[49] By the third book of

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[41] Frances M. Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute: Doctrine and Scripture in Early Christianity*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2024), 30ff.

[42] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 30.

[43] Young, 30.

[44] Young, 31. It was due the disparate and opposing frameworks (i.e., the theological presuppositions) of each side that the texts were "susceptible to opposing interpretations." That is, each side—reading the texts through the lens of their own frameworks—came up with "opposing interpretations" each more-or-less plausible from within the opposing framework; see below at footnote 51.

[45] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 31.

[46] Young, 31. Of course, any such "framework" will claim that was drawn from or emerged from Scripture itself. But such "frameworks" are not immune from the influence of other frameworks and worldviews. It should be kept in mind that the theological and scriptural debates of the fourth century took place when the prevailing philosophical framework was Neo-Platonic. Anatolios notes in the case of Arius: "It may also be that Arius found philosophical resources for asserting the absolute sovereignty and priority of the biblical God in emerging Neoplatonism, which tended to elevate the first principle beyond any secondary and intermediate 'divine' beings." Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 45. In other words, it may be that Arius could think of the being of the Father as utterly separate from all lesser beings, including the Son, because Plotinian ideas of the One as a being utterly separate from all lesser beings were floating around in the intellectual circles of the day. Thus, "Arius may have been influenced by contemporary Platonist philosophy, which distinguishes kinds of divinity, including generated ones … but Arius may also have been led to such a view because of his wish to defend a stronger and more hierarchical monotheism than Origen." George Karamanolis, *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2021), 91–92. In any case, theologians (both orthodox and otherwise) must be wary of claims of presuppositionless reading of the Bible and neutral exegesis of Scripture.

[47] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 36.

[48] James D. Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 131–32, 136, 141–42, 151.

[49] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 36. Young adds that this "metanarrative" can be discerned in Athanasius' earlier works such as *On the Incarnation;* Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 36.

Orations against the Arians[50] (and significantly "by the time of his third exile[51]—which was when he began responding to the Pneumatomachians [see below]), Athanasius was referring to this "biblical metanarrative" as "the scope of scripture," "the scope of the Christian faith," and "the ecclesiastical scope."[52] Athanasius understood that these "frameworks" were "fundamental to the way, scripture is read on either side."[53] "The rival frameworks [even] determine the selection of [scriptural] texts and the reading of those texts."[54] For Athanasius the true guide to right reading of Scripture is the *skopos* (σκοπός) of Scripture, "which is not an exegetical method, but an insistence that the Bible is a coherent whole whose central motif is the incarnation of the uncreated Word of God for human salvation…. This is how, for Athanasius, the metanarrative controls the interpretation of particular images and verses."[55]

How did Athanasius come to discern the "framework," "biblical metanarrative," or "the scope of scripture?" Young notes, "scripture itself, along with traditional readings of it … undoubtedly contributed to these frameworks."[56] There was a sort of narrowing of the perspective: starting from the "unified whole"[57] of Scripture which enabled Athanasius to discern[58] "the mind of Scripture,"[59] he would weave texts and language "from all parts of the canon into concise summaries of the overall shape of the biblical narrative";[60] he also discerned what Ernest calls "elements or windows into the narrative"—(the term Athanasius used for this is παραδείγματα, which refers to)—the images, titles or key texts "from which deductions can be drawn and on the basis of which statements about the Logos can be judged, adequate or inadequate."[61]

Haykin, in a similar line of thinking, writes that Athanasius "presupposed an understanding of the central theme of the Bible, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, and a life lived in obedience to that revelation" (*The Spirit of God*, 63).

[50] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 37.

[51] Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 142.

[52] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 37.

[53] Young, 31.

[54] Young, 33. In [ ] added by this writer.

[55] Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 150–51.

[56] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 31.

[57] Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 131.

[58] Elaboration of the points made in this sentence would go well beyond the scope (no pun intended) of this article. The point here is only to indicate that Athanasius' understanding of the "framework," "biblical metanarrative," "the scope of scripture" is not that of an arbitrary standard *imposed on* Scripture but understanding of Scripture that *emerges from* Scripture itself.

[59] On this see Frances M. Young, "The Mind of Scripture," in *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 29–45. "But fundamentally, it is his sense of the overarching plot, a sense inherited from the past and ingrained in the tradition of the Church, which allows him to be innovative in exegetical detail, and confident of providing the correct and 'pious' reading." Young, "The Mind of Scripture," 43.

[60] Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 132.

