

FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE

(Col. I: 15)

2105

A DISSERTATION

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TO  
MY MOTHER AND FATHER

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## PREFACE

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In Colossians I:15, St. Paul refers to Christ as the Firstborn of every creature (*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*), a puzzling expression found nowhere else in Sacred Scripture. The history of its use in subsequent theological speculation is an interesting one, but in spite of all the discussion given to the expression, its exact meaning is still a matter of dispute. In this preliminary study, an investigation has been made of the various interpretations proposed by Greeks and Latins during the first five centuries.

The writer takes this occasion to express his gratitude for the constructive criticism received from members of the faculty and others with whom much of his material was discussed. He is particularly grateful to the Very Reverend John F. Fenlon, S. S., D. D., Provincial of the Sulpicians in the United States, who made it possible for him to complete the study, and to have this portion printed.

E. A. C.

Feast of St. Francis de Sales, 1938.

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## INTRODUCTION

The word "firstborn" (*πρωτότοκος*)<sup>1</sup> occurs about 130 times in the Septuagint, where it appears regularly for "bekhor" (*בְּכוֹר*)<sup>2</sup> of the Hebrew text. A "bekhor" from the standpoint of the mother was the offspring (male) "which opened the womb";<sup>3</sup> from the standpoint of the father, the "bekhor" was the issue of his "first strength."<sup>4</sup> The idea implied in both cases was the physiological relation between a male first offspring and either parent, rather than that between a male offspring and later children. In fact, a male first offspring was called a "bekhor" from birth, before there were other children. If later there were other children, the "bekhor" naturally became the first of the series, but the term in itself did not necessarily imply that there were other children. It meant simply that there had been none before.

By nature, a "bekhor" was the male first offspring of one, or of both its parents; by law and custom, the "bekhor" was accorded special privileges and honors, and the term thus acquired other meanings based on these prerogatives. According to the Mosaic law, the male firstborn of every mother was sacred to Jahweh. Thirty days after its birth, and hence before there was any possibility of further children, the father was under obligation to redeem the child from a priest for five shekels of silver.<sup>5</sup> In

<sup>1</sup> *πρωτότοκος* from *πρῶτος* (first) and *τίκτεω* or *τεκνίω* (to beget, of men; to bear, of women). A *πρωτότοκος* (paroxytone) was a woman bearing her first child, while a *πρωτότοκος* (proparoxytone) was a firstborn child. Only the latter term occurs in the Greek Bible.

<sup>2</sup> " *πρωτότοκος* ' premier-né n'implique pas l'idée d'un puîné. Le substrat sémitique, hébr. *bekôr*, aram. *bukrâ*, à la différence de *πρωτότοκος*, n'exprime pas formellement la notion du nombre ordinal ' premier ': le sens fondamental de la racine sémitique *bkr* paraît être ' fendre. ' " Joüon, *L'Évangile de Notre-Seigneur Jésus Christ*, Paris 1930, p. 296.

<sup>3</sup> " Sanctify unto me every firstborn that openeth the womb (*בְּכוֹרֹת*) among the children of Israel, as well of men as of beasts: for they are all mine." *Exod.* XIII: 2. See also *Nu.* III: 12 and XVIII: 15.

<sup>4</sup> *ראשית אבני*. *Gen.* XLIX: 3; *Deut.* XXI: 17; *Ps.* LXXVIII (LXVII): 51;

*Ps.* CV (CIV): 36 in the Hebrew text.

<sup>5</sup> "And the redemption of it shall be after one month, for five sicles of silver, by the weight of the sanctuary." *Nu.* XVIII: 16.

the days before the tribe of Levi was given the exclusive right to perform priestly functions, the fathers of families may have frequently delegated such functions to their firstborn sons.<sup>6</sup>

The male firstborn on the father's side was regularly the father's principal heir.<sup>7</sup> He generally occupied a special place in the father's affections, was given first honors after the father within the family circle, but did not enjoy any special power over the other members of the family by reason of being the firstborn. The father, when in need of help to rule his household, would turn naturally to his firstborn, but the father always remained supreme. After the father's death, the firstborn received a double portion of the inheritance, and full authority over those who remained in the paternal home.

The male firstborn, not only of every mother in Israel, but also of every beast, was sacred to Jahweh.<sup>8</sup> The Rabbis, reasoning from the precepts of the Torah, developed as occasion arose the numerous rules regarding the firstborn of redemption (בכור לנדה) and the firstborn of inheritance (בכור לנדלה), found in the Mishnah.<sup>9</sup> Associated as the term was with definite religious and legal obligations of frequent occurrence, it was in constant use among the Jews. Perhaps among no people of antiquity did the firstborn of man or beast receive so much attention.

Now such a concrete term in frequent use lends itself readily to figurative usage. Although "bekhor" is generally taken throughout the Old Testament in the primary sense of the term, there are several instances of purely figurative usage. Thus in Exodus

<sup>6</sup> "Before the tabernacle was set up, the high places were permitted and the (altar) service was fulfilled by the firstborn." Zebaim 14: 4 in Danby, *The Mishnah*, Oxford 1933, p. 489. That the firstborn in the times preceding the Exodus exercised priestly functions by virtue of their rights of primogeniture, is denied by many authors. Cf. Kortlechner, *Religio a Patriarchis Israelitarum exercitata*, Oeniponte 1936, pp. 136-137.

<sup>7</sup> *Deut.* XXI: 17. See also articles "Aïnesse" (Many) and "Premier-né" (Lesêtre) in Vigouroux, *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, Paris 1895-1912; *Encyclopaedia*, New York 1901-1906; (Casasowicz) in *Jewish N. T. aus Talmud und Midrasch*, Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Exodus* XIII: 12-15.

<sup>8</sup> *Mishnah*, *Behoroth*; also *Baba Bathra* 8, and *Edugoth* 7 (Danby, *op. cit.*, pp. 529-544, 376-378, and 434, respectively).

IV: 22, God calls the Hebrew nation His firstborn son. In Psalm LXXXVIII (LXXXIX): 28, the promised Messias is called Jahweh's firstborn, and on the basis of this text, "firstborn" seems to have become another of the many titles applied to the Messias.<sup>10</sup> Then there are the very strange expressions "firstborn of death" (בכור מן המות) Job XVIII: 13 and "firstborn of the poor" (בכור מן העניים) Isaias XIV: 30). The analogy in both these cases is rather remote from the usual signification of the term.<sup>11</sup> The expression "firstborn of every creature," with which we are primarily concerned, does not occur in the Old Testament, nor in any other writing prior to its single occurrence in St. Paul.

In the New Testament, *πρωτότοκος* occurs eight times. The respective passages are listed below, and some interpretations noted briefly. Discussion will follow later.

a) Luke II: 7. "And she brought forth her firstborn son." (*καὶ ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον*).<sup>12</sup> In this passage, *πρωτότοκος* is taken in its primary sense of a male first offspring. Christ as the firstborn of His mother was sacred to Jahweh, and consequently subject to redemption from the service of the sanctuary, thirty days after birth. "And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried him to

<sup>10</sup> "Gott sprach zu Mose: Wie ich Jakob zum Erstgeborenen gemacht habe, wie es heisst: Mein erstgeborener Sohn ist Israel (Jakob) Ex 4, 42—so werde ich den König, den Messias, zum Erstgeborenen machen, wie es heisst: Auch will ich ihn zum Erstgeborenen machen Ps. 89, 28." Rabbi Nathan in Shemoth Rabba Exodus 19 (81d), quoted in Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.* III, p. 258.

<sup>11</sup> "Ebenso findest du es bei den Wegen Gottes, dass alles was geliebt ist (wert, teuer) ist, dem andren vorangeht. Weil die Tora geliebt ist vor allem, wurde sie vor allem geschaffen. . . . Weil das Heiligthum geliebt war vor allem, wurde es vor allem geschaffen. . . . Weil das Land Israel vor allem geliebt war, wurde es vor allem geschaffen." Siphre on *Deut.* XI: 10, quoted in Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, III, 256-258. From this S-B conclude: "Nach diesem Kanon ist 'Erstgeborener' soviel wie der Geliebteste, der Wertvollste, der Angesehenste, der Tüchtigste. Auch in malum partem kann jemand als 'Erstgeborener' bezeichnet werden; dann erscheint er als der Gefährlichste oder Gefürchteste seiner Art. . . . Hi 18, 13 wird der Aussatz (?) als gefährlichste Krankheit der 'Erstgeborene des Todes' genannt."

<sup>12</sup> *Godæ O* reads *ἔτεκεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς τὸν πρωτότοκον* in *Matt.* 1: 25, where the *Sinaiticus* and *Vaticanus* have simply *ἔτεκεν υἱόν*.

Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord: as it is written in the law of the Lord: Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." (Luke II: 22-23). The term does not imply that there were other children. The child that opened the womb was called a firstborn immediately, and if a male, was subject to redemption after a month according to the requirements of the Mosaic Law.<sup>13</sup>

b) Romans VIII: 29. "For whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his Son: that he might be the firstborn amongst many brethren." (*εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς*). This difficult passage, which figured so much in the controversies on Grace and Predestination, is still variously interpreted. Regarding the phrase "firstborn amongst many brethren," which alone concerns us here, there are two interpretations, depending upon the meaning given to "conformable to the image of his Son."<sup>14</sup> Some authors understand the conformity to be by grace in this life, whereby we become adopted sons of God and co-heirs of Christ. According to this interpretation, Christ is the firstborn among his adopted brethren, and firstborn is taken in the figurative sense of pre-eminence. Most interpreters, however, understand the conformity to be by glory in the next life, and explain "firstborn amongst many brethren" of the glorified Christ among the blessed in heaven. The predominating idea of "firstborn" according to this interpretation is again that of pre-eminence.

c) Hebrews I: 6. "And again, when he introduced (or, and when he again introduced) the firstborn into the world, he saith: And let all the angels of God adore him." (*ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσῆγάγῃ τὸν πρωτότοκον εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει . . .*). The exact meaning of the passage is complicated by the ambiguous position of "again" (*πάλιν*). Some authors take "again" with "he saith," as indicating simply another quotation. "When he introduced" would

<sup>13</sup> Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Luc*, 2e ed., Paris 1921; Frey, *La Signification du Terme πρωτότοκος d'après une Inscription Juive*, Biblica 1930, pp. 375-390. In *IV Esdras* VI: 58, and the *Psalms of Solomon* XVIII: 4, the *πρωτότοκος* is also *μονογενής*.

<sup>14</sup> Prat (trans. Stoddard), *The Theology of St. Paul*, New York 1926, II, pp. 244-245; Boylan, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, Dublin 1934, p. 149; Lagrange, *Épître aux Romains*, 2e ed., Paris 1922, p. 216.

then refer to the first introduction of the Son into this world at His nativity. Others take "again" with "introduceth." "When he again introduceth" would then refer to a second introduction of the Son, which is generally taken to be that at the time of the Last Judgment. In either case, the question arises as to the precise meaning of "firstborn." Does "firstborn" refer here to the Eternal Word as generated from the substance of the Father, or is it a term referring to the Messianic office of the Word Incarnate in the sense of Psalm LXXXVIII (LXXXIX): 28, "And I will make him my firstborn, high above the kings of the earth"? Most commentators are inclined to the latter view.<sup>15</sup>

d) Hebrews XI: 28. "That he who destroyed the firstborn (*τὰ πρωτότοκα*), might not touch them." The reference is to the destruction of the firstborn of the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus (Ex. XII: 29).

e) Hebrews XII: 23. "And to the church of the firstborn, who are written in heaven." (*καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτότοκων ἀπογεγραμμένων ἐν οὐρανοῖς*). Commentators agree that "firstborn" is used figuratively in this passage, but they disagree in their explanations of the figure, according as they equate "firstborn" with angels, patriarchs, apostles, first Christians, or Christians in general.<sup>16</sup>

f) Apocalypse I: 5. "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." (*ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς*). Firstborn is here used in a figurative sense. Christ was the first to rise to a glorious life, in victory over death. Besides the idea of priority, there is implied that of pre-eminence. Some see in the passage an allusion to Psalm LXXXVIII (LXXXIX): 28.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Callan, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, New York 1931, II, p. 360-361; Sales, *La Sacra Bibbia Commentata, Il Nuovo Testamento*, Torino 1914, II, pp. 445-446; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 3 ed., London 1914, pp. 21-23; Moffatt, *A Crit. and Ex. Com. on the Ep. to the Hebrews*, New York 1924, pp. 10-11; Vitti, in *Verbum Domini*, 1934, pp. 306-312, 368-374; 1935, 15-21.

<sup>16</sup> Sales, *op. cit.*, II, p. 499; Westcott, *op. cit.*, p. 417; Michel, *Der Brief an die Hebräer*, Göttingen 1936, p. 210.

<sup>17</sup> Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3 ed., London 1911, p. 7; Allo,

g) Colossians I: 13-18. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness and hath translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins; who is the image of the invisible God, the FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE (*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*): for in him were all things created in heaven and on earth . . . all things were created by him and in him. And he is before all, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD (*πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν*); that in all things he may hold the primacy."

In verses 13-14, St. Paul speaks of the glorified Christ in heaven, of whom he proceeds immediately to predicate various titles. The passage which follows is usually divided by commentators into two parts, with the first part (15-16) explained as referring to the pre-existent Word (not by all), and the second part (17-18), to the incarnate Word now glorified in heaven. In the first part is found the expression "firstborn of every creature," which is consequently interpreted of the pre-existent Word in relation to the original creation; in the other part is found "firstborn from the dead," interpreted generally of the incarnate Word in relation to the new creation of grace, which will have its ultimate consummation in glory.

