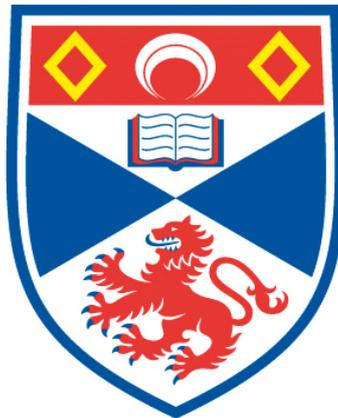


**TOWARDS ATHANASIUS'S DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE AS
AFFORDED IN HIS *LETTER TO MARCELLINUS ON THE
INTERPRETATION OF THE PSALMS***

Clayton Thomas Rowe

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of MPhil
at the
University of St Andrews**



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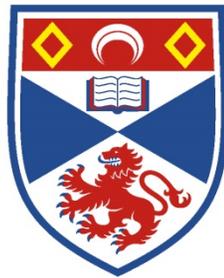
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Towards Athanasius's Doctrine of Scripture as
Afforded in his *Letter to Marcellinus on the
Interpretation of the Psalms*

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University of
St Andrews

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of MPhil
at the
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Abstract

Athanasius is best known for his role as defender of the Council of Nicaea, and for his contribution to trinitarian doctrine. Due to his importance in the history of Christian thought, much attention has been given to his polemical use of Scripture, which was aimed at various theological opponents. In the midst of these polemics, he strings together seemingly unrelated biblical texts in order to make his theological points. His exegesis has therefore often been criticized for lacking any coherent framework. Such criticism is usually levelled against him in light of modern exegetical concerns and practices.

In the first chapter I argue that fair evaluation of Athanasius's use of Scripture can only begin after his doctrine of Scripture is formulated. Questions regarding exegetical framework and consistency of interpretation can only be answered after one understands Athanasius's theological conception of Scripture. This study offers a step in that direction by examining Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms*. In the second chapter, I piece together Athanasius's understanding of inspiration. I then explore how pneumatology, trinitarianism, and Athanasius's understanding of God's presence to creation relate to Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture. In the third chapter, I explore his statements regarding the words of Scripture in *Marcellinus*, in order to demonstrate how the words of Scripture relate creedal language.

The fourth chapter begins to demonstrate the implications Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture have for Athanasian studies. I argue that Athanasius and Origen have more in common than a comparison of their use of Scripture might indicate. The final chapter of the body of the work argues that Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture factors into his list of canonical books. The conclusion of this work further draws out the implications of this study. This work demonstrates that Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture elucidates his use of Scripture, and offers further implications for Athanasian studies inculcated by Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture.

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Abbreviations

Patristic Works

<i>CG/DI</i>	<i>Contra Gentes</i>
<i>Ad Marc</i>	<i>Ad Marcellinum</i>
<i>Ad Serap</i>	<i>Ad Serapion</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Contra Arianos</i>
<i>De Decr</i>	<i>De Decretis</i>
<i>De Synd</i>	<i>De Synodis</i>
<i>DP</i>	<i>De Principiis</i>
<i>FL</i>	<i>Festal Letter</i>

Greek Manuscripts

<i>AW</i>	<i>Athanasius Werke</i>
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia graeca</i>

Other Works

<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift Für Kirchengeshichte</i>
<i>Z. Th. K.</i>	<i>Zeitschrift Für Kirchengeshichte</i>

I. Introduction

1. Aim and Source

i. Athanasius and Doctrine of Scripture

Study of Athanasius's, or anyone's, doctrine of Scripture leads to interesting questions. First and most importantly, how does doctrine of Scripture affect how an individual uses Scripture? It seems axiomatic that an individual's use of Scripture stems from what she thinks the Bible is. Also, how does one's notion of divine inspiration affect how that person approaches his or her doctrine of Scripture? Does it not also seem aphoristic that someone's pneumatology will affect how he articulates a particular account of inspiration? Certainly doctrine of Scripture depends on the doctrine surrounding the divine agent of inspiration. What other doctrines seem to naturally interlock with and perhaps inform an individual's doctrine of Scripture? How would this interplay with other areas of theology affect doctrine of Scripture?

My aim in this project is to work towards piecing together Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture. My contention in this project is that Athanasius's doctrine of God intersects with and perhaps even informs his doctrine and use of Scripture. For Athanasius, the Scriptures are a divinely inspired collection of books written by holy men that reflects the being of God who inspired them. This collection mirrors the economic activity of the Holy Spirit who is the divine agent of inspiration. When Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture is constructed correctly, it sheds light on how he uses the Bible. It comes to the fore in his defense of creedal language. Moreover, Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture helps further identify how Athanasius fits within the broader Alexandrian tradition. The doctrine of Scripture offered from Athanasius will be drawn primarily from Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* since it, more than any of his other works, presents the fullest account of his doctrine of and attitude toward Scripture.

ii. The Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms

Marcellinus does not appear in any critical Greek editions but is found in *PG* vol 27. The work is considered genuinely Athanasian, appears as a preface in the *Codex Alexandrinus*, and is epistolary in character. The prohibition in chapter 31 against altering the Psalter is likely aimed at the Apollinarian tendency to paraphrase the Bible during

the reign of Julian the Apostate. The letter's composition therefore likely dates sometime after 363.¹

Athanasius writes to an otherwise unknown figure, Marcellinus, to whom he communicates a pragmatic application of the Psalter, which he learned from an "old man." Scholarly debate exists as to whether this "old man" is a literary device or to an actual person. Thomas Böhm indicates that if the "old man" was an actual historical figure, it is likely Serapion of Thmuis, and the letter is an attempt to unify the Egyptian church under the "anchoritic sign." Athanasius therefore takes on a dual role in which he is the student of a monk father (possibly Serapion), as well as the teacher of students and "thereby builds a chain of tradition."²

Though the vast majority of the book is given to the appropriate situation for the use of each Psalm, Charles Kannengiesser notes that *Marceillinus* "illustrates [Athanasius's] genuine attitude toward the Bible."³ He goes on to posit that Athanasius is not lecturing Marcellinus in the abstract, but according to his own experience with the Psalms. According to Kannengiesser, this letter reinforces Athanasius's notion that Scriptural interpretation is bound to the concrete experience of the life of faith.⁴

2. Restating the Question: History of Research

i. Use versus Doctrine

The academic conversation regarding Athanasius and Scripture typically begins by examining his use of Scripture rather than offering an account of his doctrine of Scripture. This type of work tends to lead to certain, and at times harsh criticisms of Athanasius's exegesis. For instance, in his explication of Patristic exegesis in *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, Manlio Simonetti states, "Athanasius only holds marginal interest for us, because he himself took little interest in exegesis."⁵ James D. Ernest responds to this claim stating, "[this] verdict is correct insofar as

¹ Thomas Böhm, "Exegetische Schriften," *Athanasius Handbuch*, edited by Peter Gemeinhardt, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 271. See also George Christopher Stead, "St. Athanasius on the Psalms," *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol 39, no 1 (1985), pp 65-78.

² Böhm, 271-2.

³ Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis: The Bible in Ancient Christianity*, vol II. (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 709.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 710.

⁵ Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation In the Early Church: An Historical Introduction to Patristic Exegesis*, trans. John A. Hughes (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 77.

‘exegesis’ implies deliberate exposition of continuous biblical text.”⁶ Only one such extant work has ever been attributed to Athanasius, but since Gilles Dorival’s article “Athanasius ou Pseudo-Athanasius,” this commentary has largely been thought to be pseudonymous.⁷ Simonetti then gives a few brief sentences on Athanasius’s interpretation of the Psalms in his *Letter to Marcellinus*. He pays particular attention to Athanasius’s belief that Christological references can be found in almost all the Psalms and concludes “[we] are far removed from the restrictive criteria which were becoming current in Antiochene circles.”⁸ Though not overly critical in tone, such a statement implies this perceived absence of “restrictive criteria” means Athanasius’s exegesis lacks a framework that makes for consistent biblical interpretation.

Though Athanasius never authored a commentary, arguing that Athanasius had “little interest in exegesis” seems unfair to Athanasius since such a statement can be interpreted as asserting that he took little interest in the study and interpretation of the Scriptures. Throughout the most recent studies of Athanasius’s biblical interpretation, Kennegiesser’s assertion that “Athanasius had developed what can best be described as a ‘biblical mind-set’” is ubiquitous.⁹ Kennegiesser goes on to state Athanasius was “unable

⁶ James D. Ernest, *The Bible In Athanasius of Alexandria* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers Inc., 2004), 6.

⁷ The sudden switch in thinking can be demonstrated in the work G. Christopher Stead who authored an article in 1982, in which he tried to prove that Athanasius’s Christology included some reference to the soul of the human Jesus from the *Expositiones In Psalmos*. In 1985, however, he published an article in the same periodical indicating that, based on the work of Dorival, the author of that *Expositiones In Psalmos* was influenced by Eusebius of Caesarea, Origen, Apollinaris, Didymus, and Cyril of Alexandria, and, on closer examination, Stead concludes that the work is not Athanasian in origin. See “The Scriptures and the Soul of Christ in Athanasius,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 36 (Leiden: Brill, 1982), pp 233-250, and “St. Athanasius on the Psalms,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 39 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), pp 67-78. See also Gilles Dorival, “Athanasius ou Pseudo-Athanasius,” *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, vol 16. (1980), pp. 80-89. Jerome makes mention of this commentary on the Psalms, and Photius mentions commentaries on Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon, fragments of which are collected along side other exegetical works from Genesis, Exodus, Job, Matthew, Luke, and 1 Corinthians that have been preserved in cantae, but their authenticity is difficult to establish. See J.J. Borgan, “Athanasius,” in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Leicester: IVP, 1998), 17. See also Stead, “Rhetorical Method in Athanasius,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, vol 30 no 3 (1976), pp. 121- 137.

⁸ Simonetti, 77. Ernest points out some homilies, which may be genuinely Athanasian, exist which could fit Simonetti’s understanding of exegesis, but the texts with which Athanasius deals are those which cause difficulties for Nicene theologies, so these texts are typically grouped with Athanasius dogmatic writings. Ernest, *Bible in Athanasius*, 7.

⁹ See, for instance, Margaret Beirne “St Athanasius and the Scriptures, Exemplified in His *Letter to Marcellinus*,” *Phronema* vol. 28 no. 2, 2013, pp 89-106, and Hikaru Tanaka, “Athanasius as Interpreter of the Psalms: His *Letter to Marcellinus*,” *Pro Ecclesia* vol. 21, no. 4, 2012, pp 422-448. Bertrand de Margerie notes Athanasius’s commentators ‘have all understood his exceptional

to face any situation, or assume any responsibility, without identifying himself in his thought and action through a reflex of biblical hermeneutics.”¹⁰

Critical evaluations of Athanasius’s hermetical method derive from a chosen starting point. Questions of appropriate interpretation are often cast according to modern exegetical categories either implicitly or explicitly. In turn, an evaluative tendency arose that seems to favor Antiochene exegesis because it is more “literal” over Alexandrian exegesis, which is prone to fanciful allegory.¹¹ Thus a critical attitude toward Athanasius and his exegesis is indicated by phrases that highlight the lack of some, as Simonetti states, “restrictive criteria.” Such criticism is understandable when interpretative method is the starting point. But this starting point hinders an endeavor to adequately address an interpreter’s consistency of interpretive method. Such evaluations can only begin after an account is given of an interpreter’s doctrine of Scripture. Athanasius’s interpretative method can only be fairly evaluated in light of his doctrine of Scripture.

While Simonetti seems to brush Athanasius aside due to a perceived lack of interest in exegesis, other scholars have more deeply engaged with the particulars of Athanasius’s exegesis. But these studies tend to focus on how Athanasius participates in and perhaps invents novel methods for interpreting Scripture in the midst of his polemics directed toward the “Arians.”¹² For instance, Ernest states, “Primarily...Athanasius’s dispute with the Arians

knowledge of the divine Scriptures to which most of his works bear witness, from the beginning to the end of his long career as an episcopal writer’. *The Greek Fathers, vol 1 of An Introduction to the History of Exegesis*, (Petersham, Massachusetts: Saint Bede’s Publications, 1993), 117.

¹⁰ Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis Christianity*, 709. For an extended and thorough analysis of Athanasius’s recourse to scripture see James D. Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). Hamilton Hess points out that “Athanasius was not primarily a theoretician...He was an apologist, a controversialist, and above all a pastor.” “The Place of Divinization in Athanasian Soteriology,” *Studia Patristica* vol 26, (Leuven: Peters Press, 1993), 370.

¹¹ This tendency has been recognized as caricature as early as 1957, and has been shown to be inadequate in recent decades. See Margret M. Mitchell, “Patristic Rhetoric on Allegory: Origen and Eustathius: 1 Samuel 28 on Trial,” *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 85 no 3 (July 2005), pp 414-45. For an account that is somewhat sympathetic to the Antiochene method of Scriptural interpretation see Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹² James D. Ernest, “Athanasius of Alexandria: The Scope of Scripture In Polemical and Pastoral Context,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, no. 47 (1993), 341-362. See also, Sara Parvis, “Christology in the Early Arian Controversy: The Exegetical War,” *Christology and Scripture: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Andrew Lincoln T. and Angus Paddison, (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 120-137, and Charles Kennengiesser, “Athanasius and Traditional Christology,” in *Doctrines of God and Christ in the Early Church*, vol IV of *Studies in Early Christianity: A Collection of Scholarly Essays*, ed. Everett Ferguson (London: Garland Publishing, 1993).

took the form of a battle over the interpretation of the Bible. To a degree this was inevitable, since Arians and pro-Nicenes were alike committed to demonstrating that their doctrines were found in Scripture.”¹³ Ernest then builds a framework from which he perceives to be Athanasius’s exegetical methodology by compiling Athanasius’s biblical references.

Frances Young notes that, “Athanasius was himself an innovator as he sought to reinterpret texts exploited by opposition in the light of his hermeneutical principles.”¹⁴ She posits that Athanasius perceives “a mind” behind the text that unifies the Scripture and aids in the exegetical battle against the heretics. She concludes that “interpretations of particular texts may be novel and recent if they cohere better with the teaching that elucidates the unity of the Bible through discerning the overarching narrative from creation through incarnation to the eschaton.”¹⁵ The question that must be addressed in light of such statements is whether Athanasius’s hermeneutical principle, based on this “mind behind Scripture,” is a reaction to his opponents or consistent with an already existing theology of Scripture. My contention is the latter.

Ernest explicates this “mind behind the text” with Athanasius’s own language in his article “Athanasius of Alexandria: The Scope of Scripture In Polemical and Pastoral Context.” He gives an account of Athanasius’s use of σκοπός and διάνοια in regards to Scripture, stating:

What we have is not really a formal principle or an authentic, versatile exegetical technique that might shed light on all kinds of Scripture texts, as the language of “searching out” or “investigating” would seem to imply. Rather, we have a superficial (for want of a less pejorative-sounding adjective) technologizing of the same simple point that we saw Athanasius making earlier in the places where he speaks of σκοπός or the right διάνοια of Scripture; namely, that whatever Scripture says about Christ is meant to fit in with the history of the incarnation of the Word of God for the sake of human salvation.¹⁶

Ernest, similarly to Young, notes that the interpretive method of Athanasius centers on God’s redemption of creation, focusing on the Incarnation. Scripture’s aim is to reveal

¹³ Ernest, “Scope,” 341. Though the “battle” moved from exegesis to theology, Athanasius always grounds his arguments in scripture, appealing to it as the authority.

¹⁴ Young, *Biblical Exegesis*, 37.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁶ Ernest, “Scope,” 350. For a reading of Athanasius that focuses on his pastoral role see David Gwynn, *Athanasius of Alexandria: Bishop, Theologian, Ascetic, Father* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 131 ff.

the truths of the Word of God, and each text must be interpreted in light of the immanent and economic history of the Word.

Ernest concludes by positing that a hard distinction between the polemical (anti-Arian) and pastoral (*Letter to Marcellinus* and the *Life of Antony*) writings should not be made, stating “the spirit of the former writings is best understood in light of the latter.” That is Athanasius’s polemical work arises from his pastoral experience, thus his pastoral works shed light on his polemical works. Ernest claims that dogmatic output was a “strange work” for Athanasius since it was forced upon him. He claims Athanasius’s theological contentions were not detached and occurring within the realm of church dogma, rather “[Athanasius’s] efforts in this arena were continuous with his ascetic and pastoral teaching. He would not see his own dogmatic discussions as abstractions that distract from Christian living but as correctives to hostile positions that would make Christian living impossible or at least unintelligible.”¹⁷ As we shall see, the pastoral *Letter to Marcellinus* offers the fullest account of Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture. According to Ernest, therefore, this letter may help elucidate certain aspects of Athanasius’s polemical work.

Ernest also authored *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*, in which he compiles each biblical citation across Athanasius’s corpus in order to elucidate Athanasius’s hermeneutical method. He states the “goal of this study is to understand Athanasius better by understanding the copious and variegated use of the Bible in his writings.”¹⁸ This current study, however, affords a different entry point by offering Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture. After an account of Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture we can begin to better appreciate how Athanasius employs it in his theological and polemical works. Throughout his book, Ernest makes glancing references to some sort of doctrine of Scripture without an extensive attempt to assemble the various pieces of the doctrine Athanasius leaves throughout his corpus; rather Ernest offers extensive lists of Athanasius’s scriptural citations and allusions throughout Athanasius’s work. As stated above, I will show that Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture is bound to his theology proper and the economic role of the Holy Spirit. This will help illuminate Athanasius’s use of Scripture.

ii. Theological Implication

Any serious study of Athanasius would be remiss without mentioning and interacting with the work of Khaled Anatolios. In *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*,

¹⁷ Ernest, *Bible in Athanasius*, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

Anatolios attempts to offer a “book-length study devoted to the overall coherence of Athanasius’s theological vision, in terms of the interrelation of central aspects of his doctrine.”¹⁹ He then offers his interpretive grid by which he understands Athanasius stating “...the focus of my interpretation will be what I see as an intrinsic center of coherence in Athanasius’s theology: the distinction, and simultaneous relation, between God and the world.”²⁰ If Anatolios were claiming this is a dogmatic rule from which Athanasius consciously and meticulously builds his theology throughout his corpus, Anatolios might be guilty of overworking Athanasius’s theology. However, though his conclusions appear deceptively tidy, Anatolios has not resolved every tension in Athanasius’s thought; rather Anatolios offers an elucidation of the theological backdrop upon which Athanasius works. While certain sections of Athanasius’s work might seem detached, they all appear in the same scene and are held together by this theological background.

In *Coherence*, Anatolios does not explicitly deal with how the Bible fits into this interpretive framework of Athanasius. In the introduction to his translation of certain Athanasian texts however, Anatolios offers the same thesis, stating, “[Athanasius’s] conception of the relation between God and creation may thus be considered as the architectonic center of Athanasius’s theological vision.”²¹ Later, in his discussion of Athanasius’s exegesis of Proverbs 8:22 he states that Athanasius, “located the meaning of the text not so much in the conscious intention of the human author but in the objective reference to divine realities that was placed in the biblical text by the Spirit.”²² This is the only instance in the work in which Anatolios deals with Athanasius and Scripture. The doctrine of Scripture offered in this work fits within Anatolios’s interpretive framework for Athanasius. The Scriptures, which exhibit certain characteristics of the God, and are used to carry out of the economic role of the Holy Spirit, allows an individual to participate in Athanasius’s soteriological scheme. Scripture can be understood as one particular means by which God maintains his utter transcendence and simultaneous relation to creation.

¹⁹ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London: Routledge, 1998), 2. For a short explanation of the importance of Anatolios’s study, see Peter Bouteneff, “Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought*,” in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, vol. 40 no. 4 Jan, 2002, 391-394, and Peter Widdicombe, “Review: Athanasius: The Coherence of his Thought,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, vol 51 no 2 (Oct, 2000) pp. 727-730.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius* (London: Routledge, 2004), 39.

²² *Ibid.*, 110.

iii. Scripture, Asceticism, and the Holy Spirit

Before moving into an Athanasian doctrine of Scripture, it is appropriate to give some attention to Athanasius's understanding of asceticism since so much of *The Letter to Marcellinus* is taken up with the proper ascetic use of the Psalter. David Brakke asserts that Athanasius changed the model of the Christian life from that of a detached contemplation to the actions involved in asceticism. Athanasius, according to Brakke, "modified the traditional Alexandrian conception of the Christian life from intellectual to ethical."²³ This is true to a certain extent. For Athanasius, ascetic practice is a prerequisite for proper Biblical interpretation. This is demonstrated early in Athanasius's career. At the conclusion of his work *On the Incarnation*, Athanasius encourages his reader to search the Scriptures in order to "prove" what he has argued, by comparing Athanasius's work to Scripture. Athanasius then warns his reader that proper interpretation of the Scripture is only achieved by means of a "good life and a pure soul". Stating that one cannot understand the words of the saints if one is not attempting to imitate the saints' way of life, Athanasius states:

For just as if someone wishes to see the light of the sun he cleanses and clears his eye, and purifies it until it is similar to what he desires, so that as the eye thus becomes light it may see the light of the sun ; or as when someone wishes to see a city or a country he goes to that place for the sight ; so he who wishes to grasp the thought of theologians must first cleanse and wash his soul by his conduct and approach the saints in the imitation of their deeds, so that, being included in their company through the manner of his life, he may understand those things which have been revealed to them by God.²⁴

Athanasius argues that only when a student of Scripture is united in fellowship to the saints' way of life, will he or she be able to understand that which God has revealed to the saints.²⁵ Thus, for Athanasius, interpretation of the Scripture does not begin with intellectual techniques, but with ascetic practice.

²³David Brakke, *Athanasius and the Politics of Asceticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 144-146. This does not mean however that Brakke indicates Athanasius is an ethical individual. Moreover, there is little subtlety and room for dialogue with other readings of Athanasius in Brakke's thesis.

²⁴ *Contra Gentes/De Incarnatione* trans. and ed. Robert W. Thomson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971). *DI* 57 [Thompson, 275]. ὥσπερ γὰρ εἴ ἐθελήσειεν ἰδεῖν τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς, πάντως τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν ἀπασμῆχει καὶ λαμπρύνει, σχεδὸν ὁμοίον τῷ ποθουμένῳ ἑαυτὸν διακαθαίρων, ἵνα οὕτως φῶς γενόμενος ὁ ὀφθαλμὸς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ἴδῃ, ἢ ὡς εἴ τις θελήσειεν ἰδεῖν πόλιν ἢ χώραν, πάντως ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον ἀφικνεῖται τῆς θεᾶς ἕνεκεν· οὕτως ὁ θέλων τῶν θεολόγων τὴν διάνοιαν καταλαβεῖν, προαπονήσκει καὶ προαποπλύνει τῷ βίῳ τὴν ψυχὴν ὀφείλει, καὶ πρὸς αὐτοὺς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀφικέσθαι τῇ ὁμοιότητι τῶν πράξεων αὐτῶν, ἵνα σὺν αὐτοῖς τῇ ἀγωγῇ τῆς συζήσεως γενόμενος τὰ καὶ αὐτοῖς ἀποκαλυφθέντα παρὰ Θεοῦ κατανοήσῃ, (274).

²⁵ *DI* 57.

The later written *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* contains ascetic tones, which are intended to instruct a chanter how to order one's soul. In this letter, Athanasius explains the function of Scripture in the life of the Christian, and how the Psalms aid in ascetic practice. This letter also offers insight into Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture and its pragmatic use.

In a very stimulating article entitled "Athanasius, the Psalms, and the Reformation of the Self," Paul R. Kolbet explores the parallels between Hellenistic philosophical practices and Athanasius's instruction regarding the recitation and singing of the Psalms.²⁶ He concludes stating:

[the] daily recitation of Psalms, for Athanasius is an essential part of the Christian spiritual practice because it is particularly useful in the care of self. It provides resources that are necessary to reform the self: knowledge of Christ and the soul, powerful models for imitation, a language that reveals the true state of the world and daily exercises that bring the discordant motions of the soul into proper harmony.²⁷

The Psalms for Athanasius, according to Kolbet, reorient the human to the divine. In the midst of his argument, Kolbet explicates ancient Stoic practices, examines Athanasius's understanding of the human predicament, and then offers his understanding of Athanasius's spiritual praxis regarding the Psalms. He argues that, for Athanasius, the Psalms are a "kind of technology" that is internalized and re-written on the Christian's own being.²⁸ The Psalms aid the Christian in reforming himself into what God intended him or her to be.

Though his analysis is fascinating, when read in conjunction with *Marcellinus* itself, the absence of any reference to the Holy Spirit in Kolbet's article is striking. Athanasius explicitly and repeatedly states that the vivifying and unifying power in the Psalms is the Holy Spirit. To argue that Athanasius appropriates a philosophic practice in which the Psalter in and of itself is the mechanism that restores the self, downplays the pneumatological framework and salvific principle undergirding the Psalter's pragmatic application. In short, Kolbet's thesis that Athanasius adopts a philosophic practice and applies it to the Psalter could be bolstered by dealing with Athanasius's understanding of

²⁶ For Athanasius' philosophical framework see E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius: Synthesis or Antithesis* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974).

²⁷ Paul R. Kolbet, "Athanasius, the Psalms, and the Reformation of the Self," *Harvard Theological Review*, vol 99 no 1, (9 June, 2006), 101.

²⁸ Kolbet, "Athanasius and the Psalms," 98.

Scripture as a whole, and the Holy Spirit's affect when one reads and uses the Scripture, particularly the Psalter.

Asceticism, for Athanasius, is not an end in and of itself, but a means by which a human being participates in the life of God.²⁹ Inculcating human participation in the divine life is the economic role of the Holy Spirit, and is carried out by use of the Bible and particularly the Psalms. Any discussion of asceticism or philosophic practice that divorces Athanasius's understanding of the Scriptures from his doctrine of the Holy Spirit misses a key feature of Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus*. Again, for Athanasius, the Scriptures reflect the being of God that inspired them and carries out the salvific role of the Holy Spirit who was the divine agent of inspiration.

Though the majority of *Marcellinus* is taken up with how one can appropriate each Psalm into one's prayer life, this epistle offers insight into Athanasius's "biblical mindset." The language Athanasius uses in his depiction of Scripture reflects aspects of his doctrine of God, and the function of Scripture; particularly the book of the Psalms mirrors his understanding of the economic role of the Holy Spirit. Once again, for Athanasius, the Scriptures, because they are inspired by the Holy Spirit, exhibit divine qualities and carry out the salvific role of the Holy Spirit.

²⁹ Alwyn Petersen helpfully points out that, for Athanasius 'the body was found to be sacramental, if not a sacrament in itself.' Thus the body functions as a means that mediates the presence of or is joined to Christ. *Athanasius and the Human Body* (Bristol: The Bristol Press, 1990), 3.

II. Athanasius and the Divinely Inspired Scriptures

1. Introduction: Piecing Together Athanasius's Understanding of Inspiration

To understand Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture, we must first examine Scripture's inspiration, since implications of inspiration will inform much of this study. The notion of inspiration opens the way for questions illuminating doctrine of Scripture. For instance, what are the theological and ascetical implications concerning a book inspired by God? How does God relate to humanity through Scripture? Does God's being affect the text he inspires and if so, how?

Robert C. Hill notes the "Fathers generally are convinced of the *fact* of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures... They are less forthcoming, however, on the *manner* of inspiration, whether it is that they are in ignorance of this or merely find no occasion appropriate for making it explicit."³⁰ *Marcellinus* begins with an affirmation of Scripture's inspiration and is filled with statements about the nature of Scripture and its relationship to God, particularly God the Spirit. When these statements are pieced together they indicate that Athanasius's trinitarian doctrine and pneumatology affect his doctrine of Scripture. This chapter will therefore offer an attempt towards a construction of certain aspects of Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture. I will begin by piecing together his understanding of divine inspiration, then moving to examine aspects of his pneumatology, and finish by exploring his understanding of how the transcendent God maintains his relation to creation in order to show 1) how Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture is bound to his doctrine of God. Once Athanasius's understanding of the nature of Scripture is elucidated, his method of Biblical interpretation can be fairly evaluated in accordance with his doctrine of Scripture. 2) The use of the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms, is not merely a philosophical practice that Athanasius adopts wholesale, but one means by which the Holy Spirit inculcates participatory salvation in the life of the Christian. This will in turn help us in the following chapters to understand his relationship with creedal language and how this doctrine situates him within the Alexandrian tradition.

2. The Act of Inspiration and the Divinely Inspired Human

Athanasius holds that the entirety of Scripture is inspired by God and penned by a divinely inspired human. At the outset of the epistle, Athanasius quotes the "old man" who is "master of the Psalter." This "old man" in turn quotes 2 Timothy 3:16, stating "*All*

³⁰ Robert C. Hill, "Psalm 45: a locus classicus for Patristic Thinking on Biblical Inspiration," *Studia Patristica*, vol 25 (Leuven: Peters Press, 1993), pp 95-100, 95.