[61] Ernest, 152. "Next in importance are the images, which are elements of the metanarrative, or provide a means of grasping the metanarrative, and so far as humans can grasp it." Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 125. Again, for Athanasius it seems that getting to the "framework," "biblical metanarrative," or "the scope of scripture" was not so much a "linear process" that began with "neutral inductive exegesis," followed by the discovery of biblical themes, culminating in something like a proposition of systematic

But at the heart of it all—at each phase—(as noted by Ernest above[62]) was the central fact of the Incarnation. Charles Kannengiesser writes,

> Athanasius insists that the Arians are mistaken in their concept of theology, because they believe they are able to form a Christian idea of God by first developing in isolation the theory of the divinity of the Father and the Son without taking into consideration *right from the start* the mystery of the incarnation of the Son … he remained faithful throughout his life to this fundamental intuition: that which is first in the exposition of the Christian faith is not God as such, nor the universe in its divine origin, but the historical event of salvation accomplished by Christ.[63]

With this "biblical metanarrative," "the scope of scripture," and with the "concise summaries" he put together, and with the παραδείγματα in mind, Athanasius was ready to proceed with his exegesis. In dealing with the Arians, he discovered that a "literalistic approach to the Scriptures" combined with the fact that the Arians selected their own proof-texts "was not a satisfactory hermeneutic."[64] In dealing with the texts of his opponents, Athanasius had a variety of defensive tactics.[65] But his primary approach was to engage in "dogmatic exegesis" in which his argumentation proceeds directly from those passages of Scripture which are central to his position."[66] His exegetical method was not allegorical, and he demonstrated "respect for the normal or 'earthly' meaning of words." But, Young observes, the words were "elevated for their theological context."[67]

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theology; rather, for Athanasius it was an understanding that emerged. It began with a basic "grasp of the whole"—the "mind of Scripture"—that emerged from Scripture itself; this was what was reflected in tradition (the "rule of faith"). That "basic grasp" was better formed and informed by the "concise summaries" he put together and the παραδείγματα he discerned (quite often in the course of his arguments against his opponents). It was that emergent and emerging but continually formed and informed "scope of scripture" that Athanasius brought to his exegetical work and his theological works. Athanasius did not provide a prolegomenon of this theological method; he engaged heretics and in the course of theological debate, he discerned and defended what he understood as the truth of Scripture—and all the while, he firmly believed the Nicene creed of 325 articulated that truth. The reader should reread Archibald Robinson's quote at footnote 38.

[62] See footnote 53 above.

[63] Charles Kannengiesser, "Athanasius of Alexandria and the Foundation of Traditional Christology," *Theological Studies* 34, no. 1 (Mar 1973), 112. Emphasis added by this writer.

[64] Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 63. See Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 101; here Anatolios quotes a letter of Alexander of Alexandria to the effect that the Arians select texts "which refer to the economy and to his humiliation" but "evade those which proclaim his divinity."

[65] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 34–35. He could make an appeal to the "immediate wider context" to show that the exegesis of his opponents was strained. He would simply cite "countertexts," or point out terminological issues that made his opponents' exegesis less likely. Quite often, he would point out the texts used by his opponents (to argue for the Son's subordinate status) were referring to the time and mission of the Son's incarnation. Texts "referring to the Divine nature of the Word" needed to be distinguished "from those referring to the time when 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14)." Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 35.

[66] Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, 63; see Kannengiesser, "Foundation of Traditional Christology," 110–11.

[67] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 35.

Consider one example in *Orations against the Arians* 1.37ff where Athanasius deals with Philippians 2:9–10.[68] In refuting the Arian reading of this text, he does address the faulty exegetical conclusions of the Arians; but he spends most of his effort appealing to the "whole plot that the passage summarizes"[69]—that is, to the "story outlined in the 'Canon of Truth'—the "story of salvation"[70] and incarnation.[71] Young summarizes Athanasius' argument, "At considerable length, and with many quotations, particularly from the gospel of John, but also from Paul and Hebrews, what we might call 'salvation history' is rehearsed."[72] And at the end of the argument Athanasius summarizes, "This then I consider the sense of this passage, and that, a very ecclesiastical sense."[73] That is, in a deductive manner, Athanasius reads the various texts and along the way shows that his reading of these texts "fits" the framework, or scope of the Scriptures, while the reading of the Arians did not. Young concludes,

> Fundamentally it is his sense of the overarching plot, a sense inherited from the past and ingrained in the tradition of the Church, which allows him to be innovative in exegetical detail and confident of providing the correct and 'pious' reading. The 'Canon of Truth' or 'Rule of Faith' expresses the mind of scripture, and an exegesis that damages the coherence of the plot, that *hypothesis*, that coherence, that *skopos*, cannot be right.[74]

To briefly summarize: It seems that Athanasius used at least three tactics in his use of Scripture in *Orations against the Arians*:

> 1) Engage with the opponents and show that the texts they use are texts that were "susceptible to opposing interpretations."
> 2) Set forth the frameworks (metanarratives, scope of Scripture) of the opponents and his own.
> 3) Do "dogmatic exegesis" that reads the key texts in such a way as to demonstrate that his reading "fits" (coheres) with the "mind of Scripture" and does not damage "the overarching plotline" of Scripture.

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[68] Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," in *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, vol. 4, trans. John Henry Newman, rev. Archibald Robinson, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 327–31.

[69] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 43.

[70] Young, 43.

[71] Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," 331, writes that "the Lord, who supplies the grace has become a man like us … humbled Himself in taking our body of humiliation, and took a servant's form, putting on that flesh, which was enslaved to sin."

[72] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 43.

[73] Athanasius, "Four Discourses Against the Arians," 331.