Most commentators take the second expression "firstborn from the dead" as parallel with Apoc. I: 1, and explain in the figurative sense of priority and dignity. Christ was the first to rise (or to be born) from the dead to the new life of glory, into which He will be followed by others among whom He will have the chief place.<sup>18</sup>

Commentators do not agree regarding the meaning of "firstborn of every creature," and the expression remains one of the

*L'Apocalypse*, 3e ed., Paris 1933, p. 5; Charles, *Crit. and Ex. Com. on the Rev. of St. John*, New York 1920, Vol. I, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> "A ce titre de maître de toute vie et spécialement de la vie glorieuse, il est le premier-né d'entre les morts, le premier qui soit sorti, pour ne plus mourir, du sein du sheol. Premier, non pas seulement par le temps, mais par le rang: prince des ressuscités, il ouvre la marche et mérite aux autres la faveur de ressusciter comme lui." Huby, *Les Épîtres de la Captivité*, Paris 1933, p. 44.

unsolved problems of the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> Many explanations, more or less plausible, have been advanced, but evidence of a strictly conclusive nature is lacking. Because of the possibilities of misinterpretation, the expression was eliminated from the creed proposed by Eusebius of Caesarea at the Council of Nicea in 325 A. D.<sup>20</sup>

Questions have been raised concerning the meaning not only of *πρωτότοκος* but also of *πάσης κτίσεως*. *Πᾶς* has the distributive sense of "each" and the collective sense of "all." Although the collective sense of "all" regularly demands that the noun which it modifies have the definite article, there are a few exceptions. Is there such an exception here? Then *κτίσεως* may mean a single creature, all creatures taken collectively, or the act of creation; it may mean anything created, or it may be restricted to human creatures as in St. Mark XVI: 15 (preach the gospel to every creature). Should the translation read "firstborn of all creation" rather than "firstborn of every creature"?<sup>21</sup> Another difficulty is the kind of genitive implied in *πάσης κτίσεως*. Is it a partitive genitive, so that *πρωτότοκος* would be included in some way in the class of creatures; or is it a genitive of comparison, which would exclude the *πρωτότοκος* from the same?<sup>22</sup>

The interpretations of "firstborn of every creature" (or, of all creation) may be divided into two groups. Within one group, the

<sup>19</sup> ". . . dies ist eine von den Exegeten viel umstrittene Stelle." Norden, *Agnostos Theos*, Leipzig 1914, p. 254. "*πρωτότοκος* est un mot dont l'histoire est presque tragique. Son usage ultérieur—ou plutôt son mésusage—par les Ariens peut à vrai dire être envisagé comme un signe de l'insuffisance de n'importe quel mot pour exprimer un vérité surnaturelle." McNabb, in *Revue Biblique*, 1933, p. 323; cf. *Frontiers of Faith and Reason*, New York 1937, p. 254.

<sup>20</sup> Eusebius, in an epistle written to his diocese, gives the creed which he had originally proposed (probably the baptismal creed used at Caesarea), and the revised version as adopted by the Council. The epistle is preserved in Socrates (*H. E.* I: 8), Theodoret (*H. E.* I: 12), and St. Athanasius (*De Nicænis Decretis*, appendix, P. G. XX, 1536).

<sup>21</sup> Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, London 1916, p. 146; Prat, *op. cit.*, I, p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> Abbott, *A Crit. and Ex. Com. on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, New York 1916, pp. 210-214; cf. Bissen, *De primatu Christi absoluto apud Col. I, 13-20*, in *Antonianum* XI (1936), p. 16.



expression is interpreted of the pre-existent Word; within the other group, of the incarnate Word. In both groups there are numerous variations, according to the emphasis placed on different bits of the rather scanty evidence. A sharp and distinct classification is not possible in every case.

In the first group, which interprets the expression of the pre-existent Word, one or other of three ideas is stressed, namely, generation from the Father,<sup>23</sup> priority to creation,<sup>24</sup> and dignity.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "Né avant toute créature. L'Apôtre affirme donc, en ce verset, l'éternelle génération du Verbe: antérieur et supérieur à tout ce qui est créé, par conséquent incréé: genitum non factum." Lussseau-Collomb, *Manuel d'Etudes Bibliques* V (II partie), Paris 1931, p. 77. "The emphasis is on the generation of the eternal Word before all time." Rickaby, *Colossians* (Westminster Version III), London 1927, p. 166. "Born of the Eternal Father from Eternity." Callan, *The Epistles of St. Paul*, New York 1931, vol. II, p. 158.

<sup>24</sup> "The primary temporal meaning of the word is that which was chiefly in St. Paul's mind." Williams, *Colossians* (Camb. Greek Test.), Cambridge 1928, p. 41. "He existed before any creature. This is the force of the term first-born in this passage." Keurick, *Epistles of St. Paul*, New York 1851, p. 419. "The only ideas involved are priority of time and distinction from the genus *κτῆρας*." Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 212. "The idea of priority to all creation is obvious and indisputable. . . . the idea of sovereignty is not so certain." Radford, *Colossians*, London 1931, p. 174. "Er ist früher als die gesamte Kreatur da, und er ist erhaben über sie. Ob das Bild soweit ausgedehnt werden soll, dass der Begriff des Erstgeborenen (im Gegensatz zum Geschaffenen: Der Logos ist Sohn und nicht Geschöpf) hervorzuhelien wäre, ist fraglich." Meinertz, *Der Kolosserbrief* (Bonner Bibel VII), Bonn 1931, p. 20. "The first-born of every creature, not that the Son is created, but that He is the exemplar cause of all that God has created, just as an artist's ideas are the 'first-born' of the pictures thence resulting." Pope, *The Layman's New Testament*, London 1927, p. 685. Burney interprets it of the Son as the efficient cause of creation (*Journ. Theol. Stud.*, 1926, pp. 173-174); cf. Botte (*Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques*, 1932, p. 63) for refutation of Burney's view.

<sup>25</sup> "The course of the argument seems to require that the stress should lie on the Lordship of the Son rather than His priority to creation. For what Paul is concerned to prove is the superiority of Christ to the angels, and for this the idea of priority is not relevant but that of dominion is. Whether the word retains anything of its original meaning here is doubtful. . . . It seems best to exclude the temporal element altogether. The pre-existence is sufficiently asserted in what follows." Peake, *Colossians* (Expositors Greek Test. III), London 1910, p. 503; cf. Lightfoot, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-148.

Generation and priority are involved in the very nature of "first-born" according to its physical signification; dignity is an accessory idea, based on the special privileges accorded a firstborn son in the Hebrew family.

In the second group, which would interpret the expression of the incarnate Word, the predominating idea is the Messianic dignity of the God-man.<sup>26</sup> The promised Messiah was the Eternal Son of God, who assumed a human nature in time, and appeared as a man among men. The incarnate Word, the God-man Jesus Christ, has been appointed heir of the Father (as God He is so by nature), destined to rule over all creatures. In this sense, He has been made a "firstborn," and the expression "firstborn of every creature" in this group of interpretations is practically equivalent to "heir of all." Explanations vary according to the understanding of the term "heir." Those who make "heir" equivalent to "lord," see in the expression "firstborn of every creature," the idea of complete sovereignty of the incarnate Word over all creation, a state of affairs which will not be completely attained until the Last Judgment. Those who hold the thesis common in Franciscan schools that the Eternal Word would have become incarnate even if man had not sinned, explain the expression "firstborn of every creature" in relation to the divine intention. According to this theory, the decree regarding the incarnation preceded the decree of creation, and "firstborn of every creature" is understood in the ideal order, in the sense of priority.<sup>27</sup> These

<sup>26</sup> "L'expression Premier-né de toute créature ne serait pas un titre divin en lui-même, synonyme, comme l'a soutenu, de Filius Dei Unigenitus mais un titre impliquant la nature humaine. Comme Israël choisi entre les peuples, et le roi théocratique, mis à part parmi les rois, sont dits premiers de Dieu, Jésus Christ ressuscité d'entre les morts est le premier-né de toute créature, l'héritier de tout. le souverain Seigneur, placé à la tête du royaume messianique." Levesque, in *Revue Pratique d'Apologétique* 28 (1919), pp. 493-495; cf. Durand, in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* I (1910), pp. 56-66.

<sup>27</sup> "Qui est imago Dei invisibilis (ut Deus), primogenitus omnis creaturae, certe ut homo; et talis non est in ordine executionis temporalis cum incarnatio in medio annorum effecta sit. Ergo est primogenitus in intentione divina; ac proinde illius incarnatio futura praecedit decretum productionis creaturarum. . . . Ipse est prima creatura praedestinata; adeoque licet homo non peccasset, nihilominus Verbum divinum carnem induisset."

are only a few indications regarding the wide range of ideas which commentators and theologians are inferring from the text. Evidently, the problem of *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* is still unsolved.

Had St. Paul called Christ the "firstborn of God" or the "firstborn of Mary," there would have been little, or no difficulty. According to Catholic teaching, Christ has two natures and two births; one of the Father from all Eternity, and the other of the Blessed Virgin Mary in time.<sup>28</sup> In His divine generation, Christ is the only-begotten Son of God the Father; in His human generation, He is the only son of Mary. According to both natures, He could be properly called a "firstborn" or "firstbegotten." The expression "firstborn of every creature" (or "firstbegotten.") The imply some relation to creatures. Just what did St. Paul have in mind when he applied this enigmatic title to our Lord?

As the Christian writings of the early centuries frequently yield valuable results regarding the interpretation of difficult Scripture texts, we shall direct our search there first. A distinction, however, must be borne in mind between the writers of these documents as witnesses to the Deposit of Faith, and as apologists attempting to explain the same to Jew and Gentile in current religious and philosophical terminology.<sup>29</sup> In the latter role they were not

Bernardinus a S. Joanne Rotundo, in *Collectanea Franciscana* IV (1934), p. 561; cf. Bissen, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-26. De Sales, F., *Traité de l'Amour de Dieu*, vol. I, Annecy 1894, pp. 102-105; Suarez, *Opera*, Paris 1866, t. XVII, p. 649.

<sup>28</sup> "Si quis non confitetur Dei Verbi duas natiuitates, unam quidem ante saecula ex Patre sine tempore incorporaliter, alteram vero in ultimis diebus eiusdem ipsius, qui de coelis descendit, et incarnatus de sancta gloriosa Dei Genitrice et semper Virgine Maria, natus est ex ipsa, talis A. S. Canon 2, Conc. Constpl. II (Denziger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum*, Friburgi Breisg. 1932, #214; cf. Symbolum "Quicumque" (quod vocatur Athanasium): "Est ergo fides recta ut credamus et confiteamur, quia Dominus noster Jesus Christus Dei Filius, Deus et homo est. Deus est ex substantia Patris ante saecula genitus, et homo est. Deus est ex substantia natus: perfectus Deus, perfectus homo, ex anima rationali et humana carne subsistens, aequalis Patri secundum divinitatem, minor Patri secundum humanitatem. Qui licet Deus sit et homo, non duo tamen, sed unus est Christus, unus autem non conversione divinitatis in carnem, sed assumptione humanitatis in Deum, unus omnino non confusione substantiae, sed unitate personae." Denziger, *op. cit.*, #40.

<sup>29</sup> "Hic sedulo distinguendum est inter documenta quae ipsam Ecclesiae

always fortunate.<sup>30</sup> It must be remembered that a precise theological vocabulary was still in the making, and the implications of the views advanced were not always apparent at first. Many explanations were ultimately abandoned. Of primary interest to the theological student are the traditional elements, and it is for such that we shall seek.

fidem referunt et ea quae simul cum fide philosophicas theorias miscent. In prioribus, fides modo simplici, plus minusve distincte, recte tamen exponitur. In posterioribus, substantia quidem mysterii recte declaratur, sed aliquando accidentales inventiuntur errores in modo mysterium conciliandi cum philosophicis doctrinis." Tanqueray, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae*, Paris 1931, II, p. 372.

<sup>30</sup> ". . . ils recherchent dans les systèmes philosophiques ou exégétiques de leur adversaires juifs ou païens, toutes les prises qu'ils croient pouvoir saisir: le Timée, le deuxième lettre de Platon, la philosophie d'Héraclite, la croyance aux incarnations et aux apparitions des dieux, l'interprétation allégorique de la Bible chère aux Juifs alexandrins, tout sera mis à profit; et sous ce couvert le dogme chrétien s'avancera tout près des âmes sans les effrayer. Et cette tactique n'était point déloyale: les apologistes estimaient que ces lambeaux de vérité qu'ils recueillaient çà et là venaient, par emprunt ou par vol ou par inspiration divine, de la Vérité unique et divine qu'ils possédaient intégralement; ils ne faisaient donc que rendre à ces vestiges à demi effacés leur signification première. Ce n'était déloyal; mais parfois c'était imprudent: ces rapprochements n'étaient souvent justifiés que par une rencontre de mots; les réalités se heurtaient et, pour les adapter l'une à l'autre, on risquait de les déformer toutes les deux." Lebreton, *Histoire de Dogme de la Trinité*, Paris 1928, II, p. 515.

## CHAPTER I

### SECOND CENTURY

St. Justin (100-166), the earliest of the Fathers in whose works *πρωτόκοκ* is used of Christ, was born in the Holy Land at Neapolis (Sichem), apparently of Pagan rather than Samaritan or Jewish parents.<sup>1</sup> After studying the philosophies of the Stoics, Peripatetics, Pythagoreans, and Platonists, he came into contact with Christian teachings, and was converted.<sup>2</sup> He not only became an ardent apologist for the Faith, but died a martyr for it in Rome.<sup>3</sup> Of the many works circulating under his name, only the two Apologies and the Dialogue with Trypho are generally admitted to be authentic.<sup>4</sup> The Apologies are mainly an appeal to the Greeks, and the Dialogue, to the Jews of the times. For the one as well as for the other, the crucified Christ is set forth as the very Son of God, begotten of God before anything whatsoever was created, and to be worshipped by all as God.

