



Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line

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Abstract

Nyssen's arguments in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* entirely derive from Origen (probably also passing through Marcellus of Ancyra and Eusebius). Origen's influence, theoretical and exegetical, is evident in every passage, from the argumentative pillars down to the tiniest details of exegesis. Gregory's close dependence on Origen in his anti-subordinationism, within his polemic against 'Arianism,' confirms that Origen was not the forerunner of 'Arianism,' as he was depicted in the Origenistic controversy and is often still regarded to be, but the main inspirer of the Cappadocians, especially Nyssen, in what became Trinitarian orthodoxy. Origen inspired Marcellus, who was anti-Arian, Eusebius, who in fact was no 'Arian,' Athanasius, the champion of anti-Arianism, and the Cappadocians. I argue extensively that Origen's Trinitarian heritage is found, not in Arianism, but in Nyssen, Athanasius, Eusebius, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan line, on the basis of a painstaking analysis of his works (always with attention to their reliability in relation to Greek original, translations, and fragments) and of Pamphilus, Eusebius, Athanasius, and other revealing testimonies, pagan and Christian. The origin of the ὁμοούσιος formula is also investigated in this connection. Further interesting insights will emerge concerning Eusebius and his first report of what exactly happened at Nicaea.

Keywords

Origen, Trinitarian Theology, anti-subordinationism, ὁμοούσιος, ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, Nicaea, Athanasius, Eusebius, Gregory of Nyssa

1. Premise: Gregory of Nyssa's Close Dependence on Origen in His Anti-Subordinationistic Argument in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*

I have extensively argued elsewhere that in Gregory of Nyssa's *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* the anti-'Arian' polemic against the subordination of the Son to the Father is closely related to the doctrine of apokatastasis, and

that Nyssen's arguments entirely derive from Origen, probably also passing through Marcellus of Ancyra and Eusebius, both of whom Gregory knew well and were admirers and followers of Origen.¹ Only, Marcellus could not perfectly grasp his thought, as Eusebius also shows. A participant in the Nicene council, Marcellus was supported by Athanasius till 345, and opposed 'Arian' subordinationism, just as Origen had done *ante litteram* and Nyssen also did. His opposition to Arianism brought him to the point of denying the real distinction of the divine Persons in a "monoprosopic" Trinitarian theology. He influenced Athanasius himself, another admirer of Origen, even in precise exegetical points. I have also argued² that Eusebius probably agreed with Origen and Marcellus on the doctrine of apokatastasis, and that they both depended on Origen in their interpretation of 1Cor 15,28.

Gregory knew Origen's, Eusebius', and Marcellus' exegeses of 1Cor 15,28, one of the main biblical passages with which Origen buttressed his apokatastasis theory.³ Nyssen uses this scriptural verse to support apokatastasis, especially in *De Anima et Resurrectione* and, even more, in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. The latter work is devoted to an exegetical and theological reflection on this passage, declaring the final submission of all creatures to Christ and of Christ to God, who will be "all in all." The influence of Origen's *true* thought on Nyssen, which is transparent in many aspects of

¹ In my "In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius... (1Cor 15,27-28): Gregory of Nyssa's Exegesis, its Derivations from Origen, and Early Patristic Interpretations Related to Origen's," forthcoming in *Studia Patristica*; further arguments in "The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory of Nyssa in his *In Illud: Tunc et ipse Filius*: His Polemic against 'Arian' Subordinationism and the Apokatastasis," forthcoming in the Proceedings of the International Congress on Gregory of Nyssa and Trinitarian Theology, Tübingen September 2008, ed. V.H. Drecoll, Leiden 2010. The present study was first presented at the aforementioned congress; for reasons of space and for its complexity, the original lecture was split into two: the first part, on Gregory, is forthcoming in the proceedings; the second part, further elaborated, is published here. I am very grateful to all colleagues and friends who read and discussed my study at various stages: Volker Drecoll with the participants in the congress in Tübingen, especially Ekkehard Mühlberg, and Hans Dieter Betz, Mark Edwards, Margaret Mitchell, Henryk Pietras, Panayiotis Tzamalikos, and the attendees of a lecture of mine on this subject at Chicago University on Feb 12, 2009, which represented a further stage in the development of the present argument.

² In my "In Illud... Gregory of Nyssa's Exegesis."

³ See, e.g., R. Roukema, "La résurrection des morts dans l'interprétation origénienne," in *La résurrection chez les Pères* (Strasbourg 2003) 161-177, *praes.* 166-169; I. Ramelli, "Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007) 313-356.

the latter's thought, is especially evident in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Here, as I have thoroughly demonstrated, Gregory draws upon Origen extremely closely, even with several verbal echoes. The core issue for Gregory in this short work is to interpret 1Cor 15,28 in such a way as to refute its 'Arian' subordinationistic interpretation, based on the Son's eventual submission to the Father. Gregory explains that with his words Paul indicates, not the Son's inferiority to the Father, but the salvific submission of all human beings, who are "the body of Christ." Christ's humanity, not Christ's divinity, will submit to the Father.

For the purpose of my present argument, I shall only briefly mention that the very same explanation of 1Cor 15,28 was offered by Origen in *Princ.* 3,5,6-7, and it is highly remarkable that his interpretation, like that of Gregory afterwards, already attacked a subordinationistic reading of 1Cor 15,28:

[Christ] *in consummatione saeculi in semet ipso complectens omnes, quos subicit Patri et qui per eum veniunt ad salutem, cum ipsis et in ipsis ipse quoque subiectus dicitur Patri, dum omnes in ipso constant [...]* Hoc ergo est quod de eo dicit apostolus: "Cum autem ei omnia fuerint subiecta, tunc et ipse Filius subiectus erit ei, qui sibi subdidit omnia, ut sit Deus omnia in omnibus." Verum nescio quo pacto haeretici, non intellegentes apostolicum sensum [...], subiectionis in Filio nomen infamant [...] ut quasi is, qui nunc Patri subiectus non sit, subiectus futurus sit tunc, cum prius ei Pater universa subiecerit. Sed miror quomodo hoc intellegi possit, ut is qui, nondum sibi subiectis omnibus, non est ipse subiectus, tunc cum subiecta sibi fuerint omnia, cum rex omnium fuerit et potestatem tenuerit universorum, tunc eum subiciendum putent, cum subiectum ante non fuerint, non intellegentes quod subiectionis Christi ad Patrem beatitudinem nostrae perfectionis ostendit [...] Si ergo bona et salutaris accipitur ista subiectionis, qua subiectus esse dicitur Filius Patri, valde consequens et cohaerens est ut et inimicorum quae dicitur Filio Dei esse subiectionis salutaris quaedam intellegatur et utilis, ut sicut cum dicitur Filius Patri subiectus, perfecta universae creaturae restitutio declaratur, ita cum Filio Dei inimici dicuntur esse subiecti, subiectionis salutaris in eo intellegatur et reparatio perditorum.

It is manifest that Origen's passage already contains all of Nyssen's argument, which the latter developed in his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*. Origen's passage also makes it clear that already in his day, before the development of 'Arianism' proper, the tendency to conceive the Son as subordinated to the Father was alive. Now, Origen did not endorse this tendency, but definitely contrasted it. It is true that, of course, we have lost the Greek original of this passage and we only have Rufinus' Latin translation, but (1) the very same thesis is expressed in at least two other passages of

Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* 7,2 and *Comm. in Rom.* 7,3,60-68, to which I shall return in a moment; and, above all, (2) Gregory of Nyssa, who read Origen in the Greek original texts and did not need to rely on translations, followed his arguments and even his words very closely in his *In Illud*, thus confirming that the Greek was not different from what we now can read in the Latin version, and that Rufinus did not distort Origen's thought and wording.

Origen, indeed, offered the same interpretation of 1Cor 15,28 against subordinationism in *Comm. in Rom.* 7,3,60-68:

Non ad iniuriam [...] dictum accipimus de Salvatore quia Tunc et ipse Filius subiectus erit ei qui sibi subdidit omnia. Et hic enim subiectus non quasi inferior dicitur. Quomodo enim inferior dici potest qui Filius est et omnia est quae Pater? [...] sed in his quos Patri subdit credentes in se, quoniam in unoquoque ipsorum se esse dicit et se in eis dicit esurire et sitire et nudum esse sequae pasci in eis et indui proficitur, idcirco et in illis ipse dicitur esse subiectus.

This is, again, precisely the argument that Gregory develops in his *In Illud*, in which he displays striking similarities with Origen. The very notion that the submission of all foretold in 1Cor 15,27-28 will be voluntary and will coincide with the salvation of all is drawn directly from Origen, who also profoundly inspired Nyssen in his multiple equation between Christ's body, all humanity, the Temple, and the Church. But the examples of Origen's influence on Gregory's *In Illud* could multiply dramatically. I have detected all of them and demonstrated that the background provided by Origen for Gregory's *In Illud* is evident in really every passage of this work and in its theoretical and exegetical structure, from the main argumentative pillars down to the even tiniest details of exegesis.

2. Origen Precursor of Nyssen and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. Arguments from His Works, Pamphilus, Eusebius, Athanasius, and Other Testimonies

Now, Gregory's close dependence on Origen in his anti-subordinationism, within his polemic against 'Arianism,' confirms that Origen was not the forerunner of 'Arianism,' as he was depicted in the course of the so-called Origenistic controversy, and as he is often still regarded to be,⁴ but the

⁴ L. Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford 2004, reprint 2006) 20 exactly observes that

main inspirer of the Cappadocians, and especially Nyssen, in what became Trinitarian orthodoxy. Origen inspired Marcellus of Ancyra, who was anti-Arian, Eusebius, who in fact was no 'Arian' (see below), Athanasius, the champion of anti-Arianism, and the Cappadocians, who continued his theology and are the founders of Nicene-Constantinopolitan orthodoxy. Virginia Burrus rightly puts Origen among orthodox Nicene theologians, although, of course, I should warn that this designation is obviously to be taken *ante litteram*,⁵ like that of Lewis Ayres,⁶ who presents Origen as a "pro-Nicene" like Athanasius. Christoph Marksches rightly insists that "Vor allem die großen kappadozischen Theologen des vierten Jahrhunderts folgten Origenes nicht nur terminologisch, sondern beispielsweise auch in seiner Trinitätstheologie."⁷

Gregory's close dependence on Origen in his anti-subordinationistic polemic in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius* is revealing *per se*: Origen was not at all a precursor of Arianism, in spite of the accusations of subordinationism that were levelled against him and are still alive. There are crucial details that further substantiate this claim. Some, which I shall address in the present study, are related to phrases that subsequently became catchwords in the 'Arian' debate. In particular, from a painstaking analysis of the sources it emerges that Origen already used the Cappadocian formula μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις,⁸ and the adjective ὁμοούσιος in reference to the Son in respect to the Father, according to a meaning that was later codified by Nyssen, who displays 39 occurrences of ὁμοούσιος in his writings, most of them in a Trinitarian context.