Scripture of ours my son—both ancient and new—is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, as it is written.”³¹ The Greek phrasing of Athanasius is similar to 2 Tim, though not identical. The differences occur due to Athanasius’s interjections of the familial relation between “the old Master”³² and Athanasius, the emphasis that the text is ours (ἡμᾶς), the negation of whether or not the writings are old (παλαιά) or new (καινή), and Athanasius only lists teaching (διδασκαλίαν) as Scripture’s function.³³ The important words, however πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστός και ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν appear identically in Athanasius aside from the insertion of μὲν following πᾶσα.³⁴

Athanasius indicates that the words of Scripture were somehow spoken into the human author by the Spirit, but he does not offer here a complete account of the act of inspiration. At the end of the letter, during a prohibition against “amplifying the Psalms,” Athanasius states:

Rather let him recite and chant, without artifice, the things written just as they were spoken, in order for the holy men who supplied these, recognizing that which is their own, to join you in your prayer, or, rather, so that even the Spirit who speaks in the saints (μαῖλλον δὲ ἵνα και τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ λαλήσαν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίος), seeing words inspired by him in them (θεωροῦν τοὺς παρ’ αὐτοῦ λόγος ἐνηχηθέντας ἐχείτοις), might render assistance to us.³⁵

As the reader chants he is spiritually joined to the author, who supplied the words, and the Spirit who “speaks in the saints.” Part of Athanasius’s doctrine of inspiration is offered here, but needs to be elucidated. A certain ambiguity—the precise relationship between the Spirit who inspires and the author who writes—in Athanasius’s statement lies in the idea that the Holy Spirit somehow speaks in or by the saints (λαλήσαν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίος).

Athanasius makes a similar statement in his concluding remarks of *DI*: “For the Scriptures were spoken and written by God through men versed in theology (ἐκεῖναι μὲν γὰρ

³¹ I have followed the emphasis of Robert C. Gregg in his translation found in the volume *Athanasius: Life of Anthony and Letter to Marcellinus* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1980). I am working from the Greek text found in *PG* vol 27, 11-46 as no critical Greek edition of the letter exists. See *PG* 27:11.

³² *Ad Marc* 11 [Gregg, 101] *PG* 27:12.

³³ The reason for the negation of the other purposes is not because Athanasius believes Scripture’s only function is teaching: rather in the immediate context of the letter, he is going to contrast how the Psalms and the rest of the Old Testament “teach” a Christian.

³⁴ He uses the term once again θεόπνευστός from 2 Timothy in *Ad Marc* 30 when referring to scripture. Elsewhere, as will be shown, he opts for ἐνηχηθέντας.

³⁵ *Ad Marc* 31, [Gregg, 127], *PG* vol 27:44.

διὰ θεολόγων ἀνδρῶν παρὰ Θεοῦ ἐλαλήθησαν καὶ ἐγράφησαν).”³⁶ This quotation hardly clears up the ambiguity of the situation, but the basic notion is that the truths of Scripture are inspired by God who gives them to the saints (biblical authors). The saints in turn write the divinely inspired words down. How much of the personality of the individual author is asserted on the text, or to what extent he is controlled by the Holy Spirit is not stated expressly in these instances.

Though the process by which a human interacts with God to produce the biblical text is unclear in such statements, the quality of the person the Holy Spirit chooses, for Athanasius, is in no way vague. For Athanasius, the biblical authors are not sinful vessels graced by God for the purpose of writing the holy words of Scripture. The Holy Spirit did not provide his divinely-inspired words by the care of individuals whom were morally inferior or even equal to others, lest a biblical reader find an excuse to change the biblical text. Athanasius seems concerned that the reader might claim he is just as or more holy than the biblical author and therefore equally or even more qualified to express divinely inspired ideas. Athanasius explains that the Spirit inspired persons that Christians could view as holy models for imitation. In continuing the prohibition given above, Athanasius states, “for as much better as the life of the saints is than that of other people, by so much also are their expression superior to those we construct and, if one were to speak the truth, more powerful as well.”³⁷

The inspiration of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is not the only criteria that Athanasius gives for the primacy and authority of the biblical text. The logic runs as follows: the biblical authors lived superiorly holy lives; therefore their words in expressing and modeling a holy life are also superior. At the close of the letter Athanasius exhorts Marcellinus to meditate on the Psalter and progress in asceticism stating:

You too practicing these things and reciting the Psalms intelligently in this way, are able to comprehend the meaning in each, being guided by the Spirit. And the kind of life the holy, God-bearing men possessed who spoke these things—this life you shall imitate.³⁸

³⁶ *DI* 56, [Thompson, 272-3].

³⁷ *Ad Marc* 31 [Gregg, 127]. “Ὁσῶ γὰρ τῶν ἁγίων ὁ βίος βελτίων τῶν ἄλλων ἐστὶ, τοσοῦτῳ καὶ τὰ παρ’ αὐτῶν ῥήματα τῶν παρ’ ἡμῶν συντιθεμένων βελτίονα καὶ ἰσχυρότερα ἂν τις εἶποι δικαίως,” (*PG* 27:44).

³⁸ *Ad Marc* 33 [Gregg, 129]. The “Spirit-bearing men who spoke these things” is a reference to the biblical authors he quotes in this passage. “Ταῦτα καὶ σὺ μελετῶν, καὶ συνετῶς ἐντυγχάνων· οὕτως τοῖς ψαλμοῖς, τὸν μὲν ἐν ἐκάστῳ νοῦν ὀδηγούμενος ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος καταλαβεῖν δυνήσῃ.

The divinely inspired authorship seems to be a natural overflow of the Spirit already at work in the author. The biblical author “who spoke these things” is referred to as “God-bearing (θεοφορούμενοι).” Such individuals are distinct in manner of life, and are to be imitated. It seems then that the biblical authors were so holy that they bore the Holy Spirit in such a way that when they spoke, the Holy Spirit spoke through them (λαλήσαν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις). It is almost as if two voices proclaim the same message from one mouth. Scripture then, is the natural result of life so holy that it bears God. The human author enjoys the privilege of authoring Scripture due to his or her holiness. The nature of inspiration allows Athanasius to attribute ownership to both the inspired and inspirer, as we have seen and we will see again.³⁹

The previous quote from *DI*, “For the Scriptures were spoken and written by God through men versed in theology (ἐκεῖναι μὲν γὰρ διὰ θεολόγων ἀνδρῶν παρὰ Θεοῦ ἐλαλήθησαν καὶ ἐγράφησαν),”⁴⁰ also expresses a divine appropriation of authors possessing an advanced theological knowledge. Superior theological knowledge is likely due to their holy lives, since Athanasius links a superior holy manner of life to superior expression, as we have just seen.⁴¹ If the biblical authors were totally passive in the divinely inspired process, such a notion would be inconsequential. God could simply place theologically incomprehensible truths in the mind of the author. But for Athanasius the human agent involved in the penning of biblical books does not seem to be a totally passive object. Athanasius does not indicate what exactly their part in the inspired process is, but as we shall see he leaves room for the authors of Scripture to claim ownership of these words.

3. The Unity of Divinely Inspired Scripture

Though Athanasius leaves room for the authors of individual biblical books to claim ownership of his divinely inspired words, the individual books comprise a unified whole due to the Holy Spirit’s activity in the process of inspiration. Athanasius offers a mixed metaphor of a garden and music stating that “the Book of the Psalms is like a garden containing things of all these kinds [the promises and stories found throughout the rest of the Old

Τοιοῦτον δὲ καὶ σὺ ζηλώσεις βίον, οἷον ἔσχον οἱ ταῦτα θεοφορούμενοι λαλήσαντες ἄνδρες ἅγιοι,” (*PG* 27:45-6).

³⁹See pgs 11, 45-6.

⁴⁰*DI* 56 [Thompson, 272-3].

⁴¹“...as much better as the life of the saints is that that of other people, by so much also are their expression superior to those we construct and, if one were to speak the truth, more powerful as well.” *Ad Marc* 31,[Gregg, 127]. *PG* 27:44. See footnote 38 for extended Greek quote.

Testament], and sets them to music, but also exhibits things of its own that it gives in song along with them.”⁴² He goes on to cite references of the creation account, the Exodus, the Law, and the Prophets, and then shows how each of the biblical genres also contain the chief characteristic of the Psalms, “[for] Moses writes a hymn, and Isaiah is hymning, and Habakkuk prays with a hymn.”⁴³

Athanasius posits a dual-telic nature for each part of Scripture. “Each sacred book supplies and announces its own promise. (Εκάστη μὲν γὰρ βίβλος τὸ ἴδιον ἐπάγγελμα διακονεῖ καὶ ἀπαγγέλλει).”⁴⁴ Each major biblical section has its own particular end aimed at addressing a particular instance, or relates a particular narrative, but the ultimate end of each section is the same, namely the service to God the Word. Athanasius states:

Since it is one and the same Spirit, from whom are all distinctions, and it is indivisible by nature—because of this surely the whole is in each, and as determined by service the revelations and the distinctions of the Spirit pertain to all and to each severally. Furthermore, according to the reserved need, each frequently, when the Spirit takes over, serves the Word.⁴⁵

To the reader, each genre of Scripture appears to have its own purpose and gift. However, since the Holy Spirit gave each its distinction, each genre receives every other gift. Moreover, each part of the Bible testifies to, and therefore “serves the Word.” Here we begin to see the doctrine of God and particularly the economic role of the Holy Spirit come to the fore in Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture. A full account of this will be offered later. At this point, it suffices to say that since the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, the Scriptures themselves are indivisible due to his unifying activity. The Spirit ensures each part of Scripture shares the distinctions of the other parts of Scripture, and serves the common function of graciously serving the Word. Furthermore this language resembles his

⁴² *Ad Marc* 3 [Gregg, 102]. “Ἡ δὲ γε βίβλος τῶν Ψαλμῶν, ὡς παράδεισος τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ φέρουσα μελωδεῖ, καὶ τὰ ἴδα δὲ πάλιν μετ’ αὐτῶν ψάλλουσα δείκνυσι,” (*PG* 27:12.).

⁴³ *Ibid.* 9 [Gregg, 106]. *PG* 27:20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 2 [Gregg, 101]. (*PG* vol 27:12). See discussion on page 39.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 9 [Gregg, 107]. “ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ ἐν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμα ἐστίν, οὐπὲρ καὶ πᾶσαι διαίρεσεις εἰσίν, αὐτὸ δὲ ἀδιαίρετόν ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν· διὰ τοῦτο τὸ ὅλον μὲν ἐστίν ἐκάστῳ κατὰ δὲ τὴν διακονίαν αἱ φανερώσεις καὶ αἱ διαίρεσεις τοῦ Πνεύματος ἕκαστοις γίνονται· καὶ λοιπὸν κατὰ τὴν ἀποκειμένην χρείαν πολλάκις ἕκαστος, ὑποσχοῦντος τοῦ Πνεύματος, διακονεῖ τὸν λόγον,” (*PG* 27:20). This translation is offered as an appendix to *On the Incarnation*, though inferior to Gregg’s in many instances, offers a somewhat more clear translation, “You see, then, that the grace of the one Spirit is common to every writer and all the books of Scripture, and differs in its expression only as need requires and the Spirit demands.” (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1982), 103.

trinitarian doctrine. We shall see for Athanasius, that though creation perceives different divine persons acting in the economy, the other two are always present. In *Marcellinus* 10, Athanasius states, “Let there be such a common grace of the Spirit in all, and let it be found existing in each one, the same grace among all, whenever the need demands and the Spirit desires [wills].”⁴⁶ Thus, the individual books of the Bible written by inspired individuals for particular purposes are common in grace and ultimate function.

The implications of this idea for Athanasius’s hermeneutics are intriguing. As stated in the introductory chapter, many have implicitly or explicitly criticized Athanasius for lack of restrictive exegetical criteria. Such a notion seems as if it would be lost on Athanasius. For Athanasius, because Scripture is indivisible, no particular Scripture stands in isolation from any other Scripture. So when he pieces together seemingly unrelated texts, he does so in a manner that is consistent with his doctrine of Scripture. Furthermore, if each genre of Scripture “serves the Word” by testifying to the Incarnation, the fact that he can find prophecies concerning it in odd places should not be surprising.

In summation, Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and exists because of divine activity. This divine activity, however, does not appear to overrun the human author during its composition. Athanasius locates some type of authority in biblical expressions because their authors are holy and worthy of imitation. He also posits that God made use of minds that were versed in theology. All of this indicates that God did not overwhelm the biblical authors and override their humanity; rather he used the human traits of the authors to pen divinely inspired words that would inculcate pursuit of a holy life.

As hinted at above, when Athanasius refers to Scripture, he applies divine qualities to it. We now turn to his understanding of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit so that his doctrine of Scripture, which is reflective of his doctrine of God, can be expounded.

4. The Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and Scripture

i. Consistent Trinitarian Thought

Athanasius’s theological argumentation for the divinity of the Spirit is closely related to if not precisely the same as his arguments for the divinity of the Son. The *Tropici*, against

⁴⁶ *Ad Marc* 9[Gregg,107]. Ἐκαστῷ γινομένη εὐρισκέσθω, καὶ παρὰ πᾶσιν ἢ αὐτῇ, ὡς ἐὰν ἡ χρεία ἀπαιτῇ, καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα βούληται’. (*PG* 27:20). The translation at offered as an appendix to *On the Incarnation*, though inferior to Greggs in many instances, offers a somewhat more clear translation, “You see, then, that the grace of the one Spirit is common to every writer and all the books of Scripture, and differs in its expression only as need requires and the Spirit demands.” (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, 1982), 103.

whom Athanasius argues the *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, affirmed the divinity of the Word, yet not the divinity of the Spirit. Athanasius therefore attempts to prove the divinity of the Spirit by the Spirit's relation to the Word in the same way he argues for the Word's divinity in relation to the Father against the "Arians." In *Ad Serap* 2.1-10, Athanasius offers a summary of his arguments for the divinity of the Word that he used against the Arians in order to establish this relational argument explicitly. Yet his pneumatology and arguments for divinity of the Spirit, which receive their lengthiest treatment in *Ad Serap*, are not merely an addendum forced upon his prior theology for the sake of defeating the *Tropici*.

Already, in his anti-Arian works, Athanasius has argued his principle points regarding the Holy Spirit: the equality of the Spirit with the Son, 1.50; the Spirit is the gift of God, and His mission from the Son proves the Son's Godhead, 2.18.⁴⁷ The trinitarian framework in regard to salvation is also present in the anti-Arian writings. For instance, Athanasius states in 1.46 "...whereas he has made it clear that all things participate in him, what should one possibly think but that he is other than things that come to be, and is rather the One True Word, Radiance, and Wisdom of the Father, of which all things that come to be participate and are sanctified, in the Spirit?" Later, in 2.41 he states,

[j]ust as the things that the Father does, he does through the Son and the Lord himself says, "the things that I see my Father doing, these things I also do" (Jn 5:19), so also when baptism is given, the one whom the Father baptizes the Son also baptizes, and the one whom the Son baptizes is perfected in the Holy Spirit.⁴⁸

Thus Theodore C. Campbell notes that the anti-Arian works "indicate incipient lines of approach to the doctrine of the Spirit before the controversy [of the *Tropici*] focuses direct attention on the problem."⁴⁹ The trinitarian language used here is similar if not precisely the same as the language used in *Ad Serap* authored almost twenty years later.⁵⁰

Whereas his dealings with the Arians allowed for a brief and somewhat nascent reflection on the Holy Spirit, his dealings with the *Tropici* afforded Athanasius the

⁴⁷See C.R.B. Shapland's introduction in *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth Press, 1951), 35.

⁴⁸ *Orations Against the Arians, in Athanasius translation*, intro, and notes by Khaled Anatolios (London: Routledge, 2004), 103, 136.

⁴⁹ "The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Athanasius" *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol 27 no 4 (November, 1974), 410.

⁵⁰ *CA* 1-2 were written during Athanasius's first exile, 339-40 and *Ad Serap* dates sometime around 357-9. See Anatolios, *Athanasius*, 87, and DelCogliano, *Works of the Spirit*, 25.

opportunity to engage in deeper theological and exegetical reflection. A further and exhaustive reflection on Athanasius's arguments for the divinity of the Spirit is unnecessary for this particular task; rather I aim to deal with his basic theological lines regarding the Holy Spirit in relation to the Trinity and doctrine of God, as well as the Holy Spirit's role in the economy in order to show how Athanasius's understanding of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit relates to his doctrine of Scripture expressed in the *Marcellinus*. The point of this discussion is to demonstrate that Athanasius already had a trinitarian notion of God and affirmed the full divinity of the Spirit prior to *Ad Serap*. Therefore, in his anti-Arian writings, Athanasius already had a strong conception of the triunity of the Godhead and a strong notion of the Spirit's role in the economy, both of which influence his doctrine and in turn his use of Scripture. It is plausible, therefore, that a nascent doctrine of Scripture was his basis for the interpretive method used against the "Arians."

ii. Triunity, Divine Activity, and Scripture

As we progress through *Ad Serap* 1 we will stop to identify language resembling that which Athanasius uses to describe Scripture, much of which will be directed toward later discussions. First, a self-conscious and unyielding monotheism undergirds Athanasius's understanding of the Trinity. For Athanasius, to name one person in the Trinity is to acknowledge the presence of the other two. In doing so, he maintains the oneness of the Godhead. He states,

For the holy and blessed Trinity is indivisible and united in itself. (Ἡ γὰρ ἅγια καὶ μακαρία Τριάς, αἰρετος καὶ ἠνωμένη πρὸς ἑαυτὴν ἐστὶ) 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. For there is one grace from the Father which is perfected through the Son in the Holy Spirit (Μία γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς χάρις δι' Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ πληρουμένη).⁵¹

According to Athanasius, the individual persons of the triune Godhead never act in isolation from the other persons. Regardless of what creation may perceive in the economic activity of God, all three persons of the Godhead are fully present in the actions of one of the particular persons.

This is similar to the language earlier discussed from *Marcellinus*. The distinctions afforded to each genre of Scripture by the Spirit relate the specific promise of that genre to the reader. But since the same Spirit inspires each genre, every distinction which seems particular to one actually exists in each genre. Athanasius indicates that Moses interrupts his

⁵¹ *Ad Serap* 1.14.6 [DelCogliano, 75]. PG 26:565.

legislation to prophecy or sing. Likewise, the Prophets issue commands and sometimes recount history. The Psalter appropriates all these distinctions and chants them. The same amount of grace exists in each regardless of its particular primary use.⁵² The Holy Spirit's activity ensures the Bible resembles the Trinity with which he is one. Additionally, as we shall see as we continue this discussion, the Bible carries out the role of the Holy Spirit.

Athanasius continues in *Marcellinus* stating, "Let there be such common grace of the Spirit in all, and let it be found existing in each one, the same grace among all, whenever the need demands and the Spirit desires."⁵³ If we interpret this in light of the immediately previous quote from *Ad Serap* what we discover is that this grace from the Spirit is a triune grace. This grace comes from the Father and is perfected through the Son in the Holy Spirit. The grace that allows the Bible to interrelate to itself in a similar manner to the Trinity owes its inspiration to the triune giver of that grace.

Furthermore, this notion elucidates certain exegetical tendencies for Athanasius. If Scripture reflects the being of the Triune God in such a way that no part of Scripture stands in isolation of another part, the perceived lack of an exegetical framework is incorrect. Moreover, if each genre of Scripture is employed by the Spirit to serve the Word, one should be less surprised when he finds prophecies about Christ in unexpected Scriptures.

Continuing with *Ad Serap*, Athanasius moves on to establish the divinity of the Holy Spirit by asserting that nothing foreign or created is mixed with the Godhead, by appealing to the actions of the Holy Spirit within the economy. God is creator and the description of the Holy Spirit over the waters in Genesis 1 indicates the Spirit participates in the act of creation. Thus Athanasius states that the Godhead "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 (ὁμοία δὲ ἑαυτῇ καὶ ἀδιαίρετός ἐστι τῇ φύσει, καὶ μία ταύτης ἢ ἐνέργεια). The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit."⁵⁴ Thus, as we have just seen, whenever the Holy Spirit uses Scripture, the Father is working through the Son in the Spirit. Though humanity only perceives the Spirit, both the Father and the Son are present and working as well.

After establishing the relational argument for the divinity of the Spirit, Athanasius builds his pneumatology along a second line that is the same as his Christological

⁵² *Ad Marc* 9 [Gregg, 107]. PG 27:20.

⁵³ *Ad Marc* 10 [Gregg, 107]. See footnote 46 for extended Greek quote.

⁵⁴ *Ad Serap* 1,28.2 [DelCogliano, 97]. PG 26:596.

arguments, namely, as Campbell states, “the Spirit performs certain functions and exhibits certain characteristics that can only be ascribed to God.”⁵⁵ Along with creation he lists the various aspects of sanctification, which is achieved through participation in God’s life. The Holy Spirit is the divine agent that facilitates a creature’s participation in divinity, and therefore must be divine.⁵⁶ Interestingly, it is in the context of his discussion of the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctification that Athanasius deploys the Nicene “unscriptural watchword”⁵⁷ ὁμοούσιος. An agent who acts in such a divine manner must be of the same being as the divine Word.⁵⁸

We shall see in the following chapter, Athanasius makes a very strong statement indicating “the Lord is in the phrases of Scripture.”⁵⁹ He makes this claim because, as we shall see, the text produces power proper to divinity. Simply reading it can heal the sick and cast out demons. Since only God has the power to execute these tasks, God has to be immediately present to the text somehow.⁶⁰ Thus his argumenation for the Spirit’s divinity and the unique status of Scripture as a means of gracious divine condescension are similar if not identical.

Returning to the trinitarian discussion, oneness in being and unity in operation entails unity in mission. As has been implied, Athanasius’s assumptions about the ontological oneness of the Trinity are based upon the Trinity’s unity in economic activity. Athanasius likens the Godhead’s activity within the economy to a river from which humanity is nourished:

And again, the Father is the Fountain and the Son is called River, and so we are said to drink of the Spirit. For it is written: we were all made to drink of the one Spirit [1 Cor 12.13]. But when we drink of the Spirit, we drink of Christ. For they drank of the Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ [1 Cor 10.4].⁶¹

⁵⁵ Campbell, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” 412.

⁵⁶ *PG* 26:581-588.

⁵⁷ Gwynn, *Athanasius*, 86.

⁵⁸ Athanasius applies this term to the Holy Spirit only once in the entirety of the work. “μᾶλλον δὲ τοῦ Λόγου ἑνὸς ὄντος ἴδιον καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος ἴδιον καὶ ὁμοούσιόν ἐστι,” *Ad Serap* 1.27.3 (*PG* 26:593).

⁵⁹ *Ad Marc* 33.

⁶⁰ See discussion on page 80.

⁶¹ *Ad Serap* 1.19.4 [DelCogliano, 82]. “Πάλιν τε τοῦ Πατρὸς ὄντος πηγῆς, τοῦ δὲ Υἱοῦ παταμοῦ λεγομένου, πίνειν λεγόμεθα τὸ Πνεῦμα· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι “Ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐν Πνεύμα ἐποτίσθημεν,” (*PG* 26:574-6).

To drink of the Spirit, is to drink of the spiritual water provided by Christ, and therefore receive spiritual nourishment from the divinity of the Father. The Holy Spirit, therefore, actualizes the activity of the triune God in the life of the Christian. All spiritual goodness and grace originates from the Father who gives it to the Son, who in turn makes it accessible to the Christian through the agency of the Holy Spirit. As we shall see, this “spiritual water” is afforded in the Scriptures, and both participation and fontal language are used to describe Scripture.⁶²

We have already noted that, for Athanasius, there is one grace from the Father, which is perfected through the Son in the Holy Spirit. Each person of the Trinity shares in the dispersal of this grace; “[the] gifts which the Spirit distributes to each are bestowed by the Father through the Word. For all the Father has is the Son’s. Thus what is given by the Son in the Spirit is the gift of the Father.”⁶³ The Holy Spirit gives gifts from the Son that belong to the Father. When Holy Spirit gives the divine gifts, the Son and the Father are present along with him. The gift of divinity, like the divinity that gives it, is one. This grace is evidenced in Scripture, as we have seen.⁶⁴ Once again, the grace evident in Scripture is a trinitarian grace.

Since each person of the Trinity is ontologically one, when Athanasius ascribes attributes like immutable (ἀτρεπτον) and unchangeable (ἀναλλοιώτόν) to the Holy Spirit it is not surprising.⁶⁵ Such attributes, according to Athanasius are proper to the being of God and are therefore proper to the Holy Spirit. Athanasius would ascribe any description of the being of God as proper to the Holy Spirit. From *CG/DI*, Athanasius could have appropriated attributes and terms such as “beyond all being and human thought;”⁶⁶ “incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial;”⁶⁷ “whole and not separate parts; he is not constituted of different elements but is himself the creator of the composition of the universe;”⁶⁸ “invisible

⁶² See discussion on page 80.

⁶³ *Ad Serap* 1.30.4 [DelCogliano, 100], “Ἄ γὰρ τὸ Πνεῦμα ἐχάστω διαιρεῖ, τοῦτα παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς, διὰ τοῦ Λόγου χορηγεῖται. Πάντα γὰρ τὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς, τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐστὶ· διὸ καὶ τὰ παρὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι διδόμενα τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐστὶ χαρίσματα,” (*PG* 26:600).

⁶⁴ See discussion on pg. 19.

⁶⁵ *Ad Serap* 1.26.1 [DelCogliano, 93]. *PG* 26:589.

⁶⁶ “ὁ ὑπερέκεινα πάσης οὐσίας καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης ἐπινοίας ὑπάρχων,” *CG* 2, [Thompson 6-7].

⁶⁷ “ὁ μὲν γὰρ Θεὸς ἀσώματος ἐστὶ καὶ ἀφθαρτος καὶ ἀθάνατος,” *Ibid.*, 22, 60-61. Athanasius uses the term ἀσώματος several other times throughout the dual-work. See, for instance *CG* 28 and *DI* 7 and 10. He also relists incorruptible and immaterial in *DI* 3 though opting for ἄυλος.

⁶⁸ “ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς ὅλον ἐστὶ καὶ οὐ μέρη, καὶ οὐκ ἐκ διαφορῶν συνέστηκεν, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸς τῆς

and untouchable;”⁶⁹ “not composite but one;”⁷⁰ “omnipotent and perfectly holy;”⁷¹ “the source of goodness;”⁷², and “has dominion over all”⁷³, and from his anti-Arian writings he might posit that the Holy Spirit is “unchangeable;”⁷⁴ perfect;”⁷⁵ “immortal;”⁷⁶ and “unalterable”⁷⁷. Just as every attribute that is proper to the Father and the Son is proper to the Spirit, whom we perceive to have different roles, the Holy Spirit, ensures that each and every genre of Scripture contains every distinction proper to the other genres. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit ensures a common mission, i.e. service to the Word.

As we shall see in the next section, God remains present to creation in a way that one can perceive aspects of his being in creation. The Holy Spirit, to whom all divine attributes and work is proper, is present in the biblical authors, whom he used to author divinely inspired words. He remains present to his work. Certain aspects of the the Spirit’s being, therefore, are perceivable in the text, and the work of Spirit is carried out through text. Scripture, therefore, is used as a means by which one has immediate access to God.

5. God and Creation

i. Divine Presence to Creation

For Athanasius, God is immediately available to his creation.⁷⁸ This informs both his cosmology and his soteriology as evidenced in *CG/DI*.⁷⁹ Athanasius argues that the

πάντων συστάσεώς ἐστι ποιητής.” *CG* 28 [Thompson, 76-77].

⁶⁹ “ἀόρατος, και ἄψαυστος,” *Ibid.* 29 [78-79].

⁷⁰ “ὄν σύνθετος ἀλλ’ εἷς,” *Ibid.* 41 [112-3].

⁷¹ “παντοδύναμος καὶ παντέλειος ἅγιος,” *Ibid.* 42 [114-5].

⁷² ‘δὲ τηγὴ τῆς ἀγαθότητος ὑπάρχει’, *DI* 3 [140-1].

⁷³ “Ὁ Θεός, ὁ πάντων ἔχων τὸ κράτος,” *DI* 11, [158-9]. This list is by no means exhaustive of the attributes listed in the dual-apology.

⁷⁴ ἀναλλοίωτος, *PG* 26:85. Once again, *PG* was the only Greek text available to me. Anatolios, Athanasius, 92.

⁷⁵ τελειος, *PG* 26:92 [Anatolios, 95].

⁷⁶ ἀθανάτω, *PG* 26:112 [Anatolios, 105].

⁷⁷ ἀτρέπτου, *PG* 26:117 [Anatolios, 108].

⁷⁸ For more on how God’s relationship to creation informs his theology see Georges Florovsky, *Creation and Redemption*. vol II of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing Company, 1976), and *Aspects of Church History*, vol IV (1975). Alwyn Pettersen, “A Good Being Would Envy None Life: Athanasius on the Goodness of God,” *Theology Today*. vol 55 no 1 (Apr 1998) pp 59-68, Carolyn Schneider, “The Intimate Connection Between Christ and Christians in Athanasius,” *Scottish Journal of Theology*. vol 59 no 1 (February 2006), pp 1-12.