The expression *πρωτόκοκ πάσης κτίσεως* with which we are concerned primarily in this study, occurs only twice<sup>5</sup> in the recognized works of St. Justin, and then without comment as if its meaning were understood by his readers. There are three<sup>6</sup> other passages in which *πρωτόκοκ* is found in what appears to be an equivalent phraseology with the *πάσης κτίσεως*, and six<sup>7</sup> more in which it occurs without any immediate reference to creatures. In all eleven passages, *πρωτόκοκ* is used as a title of Christ in connection with His pre-incarnate existence. It is used interchangeably with such

<sup>1</sup> *I Apol.* 1, 1; 53, 3; *Dial.* 28, 2; 29, 1, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Acts of Martyrdom (Otto, *Corpus Apologetarum Christianorum saeculi secundi*, ed. 3, Jena 1876-81, vol. III, t. II, appendix; Eusebius, *H. E.* IV, 16).

<sup>3</sup> Otto, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. lxiii; Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, 2 Aufl., Freiburg im Breisgau 1913, vol. I, 206-262.

<sup>4</sup> *Dial.* 85, 2; 138, 2.

<sup>5</sup> τὸν πρωτόκοκ τῶν πάντων ποιημάτων (*Dial.* 84, 2); τὸν πρωτόκοκ μὲν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων (*Dial.* 100, 2); τέκνον πρωτόκοκ τῶν ἄλλων κτισμάτων (*Dial.* 125, 3).

<sup>6</sup> *I Apol.* 23, 2; 33, 6; 46, 2; 53, 2; 63, 15; *Dial.* 116, 3; also the equivalent terms *πρῶτον γέννημα* (*I Apol.* 21, 1) and *πρωτόγονος* (*I Apol.* 58, 3).

titles as λόγος, δύναμις, γέννημα, υἱός, and μονογενής. All these terms, while retaining their individual shades of meaning, are practical equivalents in St. Justin's vocabulary for the pre-existent Christ because of His origin by generation from the Father. Sometimes it is the Son, who is spoken of as begotten of God, and sometimes it is the Logos or Power;<sup>8</sup> while the terms Only-begotten, First-born, and Offspring in themselves imply the idea. This generation from the Father is stated to have been before creation.<sup>9</sup> St. Justin never says explicitly that it was from eternity.

In the First Apology, St. Justin pleads for fair treatment in behalf of Christians, and protests against their being punished simply for being Christians when they have done no wrong.<sup>10</sup> Even though the Christians do not honor the gods, they are not atheists, for they worship the one true God, who is the Creator and Ruler of the universe.<sup>11</sup> They are accused of madness for assigning the second place after the immutable and eternal God and Father of all things to a crucified man; but in this is a mystery, concerning which he would enlighten his readers.<sup>12</sup>

The expression πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως does not appear in the First Apology, but πρωτότοκος occurs in five passages.<sup>13</sup> Thus in I Apol. 23, 2, St. Justin affirms that Jesus Christ alone is properly Son begotten of God, being essentially His Logos, Firstborn, and Power, and by His will becoming man (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μόνος ἰδίως υἱὸς τῷ Θεῷ γενόμενος, λόγος αὐτοῦ ὑπάρχων καὶ πρωτότοκος καὶ δύναμις, καὶ τῇ βουλῇ αὐτοῦ γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος). The three terms λόγος, πρωτότοκος, and δύναμις, attached here co-ordinately to ὑπάρχων (being essentially, or by origin), are equivalent expressions for

<sup>8</sup> μόνος ἰδίως υἱὸς τῷ Θεῷ γενόμενος (I Apol. 23, 2); μονογενής γὰρ ὅτι ἦν τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὄλων οὗτος, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεννημένος (Dial. 105, 1).

<sup>9</sup> ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων κτισμάτων ὁ Θεὸς γενένηκε δυνάμιν τινα ἐξ αὐτοῦ λογικὴν (Dial. 61, 1); τούτο τὸ τῷ πατρὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθὲν γέννημα πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνην τῷ πατρὶ . . . ὅτι καὶ ἀρχὴ πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων τούτ' αὐτὸ καὶ γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐτεγέννητο (Dial. 62, 4); ὅτι γεννησθεῖσθε ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τούτου τὸ γέννημα πρὸ πάντων ἀπλῶς τῶν κτισμάτων (Dial. 129, 4).

<sup>10</sup> I Apol. 1-5.

<sup>11</sup> I Apol. 6, 1; 13, 1.

<sup>12</sup> I Apol. 13, 4.

<sup>13</sup> I Apol. 23, 2; 33, 6; 46, 2; 53, 2; 63, 15.

this only Son who had been begotten of God in the strict sense of the term. Son, Logos, Firstborn, and Power, as used here of the pre-incarnate Christ, denote one and the same Divine Person by reason of His origin from the Father. The contrast of ὑπάρχων with γενόμενος reminds one of St. Paul's ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ὑπάρχων . . . ἐν μορφῇ αὐθιγῶν γενόμενος,<sup>14</sup> which St. Justin probably had in mind.

In I Apol. 33, 4-6, St. Justin speaks of the Annunciation, and after referring to the Power and Spirit by which the Incarnation was accomplished, states that this Spirit and Power are nothing other than the Logos, who is also the Firstborn of God (τὸ πνεῦμα οὐκ ἄλλο καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ οὐδὲν ἄλλο . . . ἢ τὸν λόγον, ὃς καὶ πρωτότοκος τῷ Θεῷ ἐστὶ), and that it was this Spirit which came upon the Virgin, and overshadowing her, caused her to conceive, not by intercourse, but by power (καὶ τούτο ἐλθὼν ἐπὶ τὴν παρθένον καὶ ἐπισκιάσας οὐ διὰ συνουσίας ἀλλὰ διὰ δυνάμεως ἐγκύματα κατέστησε). Although both the Logos and the Holy Ghost could rightly be called 'spirit and power,' St. Justin failed to see that the text of St. Luke, which he quoted, referred to the Holy Ghost rather than to the Logos, and he thus made the Logos to appear to be the instrument of His own incarnation.<sup>15</sup> It is the pre-incarnate Logos which is called the Firstborn of God. Firstborn then in this passage also is a title originating in the divinity of Christ, and implying generation from the Father.

Writing in I Apol. 46, 1-2 against those who would urge that Christ was rather recent, having been born only one hundred and fifty years ago, St. Justin maintains that Christ had a prior existence to His earthly one, being the Firstborn of God and the Logos of whom every race of men were partakers<sup>16</sup> (τὸν Χριστὸν πρωτότοκον τοῦ Θεοῦ εἶναι . . . λόγον ὄντα οὐ πᾶν γένος ἀνθρώπων μετέχε), and that those who lived according to reason before His coming,

<sup>14</sup> Phil. II, 5-11.

<sup>15</sup> See also I Apol. 46, 5; 62, 2. The same idea occurs in other early writings. See Lebreton, *Histoire du Dogme de la Trinité*, ed. 8, Paris 1927, t. I, p. 334; Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, Jena 1923, pp. 181-182.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. II Apol. 10; 13. For a discussion of the λόγος σπερματικός, see Goodenough, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-167, 214-225.

really were Christians although accounted atheists. Again it is the pre-incarnate Logos, who is called the Firstborn of God.

In I Apol. 53, 2, St. Justin asks the question: For with what reason should we believe of a crucified man that He is the Firstborn of the unbegotten God (ὅτι πρωτότοκος τῷ ἀγεννητῷ Θεῷ ἐστίν), and that He will hold judgment on the whole race of man, except we found testimonies proclaimed of Him before He came and became man (πρὶν ἢ εἰσεῖν αὐτὸν ἀνθρώπων γενόμενον) . . . ? In this passage, the pre-existence of Christ is assumed. The 'crucified man' is more than a mere man, for He existed before becoming man as the Firstborn of the unbegotten God. Firstborn then is here also a title implying origin by generation from the Father.

In I Apol. 63, 15-16, St. Justin argues that it was not the Father of all things, but the Son of God who spoke with Moses at the Burning Bush. Christ Himself upbraided the Jews for knowing neither the Father nor the Son.<sup>17</sup> They who say that the Son is the Father of all things has a Son, who being the Logos and Firstborn of God, is also essentially God (ὅτι ἐστὶν υἱὸς τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὄλων . . . formerly appeared to Moses and the other prophets more recently became man of a virgin according to the purpose of the Father, for the salvation of the human race. Again Firstborn is used as a title of the pre-incarnate Logos. The Logos of God is His Son (ὁ λόγος δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ),<sup>18</sup> and therefore no mere power or attribute, but a real person. The Firstborn is by His very nature God (Θεὸς ἐμάρχευε).

In the First Apology then, the term *πρωτότοκος* is by His pre-incarnate Logos, and implies His nature rather than any office or mission conferred upon Him by the Father.<sup>20</sup> The *πρωτότοκος* τῷ Θεῷ or τῷ Θεῷ signifies a real offspring according to the Divine Nature. As the pre-incarnate Logos and Christ in the flesh are one and the same person, Christ in the flesh, who is simply the

<sup>17</sup> Matt. XI, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the reading *ὁ καὶ λόγος πρωτότοκος* see Otto, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 174, n. 20.

<sup>19</sup> I Apol. 63, 4.

<sup>20</sup> St. Athanasius and other writers will interpret the *πρωτότοκος* of the "syncretabasis" or descent of the Son to be the Father's agent in creation.

Logos incarnate, is still properly called Logos, Son, Power, Only-begotten and Firstborn of God.

The First Apology never dates the generation of the Logos or Son by the creation. In this respect, it differs from a passage in the Second Apology,<sup>21</sup> and from several passages in the Dialogue.<sup>22</sup> Neither has it any phraseology in which the Logos could be interpreted as having been merely Logos before becoming Son.<sup>23</sup> The Logos is always Son. Although the generation of the Logos-Son is not stated explicitly to have been from eternity, there is no expression in the First Apology which would conflict with the idea of an eternal generation, and there are several which would pre-suppose it. Thus God is said to be unchangeable and eternal,<sup>24</sup> and alone to be worshipped;<sup>25</sup> yet the Logos-Son is called God,<sup>26</sup> and is worshipped as such by the Christians.<sup>27</sup>

Neither *πρωτότοκος* πάσης κτίσεως nor *πρωτότοκος* occur in the

<sup>21</sup> II Apol. 6, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Dial. 61, 1, 3; 62, 4; 100, 2, 4; 129, 4.

<sup>23</sup> "I do not know how to deny, that, both in the East and in the West, there are writers, otherwise Catholic and orthodox in their theology, who use language concerning the Divine Sonship, which can hardly be distinguished from what in St. Augustine's day would have been considered heretical, or close upon heresy. The doctrine, which they favor, is the Temporal Genesis; viz., that the Eternal Word was not son from everlasting, but became the Son before the creation in order to be its creator. . . . That these writers held both the eternity and the hypostatic existence of the Word, I think beyond doubt . . . still that they believed in His eternity, viewed as the Son, I cannot persuade myself, if their language is the index of their belief." Newman, *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical*, London 1913, pp. 227-228. "The opinion which I have been describing is as far as words go, definitely held by Justin, Tatian, Theophilus, Methodius, in the East; by Hippolytus, Tertullian, Novatian, Lactantius, Zeno, and Victorinus, in the West; and that with so plain an identity of view in these various writers, and with such exact characteristics, that we cannot explain it away into carelessness of writing, personal idiosyncrasy, or the influence of some particular school; but are forced to consider it as the common property of them all, so that we may interpret one writer by the other, and illustrate or supply from the rest what is obscure or deficient in each." Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, London 1913, p. 417.

<sup>24</sup> I Apol. 13, 4.

<sup>25</sup> I Apol. 16, 6; 17, 3.

<sup>26</sup> I Apol. 63, 15.

<sup>27</sup> I Apol. 6, 2; 13, 3, 4; 49, 1; 65, 3; 67, 2.

Second Apology, but there is an interesting passage (#6) regarding the pre-existent Logos and Son, whose interpretation bears on our problem. In this much discussed passage, St. Justin speaks of the unbegotten Father of all things, and seems to say that this Son, who alone is properly called Son, the Logos who is with Him and is begotten before the creatures, when in the beginning through Him He created and ordered all, is called Christ (ὁ δὲ υἱὸς ἐκείνου, ὁ μόνος λεγόμενος κυρίου υἱός, ὁ λόγος πρὸ τῶν ποιημάτων καὶ συνῶν καὶ γεννώμενος, ὅτε τὴν ἀρχὴν δι' αὐτοῦ πάντα ἔκτισε καὶ ἐκόσμησε, Χριστὸς . . . λέγεται). If the συνῶν and γεννώμενος are taken together as parallel states of the Logos (and the double καὶ indicates that they should be so taken), the ὅτε clause would modify the combination, and the meaning would be that He who coexists with the Father is nevertheless in the process of being begotten, and that this was the state of affairs before anything was created.<sup>25</sup> If, on the other hand, συνῶν and γεννώμενος are taken as successive states of the Logos, with the ὅτε clause modifying only γεννώμενος, the meaning would be that the Logos who coexisted with the Father was begotten (or born) as Son only when God the Father was about to create the universe. The latter interpretation would give us the so-called two-state Logos theory, with συνῶν referring to the Logos as immanent (λόγος ἐνδιάθετος), and γεννώμενος referring to it as expressed (λόγος προφορικός), and γεννώμενος latter interpretation generally regard the Logos in its first state as an impersonal power latent within the Divine Nature, which at the creation is begotten (or born) into personal existence as Son.<sup>26</sup> They really misinterpret the analogy of the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος καὶ προφορικός, for the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος as generally understood by the philosophers was not the latent power of thinking, but a real thought within the mind, while the λόγος προφορικός was simply this same thought uttered in speech. Understood in this sense

<sup>25</sup> Goodenough, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

<sup>26</sup> " Sed γεννάσθαι est Justinus verbum sollemne, quo demonstrat λόγον qui una aderat cum deo scil. tanquam attributum divinum (συνῶν, nempe τῷ πατρὶ, —Dial. c. 62: πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνῶν τῷ πατρὶ—h. e. tanquam eius mens: λόγος ἐνδιάθετος), ante mundi creationem (ὅτε τὴν ἀρχὴν κτλ.) forma hypostatice indutum esse (γεννώμενος: λόγος προφορικός). Otto, 1840-2, II, 278 ff.

there is no essential difference between the λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and the λόγος προφορικός, and the Fathers who spoke of Christ in terms of this analogy give no indication of understanding any difference. This passage, in stating the *geneses* of the Son or Logos in reference to creation, has more affinity with certain passages in the Dialogue<sup>30</sup> than with any in the First Apology, and is an indication that the Second Apology is probably closer in time to the Dialogue than to the First Apology.