[74] Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 43. Haykin writes (referencing Adolf Laminski, "Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläuben. Der Beitrag des Athanasios von Alexandrien zur Formulierung des trinitarischen Dogmas im vierten Jahrhundert," *Erfurter theologische Studien* 23 [Leipzig: St. Benno-Verlag GMBH, 1969], 38): "Athanasius usually conducts his discussion of the Arian position by means of a methodical analysis which has a dual aim: 1) the discovery of the 'core' of his opponents' arguments; 2) the demonstration of its absurdity, so that the orthodox position may thereby be clearly manifested as right."

Athanasius: His Method and Use of Scripture in *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*

It has been said that Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion* was the "first thorough attempt to deal with the question of the divinity of the Spirit."[75] These letters were written in the later 350s,[76] likely at the time of Athanasius' "desert refuge during his third exile."[77] The three letters[78] were written to "Serapion, the bishop of Thmuis in lower Egypt," a man whom Athanasius had traveled with a few years before[79] and who was "one of Athanasius' most trusted agents."[80] Serapion had written to Athanasius[81] about a certain group who oddly enough accepted the deity and consubstantiality of the Son but who "had set their minds against the Holy Spirit claiming not only that he is a creature but also"[82] an angel. Athanasius charged this group with "heterodoxy and diabolical presumption"[83] and labeled them the "Tropiki"[84] (later to be identified as Pneumatomachians or "Spirit fighters."[85]) because they relied on a "certain mode of exegesis"[86] that relied on "allegorical construction of scriptural 'tropes'"[87] in their exegesis of biblical texts.

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[75] Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 213–14; Weinandy notes: Athanasius was "the first to write, in a sustained and coherent manner, a 'treatise' on the Holy Spirit." Thomas G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2018), 108n22.

[76] Mark DelCogliano ("Introduction to Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*" in *Works on the Spirit: Athanasius the Great and Didymus the Blind*, ed. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres [Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011], 25–29) carefully considers the evidence for the date of composition of these letters and suggests the period 359–361 is plausible. See also Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 59.

[77] Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 59.

[78] Three comments on these letters are in order:

Comment 1: Older scholars and older editions refer to four letters (e.g. C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* [London: Epworth Press, 1951]), but "it is now generally accepted that those [letters] traditionally called the second and third letters were originally a single letter." DelCogliano, "Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*," 19n25; see Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 59–60.

Comment 2: The edition used for this article is: Athanasius of Alexandria, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, trans. and ed. Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Lewis Ayres (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2011, 53–137). All quotations and references of the letters in this article will be from this edition; they are footnoted as *Letters to Serapion* with the citation numbering of that edition and page number of that volume; for the first instance see Comment 3 below.

Comment 3: The three letters cover essentially the same topics: the second letter is "an epitome of Letter One," and the third is "a renewed treatment" of some of the content in Letter One (see Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion,* 1.15.1–1.21.4) that was omitted in Letter Two. See DelCogliano, "Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*," 22–23.

[79] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 212.

[80] DelCogliano, "Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*," 19.

[81] "The letter [i.e., from Serapion to Athanasius] of Your Sacred Kindness has reached me in the desert." *Letters to Serapion*, 1.1.1, 53.

[82] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.2.2, 53; i.e., "ministering spirit."

[83] Athanasius, 1.1.4, 54.

[84] Athanasius, 1.10.4, 69.

[85] Athanasius refers to the Tropikoi as "those who are fighting the Spirit," or as Pneumatomachians, in *Letters to Serapion*, 3.1.2, 128; see editor's note at *Letters to Serapion*, 1.32.2, 103n79.

[86] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.2.2, 54. "Thus one might translate 'Tropikoi' as 'Misinterpreters.'" DelCogliano, "Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*," 21.

[87] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 137.

As noted in the previous section, Athanasius employed three strategies in *Orations against the Arians*; he used these same three strategies again in his *Letters to Serapion* in confronting the "Tropici."

The "Tropici" used two texts to argue that the Spirit was a creature. The first was Amos 4:13[88] which (in the NASB) is rendered, "For behold, He who forms mountains and creates the wind" but in the LXX is "διότι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτίζων πνεῦμα."[89] The "Tropici"—by taking πνεῦμα as a reference to the Holy Spirit—argued this was a clear statement that the Spirit is created—he is a creature.[90] The other text was 1 Timothy 5:21 which in the NASB reads "I solemnly exhort you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of *His* chosen angels"; in the reading of the "Tropici," the triad "God, Christ Jesus and chosen angels" is simply an alternate form of the triad—"Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[91]

In his response Athanasius employed the first tactic and engaged with the opponents to show that the texts they used were texts that were "susceptible to opposing interpretations."[92] In the case of Amos 4:13, πνεῦμα could just as well be taken to mean "winds"[93] or the human spirit;[94] in the case of 1 Timothy 5:21, to read "chosen angels" as just angels made perfect sense on the face of it.[95]

Athanasius then countered the faulty exegesis of the "Tropici" with some impressive lists of texts—assembled with brief comments—that reveal his sense of the scope of Scripture on the Spirit.

With respect to the mis-reading of Amos 4:13 by the "Tropici," Athanasius assembled at least three lists of texts: (1) one list of texts supports Athanasius' claim that "if 'spirit' is said without the definite article" or without certain modifiers, "it cannot be the Holy Spirit who is signified."[96] (2) Another list cited texts in which certain "qualifiers" identified "spirit" as the Holy Spirit.[97] (3) A third list cited texts where the term "spirit" is not qualified so as to be easily put in list (1) or (2); this list included generic uses of "spirit."[98] By these lists Athanasius was demonstrating that

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[88] Hanson (*Christian Doctrine of God*, 749) dryly notes that this text "would strike all modern students of the Bible as grossly irrelevant."