⁷⁹ See Anatolios, *Coherence*, 47-67, and Eginhard Meijering, “Athanasius on God as Creator

goodness and love of God, though he is incomprehensible and above all created being, ensured that God “so ordered creation through his Word that although invisible by nature, yet he might be known to men from his works.”⁸⁰ He continues:

Similarly, from the order of the cosmos we must also think of its maker and demiurge God, even if he cannot be seen with the eyes of the body. For God did not misuse his invisible nature...and leave himself completely unknowable to men. But as I said above, he so ordered creation that although he cannot be seen by nature, yet he can be known from his works.⁸¹

Here, Athanasius indicates that God’s existence is knowable through contemplation of creation. Anatolios notes that “the primary rationale for the cosmos, according to Athanasius, is to communicate knowledge of God to humanity, rendering the invisible God knowable, at least in some measure. The universe is most deeply understood as the “work” which reveals God’s nature.”⁸²

Athanasius then goes on to argue that well-ordered creation proves the existence of the Word of God stating “[but] if it was created with reason, wisdom, and understanding and has been arranged with complete order, then he who governs and ordered it can be none other than the Word of God.”⁸³ Athanasius therefore moves from knowledge of God’s existence, to perception of God’s presence through the Word. Athanasius continues his explanation arguing that the providence of and continued existence of creation proves the Word’s continued relation to it. The Word illuminates the sun, which in turn gives light to the world (τούτω φωτιζόμενος ἥλιος τὴν οἰκουμένην καταναγάζει, καὶ σελήνη μεμετρημένον ἔχει τὸ φῶς), suspends water in the clouds, causes rain, confines the sea, all of which

and Creator,” *Church History and Religious Culture*, Vol 90. No. 2-3 (2010), pp 175-197, Adam G. Cooper, “The Gift of Receptivity: St Athanasius on the Security of Salvation,” *Phronema*, vol 28 no 2 (2013), pp 1-20. This theological position would also comprise part of his polemic against the “Arians” see Paul Gavriluk, “Creation in Early Christian Polemical Literature: Irenaeus Against the Gnostics and Athanasius Against the Arians,” *Modern Theology*, vol. 29 no. 2 (2013), pp 22-32.

⁸⁰ CG 35, [Thompson, 94-5]. “τούτου ἕνεκεν τὴν κτίσιν οὕτω διεκόσμησε τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Λόγῳ ὁ Θεός, ἵν, ἐπειδὴ τὴν φύσιν ἐστὶν ἀόρατος, κἂν ἐκ τῶν ἔργων γινώσκεσθαι δυνθῆ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.”

⁸¹ Ibid., [Thompson, 96-7]. “οὕτω δεῖ νοεῖν ἐκ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου τάξεως τὸν τούτου ποιητὴν καὶ δημιουργὸν Θεόν, κἂν τοῖς τοῦ σώματος ὀφθαλμοῖς μὴ θεωρῆται. οὐ γὰρ κετεχρήσατο τῆ ἀοράτῳ φύσει αὐτοῦ ὁ Θεός· μή τις τοῦτο προφασίζέσθω· καὶ παντελῶς ἑαυτὸν ἄγνωστον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀφῆκεν· ἀλλ’ ὡς προεῖπον, οὕτω διεκόσμησε τὴν κτίσιν, ὥστε καὶ μὴ ὀρώμενον αὐτὸν τῆ φύσει, ὁμως ἐκ τῶν ἔργων γινώσκεσθαι.”

⁸² Anatolios, *Coherence*, 48.

⁸³ CG 40, [Thompson, 110-1]. “εἰ δὲ λόγῳ καὶ σοφίᾳ καὶ ἐπιστήμῃ συνέστηκε, καὶ παντὶ κόσμῳ διακεκόσμηται, ἀνάγκη τὸν ἐπικείμενον καὶ διακοσμήσαντα τοῦτον οὐκ ἄλλον τινὰ ἢ Λόγον εἶναι τοῦ Θεοῦ.”

ensures the earth “is covered with verdure in all kinds of plants, (τὸ ὕδωρ ἐπὶ νεφελῶν κρεμᾶται, καὶ ὑετοὶ τὴν γῆν ἐπικλύζουσι, καὶ ἡ μὲν θάλαττα περιορίζεται, ἡ δὲ γῆ παντοίοις φυτοῖς κομᾶ καὶ χλοηφορεῖ).”⁸⁴ The verb tense here indicates that such providence is a continued present action since the Word, “[proceeds] from the Father as from a good source, who orders and contains the universe (ὁ ἐκ Πατρὸς οἷα πηγῆς ἀγαθῆς ἀγαθὸς προελθὼν, τὰ πάντα διακοσμεῖ καὶ συνέχει).”⁸⁵ God’s relationship to creation through his Word does not end in the creative act, but continues in his providential governance of his creation. As we have seen if the Word is present, the Father and the Spirit are with him, so even though we only perceive the Word amidst his providential governing, the Father and the Spirit are present.

The providential care described in *CG* is used in *DI* as the reason for the Word’s salvific human sojourn. He states:

For this reason the incorporeal and incorruptible and immaterial Word of God came to our realm; not that he was previously distant, for no part of creation is left deprived of him, but he fills the universe, being in union with his Father. But in his benevolence towards us he condescended to come and be made manifest.⁸⁶

Here Athanasius highlights God’s simultaneous relation to and transcendence from creation. Prior to his incarnate existence, the Word was still present within and filling the world as the Father is present in and fills the world. In his governing task, he condescended himself and existed bodily for the salvation of humanity. In both his cosmological and soteriological schemes, Athanasius perceives God as being transcendent, but immediately available in creation and to humanity. This is particularly evident in his relation through his creative and sustaining Word. Humanity can know God exists, discern his presence, and know something about him because of his presence to creation. This idea of the transcendent God’s presence and governance to humanity becomes particular in the Spirit’s use of Scripture, indicated in the phrase “the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures” (Ἐστὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος).⁸⁷

⁸⁴ *CG* 40 [112-13].

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* 41 [112-3].

⁸⁶ *DI* 8, [Thompson, 150-1]. “Τούτου δὴ ἔνεκεν ὁ ἀσώματος καὶ ἄφθαρτος καὶ ἄνυλος τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγος παραγίνεται εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν χώραν, οὐτι γὰρ μακρὰν ὦν πρότερον. οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ κενὸν ὑπολείπεται τῆς κτίσεως μέρος, πάντα δὲ διὰ πάντων πεπλήρωκεν αὐτὸς συνὼν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Πατρὶ. ἀλλὰ παραγίνεται συγκαταβαίνων τῇ εἰς ἡμᾶς αὐτοῦ φιλανθρωπία καὶ ἐπιφανεία.”

⁸⁷ *Ad Mar* 33 [Gregg, 129]. *PG* 27:45.

The result of the divinely-inspired authorship is a piece of a work that resembles aspects of God's being. As we have seen humanity can discern certain things about God, like he is a well-ordered creator, because of his continued governing presence to his creation. The Spirit's work in the Bible makes certain aspects of God's being perceivable. The Spirit inculcates the Scriptures' cohesion by affording the grace of each distinction of the particular genres to the others. This ensures that though they appear diverse "the whole is in each." Furthermore the Spirit "takes over" and directs each genre of Scripture to "serve the Word." This function originates in the divine person who inspired them, remains present to them, and so displays this particular aspect of God's divine being.⁸⁸ The Scriptures are diverse in genre, but unified by the same trinitarian grace, and common mission.⁸⁹

ii. The Spirit's Work

In addition to the reader being able to perceive particular aspects of the Holy Spirit in Scripture, Scripture is used to carry out the particular work of the particular person of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, whom as we have seen is divine in the fullest possible sense for Athanasius, inspires the Scripture, and remains ever-present to Scripture, so that it fulfills the Holy Spirit's role in the salvation of humanity.

The Holy Spirit actualizes the work of Christ in the lives of Christians. He is the Spirit of sanctification (ἁγιοσύνης) and renewal (ἀνακαινώτεώς).⁹⁰ The Spirit, thus, forms the Christian to a godly life, and this is precisely the function of the Bible and particularly the Psalms. Athanasius draws a distinction between the Psalms and the other books of the Bible indicating that when one reads of the deeds of the kings and the saints, he or she learns the history of God's people, and of the foretelling of Christ in the prophets. All these are declared in the Psalms, and yet the Psalter contains a particular grace. While the lives of the saints, the declaration of prophets, and the instruction of the Law inform a Christian on what he or she ought and ought not do, the Psalms are the means by which the historical realities and lessons of the saints become available to the Christian. He states:

One turns his attention to the histories, on the basis of which he can know the deeds of the kings and the saints. But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things also comprehends and is taught in it the emotions of the soul, and, consequently on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image deriving from the words. Therefore,

⁸⁸ *Ad Marc* 9. See discussion on page 15 and footnote 45 for extended Greek quotation.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ad Serap*, PG 26:581.

through hearing, it teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting. Now there certainly are in other books preventative words that forbid wickedness, but in this book is also prescribed how one must abstain.⁹¹

The Psalms therefore allow a reader to be taught in his soul in a way that is not possible in the other parts of Scripture. These other genres are actualized in the lives of the believer through use of the Psalter. Just as the Holy Spirit actualizes the salvific work of Christ, he actualizes the Scripture, which he inspired, in the life of the Spirit-guided reader by use of Psalms.

The Spirit is also the agent that inculcates humanity's participation in divinity. By use of the temple imagery of 1 Cor 3, Athanasius posits that through the Spirit "all of us are said to be partakers of God (μέταχοι τοῦ Θεοῦ)."⁹² Later he states that the "Holy Spirit is participated in but does not participate (ὡς μευεχτόν ἐστι καὶ οὐ)."⁹³ This idea of participation is carried forth in the Psalms when Athanasius indicates that the words found in the other parts of Scripture which are available in the Psalms become the words of the reader, stating:

In the other books, those who read what the holy ones say, and what they might say concerning certain people, are relating the things that were written about those earlier people. And likewise, those who listen consider themselves to be other than those about whom the passage speaks, so that they only come to the imitation of the deeds that are told to the extent that they marvel at them and desire to emulate them. By contrast, however, he who takes up this book—the Psalter—goes through the prophecies about the Savior, as is customary in the other Scriptures, with admiration and adoration, but the other psalms he recognizes as being his own words. And the one who hears is deeply moved, as though he himself were speaking, and is affected by the words of the songs, as if they were his own songs.⁹⁴

⁹¹ *Ad Marc* 10, [Gregg, 108]. "καὶ ἱστορίαις δὲ προσέχει, ἐξ ὧν γινώσκειν δύναται τὰς τῶν βασιλέων καὶ τὰς τῶν ἁγίων πράξεις. Ἐν δὲ τῇ βιβλῷ τῶν Ψαλμῶν, πρὸς τῷ ταῦτα μανθάνειν τὸν ἀκούοντα, ἔτι καὶ τὰ κινήματα τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐν αὐτῇ κατανοεῖ καὶ διδάσκεται· καὶ λοιπὸν πρὸς ὃ πάσχει καὶ ἐν ᾧ συνέχεται, δύναται πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης ἔχεσθαι τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν λόγων· ὥστε μὴ μόνον ἀκούσαντα παρέρχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πῶς δεῖ λέγοντα καὶ ποιοῦντα θεραπεύειν τὸ τάθος, διδάσκει. Εἰσὶ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις βίβλοις κωλυτικοὶ λόγοι ἀπαγορεύοντες τὰ φαῦλα· ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ τετύπῳται," (PG 27:20).

⁹² *Ad Serap*, 1.24.1, [DelCogliano, 90], PG 26:583.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1.27.1, [DelCogliano, 95], PG 26:593.

⁹⁴ *Ad Marc* 11, [Gregg, 109]. "ὅτι ἐν μὲν ταῖς ἄλλαις βίβλοις ἃ λέγουσιν οἱ ἅγιοι, καὶ περὶ ὧν ἂν λέγωσι, ταῦτα καὶ οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες, περὶ ὧν ἐκεῖνα γέγραπται, ἀπαγγέλλοντές εἰσιν· οἱ τε ἀκούοντες ἄλλους ἑαυτοὺς ἐκείνων ἠγοῦνται, περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος φησὶ, καὶ τὰς ἐπαγγελλομένας δὲ

When one takes up the Bible, he reads others' words and learns from them.⁹⁵ Likewise, he learns about the coming incarnation of the Word. Psalms that are not explicit prophecies concerning the Incarnation afford the reader the opportunity to appropriate to himself divinely inspired words that in other parts of Scripture belong to the biblical authors. The entirety of the divinely inspired words of the Bible is therefore available in the Psalter.

However, the specific grace exclusive to the Psalter does mean that sanctification is only actualized through the Psalter. In the previous quote we see Athanasius make reference to what has been termed “the companionship of travelers” since Christians were those traveling to heaven according to Athanasius’s myth of ascent.⁹⁶ Commenting on a passage from *CA* 3.20, Brakke notes:

Given the unstable character of human behavior, the Christian life required continual ‘formation’ (τυποῦν) of the self through imitation (μίμησις) of an eternally consistent ‘form’ or ‘pattern’ (τύπος). The available patterns included the biblical saints and more recent virtuous Christians, but the ultimate pattern was God and his Word; thus, self-formation through imitation, in that one became as like to God as possible, was the ethical facet of the process that Athanasius called ‘divinization’.⁹⁷

Imitation was one ascetic means by which Athanasius believed that human beings could battle their changeable and unstable nature. First and foremost, Christians are to imitate

πράξεις, ἄχρι τοῦ θαυμάζειν καὶ ζηλοῦν αὐτάς, εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι γίνονται. Ταύτην δὲ βιβλὸν ὁ λαμβάνων τὰς μὲν περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος προφητείας συνήθως ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις Γραφαῖς θαυμάζων καὶ προσκυνῶν διεξέρχεται, τοὺς δὲ ἐτέρους ψαλμοὺς ὡς ἰδίους ὄντας λόγους ἀναγινώσκει” (*PG* 27:21).

⁹⁵ In reference to the words of Scripture belonging to their authors, Athanasius states, “Most words belong to the patriarchs, and were spoken as their own. . . Indeed it is clear that one who reads the books utters them not as his own words, but as the words of the saints and those who are signified by them.” *Ad Marc* 11 [Gregg, 109-10].

⁹⁶ See Brakke, *Asceticism*, 163 also 144 in which Brakke describes humanity’s “ascent” to heaven past weakened demonic powers. See also Jonathan L. Zeicher, *The Role of Death in the Ladder of Divine Ascent and the Greek Ascetic Tradition*, Ebook (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2015, pg 83. See also “Wegenossenschaft: Martin Tetz, ‘Athanasius und die Einheit der Kirche: Zur ökumenischen Bedeutung eines Kirchenvaters,’” *Z. Th. K.* 81 (1984), 196-219, at 203 in which Tetz speaks of the unifying nature of Scripture. See also pg 219. See also his “Zur Biographie des Athanasius von Alexandrien,” *ZKG* 90 (1979), 158-92, at 174-92 in which Tetz explicates Athanasius understanding of imitation and “die besondere Bindung des Athanasius mit seiner Imitatio sanctorum,” 191.

⁹⁷ Brakke, *Asceticism* 167. The quote given from *CA* is “Imitation [μίμησις] of these natural [κατ’ φύσιν] qualities [in God] is particularly protective in the case of human beings, as has been said; for inasmuch as they [God’s qualities] endure and never change while the conduct of human beings is easily changed, it is possible, by looking to what is unchangeable by nature, to flee evil deeds and re-form oneself [ἑαυτὸν ἀνατυποῦν] to better things,” (*PG* 26. 365).

Christ.⁹⁸ Imitation of biblical authors and characters is another means that Athanasius thinks human beings come to participate in God. When Athanasius indicates that when the reader “comes to the imitation (μιμεῖσθαι) of [the biblical author’s] deeds” in the other books of Scripture, he is referring to a particular aspect of his ascetic regimen by which one becomes more like God through the imitation of biblical characters. Therefore, in the other divinely inspired parts of Scripture where words cannot be appropriated as one’s own, the Spirit has still inspired words that aid in salvation.

The Psalter in particular affords the means by which the soul is re-formed and restored. Athanasius informs his reader that the Psalms is the biblical book that instructs the soul by mirroring the soul’s emotions, and instructing the soul how to direct the body in order to abstain from sin. Imitation is the means by which the human being ensures the body continues the salvific road of re-construction and avoidance of corruption, whereas the Psalter speaks to the human soul and teaches it how to properly guide the body to further keep the body from corruption. Thus the soul’s ascent to God is facilitated by imitating the saints in various other parts of the Bible, or by chanting the Psalms as Böhm states:

Wer also in rechter Weise singt, bewerkstelligt die Harmonie der Seele unter der Leitung des Denkens und kann durch die gesungenen Worte der Psalmen einen heilenden Verlauf in der Seele herbeiführen, der darin besteht, dass die Seele die göttlichen Vollkommenheiten Christi nachahmt und so in einen Prozess des Aufstiegs zu Christus bzw...⁹⁹

Spiritual communion through the singing and chanting of the Psalms creates corporate worship as well. Once again, in his prohibition against altering the words of the Psalms, he states:

Rather let him recite and chant, without artifice, the things written just as they were spoken, in order for the holy men who supplied these, recognizing that which is their own, to join you in your prayer (ὡςπερ εἴρηται, ὑπὲρ τοῦ καὶ τοὺς διακονήσαντας ἀνθρώπους, αὐτὰ ἐπιγινώσκοντας τὸ ἑαυτῶν συνεύχεσθαι ἡμῖν), or, rather, so that even the Spirit who speaks in the saints (μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ λαλήσαν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις), seeing words inspired by him in them (θεωποῦν τοὺς αὐτοῦ λόγος ἐνηχηθέντας ἐκείνοις), might render assistance to us.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Pettersen discusses what this looks like corporately, *Athanasius and Body*, 70-2. See also Brakke, *Asceticism*, 166-70.

⁹⁹ Böhm, *Handbuch*, 274.

¹⁰⁰ *Ad Marc* 31, [Gregg, 127]. PG 27:44.

The Psalter therefore offers a means of corporate participation in the Spirit. When one chants the words of the Psalter, the saints who wrote the words are mystically joined to the chanter in prayer, who is further aided by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who unites the biblical authors unites Christians to the biblical authors, so that the saints, throughout time, are united in prayer and aided by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰¹

For Athanasius, the Psalms, and all of Scripture to a certain extent, serve the purpose of allowing an individual to participate in the life of God, but the Psalter is not a mechanism used in isolation of the divine vivifying activity at work in and through the text. When the chanter prays the Psalter, the Holy Spirit joins and aids and thus makes the act of praying the Psalter affective. If there is a “kind of technology” at work in the practice, it is the Holy Spirit, which forms the individual to the divine life in the chanter’s use of the Psalms. The other parts of Scripture, which belong in some way to the author, also allows for the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit by means of imitation.

6. Conclusion

When his conception of Scripture is ignored, certain scholars tend to overlook or even castigate Athanasius since, as Simonetti indicated, he never authored a biblical commentary, and therefore never engaged in a sustained exposition of Scripture commenting on a biblical text verse by verse. This led to the claim that Athanasius holds little importance in the history of biblical interpretation. When Athanasius engages with the biblical text it is typically for polemical use in which he operates with theological prejudices, and moves from biblical text to theological deduction, by piecing together seemingly unrelated biblical texts so quickly that he seems to have no, or at least a dysfunctional, exegetical technique or mechanism. Anatolios correctly offers the basis for such a critical attitude toward his style stating, “his exegetical arguments are often embedded in a polemical style that is prone to strike the modern reader as ill-tempered, and as having neither the tone nor substance of a well reasoned argument.”¹⁰² Again,

¹⁰¹ Tetz explains that for Athanasius as “Christ breathes Scripture breathes” and the unity of the church is founded. “Athanasianische Spiritualität verdankt sich der Konstellation »Christus atmen« : »die Schriften atmen« In ihr wird bestimmte Weggenossenschaft geschenkt. In ihr wird Einheit der Kirche wahrnehmbar. In ihr gründet dementsprechend die ökumenische Bedeutung des Athanasius von Alexandrien - auch für die Gegenwart,” *Z. Th. K.* 81, 219.

¹⁰² Khaled Anatolios. “‘When Was God without Wisdom?’ Trinitarian Hermeneutics and Rhetorical Strategy in Athanasius,” *Studia Patristica*, vol 41 (2003), 117. Anatolios also offers a selected bibliography of this critical attitude in this article.

Athanasius's use of texts seems arbitrary as he pieces them together in a fashion, which ignores his contemporaries' "restrictive criteria." But, once again, such criticism ignores Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture.

In Athanasius's conception, the use of seemingly unrelated biblical texts is perfectly acceptable and consistent. Because the Holy Spirit inspired, ensured the cohesion of, and is present and active to and through the text, no text stands in isolation from any other. The same grace of the Spirit exists totally in each and every book of Scripture, binding them together in order to form a unified corpus. Thus when Athanasius engages in seemingly fanciful exegesis, in which he pieces together apparently unrelated texts to make claims about the incarnation of the Word, he is not casting off the constraints of the restrictive exegetical criteria of his contemporaries for the sake of polemics. He is making use of the Scripture in a way that is consistent with his understanding of what Scripture is; an indivisible and diverse group of writings reflecting, revealing, and affording salvific participation in the of God whom inspired and is present to them.

In the act of inspiration, the Holy Spirit identifies individuals of a holy life and a theologically attuned mind to inspire as authors of holy words. The lives of the saints who authored the text inspire the reader to appropriate the text through imitation of saintly deeds, and by chanting the Psalms. Just as we cannot evaluate his exegesis in isolation from his conception of the text, we cannot overlook that his conception of the text includes the requirements for and purpose of exegesis, i.e. salvation. Modern categories are lost on Athanasius because the requirement for and results of proper interpretation is ascetic rather than intellectual, and study of the Scriptures aids ascetic pursuit of theological truth. Ascetic pursuit and theological construction never occur in isolation of the other.

As we shall see, Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture will elucidate certain theological positions for Athanasius. In the next chapter we will see when, why, and how non-scriptural language is permissible for theological construction according to Athanasius by examining his defense of and attitude toward the Nicene *ὁμοούσιός*. Additionally, we will see how this doctrine of Scripture compares to his predecessor Origin, in order to situate him in the Alexandrian tradition. We now turn to the theological considerations.

III. The Voice of Scripture and the Theological Task

1. Divine Presence in Scriptural Phrases

In the concluding paragraph of *Marcellinus*, Athanasius states “the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures” (Ἐστί γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος).¹⁰³ This statement is strong, and brings Athanasius’s pneumatology and trinitarian thought to the forefront of his doctrine of Scripture. In the last chapter, it was demonstrated that Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture is bound to his understanding of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is fully divine and one with the Godhead. To name the Spirit or identify his agency is to acknowledge the presence of the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit who inspired the biblical text remains active in and to the biblical text, so one can rightly assume that, for Athanasius, the Son and the Father are also present and at work in the text since:

...the holy and blessed Trinity is indivisible and united in itself. (Ἡ γὰρ ἅγια καὶ μακαρία Τριάς, ἀϊάριτος καὶ ἠνωμένη πρὸς ἑαυτήν ἐστί) 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. For there is one grace from the Father which is perfected through the Son in the Holy Spirit (Μία γὰρ ἐστὶν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς χάρις δι’ Υἱοῦ ἐν Πνεύματι ἁγίῳ πληρουμένη).¹⁰⁴

The entire Godhead is therefore present in Scripture, since the Spirit is known to be present in and through Scripture. When Athanasius, therefore affirms that the Holy Spirit comes to the aid of those who use Scripture correctly, one can assert that he understands the Father and the Son to be present with the Spirit. To posit that the Spirit is present is to affirm the presence of the Lord. Therefore “ἔστί... ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος.” How does this notion of God’s presence affect how Athanasius uses the text when he engages his theological opponents and makes theological claims?

As stated in the previous section, in order to fairly evaluate any biblical interpreter, one must understand the biblical interpreter’s doctrine of Scripture. Only then can we charitably deal with issues of method and consistency. For Athanasius, the biblical text is the result of the Holy Spirit inspiring particularly holy people “versed in theology” for the production of the biblical text. In the process of inspiration the Holy Spirit interacts with humanity to produce a book that displays certain aspects of that divinity because God maintains his presence to it.¹⁰⁵ Despite differences in genre and numerous authors, the Bible

¹⁰³ *Ad Mar 33* [Gregg, 129]. *PG 27:45*.

¹⁰⁴ *Ad Serap* [DelCogliano, 75]. *PG 26:565*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ad Marc 33*. “Ἐστί γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος.” (*PG 27:45*).

remains indivisible because the Spirit supplies the distinction of each to all. Each part of the Bible has a unique “promise” in and of itself given by the Spirit at the moment of inspiration. But the Spirit also ensures each individual part of the Bible ultimately serves the Word. Athanasius states “[since] it is one and the same Spirit, from whom are all distinctions, and it is indivisible by nature—because of this surely the whole [set of distinctions] is in each [part of Scripture], and as determined by the Spirit pertain to all and to each severally.”¹⁰⁶ The Bible, therefore, displays characteristics, namely, though each part of Scripture seems to manifest a particular distinction, since the Spirit gives every distinction, each distinction, which seems particular to one part of Scripture, appears in the others.

Later, Athanasius states,

Do not let anyone amplify these words of the Psalms with the persuasive phrases of the profane, and do not let him attempt to recast or completely change the words. Rather let him recite and chant, without artifice, the things written just as they were spoken in order for the holy men who supplied these, recognizing that which is their own, to join you in your prayer, or, rather, so that even the Spirit who speaks in the saints, seeing words inspired by him in them, might render assistance to us.¹⁰⁷

Athanasius places heavy emphasis on the words of the text as he instructs his reader not to alter them. At the same time, the Holy Spirit renders aid once he hears the unaltered words he has inspired. The Scriptures demonstrate some sort of divine power, which allows access to both the saints who authored the text and the Spirit who inspired it. We shall see that Athanasius mixes metaphors, sometimes attributing ownership of Scripture to the Spirit, sometimes to the human author, and sometimes he indicates Scripture has its own voice. How does this affect how Athanasius uses the Bible for his theological task?

This section will offer Athanasius’s conception of the function of the words of Scripture in *Marcellinus* and then use this conception to shed light on the relation of the scriptural words for theological construction paying particular attention to Athanasius’s

¹⁰⁶ *Ad Marc* 9 [Gregg, 107] “ἐπειδὴ δὲ τὸ ἓν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ Πνεῦμά ἐστιν, οὐπὲρ καὶ πᾶσαι διαίρεσεις εἰσὶν, αὐτὸ δὲ ἀδιαίρετόν ἐστι κατὰ φύσιν· διὰ τοι τοῦτο τὸ ὅλον μὲν ἐστιν ἐκάστῳ, κατὰ δὲ τὴν διακονίαν αἱ φανερώσεις καὶ αἱ διαίρεσεις τοῦ Πνεύματος ἐκάστοις γίνονται,” (*PG* 27:20).

¹⁰⁷ *Ad Marc* 31 [Gregg, 127]. “Μὴ περιβαλλέτω μέντοι τις αὐτὰ τοῖς ἔξωθεν πιθανοῖς ῥήμασι, μηδὲ πειραζέτω τὰς λέξεις μεταποιεῖν ἢ ὅλως ἐναλλάσσειν· ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἀτεχνῶς τὰ γεγραμμένα λεγέτω καὶ ψαλλέτω, ὡσπερ εἴρηται, ὑπὲρ τοῦ καὶ τοὺς διακονήσαντας ἀνθρώπους αὐτὰ ἐπιγνώσκοντας τὸ ἑαυτῶν συνεύχεσθαι ἡμῖν· μᾶλλον δὲ ἵνα καὶ τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ λαλήσαν ἐν τοῖς ἁγίοις, θεωποῦν τοὺς παρ’ αὐτοῦ λόγους ἐνηχηθέντας ἐκείνοις συναντιλαμβάνηται ἡμῖν,” (*PG* 27:41-4).

defences of Nicene language focusing primarily on *De Decretis*. Athanasius is compelled to ground all of his theology in the biblical text because of his understanding of the nature of the text. As we have seen and will see again, Athanasius affirms that “the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures.”¹⁰⁸ The central question explored will be concerned with how Athanasius relates non-scriptural terms to phrases somehow carrying the divine presence.

2. T.F. Torrance

T.F. Torrance is well noted for his attempt to describe the connection between Athanasius’s doctrine of the Bible and how Athanasius uses the Bible theologically. In his work, Torrance affords a model for Reformed Protestants to appropriate and use the Fathers. In Athanasius in particular, Torrance finds a way to give a fresh expression to and appropriation of certain key themes found in Athanasius.¹⁰⁹ Thus, in his evaluation of Torrance’s work on Athanasius, Ernest finds Torrance’s reading “highly sympathetic” because he is “largely faithful to Athanasius” but concludes that Torrance’s “hedging seems...more Barthian than Athanasian.”¹¹⁰

While the general tenor of Ernest’s critique seems fair, he is not specific enough in his treatment of Torrance. He simply summarizes certain points made by Torrance, and then labels his approach to Athanasius “Barthian.” In the specifics of Torrance’s treatment of Athanasius, Torrance seems accurate. His work on the biblical παραδείγματα feels very Athanasian. Torrance’s imprecision seems to stem from working backwards from specific exegetical arguments aimed at a set of particular individuals addressing trinitarian issues. Torrance uses these particular situational hermeneutics as the basis for his understanding of Athanasius’s theological framework and attitude toward Scripture. Thus at the beginning of his chapter dealing with the hermeneutics of Athanasius in *Divine Meaning*, Torrance states,

The Incarnation of the *Logos* meant for Athanasius the coming of God himself in his own Being into human life and existence, in order to redeem humanity from corruption and error and to restore it to communion with himself by the adoption in and through Jesus Christ. Thus the whole notion of the *Logos* as taught by the

¹⁰⁸ *Ad Marc* 33.