In the Dialogue, St. Justin is concerned primarily with proving to Trypho that the crucified man whom the Christians worship is not only the Messias promised of old to the Jews, but the very Son of God pre-existing before the ages, who became man of the Virgin, and is to be worshipped by all as God.<sup>31</sup> Trypho demands proof from Scripture that the Spirit of Prophecy ever spoke of another besides the Maker of the universe as being God;<sup>32</sup> in answer to which, St. Justin argues that He who appeared at various times to Abraham, Jacob, and Moses in the form of an angel, and is sometimes called God and Lord, was not God the Father and Maker of all things, but the Son of God, who later became man, and is known as Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup>

In #61, he brings further proof from Scripture that there is Another besides the Maker of the universe who is called God. Identifying Christ with the Divine Wisdom of Proverbs VIII, 22 ff.,<sup>34</sup> St. Justin argues that God has begotten as a Beginning before all creatures a certain intelligent Power from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit the Glory of the Lord, and sometimes Son, and sometimes Wisdom, and sometimes Angel, and sometimes God, and sometimes Lord and Logos.<sup>35</sup> Although the

<sup>30</sup> Dial. 61; 62, 4; 129, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Dial. 48; 63, 5; 136, 3; 142, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Dial. 50, 1.

<sup>33</sup> Dial. 56-60; 127.

<sup>34</sup> Κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ,

πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελιώσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ.

πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι,

πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων,

πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἐδραστήσασθαι,

πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουναῶν γεννᾶ με. κτλ.

<sup>35</sup> ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ Θεὸς γενένηκε δύναμιν τινα ἔτι

Septuagint translation which St. Justin quotes at length speaks of the Divine Wisdom as being both "created" as the beginning of God's ways for His works" and "begotten before all the hills." St. Justin uses only the term "begotten" in his argument. To indicate that this intelligent Power begotten by God from Himself was distinct without diminishing in any way the Divine Nature, St. Justin proposes two analogies. The first is that of putting it forth, not by a cutting off as if the word within us was lessened (λόγον γάρ τινα προβάλλουτες, λόγον γεννώμεν, οὐ κατὰ ἀπορομήν, ὡς ἐλαττωθῆναι τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν λόγον, προβαλλόμενοι). The other analogy is that of one fire being enkindled from another without in any way diminishing it.<sup>27</sup> St. Justin says further that the Logos or Wisdom will Himself testify, being this God begotten of the Father of all things, and the Logos, and Wisdom, and Power, and Glory of the One who begat Him (μαρτυρήσει δέ μοι ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὃν οὐτός ὁ Θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθείς, καὶ λόγος καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις καὶ δόξα τοῦ γεννησαυτος ὑπάρχων). It is not a mere metaphorical generation which St. Justin has in view here, but a real generation from the Father.

In #62, St. Justin brings forward still another proof from Scripture, by explaining the plural of "Let us make man,"<sup>28</sup>

ἐαυτοῦ λογικῆν, ἥτις καὶ δόξα κυρίου ἐπὶ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἀγίου καλεῖται, ποτὲ δὲ υἱός, ποτὲ δὲ σοφία, ποτὲ δὲ ἄγγελος, ποτὲ δὲ Θεὸς, ποτὲ δὲ κύριος καὶ λόγος. . . . Dial. 61, 1. Maranus comments on the ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων: "Reddendum non duxi, 'initio ante omnia,' sed 'principium ante omnia.' Neque enim haec de aeterna Filii generatione accipienda sunt, sed eum Pater ante mundi creationem principium genuisse dicitur." (P. G. VI, col. 613, n. 77). Cardinal Newman, however, asks: "Where does Justin speak of any other genesis but this temporal one? and what grounds are there for saying this is not real and natural?" (Tracts Theol. and Ecc., London 1913, p. 251).

<sup>28</sup> Aquila, Theodotian, and Symmachus have ἐκτίσατο (acquired). See Field, *Originis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, Oxford 1875, t. II, p. 326. The Vulgate has "possedit." The Hebrew has יָצַק from יָצַק meaning "acquire." Cf. Brown, Driver, Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford 1906. Burney (*Jour. Theol. Stud.*, 1926, pp. 160-172) argues for "begat."

<sup>27</sup> φῶς ἐκ φωτός was incorporated into the Creed at Nicaea in 325. Cf. St. Athanasius, *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi* 23 (P. G. XXV, col. 456 D).

<sup>28</sup> Gen. I, 26.

and "Adam has become one of us."<sup>29</sup> He maintains that the Father on these occasions did not converse with Himself, with the elements, or with the angels, but with one who was distinct in number from Himself and possessed of reason (καὶ ἀριθμῶ ὄντα ἐτερον, καὶ λογικὸν ὑπάρχοντα), namely this offspring, which in reality was put forth from the Father before all His works and coexisted with Him (ἀλλὰ τοῦτο τὸ πρῶτον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθὲν γέννημα πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνῆν τῷ πατρί, καὶ τούτῳ ὁ πατὴρ προσομιλεῖ). He again appeals to Proverbs VIII, 22 for confirmation, saying that what is called Wisdom by Solomon was begotten of God both as a Beginning (principium) before all the works, and as an Offspring (ὅτι καὶ ἀρχὴ πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων τοῦτ' αὐτὸ καὶ γέννημα ἐπὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγενήθη). Here both ἀρχὴ and γέννημα are attributed to the same act of Divine generation.

In #128, St. Justin returns to the same circle of ideas. Anticipating the Jewish objection that what the Scriptures call Angel, Lord, or Logos in the divine appearances to the Patriarchs is but the mode in which the Father manifested Himself, St. Justin explicitly rejects the modalistic analogy of the sun and its light in which this idea was expressed, and insists again on the analogy of one fire being enkindled from another, each being distinct from the other. He insists that this Power, which Scripture calls both God and Angel, is not distinguished by name only, as is the light in respect to the sun, but is something distinct in actual number (ὅτι δύναμις αὐτῆ, ἣν καὶ Θεὸν καλεῖ ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος . . . καὶ ἄγγελον, οὐχ ὡς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ὁνόματι μόνον ἀριθμείται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀριθμῶ ἕτερον τί ἐστὶ).

To offset the possible inference that there might be two Gods, St. Justin makes the corrective statement that this Power was born not by a cutting off as though the Being of the Father were divided, as all other things, when they are divided and cut off, are not the same as before being cut off (οὐ κατὰ ἀπορομήν, ὡς ἀπομερίζομεν τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας, ὅποια τὰ ἄλλα πάντα μερίζομεν καὶ τεμνόμενα οὐ τὰ αὐτὰ ἐστὶν ἀ καὶ πρὶν τεμθῆναι). St. Justin is evidently struggling to express the idea of a distinction of persons in God without sacrificing that of the unity of His nature, and it is remarkable how well he succeeds. The analogies used, and

<sup>29</sup> Gen. III, 22.

individual expressions may be faulty, but the general drift of his explanation to Trypho clearly indicates what the Christian Tradition on the subject was.

In #129, St. Justin returns to the passage from Proverbs VIII, 22 ff., and remarks that this offspring mentioned in the text was begotten by the Father before all creatures whatsoever (*ὅτι γεννηθήσεται ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦτο τὸ γέννημα πρὸ πάντων ἄλλων τῶν κτισμάτων*). This is perhaps the clearest statement in St. Justin that the generation of the Logos or Son was not only antecedent to creation, but entirely transcendent to creation, and not conditioned by it in any way. It is in the light of such a statement that other statements less clear should be interpreted. That St. Justin is speaking of a real generation according to nature and not of a metaphorical one is verified in the remark which follows that everyone will admit what is begotten is numerically distinct from the begetter (*καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον τοῦ γεννούντος ἀριθμῶ ἕτερον ἐστίν, πᾶς ὁσίων ὁμολογήσειε*). Just as parent and child are distinct persons, so is the Son a distinct person from the Father who beget Him.

These passages in the Dialogue, since they are orientated from the text of Proverbs VIII, 22 ff., which speaks of Divine Wisdom as antedating creation, likewise speak of the Son as being begotten before creation. There is a passage, however, which, more like the passages in the First Apology, speaks of the begetting of the Son without any reference to creation. Thus in #105, although the word Only-begotten (*μονογενής*) had not been used in the discussion, St. Justin says that he has already shown that Christ was the Only-begotten of the Father of the universe, being properly begotten from Him as Logos and Power and was afterwards made man of the Virgin, as we have learned from the Memoirs (*Μονογενής γὰρ ὅτι ἦν τῷ πατρὶ τῶν ὄλων οὗτος, ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ λόγος καὶ δύναμις γεννημένος, καὶ ὑστερον ἀνθρώπος διὰ τῆς παρθένου γενόμενος, ὡς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀπομνημονευμάτων ἐμάθομεν*). The *ἰδίως ἐξ αὐτοῦ* according to nature, and not a metaphorical one. No reference is made to creation. In #126, St. Justin says that if Trypho had understood what had been said by the prophets, he would not have denied that Christ is God, Son of the only and begotten, and

ineffable God (*ὅσκι ἄν ἐξήγητόσθε αὐτὸν εἶναι Θεὸν, τοῦ μόνου καὶ ἀγενήτου καὶ ἀλόγητου Θεοῦ υἱόν*). In the Dialogue then as in the Apologies, Logos, Power, Only-begotten, Offspring, and Son, when used of Christ in His pre-incarnate life, imply His origin by generation from the Father. St. Justin's fundamental thesis is that Christ is God, and not a creature.

The passages of the Dialogue thus far considered do not contain the term *πρωτότοκος*, but they do contain some statements regarding the generation of the Son in reference to creatures. Of the six passages<sup>40</sup> containing *πρωτότοκος*, we shall first consider #100, 2, since it seems to furnish a key for the understanding of all others. St. Justin writes that Christ Himself revealed to us all those things which we have learned from the Scriptures by His grace, having come to know Him as the Firstborn of God and before all creatures (*γινώσκεις αὐτὸν πρωτότοκον μὲν τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων*), and son of the Patriarchs, since He took flesh of a virgin who was of their race, and endured becoming man without form and honor, and liable to suffering (*καὶ τῶν πατριάρχων υἱόν, ἐπειδὴ, διὰ τῆς ἀπὸ γένους αὐτῶν παρθένου σαρκοποιουμένης, ἀνθρώπος ἀείδης καὶ ἄρμος καὶ παθὴρὸς ἐπέμεινε γενέσθαι*). Here again we have the same succession of ideas regarding Christ in His pre-incarnate and in His incarnate life, which occur so frequently, yet with slightly varying phraseology throughout the Dialogue. Christ in His pre-incarnate existence is not the first of creatures, for He is before them all, being the Firstborn of God, and consequently God by nature. The *πρωτότοκος τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων* is most probably St. Justin's interpretation of *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*.

In #84, St. Justin writes that the sign to be given as a sure proof to the human race would be that the Firstborn of all creatures would become incarnate through a virgin's womb, and really become a child (*δὲ παρθευκτῆς μήτρας τὸν πρωτότοκον τῶν πάντων ποιημάτων σαρκοποιουμένην ἀλγῆτος παιδίον γενέσθαι*). The pre-existence of the *πρωτότοκον τῶν πάντων ποιημάτων* is implied, but nothing further can be gathered from the passage itself regarding the meaning of the expression. As St. Justin's fundamental thesis is that Christ is God and not a creature, the *πρωτότοκος* here can not be

<sup>40</sup> *Dial.* 84, 2; 85, 2; 100, 2; 116, 3; 125, 3; 138, 2.



classified with the *ποιήματα*. With #100 as the key, the interpretation would be that He who is the Firstborn of God and before all creatures, became incarnate through a virgin's womb.