[89] "The Septuagint: LXX," Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Hellenic Bible Society, accessed April 30, 2025, https://www.septuagint.bible/home, https://www.septuagint.bible/-/amos-kephalaio-4.

[90] Thus, "by the magical wand of mistranslation," Amos 4:13 is taken to teach that the Holy Spirit is a created being! Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 749–50.

[91] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.10.4, 69.

[92] Athanasius, 1.10.4, 69.

[93] Athanasius, 1.9.3. 66. If Athanasius had personal access to a Hebrew text, he might have made this point more confidently.

[94] Athanasius, 1.9.3–1.9.10, 66–68.

[95] See Athanasius, 1.14.7, 75; In the last part of this portion Athanasius simply writes, "Nonetheless, it was appropriate for him to mention the elect angels," and he gives a couple of plausible explanations.

[96] Athanasius, 1.4.2, 58; see the list in 1.4.2–1.4.3, 58.

[97] Athanasius, 1.5.1 to 1.6.13, 59–63. Many of the qualifiers indicate that the Spirit is in relation to God (e.g., "My Spirit" Gen 6:3—God speaking; "Spirit of God," Gen 1:2; Matt 12:28; 1 Cor 2:11–12; 3:16; Phil 3:3), in relation to the Lord (e.g., "Spirit of the Lord," Gen 6:3; Judg 3:10, 11:29; Isa 6:1; Mic 2:7; Acts 8:39), and in relation to Christ (e.g., "the Spirit of Christ" 1 Pet 1:9–11; Rom 8:9–11; Phil 1:18–20). This association of the Spirit to God, the Lord and Christ is meant to be indicative that the Spirit is not a creature.

[98] Athanasius, 1.7.3 to 1.8.2, 64–65.

the "Tropici" had illegitimately read the πνεῦμα in Amos 4:13 as the Holy Spirit, thus "Out of sheer audacity [they] have invented [their] own mode of exegesis."[99]

Athanasius also assembled a list of texts to answer the mis-reading of 1 Timothy 4:13. This list was meant to demonstrate that the Scriptures clearly differentiated between the Holy Spirit and angels; Zechariah 4:5 is highlighted,[100] and the list continued with more than twenty more texts cited.[101] In a final argument on this point, Athanasius points to texts where "the Lord" and "the Spirit" are juxtaposed—but the Son is not (at least not explicitly) mentioned (i.e., Isa 48:16 and Hag 2:4–5),[102] and to texts where "God" and "Jesus Christ" are referenced but not angels or the Spirit (i.e., 1 Tim 6:13–14), and to still other texts where other names or titles are juxtaposed in unexpected ways (i.e., in Exod 14:31 "God" and "Moses" are both mentioned).[103] The upshot of these lists was to show that the application of the same specious exegesis of the "Tropici"—which they had applied in the case of 1 Timothy 4:13—to these texts would lead them to "great error,"[104] it would lead them by "their own modes of exegesis … [to] misinterpret,"[105] it would be "irrational audacity,"[106] and—most significantly—it would display "ignorance of the Divine Scriptures and thus divergence from the truth."[107] In short, to read the Scriptures with the τρόπος ("exegesis") of the "Tropici" would not "fit" with "the meaning of the Divine Oracles."[108]

Athanasius used even more caustic language in introducing the next argument of his opponents. He refers to "the blasphemy which our irrational opponents utter against the Spirit," and described them as, "Yet still defiant in their struggle against the truth."[109] But this time [their] error is no longer based on the Scriptures (since they do not find it there) but [has been] belched up from the surfeit of their own heart." Their error is presented in a sort of riddle:[110] "If the Spirit is not a creature, nor one of the angels, but proceeds from the Father, then is he also a son? And are the Spirit and the Word two brothers?"[111] And if the Spirit comes from the Son, is the Father a grandfather of the Spirit?[112] At first, Athanasius dismisses this as idle speculation about "the depths of God" which humans should not try to fathom (citing

[99] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.7.2, 63–64; page 63n15. The footnote indicates the term "exegesis" here is the Greek τρόπος.

[100] Athanasius, 1.11.2–1.11.3, 70–71.

[101] Athanasius, 1.11.4–1.12.5, 71–73.

[102] Athanasius, 1.13.3, 74.

[103] Athanasius, 1.14.1–1.14.6, 74–75.

[104] Athanasius, 1.3.1, 56.

[105] Athanasius, 1.10.4, 69.

[106] Athanasius, 1.11.1, 70.

[107] Athanasius, 1.13.1, 73.

[108] Athanasius, 1.15.1, 76.

[109] Athanasius, 1.15.1, 76.

[110] Athanasius appears to be reproducing a form of his opponents' argument but casts it into this "riddle" to expose its absurdity.

[111] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.15.1, 76. See below on the matter of Athanasius' imprecision on the notion of the Spirit's procession.

[112] See Athanasius, 1.15.3, 76–77.