¹⁰⁹ For a positive appraisal of Torrance’s relationship with the Greek Fathers see Jason Robert Radcliff, *Thomas F. Torrance and the Church Fathers* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014). See particularly 112-158. For more on the relevance of Athanasius for Systematic Theology see Abraham van de Beek, “The Relevance of Athanasius in Dogmatics,” *Church History and Culture* vol. 90 no. 2-3 (2010) pp 287- 309, and Denis Edwards, “Athanasius’ *Letter to Serapion*: Resource for a Twenty-First Century Theology of God the Trinity,” *Phronema*, vol 29 no 2 (2014), pp 41-64.

¹¹⁰ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 14, 18, 16

Alexandrians, Hellenic, Jewish or Christian, was modified and radically altered by its identification with the Incarnate Son of God and the very serious doctrine of Atonement... The notions of a *Logos* as some intervenient divine element between God and the world, or as some immanent divine principle bound up with the world, or indeed any independent *Logos* doctrine, has no place in the theology of Athanasius. The old *Logos* doctrine is discarded....¹¹¹

So far this quote *feels* very Athanasian. Athanasius wholly identified the *Logos* idea with the eternal Son who was made incarnate. Athanasius grounds his understanding of the eternal *Logos* in his doctrine of God the Son. Following the previous quote, Torrance immediately states, ‘...Nature and Revelation no longer continue to be regarded as identical. Christ is not interpreted by a *Logos* idea, but Christ the Incarnate Son of the Father, is the one and only *Logos* or Mind and Word of God through whom all things were made, and through whom alone the Father is known.’¹¹² This is where Torrance seems to explain Athanasius’s thought into Barthian categories. As we have seen and shall see, Nature and Revelation are more closely related in Athanasius than Torrance indicates. For Athanasius, the revelatory quality of nature becomes more specific in the words of Scripture.

Torrance explains his reading of Athanasius’s hermeneutics, focusing the attention to how the words of Scripture point to a reality beyond themselves. Proper understanding of scriptural phrases can only be grasped after the human being is recreated. Torrance claims

‘We do not pay attention therefore to words [of Scripture] only but what is expressed, and receive it in a different spirit, with [the] new heart and the new mind’ which we are given by the Spirit of God when God puts his Spirit within us. When we understand the divine words of the Scripture in this way we receive the mind that was remade and renewed in Jesus Christ (τὸν ἐν Χριστῷ κτισθέντα καὶ ἀνακαινισθέντα νοῦν).¹¹³

Here Torrance posits, that for Athanasius, the words of Scripture signify divine realities humanity only grasps through the “new heart and mind” afforded by the Spirit upon salvation. The words of Scripture carry no distinction in themselves, but are an instrument used by God to point humanity to divinity that is beyond or behind the text.

Torrance states this explicitly when he claims that Athanasius believes that the language of Scripture “points away from itself to independent realities and is to be

¹¹¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 229.

¹¹² Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 230.

¹¹³ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 231

understood by the acts in which we look through it, refer it back to its source, discriminate the realities indicated and determine the meaning of what is written according to the nature of things signified.”¹¹⁴ Still later he claims of Athanasius:

[considered] in themselves alone, biblical expressions, images, and analogies are poor and mean and faint, and convey nothing and may be cast away. However, when they are employed by divine Revelation to point us beyond what we know and beyond what we can express in our own thoughts and words, then they are sufficient and suitable, but they must be taken and understood as they are given, within the scope of Scripture, and within the relation of the Son to the Father and the Father to the Son which they are adapted to express. Thus although they may be used to give our minds some hold on the knowledge of the Son and the Father, they are to be interpreted themselves in the light of that to which they point, for they do not explain the divine reality but are made to reflect it.¹¹⁵

Here, Torrance points out, once again, that biblical expression may be “cast away” when “considered in themselves alone,” but not when they are employed by divine Revelation. Once Revelation, presumably meaning the divine power of the Son, takes over, the expressions become something beyond written expression because it “points us beyond what we know and beyond what we can express in our own thoughts and words,” then and only then do the phrases of Scripture become “sufficient and suitable.” Torrance argues that when the text is used properly. Interpreted within the scope of Scripture, the text serves as the means by which the eternal Word directs human attention to the divine truth at which Scripture points. He does not discuss Athanasius’s statements regarding the divine presence and power displayed by the text afforded in *Marcellinus*, but it is reasonable to assume Torrance would interpret the claim that “the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures” to mean that once employed by Revelation the text manifests divine presence and power, and as we shall see, Torrance is not necessarily incorrect.

This notion of Revelation’s appropriation of the text comes to the fore again in Torrance’s discussion of Athanasius’s work on the *παραδείγματα*. Torrance states “[t]he all-important point, as Athanasius argued, was not the actual words or the terms used in the Scriptures, but the *meaning*, which they convey and the *realities* to which they refer.”¹¹⁶ Torrance states that Athanasius uses a *πράδειγμα*

¹¹⁴ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 235.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, *Divine Meaning*, 256.

¹¹⁶ Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*. Emphasis original, 128-9.

...to refer to some aspect of the visible or physical world which is adopted and adapted to point out something that cannot be reduced to words or to point upward to a divine reality that is ultimately ineffable, or to reflect the glory of God which we are unable to see. He does not think of *παράδειγμα* as a simile of man's choosing or devising, but rather as an image taken from human things which divine Revelation has laid hold of and uses in a special way for its particular purpose – that is, why we cannot really understand *παραδείγματα* apart from the condescending grace of God in divine *οικονομία*.¹¹⁷

Once again, such a notion is not necessarily out of step with Athanasius's understanding of proper exegesis towards the particular doctrine of the Trinity aimed at a particular group of people. Of Torrance's eight hundred, fifty-seven citations from Athanasius's corpus, at least six hundred, thirty-two come from works that are written expressly against his theological opponents, or are written to a third party regarding his theological opponents.¹¹⁸ The hermeneutic Torrance suggests, therefore, is largely constructed from how Athanasius approaches using the Bible for a particular polemic. Only sixty-four of Torrance's references, come from sources that are both widely if not universally considered genuinely Athanasian, and occur outside of trinitarian polemics. Athanasius's attitude toward the Bible apart from its polemical use in trinitarian debates is largely lacking.

Ernest claims that in Torrance's reading of Athanasius, *παραδείγματα* such as radiance, spring and river, substance, and expression are "merely pointers,"¹¹⁹ since the images afforded in Scripture are only meant to direct human contemplation to the realities beyond the text. Torrance claims that Athanasius was "no Biblicist" and that "he does not need to prove all his theological statements by the citation of texts, nor does he handle citations either in the way of the fundamentalist or the modern critical scholar,"¹²⁰ which directly opposes Kennegieser's assertion that Athanasius was "unable to face any

¹¹⁷Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 255. By "human things" one would think that Torrance is referring to human perceptions since light is not necessarily a "human thing."

¹¹⁸ I have included *Contra Arianos IV* in this list, though Athanasian scholarship has long considered this work to be pseudo-Athanasian. See Markus Vinzent *Pseudo-Athanasius Contra Arianos IV: Eine Schrift Gegen Asterius Von Kappadokien, Eusebius Von Cäsarea, Markell Von Ankyra Und Photin Von Sirmium* vol 36 in *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae: Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996) 58-82. He also quotes liberally from *Contra Apollinarium*, which he acknowledges "...if Athanasius did not actually write himself, is certainly Athanasian and entirely consistent with his teaching elsewhere," and also offers a few citations from the pseudonymous commentary on the Psalms. See discussion on pg 3. At least one hundred, fifty-nine of Torrance's citations, not including *CA IV*, come from sources which were suspect by the publication of *Divine Meaning*.

¹¹⁹ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 16.

¹²⁰ Torrance, *Divine Meaning*, 274.

situation, or assume any responsibility, without identifying himself in his thought and action through a reflex of biblical hermeneutics.”¹²¹ Ernest goes on to point out that Torrance fails to indicate how it is possible to “perceive behind Scripture to the truth that is only indicated in παραδείγματα on the surface.”¹²² While Torrance correctly explains that Athanasius’s doctrine of God and christocentricity inform his understanding of Scripture, Torrance does not bring Athanasius’s pneumatology or doctrine of creation and general revelation into the discussion. He does not deal with Athanasius’s idea that God is immediately knowable in and through various avenues of divine condescension, nor the text, and then draw out the implications for the παραδείγματα

In certain respects, Torrance’s understanding of scriptural words is axiomatic, since “pointing away from itself” is the very nature of written language. However, as we have seen, Athanasius attributes divine power to the text because “the Lord is in the Phrases of Scripture.” Athanasius is not indicating that God is contained in Scripture, which is why I will opt for “to” rather than “in” language, but Athanasius’s basic theological framework as offered in *Contra Gentes/De Incarnatione* allows for avenues of divine condescension alongside the Incarnation. Meijerling points out that in the dual apologetic, Athanasius actually supplies four ways in which man can know God; man’s creation in the likeness of God’s image, revelation through the harmony of creation, the Holy Scriptures of the Jews, and the Incarnation.”¹²³ The majority of Athanasius’s argument aimed at refuting the Heathen in *Contra Gentes* center around different proofs for knowing God. In chapters 2-33, Athanasius explains the ability to know God through inward contemplation of the image of the *Logos* in which each human being was created. Chapters 34-40 describe the way in which God “the all-Holy Father of Christ”¹²⁴ is knowable in nature. Athanasius gets even more specific in 41–44 and 47 by indicating that the Word himself is knowable through nature, and describes knowledge of God through Scripture in 45-46. He retraces this line of argument in *De Incarnatione* 11–12 while focusing on the recreative salvation and renewed contemplation of God wrought by the Incarnation. Thus the statement Torrance gives at the beginning of his chapter that “Christ the Incarnate Son of the Father, is the one and only *Logos* or Mind and Word of God through whom all things were made, and through whom

¹²¹ Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis Christianity*, 709.

¹²² Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 18.

¹²³ “God as Creator and Recreator,” 176-182.

¹²⁴ *CG* 40, Thompson, 11.

alone the Father is known,”¹²⁵ cuts against the grain of the arguments Athanasius sets out in the dual apologetic. Athanasius seems very comfortable with the notion that one can know God in nature and through inward contemplation of the Image of the *Logos* inside each human being.¹²⁶ For Athanasius, knowledge of God is available to humanity through various avenues, which define human existence, i.e. contemplation and interaction with creation. A comfort with divinely given words affording divine presence would logically have some distinction in theological use as well. As we shall see, Athanasius grounds his comfort with creedal and conciliar language in its proper adherence to Scripture.

3. The Voice and Power of Scriptural Words

As we have and shall see again Athanasius has a very high view of the words of Scripture. By 363 Athanasius had spent two periods of exile totaling around seven years in the monasteries of Upper Egypt.¹²⁷ Monastic influence, therefore, may have influenced Athanasius’s understanding of the importance of and power Scripture produces. Douglas Burton-Christie cites Athanasius’s amazement at the irony that the story a hermit who withdrew solitarily to a mountain was known in Spain, Gaul, Rome, and Africa, as an indicator that the sphere of monastic influence had moved from the desert to the city by the late Fourth Century.¹²⁸ As this explanation of the voice and power of scriptural words begins, we will keep the monastic understanding of words in view.

When Athanasius describes Scripture in *Marcellinus*, he personifies it by attributing to it a voice and knowledge, and ascribes supernatural power to the biblical text itself. Scripture itself reveals divine truths because of its divine inspiration and presentation. The Bible is divinely inspired and offers access to the power of divinity present to Scripture. This origin and presentation also ensure a particular task. Scripture teaches in all parts, but allows for appropriation and internalization for that teaching in the Psalter.

The first way in which Athanasius personifies the text is by ascribing voices to its various parts. When he discusses the varying parts of the Old Testament, Athanasius describes how each Old Testament genre fulfills its didactic purpose. The Pentateuch is

¹²⁵ Torrance *Divine Meaning*, 235.

¹²⁶ “The grace of being in the image was sufficient for one to know God the Word and through him the Father. (Αὐτάρκης μὲν γὰρ ἦν ἡ κατ’ εἰκόνα χάρις γνωρίζειν τὸν Θεὸν Λόγον, καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὸν Πατέρα),” *DI* 12, [Thompson, 162-3]. See also *CG* 30.

¹²⁷ See Alvyn Pettersen, *Athanasius* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 15-17.

¹²⁸ Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 7.

concerned with the world's origin, and the stories of the patriarchs and the Exodus as well as the giving of the Law. The Triteuch tells of the possession of the promised land, the exploits of the judges, and gives David's ancestral line. Ezra describes Isreal's return from exile. The books of the prophets foretell of the Word's incarnation. In this way "[each] sacred book supplies and announces its own promise."¹²⁹ Due to the Spirit's inspiration the text itself serves the didactic function of relaying the history of God's people in the Old Testament. The text of the prophetic books themselves prophecy. Each biblical genre has its own "voice" by which it carries out its own didactic end. Each contains and communicates a certain theme or message. These voices are particular to specific genres and have their own distinct message or theme. This however, does not isolate each genre from the others; rather, as noted previously, each remains unified with the whole through the activity of the Holy Spirit in the instance of inspiration.

In *Marcellinus* 14, Athanasius states:

If the point needs to be put more forcefully, let us say that the entire Holy Scripture is teacher (πᾶσα μὲν ἡ θεία Γραφή διδάσκαλος) of virtues and of truths of the faith (πίστεως ἀληθοῦς) [theology], while the Book of Psalms possess somehow the perfect image for the souls' course of life. For as one who comes into the presence of a king assumes a certain attitude, both of posture and expression, lest speaking differently he be thrown out as boorish, so also to the one who is running the race of virtues and wishes to know the life of the Savior in the body the sacred book (θεία βίβλος) first calls to mind (ἀναγνώσεως) the emotions of the soul through the reading, and in this way represents the other things, in succession, and teaches the readers by those words (διδάσκει τοὺς ἐντυγχάντας τοῖς τοιοῦτοις λόγοις).¹³⁰

Athanasius identifies the Scripture as teacher (διδάσκαλος) of virtues and rules of faith, but distinguishes between a peculiar type of teaching in the Psalms and the other parts of the Bible. It is important to emphasize, that Athanasius is referring directly to the biblical text itself. The reason the text can fulfill such a purpose is because, as stated in 2 Tim 3:16, the text is divinely inspired (θεόπνευστός).¹³¹ Athanasius indicates God affords humanity with words to approach him both intellectually and spiritually with an analogy of approaching a king. When one enters the presence of a king, he adjusts his attitude and posture of expression, so he is not thrown out of the king's presence. In this case the king, i.e. God, has

¹²⁹ *Ad Marc* 2 [Gregg, 101-2]. "Ἐκάστη μὲν γὰρ βίβλος τὸ ἴδιον ἐπάγγελμα διακονεῖ καὶ ἀπαγγέλλει," (PG 27:12).

¹³⁰ *Ad Marc* 14 [Gregg, 112-3]. PG 27:25.

¹³¹ *Ibid.* [Gregg, 112-3]. PG 27:25.

provided the words for adjusting one's attitude and posture of expression.

The Psalter serves a didactic purpose just as the rest of the Bible, but maintains a distinctive voice of its own, by appropriating the material from the other parts of the Scripture and “sets them to music.”¹³² When Athanasius, therefore indicates how the Psalms convey the themes of the Old Testament and foreshadows the New, he uses mixed musical and non-musical language. Psalm 18, for instance sings (ψάλλει) the events of Genesis.¹³³ Additionally the Psalms chant (ᾄδει)¹³⁴ even, in certain instances, with the voice of the Father.¹³⁵ The Psalms proclaim (αναφωνεῖ),¹³⁶ manifest (ἐμφαίνει),¹³⁷ declare or make clear (σημαίνει),¹³⁸ speak (λέγει),¹³⁹ do not remain silent (οὐχ ἐσιώπησεν),¹⁴⁰ state (εἰρηχώς),¹⁴¹ make known (εὐθὺς),¹⁴² foretell (προμηνύει),¹⁴³ announce (ἀναγγέλλει),¹⁴⁴ shout aloud (γενομένην),¹⁴⁵ and do not conceal (οὐχ ἔκρυψεν).¹⁴⁶ The voices in various parts of the Old Testament, as well as the foreshadowing of the New Testament are appropriated and sung in the Psalter.

Athanasius personifies Scripture a second time when he ascribes knowledge to the Psalms. The Psalter knows that the Word is the Son of God, (Τοῦτον δὲ τὸν Λόγον εἰδῶς ὄντα Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ),¹⁴⁷ and knew Christ himself as the Coming One (Καὶ Χριστὸν δὲ αὐτὸν

¹³² *Ad Marc*, 2 [Gregg, 102]. “Ἡ δὲ γε βίβλος τῶν Ψαλμῶν ὡς παράδεισος τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ φέρουσα μελωδεῖ, καὶ τὰ ἴδια δὲ πάλιν μετ’ αὐτῶν ψάλλουσα δείκνυσι,” (*PG* 27:12).

¹³³ *Ad Marc* 3 [Gregg, 102]. Athanasius uses this five times. He uses it once more a few lines after the previous citation, and again in 4, 5, and 7

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 3, 4, 5.

¹³⁵ *Ad Marc*. 5, “ᾄδει φωνὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς,” (*PG* 27:13)

¹³⁶ *Ibid.* 3. *PG* 27:13.

¹³⁷ *Ad Marc* 4. *PG* 27:13.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 5, 6. *PG* 27:13, 16.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 6. *PG* 27:16.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 8. *PG* 27:17.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 [Gregg, 104]. *PG* 27:13. Athanasius also uses a form of εἰδῶς a few lines later.

ἐρχόμενον οὐχ ἠγγόνισεν).¹⁴⁸ The Psalms, therefore, contain theological knowledge of the Word's eternal divinity, and foreknowledge concerning the events of Christ's life. Such foreknowledge is proper of the divinity that inspired, unifies, and remains present to the Scriptures. Furthermore, even before the Christian ethical model of the historical instance of the Incarnate Word, the Psalms afforded the pattern for a Christ-like life.

Christ made his model of life “resound in the Psalms” so one “can learn the emotions and dispositions of the souls, finding in them also the therapy and correction suited for each emotion.”¹⁴⁹ Thus, prior to the Incarnation, something of the eternal Word and his incarnation is explicated in the Psalms. This ensures that the saints prior to the divine sojourn had knowledge of the eternal Son and his fleshly existence.

In the closing of the letter, Athanasius describes the power of the biblical text itself, and prohibits the altering of the biblical text three times—once in each of the three final paragraphs. The first, as mentioned in the previous section, is only a prohibition against changing the words of the Psalms for prayerful or musical use. When one leaves the words unchanged in that instance, the Holy Spirit and biblical author mystically join the chanter in prayer. If the words of the text were altered or brushed aside, this particular function of the Psalms would be ineffective. Burton-Christie notes several instances in which the Egyptian monks used Scriptural words for divine help.¹⁵⁰

The second prohibition, is stated positively, “Therefore, reciting even now the *same words*, let each person be confident, for God will pay heed quickly to those who make supplications through these.”¹⁵¹ The emphasis here is on using the same unaltered words of Scripture. One using these words will be protected from oppressors, drive away the devil and demons, reprove himself and cease from sin or rejoice that he has no sin, and strain forward to what lies ahead. He then states “...of this man is not a guarantor, but the Divine Scripture itself.”¹⁵² The human being in such instances has no claim to the power for such supernatural actions; rather the Divine Scripture itself ensures such power. Once again,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. 6 [Gregg, 104-5]. *PG* 27:16. He makes use of this word at the end of the paragraph and again in 7 when describing the Psalter's foreknowledge of the Jewish conspiracy against Jesus cited in Psalm 2.

¹⁴⁹ *Ad Marc*, 13.

¹⁵⁰ Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 112, 124-5, 200.

¹⁵¹ *Ad Marc* 32 [Gregg, 127]. “Οὐκοῦν καὶ νῦν ταῦτα λέγων ἕκαστος ἔστω θαρρῶν ὅτι δι' αὐτῶν ταχέως ὁ Θεὸς ἐπακούσεται τοῖς δεομένοις,” (*PG* 27:44).

¹⁵² Ibid 32 [Gregg, 128] “καὶ τούτου οὐχ ἄνθρωπος ἐγγυητῆς ἀλλ' αὐτὴ ἡ θεία γίνεται Γραφή,” (*PG* 27:44). See Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 124.

Athanasius locates the power in the biblical text itself when he affirms the use of the “same words” of “Divine Scripture” which serve as a “guarantor.”

The salubrious effects of Scripture are achieved by God’s aid through use of the words the Spirit affords. Additionally, Athanasius here begins to widen the scope of divine power from the particularity of the Psalms to Scripture in general. He recounts Moses’ command to write Deuteronomy, stating “since the words in it are sufficient both for recalling virtue to the mind and for bringing help to those who sincerely need it.”¹⁵³ He demonstrates this ability of the text by recalling Joshua strengthening the Israelites before battle with the reading of Deuteronomy, and Josiah when he discovered and read the book of the Law aloud, no longer feared his enemies.¹⁵⁴ Thus it is the text of the Bible, not simply the Psalms, which affords divine power in its recitation.

During the third and final prohibition, Athanasius recounts the “old man’s” words that Israel exorcized the demon possessed simply by reading Scripture. The “old man” indicated that those who appropriate the Bible but change the biblical text deserve divine judgment. Demons, according to the “old man” and Athanasius, will only obey the very words of the text because “. . .the Lord is in the phrases of the Scriptures” (Ἐστί γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος).¹⁵⁵ Athanasius then quotes the demons’ reaction to Christ in Matt 8:29 and Luke 8:28 indicating that just as these demons fled before Christ when they recognized the presence of divinity, so too they flee from Scripture.

The idea of God’s presence in Scripture, though consistent with his theology proper, may have been influenced by Antony. The great monastic father was reported to say, “Wherever you go, always have God before your eyes; whatever you do, have [before you] the testimony of the holy Scriptures.”¹⁵⁶ Burton-Christie notes that Antony suggests here that having the testimony of Scripture constantly before one is equivalent to being always in the presence of God.¹⁵⁷ The anchorites’ assurance that he will remain in the presence of God can be bolstered if he remains in the presence of the Bible.

Such claims, through possibly monastic in origin, resemble Athanasius’ soteriological Christology. His Christological work has often been simplified to the

¹⁵³ *Ad Marc* 32, [Gregg, 128]. “ὡς ἀρκούντων τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς λόγων πρὸς τε ὑπόμνησιν ἀρετῆς,” (*PG* 27:44).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23 [Gregg, 138]. *PG* 27:44.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 33. *PG* 27:45.

¹⁵⁶ *Antony* 19 [*PG*:65;81].

¹⁵⁷ Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 109.

argument, Christ saves, only God can save, Christ is God.¹⁵⁸ Jesus of Nazareth exhibits characteristics that are only proper to divinity. Here, having witnessed Scripture manifest a power that is only proper to divinity, he continues by comparing the divine power demonstrated by Scripture's ability for exorcism to the divine power and presence in Paul when he exorcized demons. He states:

For seeing the Lord present, they were consumed. So Paul commanded the unclean spirits, and likewise things demonic were subjected to the disciples. And the hand of the Lord came over Elisha the prophet, and he prophesied about the waters to the three kings, when he who chanted was singing in accordance with the Lord's command. So also now, if someone is concerned for those who suffer, and he recites these things himself, he also will benefit the sufferer more, and will show his faith to be true and steadfast, with the result that God, seeing that, supplies perfect healing to those in need.¹⁵⁹

Here, Athanasius locates divine presence in the recited phrases of the text itself when these phrases are read aloud. Such reading aids one who attempting to comfort another and the one needing comfort. Serapion too recounts the usefulness of reading the unaltered text to win over a prostitute. Such practice was apparently common amongst the Egyptian monks.¹⁶⁰

Athanasius is adamant that both the recited Scripture and God offer healing. Scripture manifests divine power because of God's presence to it. God maintains a uniquely sharp divine presence in biblical text. This divine presence offered through the proper use of Scripture is a divine force, which casts out demons and performs miracles, just as in the instances of the divine presence in Paul and other biblical saints. Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture therefore is consistent with his cosmology and pneumatology. God remains present to his creation. Likewise he remains present to Scripture. But Scripture has a sharper function in that the power of God is available through use of the unaltered words. God

¹⁵⁸ See, for instance, Rowan Williams, "Athanasius and the Arian Crisis," *The First Christian Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004), 164 and Alister McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 50.

¹⁵⁹ *Ad Marc* 33. [Gregg, 129]. "ἐκαίοντο γὰρ καὶ μόνον βλέποντες παρόντα τὸν Κύριον. Οὕτως καὶ ὁ Παῦλος παρήγγειλε τοῖς ἀκαθάρτοις πνεύμασιν· οὕτως καὶ τοῖς μαθηταῖς ὑπετάσσετο τὰ δαιμόνια. Καὶ ἐπὶ Ἐλισσαίου δὲ τοῦ προφήτου ἐγένετο χεὶρ Κυρίου καὶ προεφήτευσεν περὶ τῶν ὑδάτων τοῖς τρισὶ βασιλεῦσιν, ὅτε ἐψάλλε κατ' ἐντολὴν αὐτοῦ ὁ ψάλλων. Οὕτως καὶ νῦν, εἴ τις κήδετα τῶν πασχόντων, ταῦτα λεγέτω, καὶ μᾶλλον τὸν τε πάσχοντα ὠφελεῖ, καὶ ἑαυτοῦ τὴν τίστιν ἀληθῆ καὶ βεβαίαν ἐπιδείξετα· ὥστε, καὶ ταύτην ὁρῶντα τὸν Θεὸν τελείαν τὴν θεραπείαν παρασχεῖν τοῖς δεομένοις." (PG 27:45).

¹⁶⁰ See Burton-Christie, *Word in the Desert*, 113 and *Serapion* 1 (PG 65:413-416).

remains present to Scripture and honors its proper use by manifesting divine power from the recited text.¹⁶¹ The divine phrases of Scripture are not to be cast aside because in their unaltered use the presence and power of God is available.

This is not necessarily particular to the biblical text, however. Driving away demonic powers and easing the pains of the suffering requires divine power and authority. The text makes such power and authority available because of the divine presence. However, biblical figures, such as Paul and Elisha were also able to manifest this divine power when, at least in Elisha's case, the "hand of the Lord came over him." Also, God, seeing some reciting the Scriptures when he or she is suffering, supplies the perfect healing.

What can we glean from such statements before we move to another area of Athanasius's corpus? First, and again, Scripture carries out a particular function and affords divine presence because of its inspiration. Scripture manifests its own voice in various ways through thematic differentiation in various parts of Scripture, but the themes are unified and sung in the Psalms. Second, Scripture manifests divine power. Simply reading the unaltered words can banish the devil and demons. Scripture can be used to overcome enmity and oppression, and cause the reader to stop sinning. Divine power and presence are necessary to accomplish such supernatural tasks, so the words of Scripture must somehow be related to God's power and presence. Thus Athanasius affirms "the Lord is in the phrases of Scripture." Third, the Scriptures afford humanity the proper means by which one is to approach God spiritually and intellectually. God has afforded words which he honors as humanity uses them. Once again, this implies that the words on the pages of Scripture are held in high regard for Athanasius. Finally, such notions are consistent with the doctrine and practical application of Scripture in the monastic movement of the Egyptian desert where Athanasius served his exiles. This section will now turn to how Athanasius relates the use of theological terminology to words that carry the divine presence.

4. Scripture and Theological Language

This section will focus mainly on Athanasius's first explicit defence of the theological terminology afforded by the council of Nicaea in *De Decretis* with a few glances at earlier works, which help understand his thought in general, as well as the later defence Nicaea found in *De Synodis*. All of this makes his defence of these terms and their

¹⁶¹ This is where we might be "highly sympathetic" towards Torrance. In his hesitancy to allow Athanasius to ascribe divinity to scripture, he disrupts God's immediacy to Scripture. Scripture manifests its power because of divine activation, but this does not indicate that God is somehow beyond or behind the text.

relationship to Scripture more explicit.

i. De Decretis

De Decretis is Athanasius's first explicit defence of the Nicene term ὁμοούσιος and was written between 350 and 353.¹⁶² This theological treatise was written in response to a letter from a stranger interested in learning more about the “negotiations” of the Council of Nicaea.¹⁶³ In his refutation of his opponents' theological positions, Athanasius states:

But since their ways are full of malice and they have been refuted as far as the name of ‘unoriginated’, perhaps they will wish to say: ‘One should have spoken concerning our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ from what is written about him in the Scriptures, and not have introduced unscriptural terms.’ Well, sure, that is the way it should have been; and I would also say as much. For the manifestations of the truth that are derived from the Scriptures are more accurate than those from other places. But, as I said, it was the wrong-headedness and the untrustworthy deceitful impiety of Eusebius's party that forced the bishops to proclaim more explicitly terms that would overturn their impiety.¹⁶⁴

Athanasius here responds to the charge that ἀγένητον is nowhere located in the Bible. He affirms the best theological language is found in the Scriptures because they are more accurate than phrases derived from “other places.” Both sides of the “Arian” crisis constantly made accusations of heresy for supplying words alien to Scripture.¹⁶⁵

Athanasius's constant retort to the Eusebian charges that ὁμοούσιος and ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς are not found in Scripture and should be barred from ecclesiological and theological

¹⁶² See Lewis Ayres discussion in footnote 3 in “Athanasius' Initial Defense of the term Ὁμοούσιος: Rereading the *De Decretis*,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, vol 12 no. 3, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 338. Uta Heil also offers a detailed discussion about this letter's dating. See “De decretis Nicaenae synodi,” *Athanasius Handbuch* (2011), 211.