In #85, St. Justin speaks of the devils being subdued and overcome when exorcized in the name of this very One who is the Son of God and Firstborn of every creature, and was born of a virgin, and became man liable to suffering (*κατὰ γὰρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ γεννηθῆναι καὶ παθῆναι καὶ προπορόκου πάσης κτίσεως, καὶ διὰ παρθέτου complete expression προπορόκου πάσης κτίσεως for the first time in St. Justin, but no conclusion beyond the implied pre-existence of the προπορόκου πάσης κτίσεως can be drawn from the passage alone. Again #100 will furnish the key. Neither #116 (διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ προπορόκου αὐτοῦ υἱοῦ), nor #125, where St. Justin speaks of the angel who wrestled with Jacob as being nevertheless God, since He is Son, Firstborn of all creatures (θεοῦ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ εἶναι τέκνον προπορόκου τῶν ὅλων κτισμάτων), offer any difficulty in the light of what has already been said.*

In #138, we have the other passage in which the entire phrase *προπορόκος πάσης κτίσεως* occurs. In this passage, St. Justin draws a comparison between the mission of Noe and that of Christ, saying that Noe, his wife, three sons and their wives, making eight persons in number, were a type of that day on which our Christ appeared when He rose from the dead, which in number is indeed the eighth, but in power is always the first (the eighth day is the beginning of a new week), for Christ being the Firstborn of every creature (ὁ γὰρ Χριστὸς, προπορόκος πάσης κτίσεως ὄν), has become also again the Beginning of another race which was begotten anew by Him (καὶ ἀρχὴ πάλιν ἄλλου γένους γέγονεν τοῦ ἀναγεννηθέντος ἐν αὐτοῦ). As Noe became the head of a new race after the flood, so did Christ after His resurrection, only the race of which Christ became the head was one regenerated by Him according to the *ἀρχὴ* of a race before, and by *ἀρχὴ* is evidently meant not a mere 'initium' but the 'principlum' by which the race came into being at the time of the creation, or into a new state of being after the resurrection. Christ was the *ἀρχὴ* of the original creation, being the 'principlum' through which the Father created all.

He was also the *ἀρχὴ* of the redeemed. Although *προπορόκος πάσης κτίσεως* is not explained, it is clear that the expression is a title of the pre-incarnate Christ. In His pre-incarnate existence, Christ is both *προπορόκος πάσης κτίσεως* and *ἀρχὴ*; in His work of redemption He becomes an *ἀρχὴ* again, by reason of another function. With #100 as the key again, *προπορόκος πάσης κτίσεως* as applied to Christ in His pre-incarnate life simply means Firstborn of God before every creature.

In the Dialogue as in the Apologies, *προπορόκος*, as used of Christ in His pre-incarnate state, implies His generation from the Father. This generation is stated as having taken place before creation. Do the expressions *πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων*,<sup>41</sup> *πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιήματων*,<sup>42</sup> *πρὸ αἰώνων*,<sup>43</sup> *πρὶν τὸν κόσμον γενέσθαι*,<sup>44</sup> *πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως*<sup>45</sup> as used by St. Justin imply eternity? The concept of eternity was no new idea for either the Jews or Greeks. For the Jews, who believed in creation,<sup>46</sup> time began with creation;<sup>47</sup> for the Greeks, who held the eternity of matter, time began with formation of the heavens.<sup>48</sup> The expression 'before creation,' or 'before all creatures,' would very probably connote eternity in the minds of both immediately. St. Justin, as a matter of fact, neither affirms nor denies explicitly the eternity of the Logos or Son, whom he calls the Firstborn of God. He does, however, in addition to such phrases as 'before all creatures,' make a number of statements from which the doctrine could be inferred.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *Dial.* 61, 1; 100, 2; 129, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Dial.* 62, 4; 100, 4; *II Apol.* 6, 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Dial.* 48, 1.

<sup>44</sup> "For time there was not before there was a world" (*χρόνος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν πρὸ κόσμου*). "Time began either simultaneously with the world or after it" (*ἀλλ' ἢ εὖν ἀρχὴ γέγονεν ἢ μετ' αὐτόν*). Philo, *De Opificio Mundi*, VII; cf. LXI. "But God is the maker of time also, for He is the father of time's father, that is, of the universe, and has caused the movements of the one to be the source of the generation of the other. . . . For God's life is not a time but eternity. . . and in eternity there is no past nor future, but only present existence." (*Ἐν αἰώνῳ δὲ οὐτε παρελήλυθεν οὐδὲν οὐτε μέλλει, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὑφ' ἑστῆκεν*). Philo, *Quod Deus immutabilis sit*, VI.

<sup>45</sup> *Χρόνος δ' οὖν μετ' ὀφρανοῦ γέγονεν* Plato, *Timaeus*, 37. See Zeller, *Plato and the Older Academy*, London 1888, pp. 366, 382.

<sup>46</sup> "Avant la création, le temps n'existe pas. Il commence avec le changement inhérent à l'idée de création. . . . Refuser l'éternité au Verbe, c'est

St. Justin believed that there was but one God, eternal, unchangeable, and alone to be worshipped.<sup>50</sup> As a Pagan, he had learned the Platonic definition of God: "That which is ever the same, and the cause of being to all creatures" (τὸ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως δέι ἔχον καὶ τοῦ εἶναι πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις αἰτίον, τοῦτ' δὴ εἶναι ὁ Θεός), and this definition he still found satisfactory.<sup>51</sup> Now the Logos, he calls God, and although in arguing with Trypho he refers to Him as ἕτερος or ἄλλος Θεός, he is careful to indicate that while the Logos is distinct numerically (ἕτερος ἀριθμῶς), it is not by a cutting off (οὐ κατὰ ἀποκομῆν) as if the Being of the Father were divided (ὡς ἀπομερίζομένης τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας).<sup>52</sup> The οὐσία of the Father is communicated to the Logos or Son without any division or change, so that both Father and Son possess it individually and completely, and by inference from the unchangeableness of God one could conclude that this had always been so.

On the basis of these same ideas, there should be no subordination of the Son to the Father within the Godhead in respect to the Divine Nature. St. Justin, however, never takes up the consideration as such of the inner life of the Godhead. He is mainly concerned in explaining Christ to Jew and Gentile as the Son of God through whom the creation came to be, in whom the will of the Father is revealed to creatures, and by whom fallen man was redeemed; in other words, in the activities of the Son 'ad extra' as the minister (ὑπηρέτης) of the Father.<sup>53</sup> There are, however, some passages which can not be so easily explained, as for instance, when it is said that the Logos was begotten according to the will of the Father,<sup>54</sup> just as it is said that the Logos became man of a virgin according to the will of the Father.<sup>55</sup> Then too

été, dans ces conditions, un manque de logique évident. Aucune philosophie ne pouvait conduire Justin à ce paralogisme. De fait, aucun texte n'est clair dans ce sens." Lagrange, *Saint Justin*, Paris 1914, pp. 171-172.

<sup>50</sup> *Dial.* 11, 1, 4; *I Apol.* 13, 4; 16, 6; 17, 3; *II Apol.* 7, 9.

<sup>51</sup> *Dial.* 3, 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Dial.* 128, 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Dial.* 57, 3; 58, 3; 60, 5; 113, 4; 126, 5; 127, 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Dial.* 61, 1; 127, 4; 128, 4.

<sup>55</sup> There is no passage in the Apologies in which the generation of the Logos is said to be 'according to the Father's will.'

<sup>56</sup> *I Apol.* 23, 2; 46, 5; 63, 16; *II Apol.* 6, 5; *Dial.* 87, 2.

the Father is considered as so transcendent to creation as to be unable to appear in it excepting through intermediaries.<sup>56</sup> In spite of these inaccuracies and imperfections of statement, one must admire how firmly St. Justin held that the Logos-Son was not a creature, but of the essence of God which is unchangeable and eternal, and such doctrine when thought out to its logical conclusions is ultimately incompatible with any subordinationism of nature.<sup>57</sup>

The question may be raised here whether St. Justin, in speaking of the *genesis* of the Logos, is not thinking in terms of birth rather than generation. The verb γενῆναι<sup>58</sup> means not only 'to beget' on the part of the Father, but also 'to conceive,' 'to bear,' 'to bring forth in birth' on the part of the mother. It is a general term covering the whole or any part of the process of bringing into existence new living beings from other living beings. Birth is simply the end of the process, and implies a previous begetting. In human generation, two sexes are involved, and the offspring becomes an entirely separate being at birth. In the divine generation of the Logos, sex is not involved, nor is the Logos ever separated from the Divine Essence. The one and only Divine Essence is communicated completely by God the Father to His Logos or Son, so that each possesses it completely without any division or cutting off. Unlike human generation and birth which involve a process over a period of time, the divine generation and birth of the Logos coincide in one eternal act. Did St. Justin, however, think of the *genesis* of the Logos as a process, with an eternal necessary begetting 'in sinu Patris,' and then a temporal birth by the will of the Father at the beginning of time for the purpose of creation, thus becoming the Firstborn of creation?<sup>59</sup> Although 'brought forth' could be substituted for 'begot' in the passages involved, there would be no passage indicating the eternal, necessary begetting 'in sinu Patris.' In #62, 4, St. Justin had spoken

<sup>56</sup> *Dial.* 127, 2, 4.

<sup>57</sup> Blunt, *The Apologies of Justin Martyr*, Cambridge 1911, p. XXIII.

<sup>58</sup> *u. . . de utrolibet parente . . . et in matre quidem tam de conceptione dicitur quam de partu.*" Zorell, *Lectione Graecum Novi Testamenti*, ed. 2, Paris 1931, col. 247.

<sup>59</sup> Newman, *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical*, London 1913, pp. 229, 254.

of the Offspring which had been put forth by the Father before all His works as coexisting and conversing with the Father at the time of creation (τοῦτο τὸ τῷ ὄντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθέν γένημα. In #100, 4, in place of the usual "begotten before all creatures," St. Justin has "came forth before all creatures," ποιημάτων ἀπὸ πατρὸς δυνάμει αὐτοῦ καὶ βουλή προελθόντα). Is the "putting forth" or the "coming forth" of the Son before all creatures a different act from the "begetting" of the Son before all creatures? Most probably he had one and the same act in view, for in #62, 4 (if we can trust the existing text), he couples ἀρχὴ and γένημα as resulting from the one act of generation (ὅτι καὶ ἐγγέννητο). If this act be considered from human analogy as referring to birth rather than to "begetting," the Logos then would have come forth in birth as Son to be the ἀρχὴ of the universe. This would give us the two-state Logos theory, but it is doubtful if St. Justin ever knew the theory as such. Some of his phraseology, however, may have prepared the way for it. Commentators will probably continue differing in their interpretations, unless a better text, or some of the lost works of St. Justin, come to light.

Tatian (120-185?) was born in Assyria, most probably of Pagan parents.<sup>60</sup> He travelled extensively, studied many philosophies, and finally became a Christian.<sup>61</sup> In Rome, he was a hearer of St. Justin.<sup>62</sup> After the martyrdom of St. Justin, he came under Gnostic influences, and about the year 172 he began professing Encratite doctrines.<sup>63</sup> Soon after, he left Rome for the East, and set up a school in his native land. He seems to have had a considerable influence among Syrian-speaking people, particularly through his harmony of the four Gospels, known as the Diatesseron. His "Address to the Greeks" was written probably after the martyrdom of St. Justin, but before his own defection from

<sup>60</sup> Address 42; Epiphanius, *Heresies* 46; Puech, *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque Chrétienne*, Paris 1928, t. II, pp. 171-172.

<sup>61</sup> Address 20.

<sup>62</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* I, 28, 1; Eusebius, *H. E.* IV, 29, 1.

<sup>63</sup> Eusebius (*Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte*), Leipzig 1913, VII, I, p. 206.

the faith. It shows some similarities to passages in St. Justin, but Tatian, unlike St. Justin, disliked and even ridiculed philosophy.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding God, Tatian says that our God did not begin to be in time (Θεὸς ὁ καθ' ἑμᾶς οὐκ ἔχει σύστασιν ἐν χρόνῳ).<sup>65</sup> Being alone without beginning, He Himself is the Principle of all things (μόνος ἀρχὸς ὢν, καὶ ἀπὸς ἑαυτοῦ τῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴ). God is a Spirit not pervading matter (πνεῦμα ὁ Θεὸς, ὃ δέχεται δὲ τῆς ὕλης), but the Maker of material spirits and of the forms which are in matter (ποιημάτων δὲ ἰλικῶν καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ σχημάτων κατασκευαστῆς). He is invisible, impalpable, being Himself the Father of both sense-perceptible and invisible things (ἀόρατος τε καὶ ἀναφῆς, αἰσθητῶν καὶ ἀόρατων ἀπὸς γεγονὸς πατήρ). We know Him through His creation, and apprehend His invisible power by His works (τοῦτον δὲ τῆς ποιήσεως αὐτοῦ ἵσμεν, καὶ δὲ τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀόρατον τοῖς ποιήμασι καταλαμβάνομεθα).

The Logos is considered in #5 and #7 of the "Address." It is clearly evident that Tatian believed the Logos to have pre-existed in the Father before creation;<sup>66</sup> the manner of this pre-existence, however, is not at all clear. Whether the Logos had a personal existence before creation, or merely an impersonal one as a power of the Father, can not be determined conclusively from the present corrupt text.<sup>67</sup> According to their rearrangement of the text, commentators have been able to arrive at either conclusion.<sup>68</sup>

By the simple will of the Father, the Logos springs forth (θελήματι δὲ τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτοῦ προσηρδὲ λόγος).<sup>69</sup> It does not come forth in vain, but becomes the firstborn work of the Father

<sup>64</sup> Address 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> Address 4.

<sup>66</sup> ὁ λόγος δὲ ἦν ἐν αὐτῷ κτλ. Address 5.

<sup>67</sup> "Tout n'est pas clair assurément dans ce chapitre; la faute en est un peu aux scribes, qui ont tenté de corriger un texte qui les choquait; mais le premier coupable est Tatien lui-même, plus soucieux de l'éclat du style que de la clarté ou de la fermeté de la pensée." Lebreton, *op. cit.*, t. II, p. 451.