1 Cor 2:10–11). Besides it is absurd, impious, and foolishness for "God is not like a human being."[113]

But Athanasius turns this absurd line of reasoning to his own purpose because it shows how the "Tropici" have mis-reasoned and why. In an earlier comment, Athanasius asserted (citing Eph 4:6) "there is one divinity, and one God who is over all, and through all, and in all."[114] This one divinity must not be divided so "when the Father is mentioned, with him are both his word and the spirit who is in the Son. If the Son is named, the Father is in the Son, and the Spirit is not external to the Word."[115] Whatever the relations are which are indicated by the names Father, Son, and Spirit, those relations must account for the mutual indwelling of three in one divinity.

But the "Tropici" have made a category error; they have regarded the names "Father," and "Son" in a human / creaturely way;[116] "this is not how things are for the divinity. For God is not like a human being [Num 23:19]. Nor does he have a nature that is divisible into parts."[117] The "Tropici" do not think rightly about the Father and Son and Spirit because they do not follow how Scripture itself uses the names[118] which is to identify the divinity (but not to explain it). In Scripture the Father is always called "Father"—never "Son" or "grandfather"; in Scripture the Son is always called "Son"—never "Father" (much less "brother"). "In the Scriptures the Spirit is never called a son, lest he be considered a brother."[119] The Scriptural names simply do not reveal anything about the dynamic of the relationships of *the divine* Father, Son and Spirit as such names might when used in speaking of any *human*, creaturely, or temporal family relationships. The "Tropici" "have backed themselves into the most absurd corner. Because they cannot understand how the Holy Trinity is indivisible,"[120] they are thinking like Arians who "make the Son one with the created order," and they "themselves classify the Spirit with the creatures."[121] The "Tropici" should "acknowledge what is written [in Scripture]." The Scriptures speak of "the Son with the Father and not dividing the Spirit from the Son, so as to preserve the truth of the Holy Trinity's indivisibility and sameness of nature."[122] In short, as Haykin notes, "Athanasius asserts that there is a proper way to discuss the Trinity: first by faith, that is, through the faith of the Church that believes in a God who exists

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[113] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.15.4, 77; 1.17.1–1.17.5, 80; 1.18.1–1.18.4, 81. "His initial answer to this argument is an insistence upon the impenetrable mystery of the inner life of the Godhead." Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 61.

[114] Athanasius, 1.14.6, 75.

[115] Athanasius, 1.14.6, 75.

[116] Athanasius, 1.16.3–1.16.4, 78.

[117] Athanasius, 1.16.5, 78.

[118] Indeed, the "Tropici" have invented "novel terms other than those in the Scriptures." Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.17.6, 80.

[119] Athanasius, 1.16.7, 78–79.

[120] Athanasius, 1.17.4, 80. Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 216, has "Triad" for "Trinity" here.

[121] Athanasius, 1.17.4, 80.

[122] Athanasius, 1.17.5, 80; see also 1.25.1–1.25.4, 92. It should be recalled that the "Tropici" accepted the consubstantiality of the Son and the unity of the Father and Son as stated in the Nicene Creed of 325. In effect, Athanasius is urging them to accept that this indivisibility and sameness of nature extends to the Spirit as well.

in inseparable Trinity; second, through the illustrations from the Scriptures, which provide the proper vehicle for a discussion of the Trinity."[123]

Having engaged the "Tropici" directly, Athanasius now engages in some "dogmatic exegesis." He indicates how his argument will proceed: he will argue that "the Spirit is unlike creatures based both on scriptural proofs … and Trinitarian arguments."[124] In making these arguments Athanasius deploys his other tactics: he lists and discusses the key texts of Scripture but always with "the faith of the Church that believes in a God who exists in inseparable Trinity" in mind.[125] In the course of these arguments, he is both relying on and validating the scope of Scripture so as to demonstrate that his reading "fits" (coheres) with the "mind of Scripture" and does not damage "the overarching plotline of Scripture."[126] In his concluding words to Serapion, Athanasius reveals what was his plan throughout these letters:

> And so, the Divine Scriptures consistently show that the Holy Spirit is not a creature, but is proper to the Word and to the divinity of the Father. Thus the teaching of the saints is in agreement on the holy and indivisible Trinity, and this is the one faith of the Catholic Church. But the irrational fictions of the Tropikoi diverge from the Scriptures and agree with the irrationality of the Ariomaniacs [Arians] … What I have handed on accords with the Apostolic faith that the Fathers handed down to us. I have not made anything up that falls outside of it, but have written only what I learned in harmony with the Holy Scriptures. For it also harmonizes with those passages of the Holy Scriptures cited as proof. It is not something made up on the basis of external sources…[127]

In his scriptural proofs Athanasius begins with important παραδείγματα that are found in Scripture. Father, Son, and Spirit are each—each in his own way—related to the images of "fountain and light."[128] These images are "analogies" and "illustrations" not to be taken "as reality [of the Godhead] itself"[129]—for "God's nature is ineffable" but as a way to speak truly "about God and his activity."[130] But these παραδείγματα are not to be taken lightly because they "are given to us by Scripture" and to reject them can lead to false ideas about God. And yet to rightly read these illustrations, the exegete must be "governed by a set of theological premises"[131] about the order, unity and inseparability of the persons of the Trinity.[132]

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[123] Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 71. See Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 3.5.2; see footnote 133 below.
[124] DelCogliano, "Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion*," 23.
[125] Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 71.
[126] Quotation marks for emphasis.
[127] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.32.1, 103; 1.33.2, 104.
[128] Athanasius, 1.19.1–1.19.4, 82. The texts Athanasius cites may or may not seem convincing to modern exegetes.
[129] Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 71.
[130] Haykin, 72.
[131] Haykin, 73.
[132] See Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.1, 84.