¹⁶³ Heil, *Handbuch*, 210.

¹⁶⁴ *De Decr* 32. I have followed Anatolios' translation in *Athanasius*, pg. 211, and consulted *Athanasius Werke* vol 2. “Ἄλλ' ἴσως καὶ διὰ τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἀγένητον ἐλεγχθέντες πονηροὶ τὸν πρόπον ὄντες ἐθελήσουσι καὶ αὐτοὶ λέγειν· ἔδει καὶ περὶ τοῦ κυρίου καὶ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν τὰ περὶ αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένα λέγεσθαι καὶ μὴ ἀγράφοις ἐπεισάγεσθαι λέξεις. ναὶ ἔδει, φαίην ἂν καὶ ἐγωγε, ἀκριβέστερα γὰρ ἐκ τῶν γραφῶν μᾶλλον ἢ ἐξ ἐτέρων ἐστὶ τὰ τῆς ἀληθείας γνωρίσματα· ἄλλ' ἢ κακοήθεια καὶ μετὰ πανουργίας παλίμβολος ἀσέβεια τῶν περὶ Εὐσέβιον ἠνάγκασε, καθὰ προεῖπον, τοὺς ἐπισκόπους λευκότερον ἐκθέσθαι τὰ τὴν ἀσέβειαν αὐτῶν ἀνατρέποντα ῥήματα,” (*AW* 2:28).

¹⁶⁵ Jaroslav Pelikan quotes Constantius's lament that all theological language is not derived from Scripture. *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition*, vol I of *The Christian Traditions: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 209-10. See also David N. Bell *A Cloud of Witnesses: An Introduction to the Development of Christian Doctrine to AD 500*, (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 2007), 78.

use is to immediately assert that Eusebius's own theological terminology is also not found in Scripture, nor conveys the sense (διάνοιαν) of Scripture.¹⁶⁶ Though the Nicene phrases are nowhere located in Scripture, they are authoritative because they properly interpret the Scriptures. Therefore, if we can here take Athanasius at his word; we can assert that he prefers scriptural language to non-scriptural language.

ii. Παραδείγματα

The first sustained discussion on how one is to properly draw theological conclusions from biblical images occurs in 12. Here, Athanasius explicates the nature of symbols (παραδείγματα) provided by the biblical authors. Athanasius begins this exposition by quoting Mt 11:27 indicating that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son has chosen to receive revelation.¹⁶⁷ The sacred writers to whom the Son has been revealed (διὰ τοῦτο οἱ ἅγιοι, οἷς ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ υἱος) have provided certain images (εἰκόνα). These παραδείγματα are intellectual glimpses into the life of God used to gather some approximation of the nature of the divine relation between the Father and the Son. These sacred writers have provided these symbols because “they want us to form our understanding in accordance with them. So it is very impious that, while Scripture has these images we should conceive of the Lord by other ones that are neither in Scripture nor have any pious rationale.”¹⁶⁸ The sacred and holy authors of Scripture have afforded the church with images, which illustrate the inner-life of God. Ernest describes the παραδείγματα as “windows into the metanarrative” by which he means a “concise narrative of the career of the Word from various biblical texts.”¹⁶⁹ Ernest indicates that the arguments, texts, and terms we have been discussing from *Decr.* 12 are strikingly similar if not precisely the same as Athanasius's work in *CA* 1.32, stating “[the] biblical παραδείγματα enable human knowledge about the divinity of the Word in the same way that observation of the created world—when complemented by the Scriptures—enables

¹⁶⁶ *De Decr* 18, 21, 28. Cf *De Synd* 6, 33, 36.

¹⁶⁷ *De Decr* 12.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, [Anatolios, 189-90]. ὁ οὐτω γὰρ ἡμᾶς οἱ ἅγιοι βουλόμενοι νοεῖν τοιαῦτα καὶ παραδείγματα δεδώκασι, καὶ ἔστιν ἄτοπον καὶ λίαν ἀσεβὲς τοιαύτας ἐχούσης τῆς γραφῆς τὰς εἰκόνας ἐξ ἄλλων ἡμᾶς περὶ τοῦ κυρίου διανοεῖσθαι τῶν μήτε γεγραμμένων μήτε τινὰ διάνοιαν εἰς εὐσέβειαν ἐχότων’, (*AW* 2:11). Ernest notes that in this instance εἰκόνα and παραδείγματα are used synonymously. *Bible in Athanasius*, 157, footnote 91.

¹⁶⁹ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 151. Ernest notes that the term “metanarrative” is ours rather than Athanasius's.

human knowledge that God exists and exercises providence.”¹⁷⁰ The παραδείγματα are somehow passively operative, i.e. points at which humanity can know something of God’s being since the transcendent God is present to them as he is present to creation. The παραδείγματα of Scripture, however, are superior to creation for contemplation of God since the words afforded by God are more precise than forming conclusions about him based upon his creative and sustaining work. Thus, as Ernest indicates, the contemplation of creation must be mediated by the biblical text. Ernest goes on to explain that in *De Decr* 12 Athanasius emphasizes “the foolishness of devising one’s own images rather than relying on the ones given in Scripture; and in *De Decr* 23-24 the παραδείγματα of the light and radiance is explained as supporting ὁμοούσιος.”¹⁷¹ As we shall see, ὁμοούσιος is consistent and only acceptable because it rightly describes the experience humanity has with divinity when humanity catches a glimpse of God in the παραδείγματα of light and radiance.

iii. De Decretis and the Chorus of Scriptural Voices

Following the discussion regarding the παραδείγματα, Athanasius immediately moves on to discuss the favored Arian passage, Prov. 8:22. He establishes the difference between a work and an image, and then strings together a series of biblical texts stating:

Certainly the divine Scriptures know (γινώσκουσα) better than anyone the nature of each thing. Regarding creatures, the Scripture says, through Moses: ‘In the beginning God made heaven and earth’ (Gen1:1). But, regarding the Son, it shows no other but the Father himself saying “From the womb before the morning star, I have begotten you” (Ps 2:7). The Lord himself says about himself in the Proverbs: “Before all hills he begets me” (Prov 8:25). Regarding things which have come to be and were created, John says, “All things came to be through him” (Jn 1:3). But when he preaches about the Lord, he says “The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known” (Jn 1:18). Therefore: if Son, then not creature; if creature, then not Son. For great is the difference between these. The same cannot be both creature and Son, as if his being can be considered to be both from God and from outside.¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 157.

¹⁷¹ Ernest, *The Bible in Athanasius*, 151.

¹⁷² *De Decr* 13, [Anatolios, 190-1]. “ἀμέλει πάντων μᾶλλον ἢ θεία γραφή γινώσκουσα τὴν ἐκάστου φύσιν περὶ μὲν τῶν κτιζομένων διὰ Μωυσεός φησὶν· ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν· περὶ δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ οὐχ ἕτερον, ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν τὸν πατέρα σημαίνει λέγοντα· ἐκ γαστροῦ πρὸ ἑωσφόρου ἐγέννησά σε· καὶ πάλιν· νόσος μου εἶ σύ, ἐγὼ σήμερον γεγέννηκά σε· αὐτὸς τε περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ κύριος ἐν Παροιμίαις λέγει· πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με· καὶ περὶ μὲν τῶν γενητῶν καὶ κτιστῶν ὁ Ἰωάννης φησί· πάντα δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο· περὶ δὲ τοῦ κυρίου εὐγγελεζόμενος λέγει· ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός, ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο. εἰ τοίνυν υἱός, οὐ κτίσμα, εἰ δὲ κτίσμα, οὐχ υἱός· πολλὴ γὰρ ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡ διαφορά. καὶ οὐκ ἂν εἴη αὐτὸς υἱός καὶ κτίσμα, ἵνα μὴ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐξωθεν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ οὐσία αὐτοῦ νομιζῆται.” (*AW* 2:11-2).

Athanasius inconsistently attributes voices to various agents. First, he personifies Scripture, which “knows” (θεία γραφή γνώσκουσα) and “speaks through Moses” (κτιζομένων διὰ Μουσέως). The Father himself speaks in the Psalms (ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν τὸν Πατέρα σημαίνει λέγοντα). Next he indicates that the Lord speaks about himself in the Proverbs (αὐτός τε περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ὁ κύριος ἐν Παροιμίαις λέγει). Finally Athanasius attributes a voice to the fourth evangelist (Ἰωάννης φησί).

Here Athanasius’s comfort with recognizing both the human and divine elements of Scripture comes to the fore again. Sometimes the Father and the Son speak of themselves. Sometimes the biblical authors, in this case John, speak through the text. Still other times a partnership of the divine Scripture and the author, in this case Moses, can be distinguished. In the background of these affirmations is his pneumatology. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, unifies the biblical text in a way that ensures the authors’ work is bound to the Spirit’s work. He inspired holy men versed in theology to produce work that reveals truth concerning the Godhead. Thus as the Spirit inspired these works, the Father and the Son were at work with him and their voices can also be distinguished in various parts of Scripture.

iv. Ὁμοούσιος and Ἐκ Τῆς Οὐσίας Τοῦ Πατρὸς as Proper Biblical Interpretation

This discussion will focus on paragraphs 19-24 of *De Decretis*, which Ayres refers to as the culmination of this particular work.¹⁷³ Athanasius gives the reason for Nicaea’s adoption of ὁμοούσιος and ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς in which he pays particular attention to the biblical texts and arguments used by his opponents (19-20) and then gives his explanation of the same points following the same order by using his own biblical texts and appealing to his doctrine of Scripture (21-24). He opens 19 indicating that the council set about to “banish the impious phrases of the Arians and to inscribe the words confessed by the Scriptures: that the Son is not from non-being but from God.”¹⁷⁴ Thus in the opening of a labored defence and explanation of Nicaea’s adoption of ὁμοούσιος and ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς, he links the appropriation of certain theological language directly to Scripture. He believes this language best describes and preserves the theological truth afforded in the biblical text by describing the theological reality in the παραδείγματα. These paragraphs contain twenty- three scriptural citations, ten of which he uses to describe his opponents’ positions. Thus these arguments, for Athanasius, are exegetical arguments in which both he

¹⁷³ Ayres, “Athanasius’ Initial Defense,” 340.

¹⁷⁴ *De Decr* 19, [Anatolios], 196. “Τῆς συνόδου βουλομένης τὰς μὲν τῶν Ἀρειανῶν τῆς ἀσεβείας λέξεις ἀνελεῖν, τὰς δὲ τῶν γραφῶν ὁμολογουμένας φωνὰς γράψαι,” (*AW* 2:15).

and his opponents are trying to best describe the truths of Scripture.

The argument revolves around how one is to interpret the scriptural idea that the Son is “from God.” According to Athanasius, the Eusebians interpret 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 5:17-18; 1 Cor 11:7; 2 Cor 4:11; Acts 17:28; Rom 8:39; Joel 2:25; Ex 12:41; and Ps 46:8 as indicating that the Son came from God as all things come from God, i.e. the Son is created, and that the Son is a power of God, but not the only or even a unique power of God. Because the phrase “from God” and “Power and Wisdom of God” leave room for his opponents to refer to the Son as a creature, the council first offered the phrase ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς to establish the nature of the Son’s origin and then offered ὁμοούσιος to solidify the Son’s unique status as the intrinsic Power and Wisdom of God. The authority of these terms is derivative of their relationship to Scripture. Athanasius is willing to concede that one has a legitimate complaint that these terms are nowhere found in the Scriptures, but one must agree with the sense of the council and anathematize everything the council anathematizes. The sense of the council, not the terms it introduced, is authoritative. This sense of the council is only authoritative because its goal and achievement were to correctly explain the παραδείγματα of scriptural phrases.¹⁷⁵

Athanasius picks up his discussion of the παραδείγματα in 23 and 24 after an argument from divine simplicity. According to Athanasius, when one refers to God as Father he or she is referring to who God is in his being and not to some part of God or something that is around him. God is a Father in his being because he is simple.¹⁷⁶ Since the Father is father from his being, the Son is ὁμοούσιος with the Father. The παραδείγματα of radiance and light is properly explained through the idea of ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς since,

the sacred writers did not say that the Word was related to God like a fire which is ignited from the heat of the sun and which is usually extinguished again, for this is an external product and creation of its maker. But they all preached of him as Radiance, in order to disclose his being properly and inseparably from the essence and his unity with the Father.¹⁷⁷

Radiance is the natural generation of the sun, whereas fire is an unlike consequence of the

¹⁷⁵ *De Decr* 21. The order of scriptural citations follows the order Athanasius’s references.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 23 [Anatolios, 200]. “Καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τοῦ ἀπαυγίσματος τοιοῦτον ἔχει τὸν νοῦν. οὐ γὰρ κατὰ τὸ ἐξαπτόμενον ἐκ τῆς θερμῆς τοῦ ἡλίου πῦρ, ὅπερ καὶ σβέννυσθαι πάλιν εἴωθεν, εἰρήκασιν οἱ ἅγιοι εἶναι τὸν λόγον πρὸς τὸν θεόν, τοῦτο γὰρ ἔργον ἐξωθεν καὶ κτίσμα τοῦ ποιοῦντος ἦν, ἀλλὰ ἀπαύγασμα αὐτὸν εὐηγγελίσαντο πάντες, ἵνα τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἴδιον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ τὴν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνότητα δηλώσωσι.” (*AW* 2:19).

sun's heat. Since the *παραδείγματα* afforded in Scripture are sun and radiance, which are the same in essence, then the Father and the Son are the same in essence according to the biblical *παραδείγματα*. The *παραδείγματα* of light and radiance are therefore best interpreted by use of *ὁμοούσιος*:

Once again, the symbol of the light and the radiance is indispensable. Who would dare to say that the radiance is unlike and foreign to the sun? Or rather, who, upon beholding the relation of the radiance to the sun and the identity of the light, would not confidently say that the light and the radiance are really one and that the one is shown in the other and the radiance in the sun, so that the one who beholds this sees the other. How then can those who believe and see rightly refer to such a unity and natural identity except as 'offspring, one in essence'?¹⁷⁸

Athanasius explains that the sun itself is light and the radiance it generates is also light. Radiance therefore is the generation, or offspring, of the exact essence which generates it. This *παραδείγμα*, therefore, can properly be described according to a certain understanding of the term *ὁμοούσιος*. Again, *ὁμοούσιος* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* do not derive authority from the council or the bishops assembled at the council. The council offered these creedal terms that one could use to accurately express the meaning of, aid in, and preserve proper interpretation of Scripture. Since the language agreed upon at Nicaea accurately interprets Scripture it is trustworthy for theological and ecclesiological use. Therefore, the authority of these words does not derive from the council, but from Scripture. These theological terms express the proper sense of Scripture. As long as one holds to the sense, he is not anathematized.

All must affirm this proper sense or "they deny the Scriptures," and "are immediately estranged from the name of Christians and they would be appropriately called atheists and the worst enemies of Christ."¹⁷⁹ For Athanasius, one who does not agree with the sense of Scripture denies the Scripture itself. To deny the Scripture is to cut oneself off from the name Christian and earn the label atheist. For Athanasius, one who refuses to

¹⁷⁸ *De Decr* 24 [Anatolios, 201]. "πάλιν γὰρ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τοῦ ἀπαύγασματος ἀναγκαῖον εἰς τοῦτο. τίς τολμήσει λέγειν τὸ ἀπαύγασμα ξένον καὶ ἀνόμιον εἶναι τοῦ ἡλίου; ἢ τίς μᾶλλον ἐνορῶν οὕτως τὸ ἀπαύγασμα πρὸς τὸν ἡλίον καὶ τὴν ταυτότητα τοῦ φωτὸς οὐκ ἂν εἴποι θαρρήσας, ὄντως τὸ φῶς καὶ τὸ ἀπαύγασμα ἐν εἰσι καὶ τοῦτο ἐν ἐκείνῳ δεικνύται καὶ τὸ ἀπαύγασμα ἐν τῷ ἡλίῳ τυγχάνει ὄν, ὥστε τὸν ὄρώντα τοῦτο βλέπειν κάκεῖνο; τὴν δὲ τοιαύτην ἐνότητα καὶ φυσικὴν ιδιότητα πῶς ἂν οἱ πιστεύοντες καὶ βλέποντες ὀρθῶς καλέσαιεν ἢ ὁμοούσιον γέννημα," (*AW* 2:20).

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 15 [Anatolios, 192]. "εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀρνοῦνται τὰ γεγραμμένα αὐτόθεν ἀλλότριον καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος ὄντες, οἰκειῶς ἂν καλοῦντο καὶ παρὰ πάντων ἄθεοι καὶ χριστομάχοι· οὕτω γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ἐπωνόμασαν καὶ αὐτοί." (*AW* 2:13).

acknowledge the divinity of the Word as demonstrated in Scripture refuses to acknowledge God.

v. *De Synodis, Theological Language, and Παραδείγματα*

Athanasius's supposed willingness to allow a broader range of theological language comes to the fore in *De Synodis*.¹⁸⁰ In 41 Athanasius offers an extended account of the terminology preferred by Basil of Ancyra. He purposes to show that the language opted for by Basil is in agreement with the language of the council which Athanasius has been defending. Basil, apparently suspicious of ὁμοούσιον, was adamant about the term ὁμοιοούσιον. But according to Athanasius, Basil was just as adamant about maintaining the Son as “of the essence” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας)¹⁸¹ so that “like in essence” (ὁμοιοούσιον) signified the same as “coessential” (ὁμοούσιον). The latter, however, is more precise since, “‘Like-in-essence,’ does not necessarily convey ‘of the essence,’ [but] to say ‘Coessential,’ is to signify the meaning of both terms, ‘Like-in-essence,’ and ‘of the essence.’”¹⁸² Basil is therefore not incorrect in that he still holds to the theological principle of the Son's unique and coessential relationship to the Father though his terminology may not be as precise.

Basil's adherence to the theological principal of Athanasius's explication of ὁμοούσιον is further demonstrated by Basil's reported appropriation of the παραδείγματα of “Fount of Wisdom and Life” as well as “Radiance and Eternal Light.”¹⁸³ Thus Athanasius classifies Basil as one who accepts everything affirmed by the council save ὁμοούσιον, and is therefore not to be treated as an “enemy.”¹⁸⁴ Important to note here is not only the definition of terms, which Athanasius uses to bring Basil into theological agreement, but also the use of the same biblical language drawn from the παραδείγματα.

According to Athanasius, Basil's proper use of the παραδείγματα keeps him in agreement with Athanasius. The ὁμοούσιον gives the most precise expression to what each

¹⁸⁰ Written sometime around 359. See Uta Heil “De synodis Arimini in Italia et Seleucia in Isauria,” *Athanasius Handbuch*, (2011), 221.

¹⁸¹ We cannot be certain that Basil held to such since nowhere in Basil's surviving text do we find “ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς. See Ayres ‘Rereading the *De Decr.*,” 356.

¹⁸² *De Synd* 41 *NPNF* IV:472. “ἐπειδὴ δὲ καὶ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ ὁμοιοούσιον αὐτον εἰρήκασι, τί ἕτερον σημαίνουσιν ἐκ τούτων ἢ τὸ ὁμοούσιον; καὶ γὰρ ὡσπερ ὁ λέγων μόνον ὁμοιοούσιον οὐ πάντως καὶ τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας γνωρίζει οὕτως ὁ λέγων ὁμοούσιον ἀμφοτέρων τοῦ τε ὁμοιοουσίου καὶ τοῦ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας σημαίνει τὴν διάνοιαν.” (*AW* 2:267).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, “Καὶ περὶ μὲν τῶν ἐξ ὄλου τὴν σύνοδον ἀρνούμενων ἀρκεῖ πρὸς ἔλεγχον τὰ ὀλίγα ταῦτα, πρὸς δὲ | τοὺς ἀποδεχομένους τὰ μὲν ἄλλα πάντα τῶν ἐν Νικαίᾳ γραφέντων, περὶ δὲ μόνον τὸ ὁμοούσιον ἀμφιβάλλοντας χρῆ μὴ ὡς πρὸς ἐχθροὺς διακεῖσθαι.” (*AW* 2:266).

is attempting to articulate, but Basil's hesitancy to use ὁμοούσιον does not cut him off from the orthodox fold. Thus, Athanasius is "wooing the broad constituency that might have described themselves as Homoiousian, and was refining the sense of the Nicene Homousios to bring it as close as possible to homoiousios."¹⁸⁵ As David Gwynn states, Athanasius wrote "not just to uphold the authority of Nicaea but to define how Nicaea was to be interpreted." Athanasius appears willing to expand the interpretation of ὁμοούσιος afforded at Nicaea in order to establish theological kinship with others whose theological exegesis led to the same theological conclusions. As long as ὁμοούσιον and ὁμοιοούσιον correctly explain the biblical παραδείγματα, the use of either connects the theologian with the sense of Nicaea.¹⁸⁶

Ayres argues that for Athanasius ὁμοούσιος is used as a cipher for doctrinal debates rather than a theological axiom. Ὅμοούσιος allows Athanasius to engage in complex negotiation between existing terms.¹⁸⁷ When such a cipher is applied to the likes of Basil, therefore, Basil is found within the theological tent of Nicaea though he does not ascribe to the ὁμοούσιον per se. The ὁμοούσιον, therefore, rather than being a doctrinal test, is more akin to a gauge by which one's theological language can be examined for its orthodoxy. The important point here is that Athanasius seems to be more concerned with the scriptural principle ὁμοούσιος aims at describing than requiring adherence to a limited semantic domain of this conciliar word. As Johannes Quasten states, Athanasius is "less concerned about formulas than ideas."¹⁸⁸ Ὅμοούσιος is the most precise descriptor of the biblical παραδείγματα. According to Athanasius, though Basil opts for another descriptor, they both hold to the principle revealed by the παραδείγματα of Scripture, and therefore the theological truth the Council of Nicaea aimed to express.

Stead argues that in the entirety of what can be agreed upon as his genuine corpus, Athanasius uses ὁμοούσιος perhaps 150 times, and many of these instances are reports of others' opinions. Less than half of these instances "really illuminates [Athanasius's] own

¹⁸⁵ Williams, *First Christian Theologians*, 165.

¹⁸⁶ Gwynn, *Athanasius*, 90. This could, however, be a political tactic. If the 359 dating of this work is correct, Athanasius would have been three years into his third exile, which began in 356. He might, therefore, be looking for theological allies wherever he could find them.

¹⁸⁷ Ayres, "Athanasius Initial Defense," 358. See also Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 140-4.

¹⁸⁸ Johannes Quasten, *The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature From the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon*, vol 3 of *Patrology* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics,), 66. See also Frances M. Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon: A Guide to the Literature and its Background*, 2nd Ed (London: SCM, 2010), 65- 68.

usage.” He states:

When these are examined, one striking fact emerges; [Athanasius’s uses of ὁμοούσιος] are almost without exception closely geared to the actual clause of the Nicene Creed, that Son is homoousios with the Father. It is as if Athanasius had only learnt to use the term through his defense of Nicaea...There is in fact a built-in asymmetry in his use of the term, which suggests that he is moving only very cautiously away from the moderate Origenism of Alexander...his use of theological terms is controlled by the long-standing Alexandrian principle that human analogies are imperfect and must be interpreted ‘in an intellectual and spiritual sense’.¹⁸⁹

Athanasius’s limited use of ὁμοούσιος indicates that he was not primarily concerned with the term itself. In his refutation against the Arians, it is well noted that he uses the term once (CA 1.9). If the term and the council were in some way ultimately ecclesiologically and theologically authoritative, he might have appealed to the term and the authority of the council liberally throughout his corpus regardless of any perceived theological identification with Marcellus of Ancyra.¹⁹⁰ He only takes up a defence and somewhat systematic use of the word when he defends the council and its terminology at the request of others. As we have seen he links the authority of council to how it interpreted Scripture, and never argues that the council is authoritative on some account other than that it offers a pious interpretation of the Scripture.

Athanasius’s allegiance to Nicaea in *De Decretis* and *De Synodis* is an allegiance to the proper theological exegesis undertaken at the council. He is adamant that the council is authoritative because it properly interprets Scripture. Adherence to the council is adherence to the theological truths regarding the Eternal Word’s essential relationship with the Father as afforded in Scripture. However, more important than the terms the council offered is the theological principles the council sought to safeguard. So long as one affirms the theological truths stemming from proper biblical interpretation, and anathematizes that which the council anathematizes, he or she is not treated as an “enemy.”

How does all of this piece together with the idea that ἐστὶ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος? We do not see explicitly coming to the fore in Athanasius’s defense of creedal language the idea that Scripture carries the divine presence. *De Decr* was written

¹⁸⁹ Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 260-1.

¹⁹⁰ See Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 97, 101-2, 105-7.

prior to his first flight to the desert (356-362).¹⁹¹ *De Synd* was written 3 years into in his first exile among the monks, so it is conceivable that if this idea originated in monastic context, it might not have yet filtered into Athanasius's thought. We do, however see the personification of Scripture, and the admission of both human and divine authors in Scripture. We also see a high view of Scripture, in that Athanasius seeks to prove and bolster every theological position he makes with Scripture. Additionally, he does not shy away from the texts favored by his opponents, but seeks to create a position from his own favored text as well as his corrective reading of his opponent's texts.

For Athanasius, God discloses certain truths about his eternal being by use of the *παραδείγματα*. The task of the council was to adequately describe and preserve these God-given truths. The phrases *ὁμοούσιος* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* are therefore merely descriptors of the divine *παραδείγματα* of light and radiance. Engaging with the *παραδείγματα* is to speak of the inner life of God, and should one need non-scriptural words to accurately describe what he or she finds in the *παραδείγματα*, *ὁμοούσιος* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* should suffice. These words are not authoritative and indispensable, but more theologically precise than other non-scriptural terms.

As we have seen, Athanasius prefers to let the biblical text stand for itself, and seems to sympathize with those who have a genuine problem with the fact *ὁμοούσιος* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* are nowhere found in Scripture. The *παραδείγματα* themselves, not the phrases used to describe them, are indispensable.¹⁹² As such, he is not so much concerned with the terms *ὁμοούσιος* or the phrase *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* themselves, so much as what they describe in reference to the divine realities God affords in the words of the Bible.¹⁹³ These theological terms express the proper sense of Scripture, so as long as one holds to the sense, he is not anathematized. If theologians cannot affirm this sense then “they deny the Scriptures,” and “are immediately estranged from the name of Christians and they would be appropriately called atheists and the worst enemies of Christ.”¹⁹⁴ Work

¹⁹¹ See Pettersen, *Athanasius*, 12-16.

¹⁹² *De Decr* 23 [Anatolios 200]. “Καὶ γὰρ καὶ τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ φωτὸς καὶ τοῦ ἀπαυγάσματος τοιοῦτον ἔχει τὸν νοῦν,” (*AW* 2:19).

¹⁹³ For an extended reflection on how the Creed properly interprets and explicates the Bible see George L. Parsenios, “The Creed: The Symbol of Faith,” *Theology Today*, vol 67 no 4 (January, 2011), pp 390-404.

¹⁹⁴ *De Decr* 15[Anatolios], 192. “εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀρνοῦνται τὰ γεγραμμένα αὐτόθεν ἀλλότριον καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος ὄντες, οἰκείως ἂν καλοῖντο καὶ παρὰ πάντων ἄθεοι καὶ χριστομάχοι· οὕτω γὰρ ἑαυτοὺς ἐπωνόμασαν καὶ αὐτοί.” (*AW* 2:13).

that relies on such a high view of Scripture might indicate the notion of divine presence in Scripture was easy for Athanasius to accept if and when he became familiar with it in the desert.

5. Conclusion

When Athanasius states *Ἐστὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος*, he is making reference to his position that Scripture is a peculiar means by which God gives humanity an avenue to approach God intellectually and spiritually. This presence also allows for human use of divine power through a plain reading of the text. The biblical authors in the act of divine-inspiration use their theological ability to express divine truth in human language. Such notions were common amongst the desert monks of Egypt among whom Athanasius spent almost a decade in exile. This language does not appear in his earlier works which defend creedal language and are possibly therefore original to monastic thought.

In Scripture, God condescends to humanity in the act of inspiring text and remains present to the text such that Scripture manifests a voice, speaks, contains knowledge, and manifests divine power. This is not because the Bible as it stands on its own maintains a divine power in the ink and paper, but because God is immediately present and immediately available to the ink and paper of Scripture. He is therefore powerfully present to and available by use of the unaltered words. The manner in which God is present to the text is similar to the way in which he is present to creation and a redeemed human being. Scripture is a unique part of creation in which God's presence affords humanity language to speak about him, approach him, and appropriate his power.

Athanasius describes the decisions of Nicaea and the language it offered as derivative of the authority of the scriptural truth it describes. The theologian's task, therefore, is to describe the truths afforded by God in a text, which he has inspired and to which he remains present. Proper reading and description of the biblical text therefore, is an act of piety, since the theologian is describing the truths, which God has given in human language. We have seen that Athanasius is not concerned with the terms *ὁμοούσιος* and *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς* as much as he is adamant that the biblical truths they express are maintained. He is willing to concede the use of other language, so long as that language is faithful to the biblical *παραδείγματα*.