<sup>68</sup> Otto, *op. cit.*, vol. VI, p. 20, n. 1-3; Maranus, *P. G.* VI, col. 813, n. 43; Puech, *Recherches sur le Discours au Grecs de Tatien*, Paris 1903, pp. 58-60; Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, London 1903, pp. 126-127.

<sup>69</sup> "Durch einen Willensakt (θελήματι) aber geht aus seinem einfachen Wesen der Logos hervor." Bardenhewer, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 268.

(ὁ δὲ λόγος, οὐ κατὰ κενὸν χωρήσας, ἔργον πρωτότοκον τοῦ πατρὸς γίνεται), and is known to be the ἀρχὴ of the world (τοῦτον ἵσταν τοῦ κόσμου τὴν ἀρχήν). Tatian seems to have in mind the two-state Logos theory, yet he does not use the expression λόγος ἐνδιάθετος καὶ προφορικός. The Logos begotten in the beginning, in turn begets the world (ὁ λόγος ἐν ἀρχῇ γεννηθεὶς ἀτεγγέννησε τὴν καθ' ἡμᾶς ποιήσαν). Although Tatian speaks of the Logos as being a work, and of the world as being begotten, he clearly states that this firstborn work is not cut off from the Father, thereby lessening His substance, but has His being by participation (γένονε δὲ κατὰ μερισμῶν, οὐ κατὰ ἀποκοπήν). The Logos is evidently of the Divine Nature, and not a creature. The Logos, however, according to Tatian's theory does not become πρωτότοκος until it goes forth to become the ἀρχὴ of creation. By "going forth" the Logos is never cut off from the Divine Nature, but simply assumes (apparently voluntarily) a function (ὁικονομία τὴν αἴψαν προλαβόν) "ad extra." What seems to lie under the surface of St. Justin's reasoning now comes to light in Tatian's presentation. For Tatian, the Logos was clearly Logos before becoming πρωτότοκος. He does not speak of the Logos as becoming a firstborn son, but as becoming a firstborn work, but then it must be remembered that Tatian never uses the word son in connection with the Logos. Athenagoras was an Athenian philosopher<sup>70</sup> who became a convert to Christianity, and wrote an "Apology for the Christians" about 176.<sup>71</sup> A treatise on the Resurrection is also attributed to his pen. Neither Eusebius nor St. Jerome mention Athenagoras, and little is known of his personal history. Although πρωτότοκος γέννημα appears once,<sup>72</sup> and there are several interesting passages bearing on the Logos doctrine.

Athenagoras argues that the Christians are not atheists since they acknowledge one God, uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, illimitable (ἕνα τὸν ἀγέννητον καὶ αἰθέριον καὶ ἀόρατον

<sup>70</sup> "Toute la biographie d'Athénagore se réduit à ces deux titres de philosophe et d'Athénien." Barsille, *Athénagore* (*Dict. Theol. Cath.* I, 2210).

<sup>71</sup> Lebreton, *op. cit.*, t. II, p. 493.

<sup>72</sup> *Apology* 10.

καὶ ἀπαθὴ καὶ ἀκατάληπτον καὶ ἀχώρητον . . . Θεὸν ἄγοντες), who is encompassed by light and beauty and spirit and power ineffable, by whom the universe has been created through His Logos (ἵψ' οὐ γέγεννηται τὸ πᾶν διὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ λόγου) and is set in order and kept in being (καὶ διακεκράμηνται καὶ συγκρατεῖται). He then goes on to say that Christians also acknowledge a Son of God, but warns his readers that the Christian mode of thinking as regards the Father and Son is different from that of their poets who speak of the gods.

The Son of God is the Logos of the Father in idea and operation (ἄλλ' ἔστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ),<sup>73</sup> for after the pattern of Him and by Him were all things made, the Father and the Son being one (πρὸς αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο, ἐνὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ). This sentence leaves the impression that the Son was the Logos before becoming the Son. The Son then would simply be the Logos in a special function toward creation, namely, that of its exemplary and efficient cause, yet almost immediately Athenagoras adds that as the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son in oneness of power and spirit, the mind and reason of the Father are the Son of God (ἄνθρωπος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς Θεοῦ). The 'oneness of power and spirit' signifies the 'oneness of the divine nature,' which is eternal and unchangeable.<sup>74</sup> Father and Son would thus express a distinction of persons 'in se' within the Divine Nature, and not merely in relation to a function 'ad extra.'

In answer to the question what is meant by the Son (παῖς),<sup>75</sup> he replies that the Son is the First Offspring (πρῶτον γέννημα) of

<sup>73</sup> "Verba ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ explicantur appositis: πρὸς αὐτοῦ γὰρ δι' αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο. Filius dei est logos patris 1°. ἐν ἰδέᾳ (im idealen Sinne) quia omnia πρὸς αὐτοῦ h. e. secundum logon, ei convenienter . . . sive juxta exemplar in logo descriptum facta sunt; 2°. ἐν ἐνεργείᾳ (im realen Sinne), quia omnia δι' αὐτοῦ h. e. per logon facta sunt." Otto, *op. cit.* VII, p. 45, n. 8.

<sup>74</sup> "Docet Filium in Patre esse et Patrem in Filio, quia una in utroque divinitas. Hoc enim loco Spiritus nomine divinitas significatur." Maranus, *P. G.* VI, col. 909, n. 66. "Hic πρῶτος μάρτος nomine non persona spiritus sancti sed spiritualis essentia patris et filii." Otto, *op. cit.* VII, p. 46, n. 9.

<sup>75</sup> Athenagoras makes no distinction between παῖς and υἱός.

the Father, not as having been brought into existence, but inasmuch as He came forth to be the idea and energizing power of all material things (πρωτον γένημα είναι τῷ πατρὶ, οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον . . . ἀλλ' ὡς τῶν ἑλκῶν ἐμφάντων . . . ἰδέσθαι καὶ ἐνεργεῖα εἶναι προελθόν). Again the impression is left that the Logos was not always the Son, but became the Son when He went forth for the work of creation. The Son is not brought into existence at the creation, for He pre-existed in the Father before creation, and the implication is that He pre-existed, not as an impersonal power, but as a real person. In a parenthetical explanation to indicate that the Son had a prior existence as the Logos of God, Athenagoras states that God, who is both eternally mind and eternally rational, always had His Logos with Him (ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ Θεός, τοῖς αἰῶσι ὄν, εἶχεν αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, ἀίδιος λογικὸς ὄν). Since the Son of God, according to Athenagoras, is the mind and reason of the Father (τοῖς καὶ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ), and since the Father (ὁ Θεός) is eternal mind (τοῖς αἰῶσι ὄν) and eternally rational (ἀίδιος λογικὸς ὄν), the Son should be eternal, not merely as Logos, but as Son. Athenagoras, however, explicitly states that the Son is the First Offspring of the Father inasmuch as He goes forth (προελθόν) to be the idea and energizing power of all material things. Is this 'going forth' a real or a metaphorical birth? The Logos, who is with God, goes forth from God to a special function in respect to creation, thus becoming figuratively the first offspring. The expression *πρωτον γένημα* then denotes a function rather than origin, and is equivalent to *ἀρχή*. Almost immediately, Athenagoras quotes Proverbs VIII, 22 (Κύριος ἐκτίσέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ), thus indicating what he had in mind.

Athenagoras then protests again that men should not be called atheists who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and who declare both the power in unity (τὴν ἐν τῇ ἐνώσει δύναμιν), and the distinction in order (τὴν ἐν τῇ τάξει ὁνειαύτης φύσεως). In the language of later theology, these phrases mean 'oneness of nature' and 'distinction of persons.' In #12, Athenagoras speaks of the Christians as knowing God and His Logos, and what is the oneness of the Son with the Father, and His Logos, communion of the Father with the Son, what is the Spirit, what is the unity of these (three), the Spirit, the Son, the Father, and

their distinction in unity (τοῦ τῶν Θεῶν καὶ τῶν παρ' αὐτοῦ λόγον εἶναι, τίς ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνότης, τίς ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν κοινωνία, τί τὸ πνεῦμα, τίς ἡ τῶν τοσοῦτων ἑνωσις καὶ διαίρεσις ἐν οὐμένῳ, τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦ πατρὸς). Here again the distinction of persons is considered, not in relation to functions 'ad extra' but 'in se' in respect to the Divine Nature which they possess.

Athenagoras is the first of the Fathers to introduce into his speculations on God the Johannine references to the mutual indwelling of the three Divine Persons.<sup>76</sup> Heretofore the tendency had been to explain the Son and the Holy Ghost more from the standpoint of their functions in creation. The doctrine of the circumcession (περχύρησις), as it was later called, turned theological speculation to consider the three Divine Persons 'in se' and apart from any 'operatio ad extra.' Athenagoras is not entirely free from the faulty terminology of his predecessors, and it is perhaps for that reason that contradictory views can be drawn from his work.<sup>77</sup>

St. Theophilus, sixth Bishop of Syrian Antioch,<sup>78</sup> was born in Assyria of Pagan parents.<sup>79</sup> He received a Greek education, and late in life was converted to Christianity, becoming Bishop of Antioch a few years before his death.<sup>80</sup> About the year 180 he wrote an Apology for Christianity in three books, which he addressed to a Pagan friend named Autolycus.

In this work,<sup>81</sup> St. Theophilus speaks of God as having the 'Logos Immanent' within His own bowels (ἐχων οὖν ὁ Θεός τῶν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐδιδάκτερον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγγνοις), and then having begotten Him (or given Him birth), God sent Him forth before all things along with His own wisdom that all might be created through Him (ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας ἐξενεχόμενος πρὸ τῶν ὄλων). He continues by saying that God had this Logos as helper (βοηθητὸν) in creating all things, and that the Logos in

<sup>76</sup> St. John I, 18; X, 30; XIV, 10, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Lebreton, *op. cit.* II, p. 500, n. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* IV, 20; cf. Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 25, *Ep.* 121 *ad Algasiam* 6.

<sup>79</sup> *Ad Aut.* I, 14; II, 24.

<sup>80</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* IV, 20, 24; Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 25.

<sup>81</sup> *Ad Aut.* II, 10.

this respect is called the *ἀρχή* because He becomes the Principium and Lord of all which had been created through Him (*ὁὗτος λέγεται ἀρχή, ὅτι ἄρχει καὶ κυριεύει πάντων τῶν δι' αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων*). This Logos, who is always with God (*ὁ ἀεί συμπάρων αὐτῷ*), takes on in time the function of *ἀρχή* toward creation.

In #22 of the second book, St. Theophilus takes up the same circle of ideas, speaking again of the Logos Immanent as always (*θεῶν*). He continues by saying that before anything was made, God had this Logos, who in reality was His own Mind and Thought, as His Counsellor (*πρὸ γὰρ τι γίνεσθαι, τοῦτον εἶχε σύμβουλον, αὐτοῦ νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν ὄντα*), and that when He wished to make that which had been planned, He begat (or, gave birth to) this 'Logos Expressed,' the Firstborn of every creature (*ὁπότε δὲ ἠθέλησεν ὁ Θεὸς ποιῆσαι ὅσα ἐβουλεύσατο, τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἐγέννησε προφορικῶν, πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως*). Here at last we have the Logos *ἐνδιάθετος καὶ προφορικῶς* mentioned explicitly in connection with the pre-existent Logos. The Logos, however, in these two states is one and the same person. As *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος*, He is with God always as His Counsellor, for He is the Mind and Thought of God; as *λόγος προφορικῶς* He receives a new function, yet in the exercise of this function of creating He is never separated from the Father, but remains conversing with Him (*ὁὗ κενωθεὶς αὐτὸς τοῦ λόγου, ἀλλὰ λόγον γενήσας, καὶ τῷ λόγῳ αὐτοῦ διαπαντὸς ὁμιλῶν*).

Now this *λόγος προφορικῶς* which has been begotten (or born) for an 'operatio ad extra,' St. Theophilus also calls *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*. He gives no further explanation, but the apposition of the phrase with *λόγος προφορικῶς* rather than with *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος* indicates something of its meaning. The *πρωτότοκος* is not a creature, but the Logos of God in a new role, the first step in bringing creation into being. This going forth of the Logos from the bowels (*σπλάγγνους*) or the heart (*καρδιά*) of God, this manifestation of the Logos in a relationship as it were outside the Divine Nature, is thought of by St. Theophilus as a birth, and the Logos in this new relationship is called the Firstborn of every creature.

Theophilus then may be considered as bringing to its final ex-

pression the two-state Logos theory, which was at least latent in some of the phraseology of St. Justin, was furthered by Tatian, and not entirely forgotten by Athenagoras even with his different approach from the idea of circumcession. Although the theory could be understood in an orthodox sense, it was not without its dangers. Ultimately, it was abandoned.