Notwithstanding the accusations of subordinationism and 'pre-Arianism' (the latter of course incorrect even just from a historical point of view), in *Comm. in Rom.* 7,12,146-147 Origen is very clear that Christ has nothing and nobody over him, not even the Father: *super omnia est super se neminem habet. Non enim post Patrem est ipse, sed de Patre.* The

"for some over the last centuries Arius' own theology is a direct result of Origen's 'subordinationism.'" R.P.C. Hanson, "The Influence of Origen on the Arian Controversy," in *Origeniana IV*, ed. L. Lies (Innsbruck 1987) 410-423, refuses to consider Origen to be the direct background to the Arian controversy. See also R. Williams, "Origen Between Orthodoxy and Heresy," in *Origeniana VII* (Leuven 1999) 3-14.

⁵ V. Burrus, *Saving Shame* (Philadelphia 2008).

⁶ *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 20-30; 236-40.

⁷ Chr. Marksches, *Origenes und sein Erbe* (Berlin 2007) 12.

⁸ For this formula in Nyssen see S. González, *La fórmula μία οὐσία τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις en san Gregorio de Nisa* (Rome 1939).

Son does not come *after* the Father, in a secondary position, but only *from* the Father, in that he is the Son. Far from endorsing it, Origen ascribes to “heretics” any distinction of substance or nature between the Father and the Son:⁹ *haeretici [...] male separant Filium a Patre ut alterius naturae Patrem alterius Filium dicant [...] qui autem bene adnuntiat bona, proprietates quidem Patri et Filio et Spiritui Sancto suas cuique dabit, nihil autem diuersitatis esse confitebitur in substantia uel natura (ibid.)*. The three Persons of the Trinity have each one their own properties, but they all share the same nature or substance. In 8,4,25-26 Origen declares that *unum utrique honorem deferendum, id est Patri et Filio*. The Son, far from being subordinated to the Father, is worthy of the same honour as the Father is.

Statements that clearly contradict what was to become ‘Arian’ doctrines are also found in *Princ.* 4,4,1, and not only in Rufinus’ translation, which some deem suspect, but also in Fragment 31 from Marcellus of Ancyra (*ap. Eus. C. Marc.* 1,34). This Greek attestation confirms the reliability of Rufinus’ translations in the aforementioned passages from Origen’s Περὶ Ἀρχῶν and Commentary on Romans. Above all, it seems to me really telling that Gregory of Nyssa, who, like Marcellus, read Origen’s original Greek, followed him in a decided anti-subordinationism.

In this connection, the clearest statement, which already Origen opposed to some ‘heretics’ of his day (subordinationists and, so to say, pre-‘Arians’), is: *Non enim dicimus, sicut haeretici putant, partem aliquam substantiae Dei in Filium versam, aut ex nullis substantibus Filium procreatum a Patre, id est extra substantiam suam, ut fuerit aliquando quando non fuerit*. The last phrase renders the Greek ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, which will become an ‘Arian’ slogan, but it already raised concerns in Origen, who refuted it against the ‘heretics’ of his time. Shortly after, Origen repeats: *Numquam fuit quando non fuit*, and explains that any term denoting temporality is inappropriate to the Trinity, who transcends time.¹⁰ In the former passage, Origen is warning both against the assumption that the Son is a creature, created by the Father ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων, since he was rather generated from the Father’s own substance, and against the assumption that the Son is a fragment of the Father’s substance in a sense that implies the diminution of

⁹ Indeed, J. Robertson, *Christ as a Mediator* (Oxford 2007) ch. 1, is perfectly right to maintain that Origen insisted on the “unity of substance” between the three Persons of the Trinity.

¹⁰ *Haec enim sola Trinitas est quae omnem sensum intellegentiae non solum temporalis, verum etiam aeternalis excedit.*

the initial substance of the Father. Again, these which I have quoted are passages from Rufinus' translation, but they are confirmed by Greek fragments, especially one from Marcellus of Ancyra (fr. 31) to which I shall return. Indeed, Origen was so far from forerunning the Arians that Pamphilus needed to defend him against the charge of positing *duo innata*, thus making the second Person independent of the first (cf. *Dial. cum Her.* 2,22-25: ἕτερος θεός; CC 5,39; 6,61 but adopting the Middle-Platonic terminology).¹¹

As for the description of the Trinitarian relations in terms of μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, in *Sch. in Matth.* 17,309 Origen blends both formulae together:

Εἰς ὁ ζῶν Πατήρ, ὁ Υἱός, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα. Εἷς ἐστὶν οὐ συναλοιφῆ τῶν τριῶν, ἀλλ' οὐσία μιᾶ· τρεῖς δὲ ὑποστάσεις τέλειαι ἐν πᾶσι, καὶ κατάλληλοι. Κατὰ φύσιν ἐγέννησεν ὁ Πατήρ· διόπερ ὁμοούσιος ἐγεννήθη.

If the essence or nature, the *ousia*, is one and the same in both the Father and the Son (in addition to the Holy Spirit), the Son has the same nature as the Father and thus is *homoousios* with the Father. I shall return to “*homoousios*” in a short while. Of course, the *Scholia* may raise doubts concerning the paternity of the above-quoted bit, but this is far from being the sole evidence, as I shall now show.

In *Comm. in Io.* 2,10,74 and 23,149, preserved in the original Greek and surely authentic, Origen details that the οὐσία of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit is common, just as Nyssen will deem it: Father and Son are one and the same thing in their essence (οὐσία) and substance (ὑποκειμένῳ), differing from one another only for some ἐπίνοια (*ibid.* 10,37,246). The Son is said to be God κατ' οὐσίαν in Fr. 1 *In Io.* In CC 8,12, which is likewise surely authentic, is preserved in the original Greek, and cannot be suspected of including later adaptations to orthodoxy, Origen explains that God's essence (οὐσία) is one and the same, but the Father and the Son are two distinct entities in their subsistence or individual substance:¹² δύο τῆ ὑποστάσει πράγματα. The Son is the

¹¹ M.J. Edwards, “Nicene Theology and the Second God,” in *Studia Patristica* XL (Leuven 2006) 191-195.

¹² According to A.H.B. Logan, “Origen and the Development of Trinitarian Theology,” in *Origeniana IV* (Innsbruck 1987) 424-429, this meaning might have derived to Origen from some Gnostics. At any rate, this is uncertain, and a derivation from Greek philosophical vocabulary is possible as well.

impression (χαρακτήρ) of God's individual substance (ὑποστάσεως); cf. *Comm. in Io.* 32,16,193.

In full accord with the *CC* passage that I have presented, whose authenticity is beyond doubt, in *Comm. in Matth.* 17,14, another passage preserved in the original Greek and of undisputed authenticity, Origen criticises those who think that the Father and the Son are one and the same in their ὑπόστασις and maintain that they can be distinguished only conceptually,¹³ thus indicating that in his own view the Father and the Son rather differ from each other, each one in his own ὑπόστασις. And in *Comm. in Io.* 10,37,246 Origen criticises those who think that the Father and the Son are one in their essence (ἐν οὐσίᾳ) but they do not differ in their individual subsistence: διαφόρους οὐ κατὰ ὑπόστασιν λέγεσθαι Πατέρα καὶ Υἱόν. On the contrary, he thinks that both of them are one and the same in their essence (ἐν οὐσίᾳ) and that the Son differs from the Father in his own ὑπόστασις. This passage, too, is authentic and is preserved in Greek. In reference to the Son, Origen defines a "Person" of the Trinity "the character of its individual substance": πρόσωπον Θεοῦ ὁ χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ (*Sel. in Ps.* PG 12,1600B), thus paving the way to the identification of ὑπόστασις and πρόσωπον; cf. 1581CD; 1125A: Wisdom belongs to God's Logos κατὰ τὴν ὑπόστασιν, according to the Son's individual substance. This means that it does not belong to God the Father's individual substance, which is different from that of the Son. In the same way, in *Comm. in Io.* 1,39,292 Christ is said to be the Logos, whose individual substance is the principle that is Wisdom: Λόγος [...] νοηθήσεται ὁ Χριστός [...] ἐν ἀρχῇ τῇ Σοφίᾳ τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχων. Wisdom and Logos, in this precise order, are for Origen the two main ἐπίνοιαι of Christ, but this is the case also with Christ's other ἐπίνοιαι; thus, in *Comm. in Matth. Ser.* 146,5 Origen notes that all virtues are attached to Christ's individual substance (ἀντανακολουθοῦσαι ὡς αἱ ἀρεταὶ τῇ ὑποστάσει τοῦ Χριστοῦ), so that Christ is justice, wisdom, etc. It is Christ proper, and not the Father, nor the Holy Spirit, who is these things.

In *Princ.* fr. 33, a Greek reliable fragment from Athanasius, *De decr. Nic. syn.* 27,1-2 p. 23,17-30 Opitz, Origen claims that Christ is the image of the Father's own substance, and this *ab aeterno*: ἀϊδίως συνεῖναι τὸν

¹³ Οἱ συγγέοντες Πατὴρ καὶ Υἱὸς ἕνωσαν καὶ τῇ ὑποστάσει ἓνα διδόντες εἶναι τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸν Υἱόν, τῇ ἐπινοίᾳ μόνῃ καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι μόνις διαιρούντες τὸ ἐν ὑποκειμένον.

Λόγον τῷ Πατρὶ [...] ἢ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀκατονομάστου καὶ ἀφθέγκτου ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Πατρὸς εἰκῶν. It is also evident from many other passages besides this one—for instance from *Princ.* 1,2,2.11¹⁴ and *Hom. in Jer.* 9,4: ἀεὶ γεννᾶ αὐτόν [...] ὁ σωτὴρ ἀεὶ γεννᾶται [...] ἀεὶ γεννᾶται ὁ σωτὴρ ὑπὸ τοῦ Πατρὸς—, that for Origen the Son is coeternal with the Father, another point that makes Origen's Trinitarian thought opposite to that of the subordinationists and of the later 'Arians.' In *Comm. in Io.* 2,10,76 Origen declares that the Son and the Spirit are different from one another in the ὑπόστασις. The most patent attestation, which likewise belongs to a work of undoubted authenticity, is found in *Comm. in Io.* 2,10,75: Ἡμεῖς μέντοι γε τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις πειθόμενοι τυγχάνειν, τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα.¹⁵ It is clear from these authentic passages that Origen was the forerunner and inspirer of the Nicene formula μία οὐσία, τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις, which is also consistent with his designation of the Son as ὁμοούσιος with the Father.