IV. Athanasius, the Bible, and the Alexandrian Ethos

1. Tradition and Influence

The final question this study aims to address is where Athanasius fits within the Alexandrian tradition. In order to situate him in his tradition, I will compare his thought with Origen whom can be described as the figurehead of Alexandrian theology.¹⁹⁵ Certain comparisons between Athanasius and Origen's thought in general have received nascent treatment. The most notable comparisons have been offered by Charles Kannengiesser. In his article "Origen's Doctrine Transmitted By Antony and Athanasius," he offers points of contact between the two Alexandrians' theological conceptions of the Eternal Logos. Kannengiesser notes that Athanasius made no mention of Origen's influence upon his own theology, and states that while no external evidence of such influence is explicit, Athanasius "was aware of the doctrinal tradition of his [Alexandrian] church, as evidenced in his special essay writing *In Defense of the Opinion of Dionysius*," in which Athanasius mentions Origen twice.¹⁹⁶

In addition to the difficulty caused by the lack of explicit internal or external evidence for a "special relationship" between the two Alexandrians, Kannengiesser notes that "[most] of what they have in common must therefore belong to that [shared Alexandrian] tradition" so that the intended comparison "needs first of all to determine certain characteristics of Origen's work, which necessarily require a direct contact, should they also appear in Athanasius's writings." Making the task even more challenging is the loss of Origen's original Greek for most of his transmitted works. Thus a "fruitful lexical comparison" proves a difficult task.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ G.W. Butterworth notes in the preface of Jerome's *On The Meaning of Hebrew Names*, Jerome echoed the endorsement of the Alexandrian Didymus the Blind declaring Origen was "[t]he greatest teacher of the Church after the apostles." *On First Principles*, trans and intro. by G.W. Butterworth (London: Society for Promotion of Christian Learning, 1936), i. Maurice Wiles lists Origen alongside Augustine as towering "above all other figures in the history of early Christian thought." Joseph Wilson Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in Third-century Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1983), xvii. Trigg makes the argument that the intellectual milieu of Alexandria shaped Origen as much as Origen shaped Alexandrian Christian thought, *ibid*, 3-7. For an extensive list scholar's opinions regarding Origen's importance for Christian thought and Alexandrian tradition, see Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen's Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2005) 1-2.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine Transmitted by Antony and Athanasius," *Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition*, vol II of *Origeniana Octava: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa 27-31, August 2001*. Ed. L. Perrone (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 889-90.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 889-90.

Despite the difficulty, Kannengiesser notes three points of contact between the two Alexandrians drawing from Origen's work *Peri Archôn proper* and Athanasius's *DI* and *CA* I and II. First, he notices that Athanasius displays a standard use of the titles *Logos* and *Sophia* in apposition in more than thirty paragraphs of his double treatises in addition to using Origen's four main titles for the Son of God; *Sophia*, *Logos*, *Eikôn*, and *Dynamis*.¹⁹⁸ Second, Origen, after identifying *Sophia* as the Eternal Logos in Prov 8:22, indicates the phrase "beginning of his ways" signifies Sophia's function to exist eternally as "the matrix of the universe." Athanasius, according to Kannengiesser, makes the same basic exegetical move with his incarnational exegesis. Origen locates this mission in the Son's transcendent creation and sustenance of the cosmos, whilst Athanasius locates it in his historical incarnate life. Both Alexandrians therefore identify the passage as indicating the mission of the Logos and his particular relation to creation by using various New Testament ascriptions of Christ to interpret this particular passage.¹⁹⁹ As Weinandy states, "The New Testament proclamation of Christ, for Athanasius, as well as for the Fathers who preceded him, particularly Origen, became the hermeneutical key for unlocking all the ancient theological treasures of the Old Testament."²⁰⁰ Finally, Athanasius, in his polemics against the Arians, repeats Origen's arguments from *Peri Archôn proper* "to the letter" when he indicates that nothing observed in the act of human generation can be attributed to the divine generation existent between the Eternal Father and Son.²⁰¹ Though Kannengiesser acknowledges that his conclusions are "tentative and incomplete," his case moves in the direction of establishing a firmer link between these two great Alexandrians.

When it comes to how the two Alexandrians approach Scripture, however, Kannengiesser notes elsewhere that "[being] the only bishop of his generation from whom we hear public praise of Origen, Athanasius obviously did not feel indebted to the great *didaskalos* of the third century for his own approach to Scripture."²⁰² Thus, while Kannengiesser notices similarities between their doctrines of the Eternal Logos, which might suggest familiarity and imply an Athanasian reliance, Kannengiesser does not think

¹⁹⁸ Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine," 899.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 894, 899. Athanasius likely makes this move under the influence of Marcellus of Ancyra.

²⁰⁰ Thomas G. Weinandy *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction*, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2007), 134.

²⁰¹ Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine," 894-5.

²⁰² Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* II, 710.

that Athanasius takes anything from Origen in regards to use of Scripture. Kannengiesser arrives at this conclusion based on Athanasius's hermeneutical method. The term ἀλληγορία is not listed in Guido Müller's *Lexicon Athanasianum*, and Athanasius only uses the term τυπός and the corresponding verb τυπώω with "the concrete meaning of 'impressed mark'"²⁰³ Kannengiesser infers that since Origen's three-fold sense of Scripture and corresponding hermeneutical method are absent from Athanasius's approach, the latter takes nothing in regards to use of Scripture from the former.

In this chapter, I intend to evaluate any influence from a different entry point. I intend to examine Origen's doctrine of Scripture and compare it to the doctrine pieced together from Athanasius's *Letter to Marcellinus*. While Kannengiesser makes reference to *Marcellinus* indicating that this letter "more than any of [Athanasius's] other writings... illustrates his genuine attitude toward the Bible,"²⁰⁴ he goes on to summarize Athanasius's ascetic use of the Psalms without an attempt to construct Athanasius's theology of Scripture. If Kannengiesser's basic notion that Athanasius may have been familiar with and built upon Origen's theology in the area of Christology, could the same be said of Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture if we begin our investigation with theology of Scripture rather than use of Scripture?²⁰⁵ If we lay aside hermeneutical method, can we find similarities between the two Alexandrians' doctrines of Scripture? Does Athanasius borrow and or expand upon any Origenian notions regarding the nature of inspiration, how the divine and human authors relate to one another, or even a fundamental piece of Origen's interpretative method? I will explore Origen's doctrine of Scripture afforded in the first three chapters *De Principiis* IV with a few references to book I in order to bring his pneumatology to bear on his understanding of Scripture. I will compare three particular aspects of Origen's doctrine of Scripture with Athanasius's: 1) inspiration, 2) how the divine author of Scripture relates to the divinely inspired human, and 3) the purpose of interpretation. It might seem that since their hermeneutics are decidedly dissimilar, we should expect that their theologies of Scripture are also dissimilar. However, these three points of contact indicate at least a small similarity between the two.

²⁰³ Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* II, 710.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 709.

²⁰⁵ Though these three aspects of Athanasius's Christology regarding the Eternal Son resemble that of Origen, Aloys Grillmeier makes the point that the two differ in the area of Christ's human soul. Grillmeier indicates that the soul plays no theological part of Athanasius' soteriological Christology as it does for Origen. See *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, vol I of *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Brown (London: A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1975), 321.

2. Between Origen and Athanasius

Before proceeding with a detailed comparison between Origen and Athanasius, it should be noted that Alexandrian thought does not stagnate between Origen and Athanasius. An important link between the two Alexandrians is Dionysius of Alexandria (248-265) who served as head of the catechismal school in 236 until shortly after his succession of Heraclius as the bishop of Alexandria in 247.²⁰⁶ Dionysius is an interesting figure for two reasons. First, he is the center of theological controversy in his own time as well as Athanasius's, and second because relatively little scholarly work has been dedicated to him.²⁰⁷ Due to linguistic differences between the East and West, Dionysius was called upon by the West to defend his understanding of the Trinity.²⁰⁸ The "Arians" picked up certain aspects of his thought, which Athanasius responded in his work *In Defense of the Opinion of Dionysius*.

Very little of Dionysius' corpus remains extant and most of what we do have is comes from Eusebius.²⁰⁹ It is therefore difficult to explicate his conception and use of Scripture. We know he was a pupil of Origen.²¹⁰ But his relationship to Origen seems somewhat complex. He did not call for Origen's reinstatement to Alexandria after the death of Demetrius who banished Origen. However, Dionysius wrote a letter to Origen on the subject of martyrdom and a letter extolling his teacher to Theoctenus upon Origen's death. We have pieces of his work *On the Promises* written in response to Nepos' *Refutation of Allegorists* preserved by Eusebius. But what has been preserved does not contain Dionysius'

²⁰⁶ See Charles Lett Feltoe *St. Dionysius of Alexandria: Letters and Treatises*, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1918), 11-12, and Johannes Quasten, *The Ante-Nicene Literature After Irenaeus*, vol II of *Patrology* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics _____), 101-2.

²⁰⁷ Only two translations of his work exist, Feltoe in English and K. Brodersen: *Dionysius von Alexandria: Das Lied von der Welt*. Zweisprachige Ausgabe (Zürich: Hildesheim, 1994) in German. Various scholarly works devoted to him occur sporadically over the past century including E. Bouларand, "Denys d'Alexandrie et Arius," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, vol 67 (1966), 162-9; Graeme Wilber Clarke, *Two Mid-Third Century Bishops: Cyprian of Carthage and Dionysius of Alexandria: Congruences and Divergences* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); F.C. Conybeare, "Newly Discovered Letters of Dionysius of Alexandria to the Popes Stephen and Xystus," *The English Historical Review*, vol 25 no 97 (Jan, 1910), pp. 111-4; Attila Jakab, "Denys d'Alexandrie: réexamen des données biographiques," *Recherches Augustiniennes*, vol 31 (2001), pp. 3-37; Traci Neal, "The Bishop Who Couldn't be Martyred," *Catholic Digest*, vol 75 no 4 (Feb, 2011), pp. 18-23; James M. Scott, "Dionysius and the Letter of Aristeas," *SBL XIII Congress* (2008), pp. 325-38; and M van Esbroek, "Nouveaux fragments arméniens de Denys d'Alexandrie," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica*, vol 50 (1984), 18-42.

²⁰⁸ See Justo Gonzalez, *From the Beginnings to the Council of Chalcedon*, vol II of *A History of Christian Thought*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), 256-8.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 257. See also Feltoe, 9 and Quasten, 102.

²¹⁰ Feltoe, 9-12.

own views on allegory, interpretation, or doctrine of Scripture; rather these extracts deal almost wholly with the authorship and textual criticism of John's Revelation. We are therefore uncertain regarding Dionysius's understanding of Scripture and its use.²¹¹ Feltoe concludes:

On the subject of Inspiration we have no ground for thinking that Dionysius took up an independent position. He introduces his Biblical quotation with the phrases current amongst early Christian writers. The general impress therefore left upon the reader is that Dionysius reverted to the more sober methods of interpreting Scripture that prevailed throughout the Church of his day as a whole, though he approached his master's theories in his usual sympathetic spirit and availed himself of much that was valuable in them.²¹²

We can therefore assert very little about Dionysius and his doctrine and use of Scripture other than he appears to be less prone to allegory, but he was not overly critical of and perhaps even sympathetic to it. How much of this attitude and approach was passed down the Alexandrian line to Athanasius is incredibly difficult if at all possible to determine and beyond the scope of this discussion.

3. Inspiration

Beginning our comparison of Origen and Athanasius, it seems the former believes the Scriptures are proved to be inspired by God because of the fulfilled prophecies of and regarding the Word's incarnation. Interestingly, at the outset of *DP VI*, Origen states that he is going to begin his exposition by examining the passages from Moses "the lawgiver of the Hebrew people, and then from the words of Jesus Christ, the author of Christian religion and doctrine."²¹³ But in actuality, he reverses that order and begins with the prophecies given by Christ regarding the preaching of his word throughout the world, and the persecution of those who would follow him. It appears as though Origen wants to begin his defense of the Scripture's inspiration with the work he undertakes in *IV.1.3-7*—the fulfilled prophecies from the Old Testament regarding Christ—, but he seems compelled to begin his exposition

²¹¹ Feltoe, 29-30.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 30.

²¹³ *DP 4.1.1* [Butterworth, 256-7]. "Igitur quam poterimus breviter etiam de hoc assignabimus ex ipsis divinis Scripturis, quæ nos competenter moverint proferentes, id est, de Moyse primo legislatore gentis Hebrææ, et ex verbis Jesu Christi auctoris et principis Christianorum religionis et dogmatis" and the corresponding Greek: "Καὶ πρῶτόν γε τοῦ ἀπ' αὐτῶν τῶν γραμμάτων καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτοῖς δηλουμένων, ῥητοῖς χρήσασθαι, περὶ Μωσέως καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τοῦ νομοθέτου τῶν Ἑβραίων, καὶ τοῦ εἰσηγητοῦ τῶν κατὰ Χριστιανισμὸν σωτηρίων δογμάτων, ταῦτα διαληπτέον," (*PG 11:342-4*).

with Christ's current work in life of the church as predicted during the Incarnation. Origen claims he will begin with the books of Moses, but actually begins with the words of Christ. The starting point, therefore, for Origen is the person of Christ and the fulfillment of Christ's word. Only after he establishes the fulfilled prophecies Christ made proving the trustworthiness of Christ himself, does he move on to what the Old Testament indicates about Jesus. The first step in his exposition, therefore, is to prove the trustworthiness of Christ through the fulfillment of Christ's prophecy. Implicitly then, he seems to think that only after he establishes the truthfulness of Christ can he ascribe any authority to that which testifies of Christ.

This closely resembles the manner in which Athanasius sets about his apology of the Christian faith in *DI*.²¹⁴ When proving that Christ is indeed the true Messiah, Athanasius appeals to the affect Christ has on the "heathen" nations. Then in Athanasius's refutation of the Jews, he moves on to how Christ fulfills each of the Old Testament prophecies.²¹⁵ Both Origen and Athanasius, therefore, prove the truth of Christianity by its continued persistence in light of circumstance and persecution, but Origen goes a step further, by applying the same proof to the divinely inspired Scriptures. The logic runs as follows: Christ continues to work in the world, thus the New Testament is true. The Old Testament predicted Christ's incarnate life as preserved in the New Testament and demonstrated in his continued work; therefore the entire Bible is true and can be understood as divinely inspired. Here too, Origen locates foreknowledge of future events in the text. Such foreknowledge is only proper to divinity. The text therefore must have some special connection with divinity.

Nowhere in *DP IV* does Origen make use of 2 Timothy 3:16.²¹⁶ This does not mean that Origen does not take that particular verse into account when forming his doctrine of Scripture. Origen indicates the origins of the Scripture begin with the activity of God through the agency of the Holy Spirit when he states in the second chapter of book four:

²¹⁴ *DI* 26-40.

²¹⁵ *DP* 4.1 [Butterworth, 256-68]. *DI* 33-40.

²¹⁶ Origen does make use of 2 Timothy 3:16 various works across his corpus for other reasons. Most of these instances occur in homilies. For instance in his twentieth Homily on Joshua, he uses 2 Tim 3:16 to indicate that even though some Scripture is hard to understand, it still has power and is useful. See *Origen: Homilies on Joshua*, trans. Barbara J. Bruce, ed. Cynthia White, (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 176-77, and *PG* vol 12, 923-4. For a list of all twelve uses of 2 Tim 3:16, see *Origène*, vol III of *Biblical Patristica: Index Des Citations Et Allusions Bibliques Dans La Littérature Patristique*, (Paris: Dentre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1980), 447 for a full list of citations.

...in the first place we must call to mind and point out that the Holy Spirit, who by providence and will of God through the power of his only-begotten Word who was ‘in the beginning with God’, enlightened the servants of the truth, that is, the prophets and apostles, (wished above all to lend them) to the knowledge of the mysteries connected with those affairs and causes which concern the lives and relationships of men.²¹⁷

The Holy Spirit enlightened the biblical authors to truths they then recorded. The language here implies a certain mystery given to the authors that could not be discovered otherwise.

Origen continues:

...the divine nature and inspiration both of the oracles of the prophets and of the law of Moses has been specially brought to light and proved since the time when Christ came into this world. For before the predictions made by these were fulfilled, although they were true and inspired by God, still they could not be shown to be true because they were not yet proved to have come to pass; but the advent of Christ proclaimed the truth and divine inspiration of what had been spoken, whereas before it would certainly have been considered doubtful whether the issue of what had been predicted would come to pass.²¹⁸

The truthfulness of the inspired words given to the biblical authors, however, is only knowable in hindsight. Before the advent of Jesus Christ, though the Scriptures were indeed true and inspired, they could not be proved so. The veracity of the Old Testament is only perceivable after the Word’s advent. Inspiration is a reality for the Old Testament books, but is only provable after the Incarnation. Only God holds foreknowledge that could offer prophetic oracles speaking of the Incarnation. The manner in which Scripture predicts

²¹⁷ *DP* 4.2.7 [Butterworth, 282] “illud primo repetentes et ostendentes quoniam Spiritus sanctus providentia et voluntate Dei per virtutem unigeniti Verbi ejus qui erat in principio apud Deum Deus, ministros veritatis prophetas et apostolos illuminabat ad cognoscenda mysteria earum rerum vel causarum quæ inter homines vel de hominibus geruntur,” and the corresponding Greek: “Καὶ πρῶτόν γε τοῦτο ὑποδεικτέον ὅτι ὁ σκοπὸς τῶ φωτίζοντι Πνεύματι προνοία Θεοῦ, διὰ τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν Λόγου, τοὺς διακόνους τῆς ἀληθείας προφήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, ἧν προηγουμένως μὲν ὁ περὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων μυστηρίων τῶν κατὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πραγμάτων,” (*PG* 11:371-2).

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.1.6 [264-5]. “Quibus etiam illud addendum, quod sive prophetarum vaticinatio, sive Moysis lex, divina esse et divinitus inspirata ex eo maxime illuminata est et probata, ex quo in hunc mundum Christus advenit. Ante enim quam complerentur ea quæ ab illis fuerant prædicta, quamvis vera essent, et a Deo inspirata, tamen ostendi vera esse non poterant pro eo quod nondum probarentur impleta. Adventus vero Christi vera esse et divinitus inspirata quæ dixerant, declaravit, cum utique prius haberetur incertum si eorum quæ prædicta fuerant, exitus esset implendus,” and the corresponding Greek: “Ἀεκτέον δὲ ὅτι τὸ τῶν προφητικῶν λόγων ἐνθεον, καὶ τὸ πνευματικὸν τοῦ Μωσέως νόμου ἔλαμψεν ἐπιδημήσαντος Ἰησοῦ. Ἐναργῆ γὰρ παραδείγματα περὶ τοῦ θεοπνεύστους εἶναι τὰς παλαιὰς Γραφὰς πρὸ τῆς ἐπιδημίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ παραστήσαι οὐ πάνυ δυνατὸν ἦν· ἀλλ’ ἡ Ἰησοῦ ἐπιδημία δυναμένους ὑποπτέυσθαι τὸν νόμον καὶ τοὺς προφήτας ὡς οὐ θεῖα, εἰς τοῦμφανὲς ἤγαγεν, ὡς οὐρανίῳ χάριτι ἀναγεγραμμένα,” (*PG* 11:351-354).

supernatural events centuries before they occur indicates that they must be of some divine origin, but this is only apparent after the Incarnation.

In *Marcellinus*, however, Athanasius lets the inspiration of Scripture stand as a *prima facie* truth. He quotes 2 Timothy 3:16 and then begins his theological exposition of the nature of Scripture taking their divine origins as a given. For Origen, the Incarnation removes a veil. In the Old Testament, the Logos came to humanity in the work of the prophet and legislator through the veil of the letter, which both shrouds and contains the spiritual sense of Scripture. This veil of the letter is removed from the face of Moses by the Incarnation.²¹⁹ Humanity can now have assurance that the Law and the Prophets were inspired by God since the incarnate Word proved and fulfilled them. Athanasius states nothing of this sort. Athanasius does, however, indicate that the saints of the Old Testament witnessed a divine power through proper recitation of the text. This power was able to drive out demons, heal the sick, and prepare Israel for war. Whether or not he thought this was pre-Incarnation proof of inspiration is unclear.

In the very next subsection of the same paragraph, Origen goes on to claim:

Further, if any one ponders over the prophetic sayings with all attention and reverence they deserve, it is certain that in the very act of reading and diligently studying them his mind and feelings will be touched by a divine breath and he will recognize that the words he is reading are not the utterances of man but the language of God; and so he will perceive from his own experience that these books have been composed not by human art or mortal eloquence but, if I may so speak, in a style that is divine. The splendor of Christ's advent has, therefore, by illuminating the Law of Moses with the brightness of the truth, withdrawn the veil which had covered the letter of the law and has disclosed, for everyone one who believes in him, all those good things which lay concealed within.²²⁰

²¹⁹ *DP 4.2,5*. See also H. E. W. Turner, *The Pattern of Christian Truth: A Study in the Relations between Orthodoxy and Heresy in the Early Church* (London, A.R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1978), 284-5.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, [Butterworth, 265]. “Ante enim quam complerentur ea quæ ab illis fuerant prædicta, quamvis vera essent, et a Deo inspirata, tamen ostendi vera esse non poterant pro eo quod nondum probarentur impleta Adventus vero Christi vera esse et divinitus inspirata quæ dixerant, declaravit, cum utique prius haberetur incertum si eorum quæ prædicta fuerant, exitus, esset implendus; Sed et si quis cum omni studio et reverentia qua dignum est prophetica, dicta consideret, in eo ipso dum legit et diligentius intuetur certum est quod aligro diviniore spiramine mentem sunsumque pulsatus agnoscat non humanitus esse prolatos eos quos legit, sed Dei esse sermones; et ex semetipso sentiet non humana arte, nec mortali eloquio, sed divino, ut ita dixerim, cothurno, libros esse conscriptos. Legem ergo Moysis splendor adventus Christi per fulgorem veritatis illuminans, id quod superpositum erat litteræ ejus velamen, abstraxit, et omnia quæ coopertura verbi bona tegebantur, universis in se credentibus reseravit,” and the corresponding Greek: “Ὁ δὲ μετ’ ἐπιμελείας καὶ προσοχῆς ἐντυγχάνων τοῖς προφητικοῖς λόγοις, παθὼν ἐξ αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκειν ἴχνος ἐνθουσιασμοῦ, δι’ ὃν πάσχει, πεισθήσεται, οὐχ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι συγγράμματα τοῦς

Besides the historical reality of fulfilled prophecy, Origen appeals to the experience of reading Scripture as proof for its inspiration. The very words of prophecy touch the being of the reader, who “ponders...with all attention and reverence” the Scriptures deserve, in such a way that the reader also understands that these words “are not the utterances of man but the language of God; and so he will perceive from his own experience that these books have been composed not by human or mortal eloquence but...in a style that is divine.” As we have seen, Athanasius appeals to the supernatural power available to the text. Both therefore make an appeal to experience.

For Origen, the clearest proof of Scripture’s inspiration is the advent of Jesus Christ. The prophecies made about him throughout the entirety of the Old Testament are only proved true in light of their actualization. Origen does not explain if or how the Old Testament saints knew their Scriptures were inspired. He simply indicates they could not prove its inspiration prior to the Incarnation. While Athanasius would agree that the truth of prophecy is only provable in hindsight, he could appeal to proof for the Scripture’s inspiration prior to fulfilled prophecy. In the closing paragraphs of *Marcellinus*, Athanasius describes the divine power that the saints of the Old Testament witnessed when they read Scripture. The manifestations of this power drove away demons and healed the sick. Such actions could only be achieved by divine power and activity. This power would therefore suffice to demonstrate that the text has divine origins even before their fullest realization in the fulfilled prophecies concerning the Incarnation. Origen, therefore, appears to have a more Christocentric understanding of the text in which he is interested in typology and prophecy that prove the text’s divine origins. Athanasius on the other hand is more concerned with the power of the plain reading of the text.

Both Origen and Athanasius, however appeal to the experience of Scripture as proof of its inspiration. Origen affirms that when one reads Scripture, with due reverence, he is “touched by divine breath.” These words touch the being of the reader in such a way that the reader receives assurance that he is not dealing with words that belong to a human being, but to God. Athanasius, appeals to the fact that the unified Scriptures are offered in Psalms in such a way that God affords the ability to appropriate the entirety of Scripture in the Psalter. That is, in chanting the Psalter, the Christian receives aid from both the Holy Spirit and the author. Athanasius indicates that this aid is only offered when the words of

πεπιστευμένους Θεοῦ λόγους. Καὶ τὸ ἐνυπάρχον δὲ φῶς τῷ Μωσέως νόμῳ καλύμματι ἐναποκεκρυμμένον συνέλαμψε τῇ Ἰσοῦ ἐπιδημία, περιαιρεθέντος τοῦ καλύμματος, καὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν κατὰ βραχὺ εἰς γνῶσιν ἐρχομένων, ὧν σκιὰν εἶχε τὸ γράμμα,” (PG 11:351-4).

the Psalter are left unaltered. These words are written on the inner being of a human in such a way that one must attribute a divine origin and use to them. Not only do both men appeal to experience, but both also advocate a pious approach to the Scripture in order to ensure this divine encounter.²²¹

4. The Human and Divine Authors of Scripture

The relation between the divine and human elements of Scripture is the most dissimilar factor between Origen's and Athanasius's conception of inspiration. Though both authors locate the unique qualities of Scripture in its divine inspiration, they differ on how the relationship between the divine and human Scriptural authors affects the nature of Scripture. For Origen, some relationship exists between the Spirit who inspired Scripture, and the author to whom he revealed the truths afforded in Scripture. But Origen's doctrine of the Spirit leads him to different conclusions regarding the nature of Scripture and who may ultimately lay claim to its authorship.

For Origen, the Spirit is a particular grace reserved for those progressing in the Christian faith. He states:

I am of opinion, then, that the activity of the Father and the Son is to be seen both in saints and in sinners, in rational men and in dumb animals, yes, and even in lifeless things and in absolutely everything that exists; but the activity of the Holy Spirit does not extend at all either to lifeless things, or to things that have life but yet are dumb, nor is to be found in those who, though rational, still lie in wickedness and are not wholly converted to better things. Only in those who are already turning to better things and walking in the ways of Jesus Christ, that is, who are engaged in good deeds and who abide in God, is the work of the Holy Spirit, I think, to be found.²²²

Creation maintains a relation to that particular person of the Trinity because all creation originates by the Father's work. Likewise, the Word and Wisdom of God, that is the Son, bestows rationality and order upon creation. But the Holy Spirit is said to be a particular gift

²²¹ This seems to create a bit of tension in Origen's thought. However, the difference in proof is aimed at different objectives. The fulfilled prophecies are so obvious even one who is not attending to Scripture with the proper attitude and reverence can still recognize the reality of its inspiration. The one who studies properly experiences the 'divine breath' of the text.

²²² *DP* 1.3.5 [Butterworth, 34]. "Arbitror ergo operationem quidem esse Patris et Filii tam in sanctis quam in peccatoribus in hominibus rationalibus et in mutis animalibus; sed et in his quæ sine anima sunt, et in omnibus omnino quæ sunt; operationem vero Spiritus sancti nequaquam prorsus incidere vel in ea quæ sine anima sunt, vel in ea quæ animantia quidem, sed muta sunt; sed ne in illis quidem inveniri qui rationabiles quidem sunt, sed in malitia positi, nec omnino ad meliora conversi. In illis solis arbitror esse opus Spiritus sancti qui jam se ad meliora convertunt, et per vias Christi Jesu incedunt, id est, qui sunt in bonis actibus, et in Deo permanent," (*PG* 11:150- 1). No corresponding Greek is extant.

of God to his people. This grace, according to Origen, was often removed from the saints of the Old Testament as punishment. Origen therefore takes the gifting of the Holy Spirit to mean the Spirit does not have a necessary communion with creation as a whole.²²³ The Holy Spirit therefore, is a gift given to those who are pursuing God through Christ.

Scripture is the Spirit's revelation of the truths of Christ that were hidden before his advent. The mysterious nature of Scripture reflects the mysterious nature of the Holy Spirit. Origen is hesitant to speak to emphatically about the Spirit since the language regarding his relation to the Father is ambiguous in the Biblical text. In the prologue Origen states:

Then again, the apostles delivered this doctrine, that the Holy Spirit is united in honour and dignity with the Father and the Son. In regard to him it is not yet clearly known whether he is to be thought of as begotten or unbegotten, or as being himself also a Son of God or not; but these are matters we must investigate to the best of our power from holy Scripture, inquiring with wisdom and diligence. It is, however, certainly taught with the utmost clearness in the Church, that this Spirit inspired each of the saints, both the prophets and the apostles, and that there was not one Spirit in the men of old and another in those who were inspired at the coming of Christ.²²⁴

Origen does not answer these questions regarding the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son in the body of Book I. He simply lets it stand that the Holy Spirit is included in the Trinity and proceeds from the Father somehow.²²⁵ He is emphatic, however, that the Scriptures find their origin in God and particularly in the Holy Spirit stating:

Then there is the doctrine that the Scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only the meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. For the contents of Scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things. In this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognised by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge.²²⁶

²²³ *DP* 1.3.5 [Butterworth, 34].

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.P.4 [Butterworth 3-4]. "Tum deinde honore ac dignitate Patri ac Filio sociatum tradiderunt Spiritum sanctum. In hoc non jam manifeste discernitur, utrum natus an innatus vel Filiius etiam Dei ipse habendus sit, necne. Sed inquirenda jam ista pro viribus sunt de sacra Scriptura, et sagaci perquisitione investiganda. Sane quod iste Spiritus unumquemque sanctorum, vel prophetarum, vel apostolorum inspiraverit, et non alius Spiritus in veteribus, alius vero in his qui in adventu Christi inspirati sunt," (*PG* 11:117-8).