In Scripture the three are referred to in ways that reveal a mutuality between them: wisdom is a mutual quality,[133] and indwelling and the giving of life in Christians are mutual works.[134] But—given that the nature of the Holy Trinity is inseparable from itself[135]—to attempt to distinguish a wisdom particular to each one is impossible; nor can anyone explain how the Spirit's indwelling is different than that of the Son.[136] Athanasius goes on to compare the mission of the Son—as the one sent by the Father—to the mission of the Spirit—as the one sent by the Son;[137] and he comments that in those missions the Son glorifies the Father *and* the Spirit.[138] Thus, since "the Spirit's rank in nature, vis-à-vis the Son corresponds to the Son's vis-à-vis the Father,"[139] it is inconsistent to think that the Spirit is a creature (and again, even these "Tropici" would not claim the Word is a creature of the Father).

Athanasius continues listing such "scriptural linguistic patterns"[140] that "demonstrate that the Spirit is biblically characterized in terms of divine attributes such as inalterability, incorruptibility, and omnipresence."[141] He also includes examples from Scripture of the divine activities of the Spirit:[142] the Spirit is the agent of sanctification;[143] the Spirit is the giver of life;[144] the Spirit is the anointing and seal of Christians;[145] the Spirit is the agent of the Christian's participation in God;[146] the

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[133] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.19.6, 83.

[134] Athanasius, 1.19.7–1.19.8, 83.

[135] The rhetorical questions (see Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.1, 84) are "actually the presuppositions which control the exposition of those Scriptures used in relation to the illustrations." Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 73.

[136] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.1–1.20.4, 84.

[137] Athanasius, 1.20.5, 85. Although Athanasius tantalizingly speaks here of the Son as "only-begotten offspring" and the terms "to proceed" of the Spirit (see *Letters to Serapion*, 1.2.5), "He is speaking of what informal theological language is called the Spirit's mission not his procession." Hanson, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 751; see the discussion on this issue in Athanasius below.

[138] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.6, 85.

[139] Athanasius, 1.21.1, 85.

[140] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 138.

[141] Anatolios, 138; Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.26.1–1.26.7, 93–94.

[142] Anatolios, 138.

[143] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.22.3–1.23.1, 88.

[144] Athanasius, 1.23.2–1.23.3, 89.

[145] Athanasius, 1.23.4–1.23.7, 89–90; 2.12.1–2.12.3.

[146] Athanasius, 1.24.1–1.24.4, 90. Citing this list of "soteriological" activities of the Spirit may allow a word about the Trinitarian formula for baptism and Athanasius' use of Matthew 28:19. Athanasius refers to this text six times in these letters: this first is in the list of texts that identify "spirit" as the Holy Spirit (Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.6.4, 61); the second is in the list that distinguishes the Spirit from angels (Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.11.6, 72), the third is found in *Letters to Serapion* at 1.28.4 where Athanasius cites it as a source of the trinitarian faith of the church; the fourth is found in *Letters to Serapion* at 2.6.1 where again this formula and three-fold confession is an expression of "our faith"; the fifth is found in *Letters to Serapion* at 2.25.4 where it is again an expression of the church's faith in a command of the Lord and here Athanasius makes the observation that "if the Spirit were a creature, he [the Lord] would not have ranked him together with the Father"; the sixth is found in *Letters to Serapion* at 3.5.2 where Athanasius explains (as has been seen above) that this is just how the order of the names was given and the names themselves are just what they are. Thus asking if the "Father" is a grandfather because of the order of the names is category error and so it is irrelevant; the names have a different function in the faith of the church—this is just "the faith," of the church, preached everywhere and "the faith is not to be stated otherwise than the Savior stated it"—he is the Son and the other is the Spirit.

Spirit is an agent of creation (with the Father and the Son);[147] the Spirit is the agent of "grace gifts";[148] the Spirit is the agent of prophecy.[149] All of these *divine* activities—attested to by Scripture—indicate that the Spirit cannot be understood as a creature. Athanasius also notes the different ways the Spirit and creatures are described in Scripture: Christians as creatures "partake of the Spirit" (cf. Heb 6:4) but not the other way around; there are many types of creatures (e.g., among angels there are cherubim, seraphim and archangels) but there is only one Holy Spirit;[150] creatures are "from nothing and have a beginning to their existence" (Gen 1:1), "but the Holy Spirit is and is said to be from God, as the Apostle said" (1 Cor 2:12).[151]

Throughout these letters Athanasius has built lists of texts and arguments "on the foundational principle of the primacy of scripture language."[152] Repeatedly he has demonstrated in these texts that there is a pattern "by which the three are scripturally named." Even the "non-communicability of the names of 'Father' and 'Son'"—which was at the heart of the errors of the "Tropici"—"is based on the intractable givenness of the scriptural patterns of naming."[153] It is on the basis of this consistent scriptural naming—and taking it as a given that the Father and Son are of one nature—that Athanasius argues that it would be inconsistent (worse, blasphemous)[154] to consider the Spirit to be of a different nature—a creature.