There is, of course, a critical debate¹⁶ on whether Origen did apply this adjective, ὁμοούσιος, to the Son, but it is important to remark first of all that precisely the idea that the three Persons share the same οὐσία implies that Origen surely conceived of the Son as “having the same *ousia*” as the Father. Since there was no established Christian use of the term ὁμοούσιος—which is absent in Scripture—in its Trinitarian meaning before Nicaea, Pier Franco Beatrice contended that this adjective, which

¹⁴) §2: *Quod utrumque et absurdum esse et impium omnibus patet, id est, ut aut ex eo quod non potuit Deus proficeret ut posset, aut, cum posset, dissimularet ac differret generare Sapientiam. Propter quod nos semper Deum Patrem novimus unigeniti Filii sui [...] sine ullo tamen initio, ne illo quidem quod sola apud semet ipsam mens intueri solet.* §11: *Dicitur Sapientia esse splendor lucis aeternae [...] sempiternum vel aeternum proprie dicitur quod neque initium ut esset habuit, neque cessare umquam potest esse quod est. [...] Splendor autem lucis eius Sapientia sua est, non solum secundum quod lux est, sed et secundum id, quod sempiterna lux est, ita ut aeternus et aeternitatis splendor sit Sapientia sua. [...] Subsistentia Filii ab ipso Patre descendit, sed non temporaliter.*

¹⁵) That Origen conceived of the Spirit as a divine *hypostasis* of its own, so that his theology is surely Trinitarian and not “Binitarian,” is rightly argued by Marksches, *Origenes und sein Erbe*, 107-126. He also studies Origen's concept of οὐσία (174-187).

¹⁶) M. Simonetti, “Ancora su *Homoousios*,” *Vetera Christianorum* 17 (1980) 85-98, *praes.* 94; M.J. Edwards, “Did Origen Apply the Word *Homoousios* to the Son?,” *JThS* 49 (1998) 658-670; P.F. Beatrice, “The Word *Homoousios* from Hellenism to Christianity,” *Church History* 71 (2002) 243-272, *praes.* 251; R. Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition* (London 1987) 134-137; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 24.

was imposed by Constantine at Nicaea,¹⁷ derives from Hermeticism, where it was used in the *Poimandres*¹⁸ and the *Theosophia* to indicate the sharing of the same divine nature on the part of the Nous-Father and of the Logos-Child; before Nicaea, the adjective is also attested in Gnosticism in the meaning of a sharing of nature, an identity of substance.

I think that, however, the main inspirer of the Nicene formula was precisely Origen. I suspect that already Clement had a conception of the identity of substance between the Father and Christ-Logos, in that in *Hypot. in Ep. I Ioann.* 1,1 he said that the Logos *secundum* aequalitatem substantiae *unum cum Patre constitit* (GCS Clemens 3,210). What is more, and is generally overlooked, ὁμοούσιος is repeatedly attested in Clement, and not only in his *Excerpta ex Theodoto*, where he is often reporting Gnostic ideas,¹⁹ but also in his *Stromateis*. The most significant

¹⁷⁾ But see below for the question of who may lie behind the introduction of this adjective in the Nicene formula.

¹⁸⁾ On which see my *Corpus Hermeticum* (Milan 2005).

¹⁹⁾ 2,42,3: τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ὅπερ ὁμοούσιον ἦν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ; 3,50,1-2, where the human vital soul is said to be of the same nature as that of animals, whereas the spirit has the same nature as the divine Demiurge who insufflated it; the former is the human being *in the image* of God, the latter the human being *in the likeness* of God (a differentiation that is no more at work in the other Gnostic passages on ὁμοούσιος that I am going to cite, probably because there is no longer the distinction between ὁμοούσια with animals and with the divine): Λαβὼν χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς [...] ψυχὴν γεώδη καὶ ὑλικὴν ἐτεκτῆνατο ἄλογον καὶ τῆ τῶν θηρίων ὁμοούσιον· οὗτος ὁ κατ' εἰκόνα ἄνθρωπος. Ὁ δὲ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν, τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ, ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν ὃν εἰς τοῦτον ἐνεφύσησεν τε καὶ ἐνέσπειρεν, ὁμοούσιον τι αὐτῷ δι' Ἀγγέλων ἐνθεῖς. In 3,53,1 the evildoers are said to have the same nature as the devil, an idea that Origen will refute: Τοῦτο ζιζάνιον ὀνομάζεται [...] σπέρμα τοῦ Διαβόλου, ὡς ὁμοούσιον ἐκεῖνο. *Ibidem* 3,58,2: Ἐκκλησίαν ἀναλαβὼν, τὸ ἐκλεκτὸν καὶ τὸ κλητὸν, τὸ μὲν παρὰ τῆς τεκούσης τὸ πνευματικόν, τὸ δὲ ἐκ τῆς οἰκονομίας τὸ ψυχικόν, ὃ ἀνέσωσεν καὶ ἀνήνεγκεν ἄπερ ἀνέλαβεν, καὶ δι' αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ τούτοις ὁμοούσια· Εἰ γὰρ ἡ ἀπαρχὴ ἀγία, καὶ τὸ φύραμα. For the Valentinians the discourse on 'nature' (οὐσία) and different natures was crucial (see, e.g., Ptolemy *Ep. Flor.* 7,8, where the concept is applied to the Valentinian three natures of humans: μιᾶς ἀρχῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀπλῆς οὐσης [...] τῆς ἀγαθῆς, συνέστησαν καὶ αὐταὶ αἱ φύσεις, ἢ τε τῆς φθορᾶς καὶ ἢ τῆς μεσότητος, ἀνομοούσιοι αὐταὶ καθεστῶσαι, τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ φύσιν ἔχοντος τὰ ὅμοια ἑαυτῷ καὶ ὁμοούσια), and Origen refuted it, just as Clement had done. He knew their vocabulary very well, and, like Clement, transposed it to the plane of the Trinity. In 1,1,9 Sophia is of the same nature as the pneumatic element: Ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πνευματικὸν μὴ δεδυνῆσθαι αὐτῇ μορφῶσαι, ἐπειδὴ ὁμοούσιον ὑπῆρχεν αὐτῇ [...] πρῶτον μεμορφωκέναι αὐτὴν ἐκ τῆς ψυχικῆς οὐσίας λέγουσι τὸν Πατέρα καὶ βασιλέα πάντων, τῶν τε ὁμοούσιων αὐτῷ, τουτέστι τῶν ψυχικῶν. 1,1,10: τῆς κατ' εἰκόνα μὲν τὸν ὑλικὸν ὑπάρχειν, παραπλήσιον μὲν, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁμοούσιον τῷ Θεῷ [...] ὃ κατὰ τὴν

passage is *Strom.* 2,16,74,2: Clement is discussing the ontological difference between God and the creatures and is polemicising against “the founders of heresies” (οἱ τῶν αἱρέσεων κτίσται). He asserts that nobody should dare to say that we are a part of God or have the same essence or nature as God: εἰ μὴ τις μέρος αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁμοουσίους ἡμᾶς τῷ Θεῷ τολμήσει λέγειν. Here the adjective at stake indicates the sharing of the same essence of God. This is the very same meaning in which ὁμοούσιος is applied to the Son by Origen and by the Nicene creed. The other relevant passage in Clement is *Strom.* 4,13,91,2, where he is not reporting Gnostic thought, but is refuting it. He is opposing the Valentinian idea of a privileged category of humans who are supposed to be saved by nature and cooperate with Christ in the process of salvation. Clement asks whether Christ should be considered to belong to this race himself: “If it is this elect race to destroy death, then it is not Christ who has annihilated it, unless he too should be said to have the same nature as they have” (εἰ μὴ καὶ αὐτὸς αὐτοῖς ὁμοούσιος λεχθείη), but if Christ has a different nature, then it is not the elect race to achieve the victory over death.

The presence of ὁμοούσιος in Clement renders it even more probable that Origen employed it as well, and so does its use on the part of Gregory Thaumaturgus, a direct disciple of Origen's and his fervent admirer. He says that the Son is ὁμοούσιος both with the Father and with us humans, in that he shares the nature of both, human and divine. In *In Admunt.* PG 10,1152,37 Gregory remarks that ἐκ τῶν δύο φύσεων [...] ὁ Δεσπότης ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς ὁ Χριστός, [...] ἐν θεότητι τέλειος, καὶ ἐν ἀνθρωπότητι τέλειος, κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιος τῷ Πατρὶ, καὶ ὁμοούσιος ἡμῖν κατὰ πάντα, χωρὶς ἀμαρτίας. In 1169,46, the adjective is applied by Gregory to the Trinity as a whole: Τριάς ἀγία καὶ ὁμοούσιος. In *De Fide* 13 Gregory explains how the Son is ὁμοούσιος with the Father: in his divinity, not in his flesh.²⁰ Gregory Thaumaturgus thus applied this crucial adjective both to the Son vis-à-vis the Father and to the three Persons of the Trinity. This renders more probable that his teacher, Origen, also had done so.

θεωρίαν τῶν περὶ τὸν Σωτῆρα ἀγγέλων ἀπεκύησεν, ὁμοούσιον ὑπάρχον τῇ μητρὶ; 1,5,2: Ταύτη τῇ μονάδι συνυπάρχει δύναμις ὁμοούσιος αὐτῇ, ἣν καὶ αὐτὴν ὀνομάζω τὸ ἔν.

²⁰ Πῶς δὲ ἡ μετὰ χρόνον σὰρξ ὁμοούσιος ἂν λέγοιτο τῆς ἀχρόνου θεότητος; ὁμοούσιον γὰρ λέγεται τὸ ταῦτὸν τῇ φύσει καὶ τῇ ἀειδιότητι ἀπαραλλάκτως.

Moreover, it is to be taken into consideration that, in Origen's day, well before Nicaea, ὁμοούσιος is repeatedly attested in Hippolytus,²¹ precisely in reference to the Trinity and more specifically to the Son in relation to the Father, for example in *In Cant.* 1,6: ὁ Πατήρ περὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ ἰδίου καὶ ὁμοουσίου. Most of these occurrences refer to the terminology of the heresies that Hippolytus is refuting, for instance in *AH* 5,17,6: ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ τῷ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς ὅλως, καὶ ἐκεῖ ἀνέρχεται; *ibidem* 5,8,10: εἰκόνες δὲ εἰσι τὰ προειρημένα ἀγάλματα τοῦ ἀρχανθρώπου καὶ τοῦ ἀναγεννωμένου πνευματικοῦ, κατὰ πάνθ' ὁμοουσίου ἐκείνῳ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, where the two human beings, recalling Adam and Christ, are said to share the same nature.²² The most important testimony is *ibidem* 7,22,7: ἦν οὖν, φησὶν, ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ σπέρματι υἰότης τριμερῆς, κατὰ πάντα τῷ οὐκ ὄντι Θεῷ ὁμοούσιος, γεννητὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων. The Son is *homoousios* with the Father, but was begotten ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων. Remarkably, the latter is one of the formulae condemned at Nicaea, but rather than being distinctively 'Arian,' it was a Gnostic formula. This is confirmed by 10,14,2, where, just as at Nicaea, it refers to the Son's birth:

Ἦν οὖν, φησὶν, ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ σπέρματι υἰότης τριμερῆς, κατὰ πάντα τῷ οὐκ ὄντι Θεῷ ὁμοούσιος, γεννητὴ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων [...] κατ' εἰκόνα τινά, ὡς Μεθοδῖω δοκεῖ, τυπικῶς γεγόνασι τῆς ἀγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου Τριάδος.