²²⁵ Athanasius answers such questions in *Ad Serap* I.15-20, in which he denies that the Spirit should be referred to as a son and seeks to elucidate the personal distinctions within the Godhead.

²²⁶ *DP* 1.P.8 [Butterworth 5]. "Tum demum quod per Spiritum Dei Scripturae conscriptae

While not explicitly stated, it might be possible to affirm that the mysteries inherent in the text could be due to the work of the Holy Spirit who is himself mysterious. Only those who recognize the doctrines of Christ as true recognize the Holy Spirit at all. Only those who are cognizant of the Holy Spirit are aware of the divine mysteries placed in the text, and are able to ponder them. The Holy Spirit with the cooperation of the biblical authors placed these hidden truths in the text. Origen states:

And in the first place we must call to mind and point out that the Holy Spirit...enlightened the servants of the truth...to the knowledge of the mysteries connected with those affairs and causes which concern the lives and relationships of men...These mysteries which were made known and revealed to them by the Spirit, the prophets [portrayed] figuratively through the narration of what seemed to be human deeds...Their aim was that not everyone who wished should have these mysteries laid before his feet to trample upon, but that they should be for the man who had devoted himself to studies of this kind with the utmost purity and sobriety and through nights of watching, by which means perchance he might be able to trace out the deeply hidden meaning of the Spirit of God concealed under the language of an ordinary narrative which points in a different direction, and that so he might become a sharer of the Spirit's knowledge and a partaker of his divine counsel.²²⁷

What Origen seems to indicate here is that the biblical authors were aware of the divine realities that veiled the physical words they wrote. That is to say, in Origen's scheme, as in Athanasius's, the biblical authors were not totally passive vessels. The Holy Spirit revealed

sint et sensum habeant, non eum solum qui in manifesto est, sed et alium quemdam latentem quamplurimos. Formæ enim sunt hæc quæ descripta sunt sacramentorum quorumdam, et divinarum rerum imagines. De quo totius Ecclesiæ una sententia est, esse quidem omnem legem spiritalem; non tamen ea quæ spirat lex, esse omnibus uota, nisi his solis quibus gratia Spiritus sancti in verbo sapientiæ ac scientiæ condonatur.” (PG 11:119). No corresponding Greek is extant.

²²⁷ DP 4.2.7 [Butterworth, 282-3]. “illud primo repentetes et ostendentes quoniam Spiritus sanctus providentia et voluntate Dei per virtutem unigeniti Verbi ejus qui erat in principio apud Deum Deus, ministros veritatis prophetas et apostolos illuminabat ad cognoscenda mysteria earum rerum vel causarum quæ inter homines vel de hominibus geruntur. Homines autem nunc dico animas in corporibus positas, quæ illa mysteria cognita sibi et revelata per Christum, velut humana quædam gesta narrantes vel legales quasdam observantias, præceptaque tradentes figuraliter describebant; ut non qui velit hæc velut conculcanda ante pedes haberet exposita, sed qui se hujusmodi studiis cum omni castimonia et sobrietate et vigiliis dedisset, ut per hæc forte in profundo, latentem sensum Spiritus Dei et sermonis usitata narratione alio rursus prospicientem contextum investigare posset, atque ita socius scientiæ Spiritus et divini consilii particeps fleret,” and the corresponding Greek: “Τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων τοὺς φαινομένους ἡμῖν χαρακτῆρας τῆς νοήσεως τῶν Γραφῶν ὑποτυπωτέον. Καὶ πρῶτόν γε τοῦτο ὑποδεικτέον ὅτι ὁ σκοπὸς τῶ φωτίζοντι Πνεύματι προνοία Θεοῦ, διὰ τοῦ ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν Λόγου, τοὺς διακόνους τῆς ἀληθείας προφήτας καὶ ἀποστόλους, ἦν προηγουμένως μὲν ὁ περὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων μυστηρίων τῶν κατὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους πραγμάτων. Ἀνθρώπους δὲ νῦν λέγω, τὰς χρωμένας ψυχὰς σώμασιν· ἵν’ ὁ δυνάμενος διδασθῆναι, ἐρευνήσας, καὶ τοῖς βάθου τοῦ νοῦ διὰ τῶν λέξεων ἑαυτὸν ἐπιδουῶς, κοινωνὸς τῶν ὄλων τῆς βουλῆς αὐτοῦ γένηται δογμάτων,” (PG 11:371-2).

divine truth to the authors, who in turn authored the Scripture in a mysterious way. The authors used narratives and human forms to encapsulate the divine realities that were revealed to them. This ensured that those who wished to understand the divine mysteries encapsulated by the words of Scripture were required to pursue spiritual things. In order for one to properly understand and interpret the divine Scripture, one must be actively engaged in a spiritual life.

Before going on to demonstrate how Origen relates the human and divine elements, it is beneficial to point out a couple of similarities found in the thought of Athanasius. First, as seen in the first chapter when dealing with Athanasius's understanding of inspiration, Athanasius does not suppose the Spirit overwhelmed the biblical authors. The biblical authors were divinely inspired individuals who spoke in unison with the Holy Spirit in the act of inspiration. Neither Athanasius nor Origen leaves room for any dictation theory of inspiration. The biblical authors are cognizant of the fact they are acting in a divinely inspired manner to produce a work, which originated in the divine mind.

Second, proper interpretation is bound up with proper praxis. As mentioned, at the conclusion of *CG/DI* Athanasius encourages his reader to prove everything in the dual apology by Scripture, while warning his reader that proper interpretation follows from proper asceticism. Origen likewise affirms that the spiritual meaning of Scripture only comes to the one who has dedicated himself to spiritual pursuit, i.e. holiness and study, with more seeming emphasis on study.

Several key differences, however, are also evident. Though Origen's understanding of inspiration includes the Spirit's activity, his undeveloped pneumatology, particularly in regards to the nature of the Spirit's work, leads him to conclusions with which Athanasius would disagree. In his explication of Scripture, Origen exhorts his reader to pursue the spiritual meaning behind the law and narratives of the Old Testament stating:

If, however, anyone should demand of us clear and manifest declarations on these matters out of the holy Scriptures, we must reply that it was the method of the Holy Spirit rather to conceal these truths and to hide them deeply underneath narratives which appear to be records of actual events, narratives in which people are said to go down into Egypt or to be led captive to Babylon, where some were greatly humiliated and put under bondage to masters, while others in the very places of their bondage to masters, while others in very places of their captivity were regarded as famous and illustrious, so that they held positions of power and leadership and were set to rule over nations.²²⁸

²²⁸ *DP* 4.3.11. [Butterworth, 305]. "Si quis vero evidentes et satis manifestas assertiones

Here, Origen indicates that the Holy Spirit opts to conceal truths beneath the biblical text. Such an idea is at odds with Athanasius’s basic theological framework. Anatolios notes that what most distinguishes Athanasius from Origen with reference to the relation between God and creation is the Irenaean emphasis on the immediacy of God to creation. Anatolios states “Origen would not deny such immediacy, but his conception of the universe is much more one of graded hierarchy; it is a universe of constituted mediations... Athanasius’s logic, however... is uniformly focused on the immediate relation between God and creation, to the point of consistently de-emphasizing created mediations.”²²⁹ Athanasius does not offer any notion that some mystery is buried beneath the text, nor that God conceals deeper truths for which humanity must probe. Additionally, Origen is not concerned with any explanation of how the human and divine interact in the production of Scripture in *De Principiis*. He does not seem compelled to explain how a transcendent and wholly incorporeal God and a human being interact to produce the written words of the Bible. Even though he acknowledges that humanity played a part in the process of inspiration by conceding that a human being wrote the words and made use of human images to encase divine realities, he states:

Nevertheless I have no doubt that the careful reader will be uncertain in very many cases whether this or that story is to be regarded as literally true, or true in a less degree, and whether this or that precept is to be literally observed or not. Much effort and toil must therefore be exercised, so that each reader may in all reverence become aware that he is dealing with words that are divine and not human, inserted in the holy books.²³⁰

horum de Scripturis sanctis exposcat a nobis, respondendum est quia occultare magis hæc Spiritui sancto in his quæ videntur esse historiæ rerum gestarum, et altius tegere consilium fuit, in quibus descendere dicuntur in Ægyptum, vel captivari in Babyloniam, vel in his ipsis regionibus quidam quiadem humiliari nimis et sub servitio effici dominorum alii vero in ipsis captivitatis locis clari ac magnifici habiti sunt, ita ut potestates et principatus tenuerint, regendisque populis præfuerint,” (PG 11:393-4). For statements regarding the Law see DP 4.2.2, for the Gospels and how such an approach is demonstrated by the Apostle Paul see DP 4.2.3.

²²⁹ Anatolios, *Coherence*, 25.

²³⁰ DP 4.3.5 [Butterworth, 296.]. “Verumtamen si quis attentius legat, non dubito quod in quamplurimis dubitabit utrum illa vel illa historia putetur vera esse secundum litteram, an minus vera; et illud præceptum, utrum secundum litteram observandum sit, necne. Propter quod multo studio ac labore nitendum est, quatenus unusquisque legentium cum omni reverentia intelligat se divina, non humana verba tractare quæ sanctis libris inserta sunt,” The corresponding Greek is much more extensive. Butterworth indicates that Rufinius omitted a passage from the Latin most likely because he did not understand it. The phrasing from the Greek key to my argument runs as follows: “διακείμεθα γὰρ ἡμεῖς περὶ πάσης τῆς θείας Γραφῆς, ὅτι πᾶσα μὲν ἔχει τὸ πνευματικόν, οὐ πᾶσα δὲ τὸ σωματικόν· πολλαχοῦ γὰρ ἐλέγχεσθαι ἀδύωτον ὄν τὸ σωματικόν. Διόπερ πολλὴν προσοχὴν συνεισρακτέον τῷ εὐλαβῶς ἐντυγχάνοντι ὡς θεῖοις γράμμασι ταῖς θείαις βίβλοις,” (PG 11:386-8).

The narratives and stories of the Old Testament are simply human vessels, which carry divine meaning within them. In Origen’s scheme the human author has no claim upon the words of Scripture since the reader is “dealing with words that are divine and not human.” Each and every word belongs to God in a way that the human author seems inconsequential, and can be set aside by the more advanced interpreter in order to press on to the spiritual meaning.

This creates a tension in Origen’s thought. He earlier claims that the Spirit revealed divine truth to human authors who used bodily images to encase the truths that were revealed to them. Such an indication would seem to give the human author some claim upon the biblical text that he authored. Here however, Origen lays aside the human author of Scripture. The words of Scripture belong to God, not man.

Athanasius, conversely, leaves more room for the human authors of Scripture to claim ownership. The narratives and words of the biblical authors of the Old Testament, excluding the Psalms, belong to the author, so it would be inappropriate for the reader to claim them as his own. While Origen would try to probe the text for the spiritual meaning, Athanasius would simply let the narrative stand as narrative. He states:

There is also this astonishing thing in the Psalms. In the other books, those who read what the holy ones say concerning certain people, are relating the things that were written about those earlier people. And likewise, those who listen consider themselves to be other than those about whom the passage speaks, so that they only come to the imitation of the deeds that are told to the extent that they marvel at them and desire to emulate them. By contrast, however, he who takes up this book – the Psalter – goes through the prophecies about the Savior, as is customary in the other Scriptures, with admiration and adoration, but the other psalms he recognizes as being his own words.²³¹

Athanasius therefore would either try to imitate the saints in the narrative, or appropriate spiritual benefit from any text by finding the appropriate Psalm to incorporate into ascetic prayer and chanting. In the Law, Prophets, and History of Israel, the reader considers the words to be other than his own and only comes to emulate them. He does not claim them as his own. Likewise, when he comes to Psalms that prophecy the events of the Incarnation, he

²³¹ *Ad Marc* 11 [Gregg, 109]. “Καὶ γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο παράδοξόν ἐστι πάλιν ἐν τοῖς Ψαλμοῖς, ὅτι ἐν μὲν ταῖς ἄλλαις βίβλοις ἃ λέγουσιν οἱ ἅγιοι, καὶ περὶ ὧν ἂν λέγωσι, ταῦτα καὶ οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες, περὶ ὧν ἐκεῖνα γέγραπται, ἀπαγγέλλοντές εἰσιν· οἱ τε ἀκούοντες ἄλλους ἑαυτοῦς ἐκείνων ἠγοῦνται, περὶ ὧν ὁ λόγος φησὶ, καὶ τὰς ἐπαγγελλομένας δὲ πράξεις, ἄχρι τοῦ θαυμάζειν καὶ ζηλοῦν αὐτὰς, εἰς τὸ μιμεῖσθαι γίνονται. Ταύτην δὲ βίβλον ὁ λαμβάνων τὰς μὲν περὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος προφητείας συνήθως ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις Γραφαῖς θαυμάζων καὶ προσκυνῶν διεξέρχεται, τοὺς δὲ ἐτέρους ψαλμοὺς ὡς ἰδίους ὄντας λόγους ἀναγινώσκει.” (*PG* 27:21).

considers them someone else's words. The other Psalms, however, allow the reader to appropriate the themes of these parts of Scripture and offer them as his own. Athanasius allows for the words of Scripture to belong to the human author in way that the words recorded in the Old Testament, outside the Psalter, need only to be imitated and marveled at, not claimed. Athanasius limits the reader's direct appropriation of the biblical text by the use of the Psalms, whereas Origen allows for the more mature reader to appropriate any part of Scripture to his or her being.

De Margerie notes "Scripture is no longer for Athanasius the letter that veils every conceivable truth and wisdom that may in principle be thought up; rather, it carries the message of its own proper truth."²³² For Athanasius, the truths of Scripture given to the biblical authors were not purposed to be mysterious by both the Spirit and the author in order to spur the interpreter on to pursue a deeper meaning. Rather, in the act of inspiration, the Holy Spirit gave theological and spiritual truths to those who were spiritually superior to others and theologically sound. Scripture is an overflow and gracious reward of a holy life. As such, the pursuit of a life to which these truths were revealed is requisite to properly understanding these truths. For Athanasius, there is not an inherent *mystery* in the text, so much as an inherent *holiness* of the text. This holiness must be pursued before the truths can be properly and fully comprehended.

The differences between these aspects of Origen's and Athanasius's might be due in part to their differences in pneumatology. Kannengiesser points out:

Origen never faces an adverse theory [to eternal generation] in this regard, because in the early third century, triadic thought was still in its infancy among Christian theologians. In order to overcome the mighty seduction of Valentinian theogonies, Origen's primordial challenge was to demonstrate the rational consistency of three divine hypostaseis...Hence his thought on divine generation remained implicit rather than explicit in his concentration on divine sonship as a hypostatic reality.²³³

Kannengiesser's point is to demonstrate that the "Arian crisis" afforded Athanasius the occasion to further develop the doctrine of eternal generation in a way that Origen was never compelled. This same point could be made in regards to Athanasius's pneumatology and trinitarian doctrine. His dealings with both the "Arians" and the *Tropici* forced Athanasius

²³² De Margerie, *The Greek Fathers*, 120. De Margerie, however, appropriates the term "spiritual sense" for one of Athanasius's "three-fold context of exegesis," which is unhelpful since it is foreign to Athanasius's own terminology and seems alien to his thought.

²³³ Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine," 894.

to defend the divinity of the Spirit, define the Spirit's oneness with the Godhead, and explicate the Spirit's economic function. Athanasius was more comfortable affirming that the human words of Scripture belonged to the author because his doctrine of the Trinity and his pneumatology were more developed, and he allowed for more immediate interaction between the transcendent Triune God and creation. Since Origen's understanding of graded hierarchies in God is absent in Athanasius, the entire Trinity is available to Athanasius in a way it does not seem to be for Origen. His advanced pneumatology also allows Athanasius to give the Holy Spirit a larger role in his theology proper and in turn, his doctrine of Scripture. The Holy Spirit, for Athanasius, is active in unifying and ensuring Scripture points to Christ. Athanasius's thought, therefore, excludes a series of graded hierarchies in God, affirms triunity in work and oneness in divine being, and includes a more developed pneumatology. In turn, these factors seem to allow Athanasius to leave more room for the words of Scripture to somehow belong to the divine-inspirer and the inspired author.

5. Interpretation: How Scripture Affects the Reader

Much has been written on Origen's three-fold interpretive method.²³⁴ A full explication of such would be outside the scope of this project. I intend rather to probe the reason for and affect of the three-fold sense of Scripture, i.e. the theology behind the three-fold interpretive method, since as Karen Jo Torjesen points out, "[the] subject matter of Scripture is the saving doctrines of Christ concealed in the literal sense in a symbolic form and revealed in the spiritual sense in a visible form."²³⁵ The basis for the three-fold method is the salvific effect Scripture has on the reader. Origen states,

Each one must therefore [portray] the meaning of the divine writings in a threefold way upon his own soul; that is, so that the simple may be edified by what we may call the body of the Scriptures (for such is the name we give to the common and literal interpretation); while those who have begun to make a little progress are able to perceive something more than that may be edified by the soul of Scripture; and those who are perfect and like the men of whom the apostle says: 'We speak wisdom among the perfect; yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, which are coming to nought; but we speak God's wisdom hidden in a mystery, the wisdom which God foreordained before the worlds unto our

²³⁴ The most recent and notable works include Peter W. Martens, *Origen and Scripture: The Contours of the Exegetical Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), and Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, *The Soul and Spirit of Scripture Within Origen's Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2005). Both of these works offer a helpful history of research and bibliography for a comprehensive study of Origen's exegesis.

²³⁵ Karen Jo Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure and Theological Method in Origen's Exegesis* (New York: Walter De Gruyter, 1986), 13.

glory’ – such as these may be edified by the spiritual law, which has ‘a shadow of the good things to come’, as if by the Spirit. Just as man, therefore, is said to consist of body, soul and spirit, so also does the holy Scripture, which has been bestowed by the divine bounty for man’s salvation.²³⁶

This quote is lengthy, but illuminates several insights important for this discussion. First, Origen strings together 1 Cor. 2:6-7; Rom. 8:14, and Heb. 10:1 to explain that the truths of the Scripture are wrapped in mystery and are only accessible to those pursuing the highest sense of Scripture. This mysterious and highest sense is foreign to Athanasius’s thought. Second, this quote is a short summary of Origen’s understanding of the purpose of biblical interpretation. Origen states that the three-fold interpretative method is intended to benefit each part of the human existence. The most literal reading of the main text edifies the corporeal body. The soul of Scripture aids the soul of the human being.²³⁷ Finally the spiritual sense of Scripture aids the human spirit. Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro notes that for Origen, the human spirit is incorruptible and unable to sin. The flesh suffers corruption and can be led into sin, but is not sinful per se. It only falls into sin when following the soul. The soul is the seat of the intellect and will. It chooses sin or righteousness. If it chooses sin, the spirit lies dormant and does not follow since the spirit remains pure, but the body follows the soul into sin and suffers for it. If the soul chooses righteousness, both the body and spirit follow suit. The purpose of Scripture is to lead the soul to righteousness and thus

²³⁶ DP 4.2.4 (Butterworth, 275-6). “Tripliciter ergo describere oportet in anima sua unumquemque divinarum intelligentiam litterarum, id est ut simpliciores quique ædificentur ab ipso, ut ita dixerim, corpore Scripturarum; sic enim appellamus communem istum et historiale intellectum; si qui vero aliquantum jam proficere cœperunt, et possunt amplius aliquid intneri, ab ipsa Scripturæ anima ædificentur; qui vero perfecti sunt, et similes his de quibus Apostolus dicit; Sapientiam autem loquimur inter perfectos, sapientiam autem non hujus mundi, neque principum hujus sæculi qui destruentur; sed loquimur Dei sapientiam in mysterio absconditam, quam prædestinavit Deus ante sæcula in gloriam nostram, hic tales ab ipsa spiritali lege quæ umbram habet futurorum bonorum, tauquam a spiritu ædificentur. Sicut ergo homo constare dicitur ex corpore, et anima, et spiritu; ita etiam sancta Scriptura quæ ad hominum salutem divina largitione concessa est,” and the corresponding Greek: “Οὐκοῦν τρισσῶς ἀπογράφεσθαι δεῖ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ψυχὴν τὰ τῶν ἀγίων γραμμάτων νοήματα· ἵνα ὁ μὲν ἀπλοῦστερος οἰκοδομῆται ἀπὸ τῆς οἰοει σαρκὸς τῆς Γραφῆς, οὕτως ὀνομαζόντων ἡμῶν τὴν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχὴν· ὁ δὲ ἐπὶ ποσὸν ἀναβεβηχῶς, ἀπὸ τῆς ὡσπερὶ ψυχῆς αὐτῆς· ὁ δὲ τέλειος καὶ ὁμοῖος τοῖς παρὰ τῷ Ἀποστόλῳ λεγομένοις· Εὐφραν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις, σοφίαν δὲ οὐ τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, οὐδὲ τῶν ἀρχόντων τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου τῶν καταργουμένων, ἀλλὰ λαλοῦμεν Θεοῦ σοφίαν ἐν μυστηρίῳ τὴν ἀποκεκρυμμένην, ἣν προώρισεν ὁ Θεὸς πρὸ τῶν αἰώνων εἰς δόξαν ἡμῶν, ἀπὸ τοῦ πνευματικοῦ νόμου σκιάν ἔχοντος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν. Ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος συνέστηκεν ἐκ σώματος καὶ ψυχῆς καὶ πνεύματος, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον καὶ ἡ οἰκονομηθεῖσα ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ εἰς ἀνθρώπων σωτηρίαν δοθῆναι Γραφή,” (PG vol 11, 363-6).

²³⁷ Origen does not give a full explication of the “soul of Scripture,” but simply indicates that it exists. See Lauro, *Origen and Soul*.

benefit the entire being of a human.²³⁸ Thus the tripartite nature of humanity is reflected in and aided by the three-fold interpretative method. The point to be made here is that the purpose of biblical interpretation is to aid the entirety of human existence in its pursuit of godly perfection. Though Origen asserts a gradation of spiritual achievement amongst Christians, God graciously affords every Christian aid by one or all three of the senses in his or her pursuit of the highest spiritual life and interpretation regardless of spiritual achievement.

Peter Martens agrees to an extent, but pushes his thesis further. According to Martens “Origen contextualized interpreters—himself included—within the Christian drama of salvation.”²³⁹ He goes on to state

For Origen, the contours of the exegetical life included, yet went far beyond, the mastery of Greco-Roman philology. It was a scholarly life that refracted these skills through the loyalties, procedural guidelines, moral dispositions, and theological perspectives of the Christian faith that, when seen as a whole, made this life both expressive of, and in continual search for salvation.²⁴⁰

For Martens, Origen’s entire scheme revolves around the interpreter’s salvation. The tools of philology aid the interpreter on his quest to properly handle Scripture. His concern is not proper interpretation for pedantic theological precision; rather, proper interpretation inculcates salvation of the entire being, i.e. the body, soul, and spirit. Rowan A. Greer even goes so far to say that “Origen virtually identifies the spiritual life with the interpretation of Scripture since to begin to penetrate the deeper meaning of the sacred text is to participate so far as possible in the ultimate realities that mark the Christian’s destiny.”²⁴¹

Both Lauro and Martens build off the work of W. Gruber who state:

Insofern das Wort Spiegel der Welt ist, entspricht seiner Mehrschichtigkeit eine Reihe von existenziellen Entwicklungsstufen im Menschen. Es gibt dennoch so etwas wie eine Zuordnung von Sinn und Entwicklungsstufe, zwischen denen ein klares Verhältnis bestehen muss,

²³⁸ Lauro, *The Soul of Scripture*, 86-9. See also Lauro’s article “The Anthropological Context of Origen’s Two Higher Senses of Scriptural Meaning,” *Origeniana Octava: Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition: Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress Pisa, 27-31 August 2001*, vol I (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 613-24.

²³⁹ Martens, *Origen and Scripture*, xi.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁴¹ Rowan A. Greer and James L. Kugel, *Early Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986), 180. Greer, unfortunately, only gives explication of Athanasius’s exegetical argumentation against the Arians and does not explore the ascetic requisite for and application of Scripture, pp. 186-7.

sollen sie nicht gegenseitig verschlossen bleiben. Hier liegt die tiefere Begründung der Arkandisziplin.²⁴²

The study of Scripture for Origen is therefore not a wholly academic endeavor. Though Origen is one of the most important Christian thinkers in the history of the church and the majority of his contribution is biblical commentary, his purpose in theological inquiry and exegesis is for the benefit of the church's salvation. Though he is lofty and philosophical in his construction, his intention is not pedantic; rather, though he was never ordained, he clearly cast himself in a pastoral role. As Ronald E. Heine states in the preface to his work *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church*, though Origen was well educated in the disciplines of Greek education as a Grammaticus and a philosopher, "he was first and foremost a man of Christian faith. He considered his Greek education only a 'handmaid' to serve the Christian faith. His life was devoted to understanding, defending, and promoting the faith."²⁴³

This pastoral emphasis is evident in Athanasius as well. When he quotes 2 Timothy 3:16 at the beginning of *Marcellinus* he names the chief function of Scripture as teaching, but this teaching is for the benefit of spiritual aid. When a reader works through the Old Testament narratives and laws, he marvels at and emulates them until he approaches the Psalter and is able to appropriate those words in prayer and allow his soul to join the Holy Spirit and the saints in prayer. Thus the purpose of Scripture for Athanasius is also to aid the believer on his spiritual journey by giving him the proper means to enter into the presence of the king.

Furthermore, the theological anthropology comes to the fore in Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture though in a much different form. Nowhere does Athanasius explicate a tripartite understanding of the human being. His salvific emphasis is grounded in the corporeal existence of the human being and opts for an interpretive method that sanctifies the human bodily existence rather than probe the bodily words of Scripture for deeper spiritual meaning.

For Origen, salvation is the ability to contemplate God, thus imagination is encouraged, for an enlightened and saved soul can probe the things of God. Athanasius flips

²⁴² W. Gruber, *Die pneumatische Exegese bei den Alexandrinern: Ein Beitrag zur Noematik der Heiligen Schriften, Schriften und Vorträge im Rahmen der theologischen Fakultät in Graz*, Reihe D, Heft (1957), 5, cf 74.

²⁴³ Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in Service of the Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), viii.

this idea. The soul had no existence before it was embodied. Prior to the Fall, the soul kept the body from corruption by contemplating God. When the human soul began to contemplate the sensible things of the body and sinned, the body suffered the corruption to which it was prone. When Christ restored the body to incorruptibility, the soul was able to re-assert its control over the body and enjoy a renewed contemplation of God. The body, however, had to be remade before the soul could have a renewed contemplation. Thus salvation is a harmonious life consisting of a recreated body and the soul's renewed contemplation. This idea is in opposition to Origen, who holds that salvation was a detached existence of the intellectual soul from the physical body.²⁴⁴

For Athanasius, the Scriptures afford the means for both the body and the soul to be re-formed to participation with God. Once again, Athanasius states:

There is also this astonishing thing in the Psalms. In the other books, those who read what the holy ones say concerning certain people, are relating the things that were written about those earlier people. And likewise, those who listen consider themselves to be other than those about whom the passage speaks, so that they only come to the imitation of the deeds that are told to the extent that they marvel at them and desire to emulate them. By contrast, however, he who takes up this book – the Psalter – goes through the prophecies about the Savior, as is customary in the other Scriptures, with admiration and adoration, but the other psalms he recognizes as being his own words.²⁴⁵

It has already been noted that in this quote Athanasius distances the reader of Scripture from the authors of Scripture's narratives, laws, and prophecies. Additionally, we have seen how imitation of biblical characters fits into Athanasius's interpretive and ascetic regimen. By imitating biblical characters, a Christian becomes more holy and therefore more like Christ. Imitation also serves as a means by which the body ceases its corruptive activity and forms the individual to a Christ-like life.²⁴⁶

The Psalter in particular affords the means by which the soul is re-formed and restored. He states:

But even so, the Book of Psalms thus has a certain grace of its own, and a distinctive exactitude of expression. For in addition to the other things in which it enjoys an affinity and fellowship with the other books, it possesses, beyond that, this marvel of its own – namely, that it contains even the emotions of each soul, and it has the changes and rectifications

²⁴⁴ Pettersen, *Athanasius and the Human Body*, 92-93.

²⁴⁵ *Ad Marc* 11. [Gregg, 109]. For extended Greek quote see pp 69.

²⁴⁶ See discussion on page 26.

of those delineated and regulated in itself. Therefore anyone who wishes boundlessly to receive and understand from it, so as to mold himself, it is written there. For in the other books one hears only what one must do and what one must not do...But in the Book of Psalms, the one who hears, in addition to learning these things, also comprehends and is taught in it the emotions of the soul, and, consequently, on the basis of that which affects him and by which he is constrained, he also is enabled by this book to possess the image deriving from words. Therefore, through hearing, it teaches not only not to disregard passion, but also how one must heal passion through speaking and acting. Now there certainly are in the other books preventive words that forbid wickedness, but in this book is also prescribed how one must abstain.²⁴⁷

Once again we see Athanasius informing his reader that the Psalter instructs the soul by mirroring the soul's emotions, and instructing the soul how to direct the body and abstain from sin. What we see, therefore, is a hermeneutic that aids the entire human existence. By imitation, one staves off corruption. By use of the Psalms, one instructs the soul how to abstain from sin and further direct the body away from corruption.