St. Irenaeus was a native of Asia Minor, who in his younger days at Smyrna had heard St. Polycarp,<sup>82</sup> a disciple of St. John the Apostle. Little is known of St. Irenaeus's personal history, but in 177 he came into prominence as a priest at Lyons in Gaul by being entrusted with a mission to Pope Eleutherius concerning the Montanists.<sup>83</sup> On his return to Rome, he was chosen to succeed Bishop Pothinus, who had been martyred in the interval.<sup>84</sup> During his long busy episcopate at Lyons, St. Irenaeus wrote a number of books, of which only two have been preserved, and that only in translations. About 180, he wrote his treatise "Against the Heresies," a long polemic in five books, concerned mainly with the various forms of Gnosticism then prevalent. This treatise, originally in Greek,<sup>85</sup> is preserved in Latin, in what appears to be a rather literal translation. The other work, the "Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching," was discovered in 1907 in an Armenian translation.<sup>86</sup>

In the "Against the Heresies," St. Irenaeus speaks of the Logos as the 'Dei aeternum Verbum,'<sup>87</sup> the 'Unigenitum Dei Verbum,'<sup>88</sup> the 'semper . . . coexistens Filius Patris,'<sup>89</sup> the 'mensura Patris.'<sup>90</sup> The angels, he says, are unable to understand that the offspring of God, His Firstborn Logos, should descend to the creature, that is, to what had been moulded, and that it should be contained by Him, and on the other hand that the creature should contain the Logos, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels (ut progenies ejus, primogenitus Verbum, descendat in facturam, hoc est in plasma, et capiat ab eo; et factura iterum capiat Verbum, et ascendat ad eum, supergrediens angelos).<sup>91</sup> The Firstborn Word

<sup>82</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* V, 8; 20, 4.

<sup>83</sup> Quotations in Hippolytus, Eusebius, and Epiphanius.

<sup>84</sup> *Texte und Untersuchungen*, XXXI, 1, Leipzig 1907.

<sup>85</sup> *Against the Heresies*, Bk. II, xiii, 8.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* IV, iv, 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* II, xxviii, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* II, xxx, 9.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* V, 4, 2.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* V, 5, 8.

or Logos is not a creature, but the offspring of God, in existence before the creation, and this we know from the passages above (Dei aeternum Verbum, etc.) to be from eternity.

Regarding the manner of the generation of the Logos, St. Irenaeus pleads ignorance. The Scriptures do not reveal what God was doing before creation (quid autem ante hoc Deus sit operatus, nulla Scriptura manifestat), and it is not proper to make foolish suppositions.<sup>82</sup> No man knows how the Son was produced from the Father since the generation of the Son is altogether indescribable. Only the Father who begat understands, and the Son who was begotten. Those who undertake to describe the indescribable must be crazy (non sunt compotes sui, ea quae inenarrabilia sunt enarrare promittentes).<sup>83</sup> He ridicules those who would frame conjectures by transferring to God's Word the production of the human word framed by the tongue. They talk, he says, as if they had assisted at His birth (Non ergo magnum quid invenerunt, qui emissiones excogitaverunt, neque absconditum mysterium, si id quod ab omnibus intelligitur, neque absconditum unigenitum Dei Verbum; et quem inenarrabilem et innominabilem vocant hunc, quasi ipsi obsteticaverint, primae generationis ejus prolationem et generationem enuntiant, assimilantes eum hominum verbo emissionis).<sup>84</sup> St. Irenaeus thus explicitly rejects the two-state Logos theory, openly advocated by St. Theophilus, and which also seems to underlie some of the phraseology of Tatian and Athenagoras, if not also St. Justin.

In this same treatise "*Against the Heresies*," primogenitus is used not only of the pre-incarnate Logos, but of the incarnate Logos as well. Thus in Bk. III, xvi, 4, he uses it of Christ's human nature as does St. Luke:<sup>85</sup> "Simeon . . . manibus accipiens Virginis primogenitum." He also uses it in the figurative sense of the firstborn from the dead as do St. Paul<sup>86</sup> and St. John.<sup>87</sup> Thus in Bk. II, xxii, 4, he speaks of Christ: "deinde et usque ad mortem pervenit, ut sit primogenitus ex mortuis, ipse

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.* II, xxviii, 3.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* II, xxviii, 6.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* II, xxviii, 6. For another interpretation see Jousseaume, "*Le premier-né de la Vierge*" chez saint Irénée et saint Hippolyte, in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 1932, pp. 509-532; 1933, pp. 25-37.

<sup>87</sup> *Apoc.* I, 5.

primatum tenens in omnibus, princeps vitae, prior omnium, et precedens omnes." In a similar strain, he writes in Bk. III, xvi, 3: "ex resurrectione mortuorum ut sit primogenitus mortuorum quomodum et primogenitus in omni conditione." The "primogenitus in omni conditione" indicates that Christ is "primogenitus" by reason of other titles also. In Bk. III, xxii, 4, he writes: "Primogenitus enim mortuorum natus Dominus, et in sinum suum recipiens pristinos patres, regeneravit eos in vitam Dei, ipse initium vivitium factus, quoniam Adam initium morientium factus est," and in Bk. IV, xx, 2: "principatum autem habet eorum quae sunt sub terra, ipse primogenitus mortuorum factus"; also in Bk. V, xxxi, 2: "Si ergo Dominus legem mortuorum servavit ut fieret primogenitus a mortuis." Christ by His resurrection from the dead is the beginning of a new life in a regenerated race, and in this sense He is the Firstborn from the dead. Although the usage is thoroughly Scriptural, St. Irenaeus was the first of the Fathers to use it in this sense.

In the other work of St. Irenaeus, "*The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*," recently found in an Armenian translation, Christ is spoken of as being the Son of David after the flesh, but according to the spirit the "Son of God, pre-existing with the Father, begotten before all the creation of the world."<sup>88</sup> The expression "begotten before all the creation of the world" is most probably the equivalent of *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*. In another passage,<sup>89</sup> "Firstborn" is used in three different senses in one paragraph: "the firstborn and eldest offspring of the thought of the Father, the Word . . . the Virgin's firstborn . . . the firstbegotten of the dead, Prince and Author of life unto God."

St. Irenaeus, like the other Fathers of the second century, uses *Firstborn* of the pre-incarnate Logos (though not exclusively). He is the clearest in stating the eternity of the Son; in fact, he is the only one who does so explicitly. As the Son is eternal, His generation then also must be eternal, and He is truly Firstborn from everlasting. There is thus no room for the two-state Logos theory, in which the Logos is considered as being only Logos before becoming the Son. Although St. Irenaeus had the Gnostics with

<sup>88</sup> *Demonstration* 30 (trans. J. Armitage Robinson, London 1920).

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* 39; cf. 43, 51, 52.

their various systems of divine emanations mainly in view, he was probably not unaware that the two-state Logos theory struck a false note when judged by the tradition which he had inherited through St. Polycarp from the last of the Apostles, St. John.

In conclusion, it is to be noted that the expression *πρωτότοκος* occurs only three times in the recognized works of the second century. St. Justin used it twice (Dial. 85, 138), but without any explanation regarding its precise meaning. From what appears to be equivalent phraseology in other passages, one may conclude with reasonable certainty that the expression meant for St. Justin "begotten before all creatures." The third passage is in St. Theophilus (Ad Aut. II, 22), where the expression is equated with the *λόγος προφορικός*, and it is explicitly stated that the *λόγος προφορικός* was born, not from eternity, but when the Father was about to create. Before creation, the Logos existed in the Father as *λόγος ἐνδιάθετος*. Tatian did not use the expression *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, but his *ἔργον πρωτότοκον* is without doubt the equivalent of the *λόγος προφορικός*. Athenagoras likewise did not use the expression, but his *πρῶτον γέννημα* also seems to be an equivalent for the *λόγος προφορικός*. St. Irenaeus rejected the double Logos theory. The Logos was eternal, not only as Logos but also as Son. For St. Irenaeus, "primogenitus" when applied to the pre-incarnate Logos meant the eternal Son of God. The whole *πρωτότοκος* question is thus intimately connected with the larger problem of the Divine Sonship of Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER II

### THIRD CENTURY

Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens)<sup>1</sup> was born of Pagan parents about the middle of the second century, most probably at Athens.<sup>2</sup> He received an excellent training in literature and philosophy, and in his mature years embraced Christianity.<sup>3</sup> The exact dates of his birth and conversion are unknown. Traveling extensively after his conversion, he contacted many Christian teachers, and finally became associated with Pantaeus in the famous *Didascation*, or Catechetical School of Alexandria. He was ordained a priest, and after the death of Pantaeus, became the head of the school.<sup>4</sup>

Alexandria at this time more than Athens was the chief intellectual center of the Hellenic world, and Clement, who loved his Hellenic culture along with his new Faith, found the intellectual atmosphere stimulating. With the view of winning the learned of the city to the Faith, he undertook the composition of an extensive work in three parts to serve as an introduction to Christianity. Of this trilogy, the first two treatises, known as the *Protrepticus* and the *Paedagogus*, have been preserved entire. Whether the *Stromateis* is the third treatise, which Clement had promised to write under the name of the *Didascalos*, or Master, is disputed.<sup>5</sup> There are some twenty other treatises attributed to Clement, but only the homily on Mark X, 17-31, entitled *Who is the rich man that is saved*, is complete. Clement had written a commentary on Scripture in eight books, known as the *Hypotyposes*, but only

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, 13; Photius, *Bibl. Cod.* CXI; cf. Havesy, *Clement of Alexandria*, in *Cath. Enc.* IV, pp. 45-47.

<sup>2</sup> Epiphanius, *Haer.* XXXII, 6. Athens was the starting point, and Alexandria the end of his journey (*Strom.* I, 11).

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, *Præp. Ævang.* II, 2; *Pæd.* I, 1; II, 62.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* V, 10-11; VI, 6, 13; Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 36, 38; *Pæd.* I, 37; *Strom.* I, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Tollinton, *Clement of Alexandria*, London 1914, vol. I, pp. 190-194; De Faye, *Clément d'Alexandrie*, Paris 1898, pp. 78-88.





from the Son,<sup>25</sup> the Son is always in the Father, and the Father always in the Son.<sup>26</sup> The Son<sup>27</sup> like the Father<sup>28</sup> is beyond time and without beginning (*ἀχρονον ἀπαρχον*), and hence eternal.

Although Clement did not use *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, he probably had the expression in mind when he spoke of the Son as being the first principle of all things, imaged forth from the invisible God first and before the ages, and fashioning all things which came into being after itself (*ὁ υἱὸς . . . ἡ τῶν ὄλων ἀρχή, ἥτις ἀπεικονίστα μὲν ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀόρατου πρώτῃ καὶ πρὸ αἰώνων, τετύπωκεν δὲ τὸ εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀόρατου*).<sup>29</sup> St. Paul had called the Son "the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, for in him were all things created . . . all things were created by him and in him, and he is before all, and by him all things consist" (*ὅς ἐστιν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀόρατου, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα . . . τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται*).<sup>30</sup> Clement is evidently paraphrasing the text. In his "imaged forth . . . αἰώνων" may be seen the equivalent of *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*. Twice Clement quotes Romans VIII, 29 with its reference to the risen Christ as the "Firstborn among many brethren" (*πρωτότοκον ἐν πολλοῖς ἀδελφοῖς*).<sup>31</sup> In the new order of grace, Christ is the Firstborn, and we become his brethren. Clement seems to have been the first to use this text. Clement also speaks of a *πρωτότοκος ἐκκλησία ἢ ἐκ πολλῶν ἀγαθῶν συγκεκμημένη παίδων*.<sup>32</sup> We too are firstborn sons, the genuine friends of the Firstborn (ὁὶ τοῦ προτοτόκου γνήσιοι φίλοι), who first of all other men attained to the knowledge of God, who first were freed of our sins and severed from the Devil (ὁὶ πρόωτοι τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἐν νενοηκότες, οὐ μεριζόμενος οὐκ ἀποτεμενόμενος. *Strom.* VII, 1 (III, 5, 26).

<sup>25</sup> οὐ μεριζόμενος οὐκ ἀποτεμενόμενος. *Strom.* VII, 1 (III, 5, 26).  
<sup>26</sup> υἱὸς ἐν πατρὶ, καὶ πατὴρ ἐν υἱῷ. *Paed.* I, 5 (I, 104, 14; 121, 26; 131, 32).  
<sup>27</sup> τὴν ἀχρονον ἀπαρχον ἀρχὴν τε καὶ ἀπαρχὴν τῶν ὄντων, τὸν υἱόν. *Strom.* VII, 1 (III, 4, 6); cf. *Protr.* XII (I, 84, 30; 85, 23).

<sup>28</sup> ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἀπαρχου . . . ὡν ἀεὶ ὁ ἔστιν. *Strom.* V, 14 (II, 421, 8-10).  
<sup>29</sup> *Col.* I, 15-17.  
<sup>30</sup> *Paed.* III, 3 (I, 248, 22); *Strom.* IV, 7 (II, 269, 7).  
<sup>31</sup> *Protr.* IX (I, 62, 25 ff.).

πρόωτοι τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν ἀποστασμένοι, οὐ πρόωτοι τοῦ διαβόλου κεχωρισμένοι). The Firstborn of whom we are the true friends, is here the incarnate risen Christ, and the term is used in a figurative sense to denote priority. In this new order of grace, Christ is the first.

Regarding the charge of Photius<sup>33</sup> that Clement taught two Divine Logoi neither of which became incarnate, but only an emanation from the first, there is no foundation. Nothing in the trilogy justifies the charge, and there is much to the contrary. Clement like those before him merely distinguished between the intelligence of God which is the Father's attribute, and the personal Logos who is the Son.<sup>34</sup>

It is likewise evident that the two-state Logos theory has no place in Clement's system; in fact, he explicitly rejects the idea of the *Λόγος προφορικός*.<sup>35</sup> The Logos was not first Logos and then Son. The Logos was always Son, and apart from His function in creation.

The *Excerpta ex Scriptis Theodoti* are extracts which Clement may have made from the works of the Valentinian Gnostics, of whom a certain Theodotus, otherwise unknown, is mentioned several times. As with all Gnostic works, it is almost hopeless to find any consistency in the hodge-podge of statements.<sup>36</sup> Jesus is spoken of as *πρωτότοκος* in creation, but as *μυρογενής* in the Pleroma.<sup>37</sup> The expression *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* occurs twice, but it is not clear in what sense.<sup>38</sup>

Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus) was born about 160 at Carthage of Pagan parents, and spent most of his life in that city. His father was a centurion in the pro-consular service.<sup>39</sup> Tertullian received an excellent education, either at

<sup>32</sup> *Bibl. Cod.* CIX; cf. Casey, *Clement and the Two Divine Logoi*, in *Jour. Theol. Stud.* 25 (1924), pp. 43-56.