Origen, who knew Clement's conception and terminology and that of the Gnostics as well, and from whom Gregory Thaumaturgus probably drew his own, is very likely to have thought of the Father and the Son as *homoousioi*.

But there is much more to substantiate this hypothesis. I have already cited *Schol. in Matth.* 17,309, where both formulae are joined, μία οὐσία τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις and ὁμοούσιος in reference to the Son, and which is confirmed by many surely authentic texts. It is also important to observe that Origen, like Clement, repeatedly used ὁμοούσιος *against* the Gnostics

²¹ Of course, speaking of Hippolytus the proviso is necessary that his identity is problematic and probably double. See, e.g., M. Simonetti, "Ippolito," in *NDPAC* 2 (Rome 2007) 2584-2599 (English edition forthcoming in Cambridge).

²² See also 5,17,10: ὑπὸ τοῦ ὄφρα ἄγεται πάλιν ἀπὸ τοῦ κόσμου τὸ ἐξεικονισμένον τέλειον γένος ὁμοούσιον; *ibidem* 6,38,3: ταύτῃ τῇ Μονάδι συνυπάρχει δύναμις ὁμοούσιος αὐτῆ, ἣν καὶ αὐτὴν ὀνομάζει τὸ Ἔν; 7,22,13: Ἀναφερομένη γοῦν ὑπὸ τοῦ Πνεύματος ἢ υἰότης ὡς ὑπὸ πτεροῦ, ἀναφέρει τὸ πτερόν, τουτέστι τὸ Πνεῦμα [...] ἦν γὰρ οὐχ ὁμοούσιον οὐδὲ φύσιν εἶχε τῆς υἰότητος.

(who already employed this adjective), in reference to the different 'natures' of humans postulated by the Valentinians,²³ and in *Fr. in Ps.* 54,3-4 (dubious, to be sure, but not necessarily spurious), the Son is called ὁμοούσιος with the Father: ὁ Υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρὸς, ὁ ὁμοούσιος βασιλεύς, ἀλλὰ δούλου μορφήν φέρων.

Origen's use of ὁμοούσιος in reference to the Son is also attested by a reliable source such as Pamphilus, in a fragment on Heb 1,3 preserved in *Apol.* 99 (166 Amacker-Junod). Origen here states, on the basis of that biblical passage, that Christ-Sophia proceeds from the Father as a kind of breath, *ex ipsa substantia Dei generatur* [...] *communione substantiae esse Filio cum Patre*; ἀπόρροια ἐνὶ ὁμοούσιος *videtur, id est unius substantiae, cum illo corpore ex quo est vel ἀπόρροια. vel vapor*. Since the Son is described as the Father's emanation or "evaporation," Origen observed that the emanation must be of the same essence or substance of that of which it is an emanation. Rufinus in his translation preserved the Greek term ὁμοούσιος and added the gloss, *id est unius substantiae*. Hanson, followed e.g. by Dinsen and Williams,²⁴ thought that Rufinus' translation altered Origen's wording in order to prove Origen's Nicene orthodoxy.

However, besides the proofs that I have already adduced from Origen himself and from Clement and the Thaumaturgus, and besides Gregory's and the Cappadocians' close dependence on him, Athanasius, well before Rufinus, would never have appreciated Origen so much, if he had not

²³ In *Comm. in Io.* 13,25,149-150 Origen criticises the Valentinian view that the spiritual race of humans is of the same nature as the divine: Ἐπιστήσωμεν δὲ εἰ μὴ σφόδρα ἐστὶν ἀσεβὲς ὁμοουσίους τῇ ἀγεννήτῳ φύσει καὶ παμμακαρία λέγειν εἶναι τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας ἐν πνεύματι τῷ θεῷ [...] οὐχ ὁρώσιν οἱ ταῦτα λέγοντες ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ὁμοουσίον ἐστὶν καὶ πᾶν αὐτῶν δεκτικόν· εἰ δὲ ἐδέξατο τὸ πορνεῦσαι ἢ πνευματικὴ φύσις, ὁμοούσιος οὐσα <τῷ θεῷ> ἀνόσια καὶ ἄθεα καὶ ἀσεβῆ ἀκολουθεῖ. In 20,20,170 he opposes the Valentinian view that the σαρκικοί are of the same nature as the devil: ὁμοουσίους τινὰς τῷ διαβόλῳ λέγων ἀνθρώπους, ἑτέρας [...] οὐσίας τυγχάνοντας παρ' οὓς καλοῦσι ψυχικούς ἢ πνευματικούς. See 20.24.206: πνευματικὸν καὶ ὄν λέγουσιν εἶναι χοϊκόν. Ἄρα γὰρ τὸ παραπλήσιον ἐν διαφόροις γέγονεν οὐσίαις, ἢ διὰ τοῦτο παραπλήσιον γέγονεν τὸ πάθος, ἐπεὶ ὁμοούσιον ἦν τοῦτο ὃ συμβέβηκε τὸ πάθος; τὸ μὲν οὖν φάναι τοὺς αὐτοὺς τύπους φαντασιῶν καὶ συγκαταθέσεων καὶ διανοήσεων καὶ μνημονεύσεων γεγρονέναι ἐν τοῖς ἑτεροουσίαις ἄλογον· τὸ δὲ ἐν τοῖς ὁμοουσίαις ἐκ μέρους ὡς παρὰ ταύτην εἶναι τινα καὶ ἄλλην οὐσίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἡλίθιον.

²⁴ R.P.C. Hanson, "Did Origen Apply the Word *Homoousios* to the Son?," in *Epektasis. Mélanges Daniélou* (Paris 1975) 293-303; F. Dinsen, *Homoousios. Die Geschichte des Begriffs bis zum Konzil von Konstantinopel* (Diss. Kiel 1976) 29-31; R. Williams, *Arius. Heresy and Tradition* (London 2001) 134ff.

considered him to be an inspirer of the Nicene faith and a fierce adversary of subordinationism. Also, Athanasius knew Pamphilus' *Apology* and read the passage I quoted in the same form and meaning as we have it; we have it only in Latin (with the Greek keywords left in their original language), but he read it in Greek. Gobar, *ap* Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 232,291b, attests the admiration of Athanasius and other Patristic authors for Origen and his faithful follower Theognostus:

Ὁριγένην καὶ Θεόγνωστον ὃ τε μέγας Ἀθανάσιος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρείας ἐν πολλοῖς ἀπεδέχετο λόγοις καὶ Τίτος ὁ Βόστρων, καὶ ὁ θεολόγος Γρηγόριος ἐν ἐπιστολαῖς φιλόκαλον αὐτὸν λέγει, καὶ ὁ Νύσσης δὲ εὐφήμως εἰς μνήμην ἄγει. Ἄλλὰ καὶ Διονύσιος ὁ Ἀλεξανδρείας πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐκείνου γράφων, ἔτι δὲ καὶ μετὰ θάνατον ἐκείνου πρὸς Θεότεκνον τὸν τῆς Καισαρείας ἐπίσκοπον γράφων, δι' ἐπαίνων τὸν Ὁριγένην ἄγει καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Ἱεραπόλεων ἐπίσκοπος καὶ μάρτυς, πρὸς τὸν αὐτὸν Ὁριγένην γράφων, λίαν οἰκειοῦται τὸν ἄνδρα τοῖς λόγοις.

Gobar also adds that Origen's accusers had misinterpreted his thought—which Gobar proves to have understood well²⁵—: Θεόφιλος μὲν καὶ Ἐπιφάνιος λίαν ἐκτρέπονται τὸν Ὁριγένην (*ibidem*). The same was maintained by Pamphilus, Eusebius, Athanasius, Rufinus. The anonymous apology in five books preserved by Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 117,91b-92a Bekker), and apparently based on Pamphilus and Eusebius, defended Origen precisely from the accusation of entertaining Trinitarian conceptions that were later regarded as heretical, and of being a precursor of 'Arianism':

Φησὶ δὲ καὶ περὶ τοῦ Ὁριγένους μηδὲν αὐτὸν κατὰ δόξαν ἐσφάλλαι περὶ τῆς Τριάδος, ἀντιφερόμενον δὲ τῇ αἰρέσει Σαβελλίου εἰς μέγα κακοῦ ἡρμένη τότε, καὶ τὴν τῶν προσώπων Τριάδα ἐναργεστάτην καὶ πολλοῖς τρόποις διαφέρουσαν ἀγωνιζόμενον παραστήσαι, πέρα τοῦ προσήκοντος καὶ εἰς τὸναντίον ἀπενεχθῆναι, ἐξ οὗ δόξαι καὶ τῷ Ἀρειανῷ ἀρρωστήματι προεαλωκῆναι.

This is notable. The apologist insists on the heuristic value of many of Origen's passages, as Pamphilus, Athanasius, and Rufinus did, and denounces interpolations in Origen's manuscripts, which were lamented by Origen himself and likewise denounced by Rufinus.

Athanasius, who was influenced by Platonism, was the biographer and celebrator of St. Anthony, who transmitted Origen's doctrine (it is well known that the environment of Egyptian monasticism was saturated with

²⁵ A full demonstration is forthcoming in a work of mine on the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Origen's thought).²⁶ Anthony spoke of an original unity of all beings (*ep.* 3;4) from which they fell, but to which the Logos will bring them back in an "apokatastasis of the Spirit" (*ep.* 2;4-6), with a resurrection from the heart of the earth (*ep.* 4;6), according to a spiritual exegesis of the resurrection that was typical of Origen but that does not exclude that in the end all humans will have a spiritual body, after the purification taught by the Spirit (*ep.* 1).²⁷ It is revealing that Athanasius elected as leader of the Alexandrian Didaskaleion Didymus the Blind (Rufinus *HE* 2,7), a convinced Origenian who embraced the doctrines of apokatastasis and of the so-called "pre-existence of souls," and who followed Origen in the allegorical exegesis of the Bible, especially the Psalms.²⁸ Athanasius was a supporter of the Incarnation doctrine, and his soteriology is grounded in the couple "incarnation-divinization," in that God's incarnation in Christ produces the divinization of humanity.²⁹ He found this conception in Origen and developed it.³⁰ It is obviously in his polemic against the Arians that Athanasius best elaborated this theme,

²⁶ Cfr. E.P. Meijering, *Orthodoxy and Platonism in Athanasius* (Leiden 1968); A. Louf, *St. Antoine. Lettres* (Bellefontaine 1976) 21ff.; G.J.M. Bartelink, "Echos aus Platos *Phaedo* in der *Vita Antonii*," *Mnemosyne* 37 (1984) 145-147; Id., "Eine Reminiszenz aus Platons *Timaeus* in der *Vita Antonii*," *ibid.* 40 (1987) 150ff.; J.F. Dechow, *Dogma and Mysticism in Early Christianity* (Macon 1988) 139-164; E. Prinzivalli, *Magister Ecclesiae* (Rome 2002) 77-78, 186 n. 40; S. Rubenson, "Origen in the Egyptian Monastic Tradition of the Fourth Century", in *Origeniana VII*, 319-338; C. Kannengiesser, "Origen's Doctrine Transmitted by Antony the Hermit and Athanasius of Alexandria", in *Origeniana VIII*, 889-901; T. Orlandi, *Testi patristici in lingua copta*, in *Patrologia*, V, ed. A. Di Bernardino (Genoa 2000) 497-573, *praes.* 513-515. Also: A. Martin, *Athanase d'Alexandrie et l'église d'Égypte au IV siècle* (Rome 1996); K. Anatolis, "Theology and Economy in Origen and Athanasius," in *Origeniana VII*, 165-172; Th. Weinandy, *Athanasius. A Theological Introduction* (Aldershot 2007).