Though Athanasius does not appropriate Origen's tripartite anthropology and hermeneutical scheme, his anthropology and hermeneutical scheme similarly inform his salvific reading of the text. For Origen the lower senses of Scripture, while beneficial, do not aid the human spirit in its saving contemplation of God. Allegory helps the human spirit penetrate to the deeper meaning of Scripture so that a restored contemplation of God, i.e. salvation, can occur. Athanasius, on the other hand, defines humanity's need as salvation from its corrupted nature comprised of a unified body and soul.²⁴⁸ Again, the narratives afford the reader the means to imitate the saints of the Bible and therefore participate in divinization. Simultaneously, Psalms afford the opportunity for the reader's soul to be instructed in order that it may assert control over the body and further aid in imitating God. Though their anthropological and hermeneutical schemes differ, their anthropologies inform

²⁴⁷ *Ad Marc* 11. [Gregg, 107-8]. “Ἡ δὲ γε βίβλος τῶν Ψαλμῶν καὶ οὕτως ἔχει τινὰ πάλιν χάριν ἰδίαν καὶ παρατήρησιν ἐξαίρτον· πρὸς γὰρ τοῖς ἄλλοις, ἐν οἷς πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας βιβλους ἔχει τὴν σχέσιν καὶ κοινωνίαν, λοιπὸν καὶ ἴδιον ἔχει τοῦτο θαῦμα, ὅτι καὶ τὰ ἐκάστης ψυχῆς κινήματα, τὰς τε τούτων μεταβολὰς καὶ διορθώσεις ἔχει διαγεγραμμένας καὶ διατετυπωμένας ἐν ἑαυτῇ· ὥστε τινὰ τὸν βουλόμενον ὡς ἄπειρον ἐξ αὐτῆς λαμβάνειν καὶ κατανοεῖν, οὕτω τὸ τυποῦν ἑαυτὸν, ἐκεῖ γέγραπται. Ἐν μὲν γὰρ ταῖς ἄλλαις βίβλοις μόνον τις ἀκούει τὸν νόμον προστάττοντα, ἃ (μὴ) δεῖ ποιεῖν καὶ μὴ δεῖ πράττειν·... Ἐν δὲ τῇ βίβλῳ τῶν Ψαλμῶν, πρὸς τῷ ταῦτα μανθάνειν τὸν ἀκούοντα, ἔτι καὶ τὰ κινήματα τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ψυχῆς ἐν αὐτῇ κατανοεῖ καὶ διδάσκεται· καὶ λοιπὸν πρὸς ὃ πάσχει καὶ ἐν ᾧ συνέχεται, δύναται πάλιν ἐκ ταύτης ἔχεσθαι τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν λόγων, ὥστε μὴ μόνον ἀκούσαντα παρέρχεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πῶς δεῖ λέγοντα καὶ ποιοῦντα θεραπεύειν τὸ πάθος, διδάσκει. Εἰσὶ μὲν γὰρ καὶ ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις βίβλοις κωλυτικοὶ λόγοι ἀπαγορεύοντες τὰ φαῦλα· ἐν ταύτῃ δὲ καὶ πῶς ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ τετύπεται,” (*PG* 27, 20).

²⁴⁸ See, Pettersen, *Human Body*, 112-3.

their soteriological reading of Scripture.

Finally, Origen makes a statement in his twentieth homily on the book of Joshua that seems similar to a statement made by Athanasius at the end of *Marcellinus*. Origen states:

Therefore, O Hearer, if you observe that sometimes you recite in your ears a Scripture that you do not understand and its meaning seems obscure to you, submit nonetheless to its chief benefit: By hearing alone, as if by certain incantation, the poison of the noxious powers that beset you and that plot against you is expelled and driven away. Only take care that you do not become “as vipers that are deaf and stop up their ears, lest they hear the sound of the enchantment and magic that is chanted by the wise person.” For example, there is a song that is sung and chanted by the wise Moses and that is sung and chanted by the wise [Joshua] of Nun and that is sung and chanted by all the wise prophets. Moreover, we have said these things for this reason, that on hearing the Scriptures we may not reject them, even if we do not understand them. But “may it be done to us according to faith,” since we believe that “all Scripture inspired by divine influence is useful,” we ought to believe that it is useful even if we do not discern the usefulness.²⁴⁹

Here Origen notes the divine power afforded by a plain reading of the text. Though one may not understand what he or she is reading, simply by reading it, the reader is given spiritual aid since the divine origins of Scripture ensure each has a beneficial utility.

Athanasius makes the same sorts of claims in *Marcellinus* 32-33. He appeals first to the power of chanting Psalms, and then to the same Old Testament figures that sing Scripture cited by Origen. While Origen makes a general reference to the “poison of the noxious powers that beset” and “plot against,” Athanasius makes a concrete reference to demons. While Origen is more general than Athanasius, both Alexandrians locate a spiritual power the reader can use to overcome demonic oppression by reading the biblical text aloud. As we have seen however, such thought was present in monasticism. It is therefore just as

²⁴⁹ *In Librum Jesu Nave Homilia XX*, [Bruce, 176-7]. “Si ergo vides, o auditor, aliquando legis Scripturam in auribus tuis quam non intelligis, et sensus ejus tibi videtur obscurus, interim hanc primam suscipe utilitatem, quod solo auditu velut præcansatione quadam, noxiarum virtutum, quæ te obsident et quæ tibi insidiantur, virus depellitur et fugatur. Observa tantum ne efficiaris sicut aspides surdæ, et obturantes aures suas, ne audiant vocem incantationis et veneficii, quod incantatur a sapiente. Verbi causa, est carmen quod præcantatur et canitur a sapiente Mose, et quod præcantatur et canitur a sapiente Jesu Nave, et quod præcantatur et canitur a sapientibus omnibus prophetis. Hæc autem idcirco diximus, ne fastidium capiamus audientes Scripturas, etiam si non intelligimus, sed fiat nobis secundum fidem nostram, credentibus quia omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata utilis est. Si ergo divinitus inspirata est et utilis, etiamsi non sentiamus utilitatem, credere tamen debemus quia utilis est,” (*PG* 12:923-4).

likely that Athanasius appropriated this idea from the monasteries as from Origen. However, it is equally possible that if Athanasius somehow received this tradition from Origen, he took to the desert with him.

6. Conclusion

If we begin with a comparison of interpretive methods, Athanasius and Origen appear to have little in common. Origen's interpretive method attempts to get at the divine realities encapsulated in the words of Scripture, while Athanasius opts for, what might be called, a more plain reading of the text. Though their interpretive framework differs vastly, their conceptions of Scripture are surprisingly similar at their foundation.

Both Athanasius and Origen base their conception of Scripture in their pneumatology. For Origen, the Holy Spirit is mysterious, and is only related to those who are pursuing the spiritual life afforded by God in Christ. The Scripture too is a type of grace that deepens as the interpreter pursues study in conjunction with spiritual praxis. For Origen, however, the Holy Spirit is mysterious and in *De Principiis* he does not seem to know what to make of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, even though his pneumatology seems to loom in the background, his doctrine of Scripture and his interpretive method are "thoroughly dominated by his understanding of the Logos."²⁵⁰ For Athanasius, Christ stands as the unifying theme of Scripture since its entirety "serve the Word." However, since Athanasius's pneumatology is more developed than Origen's, Athanasius brings the Spirit's role in the inspiration and function of Scripture to the fore.

For Athanasius, the Spirit is divine and one with the triune Godhead. Though each genre of Scripture contains a particular distinction, because the Holy Spirit inspires and works through Scripture, every distinction is present in the others. This Spirit ensures that the diverse books of Scripture are inseparable. Similarly, the Spirit is the agent that inculcates a human's divinization and sanctification. This function is manifested throughout the Scriptures, though its most potent instance occurs with proper use of the Psalms. Both, therefore, base their understanding of Scripture in their understanding of the pneumatology. While Origen encourages his reader to pursue the truth beyond the words of Scripture and Athanasius does not, both understand that whatever the divine realities of Scripture may be, they are only made available by God.

Similarly, though their theological anthropologies differ, both indicate that proper biblical interpretation meets humanity's salvific need. For Origen, one needs to probe

²⁵⁰ Torjesen, *Origen's Exegesis*, 108.

beyond the words of Scripture to the spiritual meaning in order to re-establish proper contemplation of God. For Athanasius, the narratives, laws, and instructions of Scripture provide a means of imitation which reform the corrupt being of the human, while the Psalms afford instruction for the human soul's reassertion of control over the body. Salvation and sanctification are the purpose of proper interpretation.

The basic framework for their doctrine of Scripture therefore is strikingly similar. Though different philosophical and anthropological concerns lead to different conclusions of Scripture, their starting point is the same; namely a doctrine Holy Spirit and an understanding of his sanctifying work. Whether or not this represents the larger Alexandrian tradition would require further comparison including a figure prior to Origen as well as one of Athanasius's later Alexandrian contemporaries. Additionally, one might offer a similar survey from a contemporary tradition to create a theology of Scripture aimed to demonstrate any uniqueness of an Alexandrian conception. At this point, it suffices to say that Athanasius and Origen both build their doctrine of what Scripture is from a similar foundation. That is, their concept of God, and the Holy Spirit and his work in particular drives their doctrines of Scripture.

As stated at the outset, we can see basic points of contact between the Athanasius's and Origen's doctrines of Scripture. We can assert that Athanasius is likely familiar with the Alexandrian tradition. How directly the work of Origen influences the thought of Athanasius, however, is difficult to determine. We cannot say that Athanasius takes from Origen certain themes, which he appropriates and adapts. But we can say that based on his familiarity with the Alexandrian tradition and the points of contact with his famed predecessor, such appropriation and adaptation is at least feasible, though such appropriation and adaptation from Origen by Athanasius may be mediated through other figures.

V. Canon

Before concluding, I will examine how Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture informs his understanding of canon. David Brakke has been a significant contributor to the study of the formation of Athanasius's canon. Brakke notes that Athanasius's 39th *Festal Letter* (367) is most famous for containing the first instance of the New Testament canon that would eventually prevail, but notes "less studied is its origin in the social conflict between Episcopal and academic Christianities."²⁵¹ He states elsewhere that studies regarding the canon's formation typically begin by asking "where, at what time, and by what criteria early Christians considered certain writings authoritative." He indicates the less common questions, which he aims to answer, inquire what the theological and political effects the canons had in various early Christian communities, what social institutions and modes of authority did canons support and undermine, and what were the practical and spiritual goals pursued by leaders who promulgated canons.²⁵²

In all instances Brakke indicates that Athanasius's creation of canon was largely motivated by a desire to unify the Egyptian church under the Alexandrian See. In the *Festal Letter*, Athanasius argues that only Christ is teacher and he teaches through the books comprising Scripture, which have been handed down from the Apostles.²⁵³ Even the Apostles are only teachers in the sense that they deliver the truths they received from Christ. Thus all teaching finds its source in Christ who is the one true teacher. Brakke takes this to mean that Athanasius uses the equation of Scripture with Christ's teaching to counter the "human teaching" of the heretics and the apocryphal books they use.²⁵⁴

In the course of his explication, Brakke lists apparent theological concerns, which compelled Athanasius to form a canon with the intention to reinforce orthodox thought and

²⁵¹ Brakke, *Athanasius Politics*, 67.

²⁵² Brakke, "Canon Formation and the Social Conflict in Fourth-Century Egypt: Athanasius of Alexandria's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*," *Harvard Theological Review*, vol 87 no 4 (1994), 396. See also "A New Fragment of Athanasius's Thirty-Ninth *Festal Letter*: Heresy, Apocrypha and Canon," *Harvard Theological Review*, vol 103 no 1 (2010), pp 47-66. For a parallel between Brakke's assessment of Athanasius's canon list and the canon of the Hebrew Bible see Hindy Najam "The Vitality of Scripture Within and Beyond the 'Canon'", *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol 43 no 4-5 (2012), pp.497-518. She argues that the generative vitality of Scripture should move scholars and theologians to a more open understanding of 'canon'.

²⁵³ Brakke, *Athanasius Politics*, 66-8.

²⁵⁴ Athanasius lists both the Arians and the Melitians in his letter, but only makes reference to the apocryphal books used by the latter.

impose adherence to Alexandrian theology and ecclesiastical authority. Brakke's sociological and historical context is helpful, and to a certain extent, he is correct. Canon lists meant to safeguard proper Christian belief are evidenced by reactions to Marcion as early as the mid 140s.²⁵⁵ But Brakke does not take into account the language indicating that Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture plays some part in Athanasius's canon list.

Language from *Marcellinus* as well as *Serapion* helps inform the theological context for Athanasius's canon list. In the *Festal Letter*, Athanasius claims the heretics are dead as opposed to the orthodox that has the Scriptures for salvation. The Scriptures are "springs of salvation (πηγαὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου), so that someone who thirsts may be satisfied by the words they contain"²⁵⁶ In his explication of the unified work of the Trinity, Athanasius states, "the Father is the Fountain (πηγῆς) and the Son is called the River, and so we are said to drink of the Spirit... But when we drink of the Spirit, we drink of Christ."²⁵⁷ Here Athanasius draws attention to the source of Scripture. As our discussion has shown, Athanasius prefers to draw from biblical imagery when developing his theological positions. Here he appropriates the biblical language he used to describe a Christian's salvific nourishment from divinity. The Father is the source of spiritual sustenance, which flows down through the Son and humanity drinks from the Spirit. The Spirit actualizes the spiritual nourishment of the Father for the Christian. Thus when the Scripture is referred to as the πηγὰὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου, it is none other than the Father, flowing through Christ in the Spirit made available to the Christian in Scripture. To drink of the Scripture is to drink of divinity since Ἐστὶ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τῶν Γραφῶν ῥήμασιν ὁ Κύριος.²⁵⁸ The description of this collection of books as the "spring of salvation" could indicate that Athanasius identifies what Scripture is by what it does. Since these books satisfy a salvific thirst, which is the economic function of the Holy Spirit, he can identify these books as Scripture.

²⁵⁵ Anatolios, "The Canonization of Scripture in the Context of Trinitarianism," *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 15. See also Gwynn, 56-7, and 152-6.

²⁵⁶ *FL* 39 [Brakke, 329]. "ταῦτα πηγὰὶ τοῦ σωτηρίου, ὥστε τὸν διψῶντα ἐμπορεῖσθαι τῶν ἐν τούτοις λογίων." (Kirchhofer, 9).

²⁵⁷ *Ad Serap* 1.19.4 [DeI Cogliano, 82]. "Πάλιν τε τοῦ Πατρὸς ὄντος πηγῆς, τοῦ δὲ Υἱοῦ παταμοῦ λεγομένου, πίνειν λεγόμεθα τὸ Πνεῦμα· γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι "Ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐν Πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν." Τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα ποτιζόμενοι, τὸν Χριστὸν πίνομεν· "Ἐπινον γὰρ ἐκ πνευματικῆς ἀκολουθούσης πέτρας· ἡ δὲ πέτρα ἦν ὁ Χριστός,"" (*PG* 26:574-6).

²⁵⁸ *Ad Marc* 33. *PG* 27:45.

Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture comes to the fore again in his discussion regarding certain Melitian apocryphal books. This discussion is not aimed at dismissing the non-canonical books entirely, but to distinguish which books are useful in addition to his authorized canon from those that are harmful. The useful books instruct new believers in "the words of piety."²⁵⁹ These useful books gain their status from their relationship to the canonized books since "[in] these books [of the canon] alone the teaching of piety is proclaimed."²⁶⁰ Athanasius finds value in these books because they prime the new Christian to read the Bible. She is instructed in the "word of piety" (τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγον) before she deals with the works which proclaim the teaching of piety (ἐν τούτοις μόνοις τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας διδασκαλεῖον εὐαγγελίζεται).

Here we see the personification of texts once again employed by Athanasius. The books of the canon proclaim (εὐαγγελίζεται) the teaching of piety (εὐσεβείας διδασκαλεῖον). Similarly, the helpful books catechize (κατηχεῖσθαι) the new believer and teach her how to properly read the words of piety (τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγον) afforded in Scripture.²⁶¹ The "voice" of the apocryphal books used by the heretics, however, "are empty and polluted."²⁶² Here Athanasius contrasts that which is useful to aid one's understanding of Scripture to that which is not, by indicating that the "voice" of the heretical apocryphal books is antithetical to the voice of Scripture. But the "voice" of the useful books prepares the Christian novice for the "voice" of Scripture. Furthermore, the Scriptures which are pure waters of divinity and salubrious to both the body and soul, while the apocryphal books carry nothing of value and are unwholesome.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ *FL 39* [Brakke, 330]. "κατηχεῖσθαι τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας λόγον," (Kirchhofer, 9).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, [Brakke, 329-30]. "ἐν τούτοις μόνοις τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας διδασκαλεῖον εὐαγγελίζεται," (Kirchhofer, 9).

²⁶¹ For an analysis of how Athanasius uses one of the "useful books" see Johan Leeman who catalogues Athanasius's citation of allusions to the Book of Wisdom. He notes that Athanasius draws upon *Wisdom* for his refutation of pagan idolatry, his explication of original sin, the possibility to know God through creation, the uncreated essence of the Son, and the divinity of the Spirit. He concludes "at least with regard to the book of Wisdom, there is no difference between "canonical books" and books to be read to the catechumens." "Athanasius and the Book of Wisdom," *Ephemerides theologicae Lovanienses*, vol 73 no 4 (Dec 1997), 368.

²⁶² *FL 39* [Brakke, 330]. This section of the letter only exists in Coptic to which I do not have access. Furthermore, the difference in language would hinder a semantic comparison. For a more recent Greek text and French translation using both Greek and Coptic fragments see "S. Athanase *Lettres Festales Et Pastorales* en Copte," *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol 151 no 20, Ed. and trans by L.-TH Lefort (Louvain: Imprimerie Orientaliste L. Durbecq), 1955, pp 31-40.

²⁶³ See discussion on pp 37-9

In conclusion, Brakke's thesis emphasizes Athanasius's political concerns and does not engage with his doctrine of Scripture, nor does he engage with the question of how Athanasius follows his tradition.²⁶⁴ While Athanasius certainly used political means in an attempt to unify the Egyptian church, ignoring Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture seems to portray him as an ecclesiastical-politician rather than a pastor-theologian. We have seen throughout this work that Athanasius had a doctrine of Scripture, which informed how he used Scripture. While much more could be written concerning how Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture informs his canon list, the instances of formal language and attribution of voices to texts indicates that his doctrine of Scripture plays some, if not a significant part, in his creation of a canon list.

²⁶⁴ See Edmon L. Gallagher discussion regarding the Father's conception of the relation between the Hebrew alphabet and the Old Testament canon. *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 89-90.

VI. Conclusion

In order to fairly evaluate how any figure uses the Bible, one must first address questions of doctrine which include inspiration and function. In order to avoid the anachronistic tendency of evaluating ancient interpreters by modern standards, one must first construct a framework by which an interpreter is judged. Questions like consistency and coherency can only be addressed after one has constructed the framework from which an interpreter interprets. Before an evaluation that is charitable to the interpreter can be undertaken, one must first explicate a given interpreter's doctrine of Scripture.

For Athanasius, the scriptures are a divinely inspired collection of books written by holy men that reflects the being of the trinitarian God in whom they find their origin. This collection mirrors the economic role of the Holy Spirit who, though not in isolation of the other two persons, is the agent of inspiration. When studying Athanasius's biblical interpretation, issues of novel and polemical exegesis should be examined against his theological conception of Scripture. When his doctrine of Scripture is rightly pieced together, it sheds light on how he uses the Scripture, and how he engages in the theological task.

According to Athanasius, in the act of inspiration, the Holy Spirit identified individuals of a superior holiness of life and theological knowledge. The Spirit made use of these holy authors in a manner that did not override their agency, but cooperated with it. The human author of Scripture penned a work that was an overflow of his holy life. Holy people produced a holy text that is authoritative, and worthy of study and contemplation. The words and expressions of the Bible are superior in both holiness and theological precision because the human authors were superior in holiness and ability to express theological truths regarding God. The church can trust the biblical books because they can trust that they came from an authoritative source; holy and theologically superior individuals whom the Holy Spirit inspired to write a holy book.²⁶⁵

Though Athanasius makes room for the human author of Scripture to claim ownership of the words he wrote, Scripture's ultimate purpose, unity, and function derive from its divine inspiration. Due to the Holy Spirit's activity in the act of inspiration, though various parts of Scripture seem independent of one another, Scripture as a whole is inseparable because the Holy

²⁶⁵ *Ad Marc* 31, *DI*, 56.

Spirit's presence and activity ensure it.²⁶⁶ Furthermore, Scripture testifies to Jesus because the Holy Spirit ensures that each part of Scripture "serves the Word." Additionally, Scripture is a way in which one participates in the divine life. Through imitation of Christ and other biblical figures, one becomes more holy and divinized. Additionally, the Psalms afford one the opportunity to appropriate the other parts of the Bible into his or her own ascetic regiment. When one reads the words of the Old Testament narratives, he is instructed in what he should do and given models to imitate. When the reader comes to the Psalms he or she is afforded the various other parts of Scripture in a way he can appropriate them to his or her being. The reader is taught not only what he should abstain from but also how the reader should abstain. The inseparability of Scripture, the function of serving the Word, and the act of bringing the reader into the life of God resembles the being and function of the Holy Spirit, who inspired the Scripture.²⁶⁷

We have seen that Athanasius uses personifying language in order to explicate Scripture's function. He attributes a voice, knowledge, and divine power to it. He describes the Scripture as singing, chanting, and relating. He argues that the books of prophets and the Psalms knew the events of Christ's advent before its occurrence.²⁶⁸ He also indicates that one can heal afflictions and drive away demons by reading the unaltered biblical text. This description of the divine power available through use of the text is accompanied by strong warnings against altering the biblical text itself. God withholds aid from those who use an altered version of the text.²⁶⁹ Athanasius therefore maintains a high view of the very words of Scripture to which God is immediately present and God uses to manifest his divine power. With such a high view of the very words of Scripture, it is not a surprise when he indicates that he prefers biblical language because it is more accurate than language derived from other places.²⁷⁰ Scripture is the product of the Holy Spirit's inspiration of holy men. Because these men's lives are superior to the rest of the saints, their words are superior as well.²⁷¹ These words and expressions are therefore superior to the words theological terminology derived from other sources.

²⁶⁶ *Ad Marc* 9.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3-6, 8, 13.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1-33.

²⁷⁰ *De Decr* 32.

²⁷¹ *Ad Marc* 31.

When Athanasius, therefore, defends the creedal language of Nicaea, he does so by describing how it relates to and properly describes biblical language.²⁷² This is not simply a rhetorical move, but a demonstration of a genuine concern to remain faithful to the truths God has afforded in Scripture. His concern is not so much the words offered by the council themselves so much as it is the truth these creedal terms were attempting to express. He is willing to work with with the semantics of creedal language in order to bring those who prefer other language into the orthodox camp. So long as one affirms the sense of the council and the biblical truths it tried to describe, Athanasius is willing to count them as an ally.²⁷³ The important point for Athanasius is that one correctly interprets biblical images in a pious manner. So long as one remains faithful to the paradigms afforded in Scripture, one avoids heresy.

Finally, we have seen that when doctrine of Scripture is the starting point, comparisons with certain Alexandrian predecessors lead to different conclusions. Though their use of Scripture appears substantially different, Athanasius and Origen's doctrine of Scripture is surprisingly similar. Both begin their doctrine with inspiration. Both are compelled to speak of Scripture's relationship to the Holy Spirit. But because Athanasius has a more developed pneumatology, he seems more capable of describing how the Holy Spirit relates to Scripture.²⁷⁴ While both keep the focus of Scripture on Christ, Athanasius has the theological tools to describe how the Holy Spirit inspired biblical authors to point the text towards Christ. Both Athanasius and Origen's schemes describe how Scripture aids in sanctification. The purpose of Origen's threefold method is to aid in the salvation of the individual. The body, soul, and spirit of Scripture, salvifically benefit the body, soul, and spirit of the human being.²⁷⁵ Athanasius's anthropology consists of a body and a soul. The soul guides the body as it attempts to stave off the corruption to which it is naturally prone. Imitation of biblical characters allows for the body to move towards God and away from corruption. Excluding those that prophecy about Christ, the Psalms teach the soul how to control the body, by teaching how to follow the models afforded elsewhere in Scripture.²⁷⁶ The Bible for Athanasius and Origen is the means that the Holy Spirit uses to sanctify the entirety of the

²⁷² *De Decr* 19-24.

²⁷³ *De Synod* 41.

²⁷⁴ See Origen's description of the Holy Spirit in *DP* 1.4 against Athanasius' in *Ad Serap* 1.15-20.

²⁷⁵ *DP* 4.2.4.

²⁷⁶ *Ad Marc* 11.

human being. When use of Scripture is the entry point for comparison, they appear to have little in common.

Athanasian studies have yet to attempt to link Athanasius's doctrine of Scripture with his theological scheme in general. Typically, studies begin with Athanasius's use of Scripture, draw conclusions about his hermeneutical method or lack thereof, and then make passing conclusions about his doctrine of Scripture.²⁷⁷ No one has put his doctrine of Scripture before his use in order to draw the implications for use based on doctrine. No one has looked at how other aspects of his theology affect his doctrine of Scripture and vice versa. I have argued that when description and evaluation is the entry point for a study of Athanasius and the Bible, it limits the scope of how the Bible fits within Athanasius's theological scheme. I have demonstrated that when his doctrine of Scripture is pieced together and fitted into his theological scheme in general it opens up further study for how he uses the Bible.

I have demonstrated that when we take into account that Athanasius views the Bible as a unified whole that is indivisible because of the Holy Spirit's activity,²⁷⁸ what we find is a unified text in which no one section of Scripture stands in isolation. We could say that his hermeneutical method of piecing together Scriptures, which seem entirely unrelated, is perfectly consistent with his understanding of what Scripture is. We also understand that his high view of Scripture is based his understanding of a transcendent God's immediate availability to creation. God is not far removed from his creation, but through various avenues of divine condescension he makes himself knowable and available. If this wholly transcendent God makes himself available in and to creation in general, which in turn upholds a high view of creation, how distinct must an avenue of self-revelation be in which God affords truths about himself through the use of human language? This type of revelatory condescension would be second only to the Incarnation of the Word. Thus, whenever he says anything about God, he uses the best means of divine condescension available to him, i.e. Scripture.

Additionally, studies beginning with doctrine of Scripture may open doors for comparisons with other ancient traditions. For instance, much scholarly attention has been given

²⁷⁷ The best example of such is Ernest's *The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria*.

²⁷⁸ *Ad Marc* 9.

to the differences between Alexandrian and Antiochene exegesis.²⁷⁹ The latter has been characterized as opting for a more “literal” interpretation of the text, while the former is usually described as prone to allegory. If such a distinction can still be argued to exist, we may begin to account for the differences in interpretive method by first offering the basic conceptual framework for the Bible according to each school. As we have seen, the Alexandrian concern for Biblical interpretation was the salvation of the interpreter. Origen’s method involving allegory was for the purpose of aiding the salvation of the interpreter’s Spirit. What was it about the Antiochene conception that compelled a “literal” reading of the text? When doctrine of Scripture is placed at the forefront it opens up an entrance for further and more fruitful analysis.

I have demonstrated that though their interpretive methods appear to have little in common, Origen and Athanasius share certain concerns. This type analysis of influence upon and from Athanasius is also a question for future study. One might go back as far as Philo to see how much of Philo’s Middle Platonic Jewish ideas included a doctrine of Scripture by re researching inspiration and effect of biblical interpretation in order to trace if any of Philo’s thought seeped into Athanasius’s. One could also begin to address how much Athanasius’s conception of Scripture comes from monks with whom he spent his exiles, and how much influence he exerted upon these monks when he left exile. Study might also be aimed at discovering how much of Irenaeus’ thought is perceivable in Athanasius’ conception of Scripture. One could explore how much of this conception is passed down through the Alexandrian tradition. Additionally, one might address whether aspects of Athanasius’ thought appear in the West before, contemporaneously, or after him.

Finally, a fair amount of study devoted to *Marcellinus* is also warranted and could open up further doors for Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture and his theology in general. This study addresses Athanasius’s doctrine of Scripture is and how he uses it. But other aspects of this understanding of Scripture and theology, which space prevented me from addressing, are present as well. His understanding of the prophetic role of Scripture and the prophet are sprinkled throughout this work. Because this text contains his personal use of the Psalms, one might address how Athanasian the pseudo-Athanasian commentary on the Psalms is. He makes passing references to that atonement that “he took on himself the wrath directed against us on account of

²⁷⁹ See Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church* and Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture*.

the transgression.”²⁸⁰ This passing reference could illuminate certain contemporary concerns that his theology leaves little room for the atonement.²⁸¹ The *Letter to Marcellinus on the Interpretation of the Psalms* still has a great deal to offer in regards to Athanasius’s place in the Alexandrian tradition, his doctrine and use of Scripture, as well as various other aspects of his theology.

²⁸⁰ *Ad Marc 7* [Gregg, 105] “καὶ τὸν ἡμῶν θυμὸν διὰ τὴν παράβασιν ἐφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἐβάσταζε,” (*PG* 27: 17).

²⁸¹ See R.P.C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 450-1.

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