There are two features of the framework or scope in which one can discern from Athanasius' arguments that the Spirit is not a creature. One is the way Athanasius recognizes a correlation between "the intertextual patterns of Scripture" (i.e., the patterns of naming Father, Son, and Spirit") and—most significantly—the ontological status of the persons in the Godhead.[155] In other words, "Seeing that there is such an order and unity in the Holy Trinity"—as is manifestly the teaching of the Scriptures—"who could separate either the Son from the Father"—not even the "Tropici" would want to do that (again, they accepted "the full divinity of the Son"[156])—"or the Spirit from the Son or from the Father himself. Who could be so audacious" (apparently the "Tropici" could) "as to say that the Trinity is unlike Itself and different in nature? Or that the Son is foreign to the Father in substance? Or that

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What did Athanasius intend by these citations? The topic is complex but the answer in Anatolios seems about right: "Athanasius's construction of a distinctive interpretation of baptism enfolds the threefold name with an emphasis on the single divine agency, which he interprets as the content of the 'oneness' of baptism." (See Eph 4:5) Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 146; "Thus baptism becomes a hermeneutical principle for discerning the inner life of the Triad especially the position of the Holy Spirit." Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 106. In other words, these three are inseparably the agent(s) of baptism, and baptism was a testimony to adherence to the church's belief in the Trinity. Furthermore—and to the argument of these letters—if the Spirit does not have the same nature as the Father and the Son, if he is only a creature, then Christian baptism is invalid. See Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.30.1–1.30.3, 98–99.

[147] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.24.5–1.24.6, 91.
[148] Athanasius, 1.30.4–1.30.6, 99–100.
[149] Athanasius, 1.31.3–1.31.12, 101–102.
[150] Athanasius, 1.27.1–1.27.3, 95–96.
[151] Athanasius, 2.11.2, 120.
[152] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 140.
[153] Anatolios, 140.
[154] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.15.1, 76.
[155] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 142.
[156] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 212.

the Spirit is estranged from the Son? How could such things be possible?"[157] Once again, Athanasius is making bold claims in these rhetorical questions. They are not mere question-begging assertions but claims based on "the intertextual patterns" and scope of Scripture that the Father, Son, and Spirit are of the same substance and nature!

The other feature of Athanasius' framework revealed in these arguments (that the Spirit is not a creature) is his "fundamental concern to maintain the utter difference in nature between creature and Creator."[158] Athanasius' arguments "on behalf of the divinity of the Spirit" are grounded in "his typical starting point … the radical polarity of the Creator-creature distinction."[159]

Athanasius' arguments are based in the biblical metaphysical distinction of Creator/creature in contrast to a neo-platonic (or just generally Platonic) notion of chain-of-being[160] that his mentor, Alexander of Alexandria had framed in opposing Arius.[161] For many, possibly Arius and those after him,[162] the idea of one radically separate One being—the source of all being but utterly separate—under whom is a hierarchy of being,[163] and beings, was not just plausible but probable. So, to posit a being who was not the Highest One but nevertheless held a higher status (demi-god) was also likely. For some this thinking—if not this doctrine—could be made to fit with the Christian teaching of the Logos, a being who, did not have the absolute priority of God (Father), who was higher on the scale of being than ordinary souls, who may have been in some sense even preexistent "divinity," who had a certain degree of preeminence but who was still a creature. This created divinity may have had some part in the process of the creation of everything after or below him—but he was still a creature himself. This was something like Arius' view of Christ.[164] For Arians, "The Son, therefore, is a creature who originated from nothing through the sovereign and gracious will of the Unbegotten: 'He was not before he was begotten and created…'"[165] It is that sort of metaphysical thinking with which Athanasius' mentor, Alexander of Alexandria had to contend when dealing with Arius. Anatolios summarizes: "it is Alexander who initiates the central argument that the Creator-creature distinction constitutes mutually exclusive categories that allow for no middle term," that is no semi-divine but created being, because "the notion of a created creator is simply nonsensical."[166] Thus, since the Scriptures attest that the Son was Creator, he necessarily was on the divine side of being.[167] Just so, when Athanasius' establishes—as he does from Scripture—that the Spirit is not a creature, he is at the

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[157] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.1–1.20.2, 84.

[158] Young, *Scripture in Doctrinal Dispute*, 49.

[159] Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 138.

[160] See footnote 44 above. To delve into even the complexities of Greek metaphysical ideas in the third and fourth centuries is well beyond the purpose of this article. The author recognizes the short-comings of the next few comments and asks for the reader's understanding and indulgence.

[161] See Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 79ff.

[162] Anatolios, 45.

[163] See Dominic J. O'Meara, "The Hierarchical Ordering of Reality in Plotinus," in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus,* ed. Lloyd P. Gerson (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–81.

[164] See Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea*, 45.

[165] Anatolios, 45–50; citing Arius.