²⁷ The authentic letters of Anthony are available in Coptic fragments and a complete Georgian translation; cf. S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St. Antony* (Lund 1990), who underlines the Origenian drift of this work.

²⁸ Cf. G.M. Vian, "La tradizione esegetica alessandrina sui Salmi," in *Paideia cristiana. Studi M. Naldini* (Rome 1994) 219-226.

²⁹ See my "Θέωσις—Deification (Greek and Latin Patristics)," forthcoming in *EBR. Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception* (Berlin).

³⁰ Cf., e.g., B. Studer, *Dio salvatore nei Padri della Chiesa* (Rome 1986) 168-172. For Origen's reception in Athanasius see E. Prinzivalli, "Per un'indagine sull'esegesi del pensiero origeniano nel IV secolo," *Annali di Storia dell'Esgesi* 11 (1994) 433-460.

and of course he used the key-word ὁμοούσιος (in his authentic works we find 181 occurrences!).³¹

Athanasius' admiration for Origen is also pointed out by Socrates, who rightly considers it as a guarantee of Origen's Trinitarian orthodoxy. In *HE* 6,13 he remarks that the detractors of Origen, Methodius, Eustathius, Apolinarius, and Theophilus, by abstaining from criticising him on Trinitarian matters (ὡς κακῶς δοξάζοντα περὶ τῆς ἁγίας Τριάδος οὐδ' ὄλωσ ἐμέμψαντο), clearly show his orthodoxy in this respect: δέικνυνται περιφανῶς τὴν ὀρθὴν εὐσέβειαν μαρτυροῦντες αὐτῷ. What is more, Socrates affirms that Athanasius, the strongest assertor of the Nicene faith (ὁ τῆς ὁμοουσίου πίστεως ὑπερασπιστής), called Origen a witness to the orthodox, Nicene faith in his work against the Arians: ἐν τοῖς κατὰ Ἀρειανῶν λόγοις μεγάλη τῇ φωνῇ μάρτυρα τῆς οικείας πίστεως τὸν ἄνδρα καλεῖ. Soon after, Socrates introduces a quotation from Athanasius concerning Origen, which seems to refer to *De decr. Nic. syn.* 27, which I shall analyse in a moment (we may also be dealing with a third, lost passage, whose authenticity we have no reason to doubt): ὁ θαυμαστός, φησί, καὶ φιλοπινότατος Ὀριγένης τάδε περὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ δόξῃ μαρτυρεῖ, συναΐδιον αὐτὸν λέγων τῷ Πατρὶ. This attests to both Athanasius' admiration for Origen and to Origen's conception of the Son as coeternal with the Father.³² Socrates comments: "Those who blame Origen do not realise that they also curse Athanasius, his admirer."

Athanasius expressed a very positive judgment on Origen indeed, as is testified to not only by Socrates and the aforementioned Gobar (according to whom, furthermore, Athanasius constantly studied Origen's writings), but above all by some extremely meaningful passages of Athanasius himself. One is *In Illud: Qui dixerit verbum in Filium* PG 26,649,21. Athanasius, taking into consideration Origen's and Theognostus' exegesis of Matt 12,31-32 on the unforgivableness of the blasphemy against the Spirit, exalts Origen as "the most learned and active writer among the ancients," and Theognostus, who admired and followed him, as "wonderful and diligent" (παλαιοὶ μὲν οὖν ἄνδρες, Ὀριγένης ὁ πολυμαθὴς καὶ

³¹ See, e.g., X. Morales, *La théologie trinitaire d'Athanasie d'Alexandrie* (Turnhout 2006); M.C. Steenberg, *Of God and Man. Theology as Anthropology from Irenaeus to Athanasius* (London 2009) 158-189.

³² Cf. W.A. Bienert, "Athanasius von Alexandrien und Origenes," *StPatr* 26 (2003) 360-364. Athanasius also seems to have inherited Origen's idea that the Father is the ἀρχὴ of the Son, on which see E.P. Meijering, "Athanasius on the Father as the Origin of the Son," in *God, Being, History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy* (Amsterdam 1975) 89-102.

φιλόπonos, καὶ Θεόγνωστος ὁ θαυμάσιος καὶ σπουδαῖος). He also says that he was just reading their works concerning that biblical passage when his interlocutor wrote him (τούτων γὰρ τοῖς περὶ τούτων συνταγματίους ἐνέτυχον, ὅτε τὴν ἐπιστολὴν ἔγραψας; the first τούτων refers to Origen and Theognostus, the second to the aforementioned Matthew passage), and indeed he reports their interpretation, first in a paraphrase,³³ and then in a long quotation from Origen himself.³⁴

But the most important attestation of Athanasius' esteem for Origen comes from *De decr. Nic. syn.* 27,1-2 (23.13-30 Opitz). Here, he praises Origen's commitment to hard work—on the account of which he dubs him φιλόπonos, which probably has the same meaning as Ἀδαμάντιος and which corresponds to φιλοπονώτατος, which we have already encountered in Socrates' quotation from Athanasius, again in reference to Origen—and his conception of the Father-Son relationship, which was decidedly opposite to the 'Arian slogan' ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν. In 25,1 Athanasius also commends Theognostus, a faithful follower of Origen who affirmed that the Son was born "from the Father's very essence," ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας. Athanasius also defends Origen against accusations that were brought against him already in the days of Pamphilus, who likewise warned Origen's readers that his writings often display a heuristic method, so that at least some parts of them should not be taken as dogmatic:

Περὶ δὲ τοῦ αἰδίδως συνεῖναι τὸν Λόγον τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ μὴ ἑτέρας οὐσίας ἢ ὑποστάσεως, ἀλλὰ τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς ἰδίου γέννημα αὐτὸν εἶναι, ὡς εἰρήκασιν οἱ ἐν τῇ συνόδῳ, ἐξέστω πάλιν ὑμᾶς ἀκοῦσαι καὶ παρὰ τοῦ φιλοπόνου Ὡριγένους. ἃ μὲν γὰρ ὡς ζητῶν καὶ γυμνάζων ἔγραψε, ταῦτα μὴ ὡς αὐτοῦ

³³ Ἀμφότεροι γὰρ περὶ τούτου γράφουσι, ταύτην εἶναι τὴν εἰς τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα βλασφημίαν λέγοντες, ὅταν οἱ καταξιοθέντες ἐν τῷ βαπτίσματι τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος παλινδρομήσωσιν εἰς τὸ ἁμαρτάνειν.

³⁴ Ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ὡριγένης καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων κρίσεως οὕτω λέγει· Ὁ μὲν Θεὸς καὶ Πατὴρ εἰς πάντα διήκει καὶ πάντα συνέχει, ἄψυχά τε καὶ ἔμψυχα, λογικά τε καὶ ἄλογα· τοῦ δὲ Υἱοῦ ἡ δύναμις εἰς τὰ λογικά μόνα διατείνει, ἐν οἷς εἰσι κατηχούμενοι καὶ Ἕλληνες, οἱ μηδέπω πιστεύσαντες· τὸ δὲ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον εἰς μόνους ἐστὶ τοὺς μεταλαβόντας αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ τοῦ βαπτισματος δόσει κτλ. The quotation goes on further. Other references to Origen belong to works that are ascribed to Athanasius but are spurious, such as *Synopsis Sripturae Sacrae* PG 28,436,18; *Testimonia e Scriptura* PG 28,73,32; *Quaestiones ad Antiochum ducem* PG 28,608,11 (where, however, the reference is rather to Origen's followers); 28,641,11. It is telling that all these surely spurious references to Origen are negative (ἄθλιος Ὡριγένης κτλ.), whereas the authentic ones are extremely positive.

φρονούντος δεχέσθω τις, ἀλλὰ τῶν πρὸς ἔριν φιλονεικούντων ἐν τῷ ζητεῖν· ἃ δὲ ὡς ὀρίζων ἀποφαίνεται, τοῦτο τοῦ φιλοπόνου τὸ φρόνημά ἐστι. μετὰ γοῦν τὰ ὡς ἐν γυμνασίᾳ λεγόμενα πρὸς τοὺς αἰρετικούς εὐθὺς αὐτὸς ἐπιφέρει τὰ ἴδια λέγων οὕτως·

“Εἰ ἔστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, ἀόρατος εἰκὼν· ἐγὼ δὲ τολμήσας προσθεῖην ἄν, ὅτι καὶ ὁμοίότης τυγχάνων τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν. πότε γὰρ ὁ Θεός [...] ἀπαύγασμα οὐκ εἶχε τῆς ἰδίας δόξης, ἵνα τολμήσας τις ἀρχὴν δῶ εἶναι Υἱοῦ πρότερον οὐκ ὄντος; πότε δὲ ἡ τῆς ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀκατονομάστου καὶ ἀφθέγκτου ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Πατρὸς εἰκὼν, ὁ χαρακτήρ, ὁ Λόγος ὁ γινώσκων τὸν Πατέρα οὐκ ἦν; κατανοεῖται γὰρ ὁ τολμῶν καὶ λέγων· ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν ὁ Υἱός, ὅτι ἐρεῖ καὶ τό· Σοφία ποτε οὐκ ἦν καὶ Λόγος οὐκ ἦν καὶ ζῶη οὐκ ἦν.”

In the last section Athanasius quotes Origen *ad verbum* and is a fully reliable and not hostile source. His account indeed coincides with what has emerged from the analysis of Origen’s passages I previously offered: Origen considered the Son to have the same οὐσία of the Father and to be coeternal with the Father, which immediately implies that οὐκ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν. According to Athanasius’ quotation, Origen used this formula *verbatim* (with ἔστιν instead of the first ἦν). The only difference is that, when at the beginning Athanasius says, in his own words, μὴ ἐτέρας οὐσίας ἢ ὑποστάσεως, he uses ὑπόστασις in the sense of “substance,” but not of “individual substance,” which Origen distinguished for the three Persons of the Trinity. In Athanasius’ own words in this passage, οὐσία and ὑπόστασις are used rather synonymically, whereas in his literal quotation from Origen (ἀρρήτου [...] ὑποστάσεως τοῦ Πατρὸς) ὑπόστασις assumes the meaning of individual substance, which I have already pointed out in many authentic passages of Origen’s. For it is only the Father who is ineffable, not the Son, who reveals the Father.