[166] Anatolios, 80.

[167] Anatolios, 80–81. The reader should consult the whole of Anatolios' discussion here.

same time presupposing that "there is no middle term" and so he must be Creator—and as Creator, He must be God.

Athanasius concludes the first letter by once again affirming where his confidence lay:

> Nonetheless, in addition to these arguments, let us also examine the tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church from the beginning, which is nothing other than what the Lord gave, and the Apostles preached, and the Fathers preserved. On this the Church is founded, and whoever falls away from it can no longer be nor called a Christian. So, the Trinity is holy and perfect, confessed in Father and Son and Holy Spirit. It has nothing foreign or external mixed with it, nor is it composed of Creator and creature, but is entirely given to creating and making. It is self-consistent and indivisible in nature, and it has one activity.[168]

Athanasius was quite clear that the Spirit was not a creature and that the Spirit shared the same nature as the Father and the Son. But he is not quite so clear on the matter of the relations of the Son and Spirit. The relationship of the Father and Son is taken as the model—the given—for the "Son is the only begotten offspring";[169] but then the relationship of the Spirit to the Son is … what? Athanasius asserts: "Indeed, *just as* the Son is the only-begotten offspring, *so too* is the Spirit, who is given and sent from the Son."[170] For Athanasius there is more than a *similarity* in the relation of Father to Son and Son to Spirit—the Father to Son relation is of same nature (*homoousias*[171]) and Athanasius wants to affirm that is also true of the Son to Spirit. But the Son is "offspring" (γέννημα) to the Father—so what is the Spirit to the Son? "One cannot say … 'the Spirit is begotten of the Son'"[172] because that would be tantamount to repeating the error of the "Tropici." A few lines later Athanasius writes: "Since there is one living Word, there must be one perfect and complete living activity and gift whereby he sanctifies and enlightens. This is said to proceed from the Father, because the Spirit shines forth, and is sent, and is given from the Word, who is confessed to be from the Father."[173] The term "proceed" and the entire point in this sentence is an allusion to John 15:26, but (as noted above, see footnote 124) Athanasius does not seem to be using the term as it came to be used in later theological reflection on the trinitarian relations.[174] So, although Athanasius has successfully argued that "the Holy Spirit's divine nature and divine subjective/identity are predicated upon his existential relationship both to the Father and the Son,"[175] he needed a way—or a term—to distinguish the Spirit's "unique

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[168] Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.28.1–1.28.2, 96–97.

[169] Athanasius, 1.20.5, 85.

[170] Athanasius, 1.20.5, 85. Emphasis added.

[171] This *is* what the Nicene Creed 325 affirmed!

[172] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 112.

[173] Weinandy, 112.

[174] Emery notes that it was Basil of Caesarea who introduced the category of relation in his responses to Eunomius of Cyzicus (Gilles Emrey, *The Trinitarian Theology of St Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 80–81; later theological reflection refined the category of relations using the terms paternity, filiation and spiration / procession.

[175] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 113.

existential relationship" with the Father (and the Son[176]) "that differs from the Father's and the Son's existential relationship."[177] It seems Athanasius never did seem to find that way or term.[178]

Bray seems to suggest that Athanasius attempted to "develop his own understanding of Trinitarian relations."[179] Bray quotes *Letters to Serapion* (from a different translation):

> Since the Son is one [with God] as the living logos, his perfect and fully sanctifying and illuminating energy (*energeia*) and gift must also be one [with him]. He proceeds from the Father because he is light, being sent and given from (*para*) the Son, whom we confess comes from (*ek*) the Father.[180]

Bray notes the prepositions in the line "from (*para)* the Son, whom we confess comes from (*ek*) the Father."[181] He observes that there may not be a real difference between the Greek prepositions *para* and *ek,* but "perhaps the former means 'from alongside of' and the latter 'from inside of." But that may not be altogether helpful because that might "imply that the second and third persons have different origins and perhaps different natures also."[182] The use of the nuances of Greek prepositions to help clarify (or not) the trinitarian relations will be explored by Basil of Caesarea in his great work *On the Holy Spirit*.[183] The fact is Athanasius left this matter unresolved—a matter with which later theologians will resolve by using the term "procession" in a way that did not occur to Athanasius himself.

Athanasius' teaching on the Holy Spirit in his *Letters to Serapion* had a significant influence on the Nicene theologians who came after him—Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. As noted above, Part Two will examine the Scriptural teaching on the Spirit of these three Cappadocians to demonstrate that after Athanasius these men established "a foundational phase in a trajectory of reflection that [came] to resolution in the affirmation of the Spirit's divinity by the council of Constantinople in 381."[184]

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[176] But that is another debate!

[177] Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 113.

[178] This is the observation of Shapland (*The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, 183)—Athanasius was "in urgent need of a term which shall distinguish the relation of the Spirit to the Father as (γέννημα) in the previous sentence distinguishes that of the Son." Weinandy addresses this problem in different terms, Weinandy, *Athanasius*, 112–13.

[179] Bray, *God Has Spoken*, 625.

[180] Bray, 625. Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion*, 1.20.5, 85.

[181] Bray, 625.

[182] Bray, 625.

[183] St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

[184] Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 214.