That μὴ ἐτέρας οὐσίας καὶ ὑποστάσεως is Athanasius’ (and the Nicene Fathers’) formula, not Origen’s, is further supported by the first account available of the discussion of the Nicene Fathers concerning the adjective ὁμοούσιος, which Constantine, according to tradition, wished to introduce into the Nicene Creed: Eusebius’ *Letter to his own Church*, preserved by Socrates *HE* 1,8 and already quoted by Athanasius himself (*De decr. Nic. syn.* 33).³⁵ Eusebius in § 4 quotes the first Creed formula proposed by the Fathers, which in the section devoted to the Son reads as follows: ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγον, Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, ζῶν ἐκ ζωῆς, Υἱὸν μονογενῆ, πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως, πρὸ

³⁵ Athanasius *Decr.* 33; Socrates *HE* 1,8; Theodoret *HE* 1,12; Opitz 22,42.

πάντων τῶν αἰῶνων ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεγεννημένον. Then, Eusebius explains, Constantine wished to introduce the adjective ὁμοούσιος (§ 7): βασιλεὺς ὀρθότατα περιέχειν αὐτὴν ἐμαρτύρησεν [...] ἐνὸς μόνου προσεγγραφέντος ῥήματος τοῦ ὁμοουσίου. Thus, Eusebius quotes the second Creed issued by the Nicene Fathers and the emperor. This is the passage on the Son:

ἔνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς μονογενῆ, *τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς*, Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, *γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ* [...] τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ἐγένετο ἢ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι ἢ κτιστὸν ἢ τρεπτὸν ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία.

I have italicised the additions to the second formulation, which concern the identity of essence between the Father and the Son and the Son's being no creature. Here, just as in Athanasius' words—and as in Basil's earlier phase (as pointed out by Hildebrand)³⁶—οὐσία and ὑπόστασις are treated synonymically, differently from what happened in Origen's works. Moreover, an anathema is added against some formulae concerning the Son,

³⁶ S.M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea* (Washington 2007) highlights Basil's importance in the development of the Trinitarian doctrine. Basil is first of all an exegete who put his Greek *paideia* at the service of Biblical interpretation (just as Origen, I note). The first phase of his Trinitarian theology (360-365) is analysed in ch. 2: Father and Son are *homoiousioi*, not *homoousioi*, and *hypostasis* is still used as a synonym of *ousia*. Toward the end of the 360s (ch. 3) he used *homoousios* and distinguished *hypostasis* and *ousia*. John 14,9 and 17,26 and Matt 11,27 ground Basil's Trinitarian doctrine especially in *Contra Eunomium* (ch. 5). See also G.C. Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford 1977); H. Dörrie, "Hypostasis. Wort- und Bedeutungsgeschichte," *Nachr. Akademie Göttingen* 3 (1955) 35-92; R.M. Hubner, "Basilus von Caesarea und das Homoousios," in *Essays G.C. Stead* (Leiden 1993) 70-91, 663-671; J. Hammerstaedt, "Hypostase," in *RAC* 16 (1985) 986-1035; V.H. Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilios von Cäsarea* (Göttingen 1996); L. Turcescu, "Prosopon and Hypostasis in Basil of Caesarea's *Against Eunomius* and the Epistles," *Vigiliae Christianae* 51 (1997) 374-395; J.T. Lienhard, "Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'," in *The Trinity*, eds. S.T. Davis, D. Kendall, and G. O'Collins (Oxford 2000) 99-121; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 187-221 on the development of Basil's Trinitarian theology and terminology. On the homoiousian doctrine I limit myself to referring to W. Löhr, *Die Entstehung der homöischen und homöusianischen Kirchenparteien* (Bonn 1986); Id., "A Sense of Tradition: The Homoiousian Church Party," in *Arianism after Arius*, eds. M. Barnes—D.H. Williams (Edinburgh 1993) 81-100.

which have no Biblical ground: that the Son is not coeternal with the Father, that he has a different essence, that he was created (§ 8).

Eusebius explains that the expressions concerning the identity of οὐσία between the Father and the Son were carefully discussed (§ 9).³⁷ The Fathers clarified that the expression ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας indicated the birth of the Son from the Father, but not that the Son is a part of the Father: ἐκ μὲν τοῦ πατρὸς εἶναι, οὐ μὴν ὡς μέρος ὑπάρχειν τοῦ πατρὸς. I wish to point out that this concern derived to Eusebius directly from Origen, who in *Princ.* 4,4,1, fr. 31 from Macellus (*ap. Eus. C. Marc.* 1,4), explained that the Son was not begotten as a *part* or *fragment* of the Father, so that the Father's substance should be divided or diminished: ἀδιαίρετος ὢν καὶ ἀμέριστος Υἱοῦ γίνεται Πατήρ, because the generation of the Son is not ὅποια τὰ τῶν ζῶων γεννήματα; the very same concern is found expressed in *Comm. in Io.* 20,18,157, another Greek passage of sure authenticity, which thus confirms the fragment preserved by Marcellus:

ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας φάσκειν τοῦ Πατρὸς γεγενῆσθαι τὸν Υἱὸν οἰονεὶ μειουμένου καὶ λείποντος τῆ οὐσία ἢ πρότερον εἶχε τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἐπὶν γεννήσῃ τὸν Υἱόν. [...] ἀκολουθεῖ δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ σῶμα λέγειν τὸν Πατέρα καὶ τὸν Υἱὸν καὶ διηρησθαι τὸν Πατέρα [...] ἐν σωματικῷ τόπῳ δώσουσιν τὸν Πατέρα.

Now, once he was assured about this, Eusebius recounts, he gave his assent to the new creedal formula and to the use of the adjective ὁμοούσιος (§ 10):

ταύτη δὲ καὶ ἡμῖν ἐδόκει καλῶς ἔχειν συγκατατίθεσθαι τῆ διανοίᾳ τῆς εὐσεβοῦς διδασκαλίας ὑπαγορευούσης ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς εἶναι τὸν Υἱόν, οὐ μὴν μέρος αὐτοῦ τῆς οὐσίας τυγχάνειν. διόπερ τῆ διανοίᾳ καὶ ἡμεῖς συνετιθέμεθα οὐδὲ τὴν φωνὴν τοῦ ὁμοουσίου παραιτούμενοι, τοῦ τῆς εἰρήνης σκοποῦ πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν ἡμῖν κειμένου καὶ τοῦ μὴ τῆς ὀρθῆς ἐκπεσεῖν διανοίας.

Clearly, Eusebius was not at all against the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father—which was already maintained by Origen, whom he admired so much—but only against its possible misinterpretation in the sense that the Son should be a part or fragment of the Father, a conception that Origen himself had rejected. I have already argued for this on

³⁷⁾ Ὅπως εἴρηται αὐτοῖς τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τὸ τῷ Πατρὶ ὁμοούσιον, οὐκ ἀνεξέταστον αὐτοῖς κατελιμπάνομεν. ἐπερωτήσεις τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἀποκρίσεις ἐντεῦθεν ἀνεκινούντο ἐβασάνιζέν τε ὁ λόγος τὴν διάνοιαν τῶν εἰρημένων.

the basis of the Greek fragment preserved by Marcellus. Moreover, in *Princ.* 4,4,1 Origen likewise opposed this view, which he ascribes to some contemporary “heretics,” and also the idea, later embraced by the ‘Arians,’ that ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν (*sc.* the Son): *Non enim dicimus, sicut haeretici putant, partem aliquam substantiae Dei in Filium versam, aut ex nullis substantibus Filium procreatum a Patre, id est extra substantiam suam, ut fuerit aliquando quando non fuerit.*

In the same way Eusebius explains that he accepted the definition that the Son is not a creature (§ 11),³⁸ an idea that Origen himself, as I have pointed out, had already maintained. Eusebius further explains what it is that the Nicene Fathers meant with ὁμοούσιος, which they decided to include in the Creed: they meant that the generation of the Son was not κατὰ διαίρεσιν τῆς οὐσίας, nor κατ’ ἀλλοίωσιν τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς οὐσίας, and that the Son is not ἐξ ἑτέρας τινὸς ὑποστάσεως καὶ οὐσίας, ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς. Here ὑπόστασις does not indicate the individuality, but “substance,” and is a synonym of οὐσία, just as in Athanasius’ previous words preceding his quotation of Origen. It is not by chance that right here Eusebius inserts his justification based on the linguistic use of some “authors” who first of all include Origen himself (Αὐτῷ τοῦτον ἐρμηνευθέντι τὸν τρόπον καλῶς ἔχειν ἐφάνη συγκαταθέσθαι, ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν παλαιῶν τινὰς λογίους καὶ ἐπιφανεῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ συγγραφεῖς ἔγνωμεν ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ Υἱοῦ θεολογίας τῷ τοῦ ὁμοουσίου χρησαμένου ὀνόματι). Eusebius insists in § 14 that he and the others did not sign the formula without a close examination and ponderation,³⁹ and he claims that he accepted the final anathematisms in that they excluded expressions unattested in Scripture.⁴⁰ Notably, these anathematisms mentioned

³⁸ Κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ καὶ τὸ γεννηθέντα καὶ οὐ ποιηθέντα κατεδεξάμεθα [...] διὸ δὴ μὴ εἶναι αὐτὸν ποίημα τοῖς δι’ αὐτοῦ γενομένοις ἐμφορές, κρείττονος δὲ ἢ κατὰ πᾶν ποίημα τυγχάνειν οὐσίας.

³⁹ Συμφωνήσαμεν οἱ πάντες οὐκ ἀνεξετάστως, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὰς ἀποδοθείσας διανοίας ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοφιλεστάτου βασιλέως ἐξετασθείσας καὶ τοῖς εἰρημένοις λογισμοῖς συνομολογηθείσας.

⁴⁰ Καὶ τὸν ἀναθεματισμὸν δὲ τὸν μετὰ τὴν πίστιν πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐκτεθέντα ἄλλυπον εἶναι ἡγησάμεθα διὰ τὸ ἀπειργεῖν ἀγράφοις χρῆσθαι φωναῖς [...] μηδεμίᾳς γοῦν θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς τῷ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων καὶ τῷ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν καὶ τοῖς ἐξῆς ἐπιλεγόμενοις κεκρημένης οὐκ εὐλογον ἐφάνη ταῦτα λέγειν καὶ διδάσκειν. ᾧ καὶ αὐτῷ καλῶς δόξαντι συνθεμέθα, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ ἐν τῷ πρὸ τούτου χρόνῳ τούτοις εἰώθαμεν συγγραῖσθαι τοῖς ῥήμασιν. Ἔτι μὴν τὸ ἀναθεματίζεσθαι τὸ πρὸ τοῦ γεννηθῆναι οὐκ ἦν οὐκ ἄτοπον ἐνομίσθη τῷ παρὰ πᾶσιν ὁμολογεῖσθαι τὸ εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸ τῆς κατὰ σάρκα γεννήσεως. ἥδη δὲ ὁ θεοφιλέστατος ἡμῶν βασιλεὺς τῷ λόγῳ κατεσκευάζε καὶ κατὰ τὴν

the formulae ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων and ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, the very same that Origen already attacked in *Princ.* 4,4,1: *Non enim dicimus* [...] *ex nullis substantibus Filium procreatum a Patre* [...] *ut fuerit aliquando quando non fuerit.*

Moreover, Eusebius himself in his own works, besides his *Letter to his Church*, uses ὁμοούσιος.⁴¹ It is true that in *DE* 4,7,156 Eusebius says that Christ has a lordship δευτέρως, but he does not maintain that he has a second-place divinity. Likewise, in *DE* 6 *proem.* 1 he claims that the Son has a second οὐσία, but he manifestly accepted at Nicaea that it is the same οὐσία as the Father's. If in *DE* 5,4,8 the Father is πρῶτος Θεός and the Son is δεύτερος, they are both God, only distinct in their individuality. These are not 'Arian' claims. It is no accident that, as Edwards rightly pointed out,⁴² Eusebius insists so much on the unity of God in the very same work (*DE* 5,4,8-14). After Nicaea he will be even farther from any trace of Arianism. This does not surprise in a close follower of Origen.

That Origen rejected the view that "there was a time when the Son did not exist" is also clear from further works of his own, besides the key fragment, already cited, preserved by Pamphilus, and the aforementioned *Princ.* 4,4,1, and the undoubtedly authentic fragment from Athanasius' *De decretis Nycenae synodi*, in all of which he insists on the coeternity of the Son with the Father and displays the very formula οὐκ ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν.⁴³ In *Comm. in Rom.* 1,7,4, the sentence *non erat quando non erat*, just as in *Princ.* 1,2,9 the sentence *non est autem quando non fuerit*, in reference to the Son, is not an invention of Rufinus opposite to Origen's own

ἐνθεον αὐτοῦ γέννησιν τὴν πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων εἶναι αὐτόν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πρὶν ἐνεργεῖα γεννηθῆναι δυνάμει ἦν ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ἀγεννήτως, ὄντος τοῦ πατρὸς αἰεὶ πατρὸς ὡς καὶ βασιλέως αἰεὶ καὶ σωτήρος αἰεὶ, δυνάμει πάντα ὄντος, αἰεὶ τε κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχοντος.

⁴¹ E.g., in *PE* 11,21,6, where the νοητὰ οὐσίαι are said not to be ὁμοούσιοι with God: τὰς νοητὰς οὐσίας [...] τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ἔχειν παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, δηλαδὴ τοῦ θεοῦ, φησὶν ὁ Πλάτων τὸ τε ἀγαθὸν μὴ εἶναι οὐσίαν, ἀλλ' ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχον· ὥστε μὴ ὁμοούσια αὐτὰ τίθεσθαι. In *DE* 1,10,13 the irrational animals are said to be "of the same nature" as plants: ὁμογενῆ καὶ ὁμοφυῆ καὶ ὁμοούσια εἶναι ἠγεῖσθαι τοῖς ἀπὸ γῆς βλαστήμασι καὶ φυτοῖς τὰ ἄλογα. And in *Or. ad sanct. coetum* 13,1 a conception is expressed that is attuned with Origen's: the ontological order is essentially different from the ethical (οὐδὲ τὰ φυσικὰ τοῖς ἠθικοῖς ὁμοούσια).

⁴² "Nicene Theology," 194.

⁴³ It would be extremely interesting to explore the intellectual background from which Origen took this formula, but this will be for another study.

thought, in the light of the other attestations. The same concept is expressed in *Comm. in Rom.* 1,7,15-19: *Haec nobis dicta sint propter eos qui in unigenitum Filium Dei impietatem loquuntur [...] qui [...] semper fuit sicut et Pater.* Just as when he interprets 1Cor 15,28 in an anti-subordinationistic sense, here too Origen polemicalises against some subordinationists ('Arians' only *ante litteram*).

In this connection, Athanasius' quotation of Origen on the coeternity of the Son with the Father, to which I have already called attention, is worth considering. Athanasius surely did not need to invent a passage of Origen to support his own position. His quotation is entirely trustworthy, all the more in that, otherwise, many would have been able to give him the lie. He had no motive to alter Origen's words or even invent them. If Origen had not used these expressions and maintained these positions, Athanasius would never have cited him—who moreover was already strongly criticised, and indeed Athanasius himself felt the need to *defend* him in that very passage—in support of his own thesis, and he would never have admired Origen so much. Thus, not only did Origen think of the Son as "having the same essence" as the Father, but he also refuted what would become the 'Arian' slogan ἦν ποτε ὅτε οὐκ ἦν.

Just as the 'anti-Arian' Athanasius admired Origen and even cited him in support of his own Trinitarian theology, so was Marcellus of Ancyra a convinced Origenian, and at the same time he was so 'anti-Arian' as to fall into the opposite extreme. Both these theologians, and Nyssen even more, would hardly have esteemed Origen so much, and followed his thought to such an extent, if they had known or even suspected that he was a supporter of subordinationism.

Moreover, Rufinus in *De adult.* 1 explicitly states that Origen used the word ὁμοούσιος for the Son (*Patrem et Filium unius substantiae, quod graece homoousion dicitur, designavit*), which makes it impossible to suppose a tacit alteration in his Latin translation of Origen's fragment in Pamphilus. It is highly meaningful that precisely in that fragment preserved by Pamphilus, which I have previously discussed, Origen uses ὁμοούσιος in connection with the exegesis of Heb 1,3 and Wis 7,25-26, which are the very same passages that he quotes in *Princ.* 1,2,6 just before stating that the imagery used in these *loci* expresses the unity of "nature and substance" between the Father and the Son: *naturae ac substantiae Patris et Filii continet unitatem.* "Nature and substance" is the translation of οὐσία. In the *Dialogue of Adamantius* 1,2 the Greek includes this very catchword in Adamantius' words, τὸν ἐξ αὐτοῦ Θεὸν Λόγον ὁμοούσιον,

and Rufinus, who identified Adamantius with Origen, renders: *Verbum eius consubstantivum ei*, where οὐσία is translated *substantia*.

Above all, Eusebius provides an important clue. For it is to Origen first of all, whom he highly admired and whose doctrine he followed,⁴⁴ that he is likely to refer when, in his aforementioned *Letter to his own Church*, he justifies his acceptance of the ὁμοούσιος Nicene formula by saying that it had already been applied to the relation between the Father and the Son by some “learned and distinguished ancient bishops and writers” (τῶν παλαιῶν τινὰς λόγιους καὶ ἐπιφανεῖς ἐπισκόπους καὶ συγγραφέας).⁴⁵ Origen was not among the bishops—like Irenaeus or Hippolytus, who, as I have pointed out, did use this adjective before Nicaea—, but he surely was among the writers.

I find it unsurprising that the same adjective ὁμοούσιος was used by Plotinus, a fellow-disciple of Origen’s at Ammonius’ school in Alexandria, and by Porphyry, who knew Origen well and even met him as a young boy,⁴⁶ and was highly influential upon Nyssen’s thought.⁴⁷ Plotinus uses it twice, in *Enn.* 4,4,28,56 and 4,7,10,19. In the first passage (ὁμοούσιον εἶναι τοῦτο τῷ ἑτέρῳ ἴχνει ψυχῆς) it clearly means “of the same nature”: one of the “traces of the soul” has the same nature as the other, since they both belong to the same soul. In the same passage, this same meaning is further clarified by the joining of τὸ ὁμοούσιον to συγγένεια, which both point to the idea of “sharing the same nature.”⁴⁸ Plotinus is contending that wisdom and virtue have “the same essence and nature” as the immortal soul, i.e., a divine and eternal nature. Porphyry uses this adjective four times, in three passages. In *De abst.* 1,19 he says that one should not kill beings of one’s same race, if it is true that the vital souls of animals are of the same nature as ours: ὁμοούσιοι αἱ τῶν ζώων ψυχαὶ ταῖς ἡμετέραις. In *Sent.* 33 the plural ὁμοούσια means “things that have the same nature

⁴⁴ Even to the point of probably sharing his theory of apokatastasis: see Ramelli, “*In Illud...* Gregory of Nyssa’s Exegesis.”

⁴⁵ In H.G. Opitz, *Urkunden zur Geschichte des arianischen Streites 318-328* (Berlin 1934-35) 22,13. As for the “bishops,” Beatrice, *Homoousios*, 254 hypothesises that Eusebius was thinking of Dionysius of Alexandria.

⁴⁶ See my “Origen, Patristic Philosophy, and Christian Platonism,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 63,3 (2009) 217-263.

⁴⁷ See my *Gregorio di Nissa*, introductory essay and integrative essay II.

⁴⁸ Ἀνάγκη θεῖον τὸ τοιοῦτον εἶναι, ἅτε θεῖων μεστὸν αὐτῷ διὰ συγγένειαν καὶ τὸ ὁμοούσιον. On the soul traces see J. Phillips, “Plotinus on the Generation of Matter,” *IJPT* 3 (2009) 103-137.

as,” “things that share the same nature.”⁴⁹ The use of this adjective on the part of Plotinus, Origen's fellow-disciple, and Porphyry makes it even more probable that Origen himself found this adjective, which was rare earlier, in his philosophical formation, in addition to encountering it in Clement and the Gnostics.

3. Conclusions on Eusebius' Possible Role at Nicaea and on Origen's Anti-Subordinationism. Origen's Trinitarian Heritage in Nyssen, Athanasius, and Eusebius

I even wonder whether it was through Eusebius that Constantine, as is reported by Eusebius himself in his letter to his own church (Opitz, 22,7), which I have analysed, supported the inclusion of ὁμοούσιος in the Nicene creed. Indeed, it is again Eusebius who explains Constantine's point in *Or. ad Sanct. coetum* 9 (a work that Edwards considers to contain no 'Arian' ideas),⁵⁰ where the Nicene faith about the Father and the Son is claimed to be consistent with Plato's theology, of course as conveyed by Middle Platonism and the beginning of Neoplatonism.⁵¹ Now, I think that this is first of all *Eusebius'* own conviction. In his *PE* 11-13 he interprets Platonism as the philosophical doctrine that most agrees with the Hebrew and Christian philosophy: according to Justin, Clement, and Origen, of course, this was the case because Plato depended on Scripture. Eusebius supposes that Plato, “the most excellent of Greek philosophers” (*PE* 11,1,3),⁵² either learnt the Judaic philosophy via an oral transmission or found the truth by himself, or else was divinely inspired. Eusebius' Plato was obviously filtered through Middle and Neoplatonism, especially

⁴⁹ Διὸ καὶ ἡ σύνοδος ἐκβεβηκυῖα τῶν θεωρεῖσθαι εἰωθότων ἐπὶ τῶν ὁμοουσίων. οὐτε οὖν κρᾶσις ἢ μίξις ἢ σύνοδος ἢ παράθεσις, ἀλλ' ἕτερος τρόπος φαντάζων μὲν παρὰ τὰς ὀπωσοῦν γινομένης ἄλλων πρὸς ἄλλα κοινωνίας τῶν ὁμοουσίων, πασῶν δὲ ἐκβεβηκῶς τῶν πιπτουσῶν ὑπὸ τὴν αἴσθησιν. Cf. Iamb. *De Myst.* 3,21,7: Εἰ γὰρ πού τι ἐκ δυοῖν ἐν ἀποτελοῖτο, ὁμοειδὲς τοῦτο καὶ ὁμοφυῆς πᾶν ἐστὶ καὶ ὁμοούσιον.

⁵⁰ On the relationship Eusebius-Constantine see, most recently, R. Staats, “Kaiser Konstantin der Große und der Apostel Paulus,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008) 334-370, *praes.* 366-367.

⁵¹ The influence of Numenius upon this conception has been hypothesised by J. Rist, “Basil's 'Neoplatonism,’” in *Basil of Caesarea*, ed. P.J. Fedwick, I (Toronto 1981) 137-220, *praes.* 155-159; Beatrice, *Homoousios*, 226 advocates a derivation from Hermeticism.

⁵² Cf. É. des Places, “Eusèbe de Césarée juge de Platon dans la *Préparation Évangélique*,” in *Mélanges A. Diès* (Paris 1966) 69-77.

Numenius and many other authors whom Eusebius cites, such as Plutarch, Atticus, Plotinus, Porphyry, Amelius, and so on. It is no accident that *PE* 14,5-9 provides a history of the Academy until Carneades on the basis of Numenius, and that *PE* 11,21 is entitled *Περὶ τῶν τριῶν ἀρχικῶν ὑποστάσεων*, just like Plotinus, *Enn.* 5,1 (of course at the hands of Porphyry). On the basis of the *Second Letter*—the very same that was also cited by Plotinus in *Enn.* 5,1,8 to provide a basis for his doctrine of the three hypostases—, Eusebius argues here that Plato's Trinitarian theology depends on the "Jewish oracles," that is to say, the *Sapientia Salomonis*. This theology was interpreted, he maintains, by "the exegetes of Plato," i.e. Plotinus and his followers, as a reference to the three hypostases, and by the Christian tradition as a reference to the Trinity. This tradition was represented above all by Clement, who interpreted the "three kings" of the *Second Letter* in reference to both the Trinity and the Platonic hypostases, which will be theorised by Plotinus. Indeed, in *PE* 11,15-19 Eusebius identifies the Biblical Wisdom with Philo's Logos, Plotinus' Nous, and Numenius' "second god."

Moreover, Constantine's stress upon the Son as the consubstantial *βουλή/βούλησις* of the Father and creator of all (Opitz 27,1) strongly reminds me of the line maintained by Origen himself and even going back to Clement's teacher, Pantaenus. In his fr. 2 Routh (= Clem. Alex. fr. 48 St.) the Logos is said to be God's *βουλή* in which the whole creation consists. Again, I suspect that Eusebius, Pamphilus' disciple and an excellent knower and admirer of Origen, may have had a role in the transmission of this idea. Indeed, Eusebius maintained that it was by the *βούλησις* of God the Father that the Son-Logos subsisted (cf. Marc. Anc. *De S. Ecclesia* 95-96 Logan), and that the creation of the universe was due to God's will. The conceptual, and even verbal, likeness is striking. And, once again, it is sure that Eusebius depends on Origen, *Princ.* 4,4,1 (*Verbum et Sapientiam genitam dicimus [...] velut si voluntas procedat a mente*) and 1,2,6: *natus ex eo est velut quaedam voluntas eius ex mente procedens [...] sufficere debeat voluntas Patris ad subsistendum hoc quod vult Pater [...] ita ergo et Filii ab eo subsistentia generatur* (cf. 1,2,9: *ex ipsa virtute velut voluntas ex mente procedat*). To be sure, what we have here is Rufinus' version, but Eusebius certainly read Origen's original Greek, in which *voluntas* was *βούλησις/βουλή* or *θέλησις*, and *subsistentia* was *ὑπόστασις*. Origen maintained that the very unity between the Father and the Son, besides being a sharing of the same οὐσία, is a unity of will. This is clear, for instance, from *Princ.* 1,2,12, a passage that seems to anticipate

Gregory of Nyssa's *Ad Ablabium: speculum immaculatum* ἐνεργείας (*id est inoperationis*) *Dei esse Sapientia nominatur* [...] *nec aliud est opus Filii quam Patris, sed unus atque idem, ut ita dicam, etiam motus* [sc. act of will] *in omnibus est* [...] *nulla omnino dissimilitudo Filii intellegatur ad Patrem*. Even clearer is *Comm. in Io.* 13,36,228: εἶναι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν τῷ θελήματι τοῦ Υἱοῦ, καὶ γενέσθαι τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἀπαράλλακτον τοῦ θελήματος τοῦ Πατρός, εἰς τὸ μηκέτι εἶναι δύο θελήματα ἀλλὰ ἐν θέλημα (cf. *ibidem* 13,36,231).

Eusebius is often labelled an "Arian," which, as I have already argued, is imprecise.⁵³ Indeed, his very *Letter to his Church*, which is the most ancient source concerning Nicaea, and which does not mention an excommunication of Arius,⁵⁴ was cited as an important document by Athanasius in *De decretis Nicenae synodi*, which would obviously not have been the case if Athanasius had considered Eusebius to be an Arian.⁵⁵ But far from seeing in Eusebius a theologian suspected of 'Arianism,' in *De decr. Nic. syn.* 3,3, Athanasius speaks in very positive terms of Eusebius' letter, which he reports toward the end of his work: he says that Eusebius at first, just once, refused to admit the formula γέννημα ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Πατρός ἐστιν ὁ Λόγος, but then he accepted it (πρὸ μιᾶς ἀρνούμενος ὅμως ὕστερον ὑπογράψας) and "sent a letter to his own church, attesting that *this is the faith of the Church and the tradition of the Fathers*, and clearly showed to all that beforehand they were mistaken and contended in vain against the truth."⁵⁶ That Eusebius' church at first did not accept the idea that the

⁵³ H. Strutwolf, *Die Trinitätstheologie und Christologie des Euseb von Caesarea* (Göttingen 1999).

⁵⁴ This is rightly highlighted by H. Pietras, "Lettera di Costantino alla Chiesa di Alessandria e Lettera del sinodo di Nicea agli Egiziani (325)—i falsi sconosciuti da Atanasio?," *Gregorianum* 89 (2008) 727-739, who argues that the two letters cited in the title, and which most stress the condemnation of Arius, were unknown to both Eusebius and Athanasius because they are pseudepigrapha composed later on. See also S. Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford 2006) 38-95 on Nicaea, and, on the post-Nicene "construction" of Arianism, R.J. Lyman, "A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism," in *Arianism after Arius*, 45-62; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 100-104 on the "creation" of Arianism in the years 325-342, and 105-131 on its "creation" in the years 340-350.

⁵⁵ The title in its present form, Εὐσεβίου Καισαρέως τοῦ ἀρειανόφρονος ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς τοὺς τῆς παροικίας αὐτοῦ, is of course unauthentic. For Athanasius' *De decretis* see also L. Ayres, "Athanasius' Initial Defense of the Term ὁμοούσιος," *J ECS* 12 (2004) 337-359.

⁵⁶ Ἐπέστειλε τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἑαυτοῦ, λέγων ταύτην εἶναι τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὴν πίστιν καὶ

Son was of the same οὐσία as the Father and from the Father's οὐσία itself, is an inference that one might draw from Eusebius' letter, but that is by no means certain. Athanasius may have drawn it from what he interprets as an "apologising" tone in Eusebius' letter, which is, again, an impression and is far from conveying reliable historical information. What is certain, on the contrary, and is relevant to my argument, is that Athanasius observes that Eusebius endorsed the *homoousios* formula and even strongly contributed to its diffusion from the very beginning: "Although he was somewhat embarrassed to write in these expressions, and it is as though he wished to apologise toward his church, however *he certainly did not deny* the *homoousios* formula or the expression 'from the Father's substance,' but rather *wishes to make this known clearly* by means of his letter."⁵⁷ Therefore, Athanasius remarks, "something remarkable happened to him: albeit as though apologising, however he *did condemn the Arians*."⁵⁸ Athanasius cannot but approve this outcome. It is notable that he does not at all accuse Eusebius of being an 'Arian' himself, and that *De decretis Nicenae synodi*⁵⁹ is the very same work in which, as I have shown, he praises Origen, defends him, and even adduces his words in support of the Nicene Trinitarian view. This can scarcely be fortuitous.

Furthermore, in the Letter of Constantine to all churches, reported by Socrates from Eusebius' *Vit. Const.* 3,17ff., dating from A.D. 337-339, it is not said that the bishops of the whole Christendom were summoned in order to condemn Arius, but rather to establish a profession of faith and a common date for Easter. Athanasius himself never cited any sentence of condemnation formally issued by the Nicene council against Arius; he rather limited himself to explaining the Nicene creed in an 'anti-Arian' sense. Sabinus of Heraclea, a Macedonian bishop, around A.D. 375 collected the proceedings of the council, and Socrates attests that he praised Eusebius for his trustworthiness in relating what actually happened.⁶⁰ It is thus easier to imagine an influence of Eusebius—who was not really 'Arian'—upon Constantine also in connection with the introduction of

τῶν πατέρων τὴν παράδοσιν, πᾶσι τε φανερώς ἔδειξεν, ὅτι πρότερον ἐσφάλλοντο καὶ μάτην ἐφιλονείκουν πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

⁵⁷ Εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἡσχύνθη τότε ταύταις ταῖς λέξεσι γράψαι καὶ ὡς ἠθέλησεν αὐτὸς ἀπελογήσατο τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἀλλὰ γε διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς τὸ ὁμοούσιον καὶ τὸ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας μὴ ἀρνησάμενος φανερώς τοῦτο σημάει βούλεται.

⁵⁸ Καὶ πέπονθέ τι δεινόν: ὡς γὰρ ἀπολογούμενος κατηγορήσῃ λοιπὸν τῶν Ἀρειανῶν.

⁵⁹ H.G. Opitz, *Athanasius Werke*, 2/1 (Berlin 1940) 1-45.

⁶⁰ M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo* (Rome 1975) 25.

the ὁμοούσιος notion, which was already supported by Origen, Eusebius' greatest inspirer.

What emerges ever more clearly is that Origen's Trinitarian heritage is to be found, not in 'Arianism,' but in Athanasius, Marcellus of Ancyra, Eusebius, Didymus, and above all Nyssen (and the Cappadocians), although, unlike Origen, Gregory of Nyssa obviously wrote after Plotinus and endeavoured to show that all the Trinity is identifiable with Plotinus' first hypostasis (see especially his *Ad Gr.* 5). Indeed, Origen seems to have been the first positive anti-subordinationist in Christian thought, and was understood as such especially by Gregory of Nyssa and the other Cappadocians, and partially by Athanasius (and even more partially by Marcellus). Nyssen, in particular, took up Origen's argument against subordinationism and its connection to the doctrine of apokatastasis very closely in his exegesis of 1 Cor 15,28.