<sup>33</sup> Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, St. Louis 1910, vol. I, p. 247.  
<sup>34</sup> *Strom.* V, 1 (II, 329, 21).

<sup>35</sup> "varia Veteris Novique Testamenti loca ullo absque ordine, ulleque sine cohaerentia et connexionе accumulatur, nec rectis sanisque plerumque interpretationibus explicantur." Le Nourry, *De aliis Clementi Alexandrini operibus*, Migne, P. G. 9, col. 1459; cf. Casey, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-38.

<sup>36</sup> *Excerpta* VII (G. C. S. III, 108, 12 ff.).  
<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* VII (III, 108, 26); XIX (III, 113, 7 ff.).

<sup>38</sup> Jerome, *De vit. ill.* 53.

Carthage or Rome, and wrote in both Latin and Greek. He was very well informed on Roman Law, and it is generally believed that he was engaged for a time in its practice.<sup>40</sup> Practically nothing is known regarding his life apart from his literary labors after his conversion. The conversion to Christianity is usually placed between 193 and 197, but its motives and circumstances remain unknown. Tertullian was married and childless, and probably became a priest about 200. Of a fiery, rigoristic, critical temperament, he was attracted to the Montanists about 206, but did not break definitely with the Church until 213. Ultimately, he organized his own sect, known as the Tertullianists, the remnants of which were reconciled to the Church by St. Augustine.<sup>41</sup> After 222, Tertullian disappears from view, although St. Jerome states that he lived to an old age.<sup>42</sup> There is no evidence that Tertullian was reconciled to the Church before his death. He was a prolific writer, and is generally recognized as the father of Christian Latin Literature. Some of his terminology has found a definite place in Latin Theology. Of special interest to our problem are the *Apologeticus* and the *Adversus Praxean*. The *Apologeticus* was written about 197, shortly after Tertullian's conversion, and was directed to the Provincial Governors of the Roman Empire in defense of Christianity. The *Adversus Praxean* was written after 213, when Tertullian was definitely a Montanist, and is a polemic against monarchian modalism brought to Rome from the East by a certain Praxeas. There are also some pertinent passages in the anti-Gnostic works known as the *Adversus Hermogenem* and *Adversus Marcionem*.

Two lines of thought appear in Tertullian's Logos speculations. In the one, the Logos is considered from the standpoint of His operation ad extra in creation, while in the other, the Logos is thought of as immanent in the Divine Nature even before creation. Although the first appears more frequently, the importance of the other must not be overlooked for a proper concept of Tertullian's teaching. Tertullian's Trinity was an immanent as well as an economic Trinity; in fact, he uses the term Economy of the inner

<sup>40</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* II, 2, 4.

<sup>41</sup> Augustine, *De haer.* 86.

<sup>42</sup> "vixisse usque ad decrepitam aetatem." Jerome, *op. cit.* 53.

relationship within the Godhead apart from all operations ad extra.<sup>43</sup>

Although Tertullian states that God was alone before all things, he qualifies immediately by saying that God was alone only in the sense that there was nothing external to Himself. Within Himself God was not alone, for He had in Himself His Reason (Ratio), and in that Reason His Word (Sermo). He states also that the distinction between Reason and Word is of no practical importance; apparently these are but different states of one and the same Divine Logos. Even before God sent His Word, He already had this Word within Himself, with and in Reason itself, as He silently planned and arranged within Himself what He was afterwards to speak through His Word.<sup>44</sup> Tertullian thus carries his Logos speculation into the eternity before creation. Within the unity of the God-head, there is a distinction of being, an inner companionship, which is personal, and eternal.<sup>45</sup>

The Logos, which was always in God as Ratio even before creation,<sup>46</sup> was put forth as Sermo when God said: Fiat lux.<sup>47</sup> By this "putting forth" the Logos was begotten or born into Sonship.<sup>48</sup> The Logos was not always Son but became Son at creation. Although God was always God, He was not always Father, but became Father in the generation or birth of the Son.<sup>49</sup> By the generation, the Son proceeds from the Father for the work of creation, yet is never separated from the Father.<sup>50</sup> There is no

<sup>43</sup> Warfield, *Studies in Tertullian and Augustine*, Oxford 1930, pp. 79-81.

<sup>44</sup> *Adversus Praxean* 5 (*Corpus Scrip. Eccl. Lat. Tertullianus* III, 233, 7 ff.).

<sup>45</sup> "deum immutabilem et informabilem credi necesse est, ut aeternum. . . . Sermo autem Deus." *Adv. Prax.* 27 (III, 280, 27 ff.).

<sup>46</sup> *Adv. Prax.* 5 (III, 233, 7 ff.).

<sup>47</sup> *Adv. Prax.* 7 (III, 235, 14-22).

<sup>48</sup> "Hunc ex Deo prolatum didicimus, et prolatione generatum, et ideirco Filium Dei et Deum dictum ex unitate substantiae." *Apologeticus* XXI (*P. L.* I, col. 399).

<sup>49</sup> "quia et pater deus est et iudex deus est, non tamen ideo pater et iudex semper, quia deus semper. nam nec pater potuit esse ante filium nec iudex ante delictum. fuit tempus, cum et delictum et filius non fuit, quod iudicem et qui patrem deum faceret." *Adv. Hermogenem* 3 (III, 129, 2 ff.).

<sup>50</sup> "et sermo erat apud deum et numquam separatus a patre, aut alius

division of substance,<sup>51</sup> only an extension,<sup>52</sup> just as the root puts forth the tree, the fountain the river, and the sun the ray.<sup>53</sup> This Son was Firstbegotten in that He was begotten before all things; and Only-begotten in that He alone was begotten, in the real sense of the term, from the womb of His own heart (exinde, cum patrem sibi faciens, de quo procedendo filius factus est, primogenitus, ut ante omnia genitus, et unigenitus, ut solus ex deo genitus, proprie de vulva cordis ipsius).<sup>54</sup> He is the Firstborn of creation (primogenitus conditionis) for He is the Word through whom all things were made.<sup>55</sup> Firstborn is thus a title of the Logos, not by reason of His eternal origin from the Father, but because of His being begotten or born into a temporal Sonship for the purpose of creation. Much of Tertullian's subordinationalistic language may be explained in the light of this temporal *genesis*, which affected the Logos only in His external activities and not in His inner nature.<sup>56</sup> The Logos is of the nature of God, which is eternal and unchangeable.

Hippolytus was born about 170, probably at Rome, where he spent most of his life.<sup>57</sup> Although Photius refers to Hippolytus

a patre, haec erit probola veritatis, custos unitatis, qua prolatum dicimus filium a patre, sed non separatam." *Adv. Praex.* 8 (III, 238, 14 ff.).

<sup>51</sup> "et hoc non ex separatione substantiae, sed ex dispositione, cum individuum et inseparatum filium a patre pronuntiamus." *Adv. Praex.* 19 (III, 262, 26-27).

<sup>52</sup> "Et cum radius ex sole porrigitur, portio ex summa; sed sol erit in radio, quia solis est radius, nec separatur substantia, sed extenditur . . . ita et quod de Deo profectum est, Deus est, et Dei Filius, et unus ambo." *Apol. XXI (P. L. I, 399)*.

<sup>53</sup> "protulit enim Deus sermonem . . . sicut radix fruticem et fons fluvium et sol radium." *Adv. Praex.* 8 (III, 238, 18-19).

<sup>54</sup> *Adv. Praex.* 7 (III, 235, 21-22); cf. *Adv. Herm.* 18 (III, 146, 6-7).

<sup>55</sup> "Even the theory of the generation in time was partly amended by the distinction between the conception of the Word ad intra and His generation ad extra: subordinationalism was made less offensive by the close relation established between the Son's inferiority and His origin, a relation which tended to ascribe that inferiority to His personality rather than to His nature." Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, St. Louis 1910, p. 314.

<sup>57</sup> Dix, G., *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*, London 1937, p. xii; cf. Easton, *The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus*, Cambridge 1934, p. 18.

as a disciple of Irenaeus,<sup>58</sup> this may mean no more than that Hippolytus admired the writings of Irenaeus and adopted some of his views. Origen, while on a pilgrimage to Rome about 212, heard Hippolytus preach a homily.<sup>59</sup>

Though a scholarly and zealous priest, Hippolytus was not without his serious faults. He was like Tertullian, his African contemporary, fiery in temperament and rigoristically inclined. He opposed Pope Zephyrinus (197-217) and his deacon Callistus for their lenient attitude towards the penitential discipline of the Church, and towards those inclined to the Monarchian side of the Trinitarian controversy, then raging in Rome.<sup>60</sup> When Callistus was chosen to succeed Zephyrinus as Pope, Hippolytus and his followers withdrew into schism. Hippolytus is later referred to as a Bishop, and may have been irregularly consecrated as such.<sup>61</sup>

During the persecution of Maximin I in 235, Hippolytus and Pope Pontian, the second successor of Pope Callistus, were banished to the mines of Sardinia, where both died shortly. The bodies were brought back to Rome at the same time, and both were honored as martyrs by the Roman Church. Hippolytus then must have been reconciled before his death.<sup>62</sup>

Hippolytus like Tertullian was a voluminous writer, but much of his work has perished.<sup>63</sup> Although Greek was fast disappearing in the West as the language of theology, Hippolytus wrote exclusively in that language. His views bearing on our problem are found mainly in his treatise *Against Noetus*, and in his *Philosophumena*.

There were two extreme schools of thought regarding the Trinity struggling to be recognized at Rome. The one emphasized the unity or Monarchy of God, and made the Trinity of Persons to be but successive modes of the one Divine Being. There were a

<sup>58</sup> Photius, *Bibliotheca* CXXI.

<sup>59</sup> Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 61.

<sup>60</sup> *Philosophumena* IX, 7, 11, 12 (G. C. S., *Hippolytus* III, 240, 16 ff.; 245-251).

<sup>61</sup> Dix, *op. cit.* xxvi-xxviii.

<sup>62</sup> *Liberian Catalogue* (Lightfoot, *Apostolic Fathers*, I, 262); *Inscription of Damasus* (Lightfoot, *op. cit.* II, 328).

<sup>63</sup> Puech, *Histoire de la Littérature Grecque Chrétienne*, Paris 1928, II, 550-577.

number of variations in this view, from which arose such group names as Monarchians, Patripassionists, Sabellians, etc. The other view emphasized the distinction of Persons in the Divine Economy to such an extent as to make them appear to be separate Beings. Holders of this view were known as Dithelists or Tritheists. When Pope Callistus was accused by Hippolytus of being a Sabellian, he retorted that Hippolytus was a Dithelst.<sup>64</sup> Both Zephyrinus and Callistus in reality tried to hold the middle way between the two extremes, denying neither the Monarchy nor the Economy of the Trinity.<sup>65</sup>

Hippolytus held a three-state Logos theory. First, the Logos existed in God before all things; secondly, when God willed to create, He begat the Logos as His Firstborn voice, putting Him forth for the work of creation; thirdly, the Logos became perfect Son (*τέλειος υἱός*) at the Incarnation. Regarding the first state, Hippolytus is vague. Although God is alone in the beginning, yet He is a plurality (*αὐτὸς δὲ λόγος ὂν, πῶλὸς ἦν*).<sup>66</sup> God was never reasonless, or wisdomless, or powerless, or counselless, but all things were in Him and He was the all (*οὐτε γὰρ ἄλογος, οὐτε ἀστροφος, οὐτε ἀδύνατος, οὐτε ἀβούλευτος ἦν. πάντα δὲ ἦν ἐν αὐτῷ, αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν τὸ πᾶν*).<sup>67</sup> This God then, being alone and above all, conceived the Logos first in His own mind and begat Him (*οὐτος οὖν λόγος καὶ κατὰ πάντων Θεὸς λόγον πρῶτον ἐνοργηθεὶς ἀπογεννᾷ*), not as a word in the sense of a voice, but as the indwelling Reason of all Logos in this first state appears to be more like the ideal world (*κόσμος νοητός*) of Plato and Philo than a real person.<sup>68</sup>

In the second state, God begets the Logos as His Firstborn Voice (*πρωτότοκος φωνή*), which then appears at His side as His

<sup>64</sup> *Philosophumena* IX, 11, 12 (III, 246, 7, ἀπεκάλει ἡμᾶς διθέτους; III, 248, 23, διθέσι ἐτέρε).

<sup>65</sup> D'Ales, *La Théologie de Saint Hippolyte*, Paris 1906, pp. 33-34.  
<sup>66</sup> *P. G. X*, col. 817.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Phil. X*, 33 (III, 289, 3-5).

Logos viewed sub specie aeternitatis anything more than an impersonal Divine attribute, for the completion of whose Personality the Incarnation was a radical necessity."

Counsellor, and through Him God makes all things.<sup>70</sup> God begat this Logos when He willed and as He willed, and Hippolytus seems to infer that God could have willed not to beget Him at all.<sup>71</sup> The Logos is of the substance of God, and consequently God; the world, however, was made from nothing (*ταύτου ὁ λόγος λόγος ἐξ αἰῶνός· διὰ καὶ Θεός, οὐσία ὑπεάρχων Θεοῦ· ὁ δὲ κόσμος ἐξ οὐδενός· διὰ αὐτοῦ*).<sup>72</sup> All comes into being through Him, but He alone is from the Father (*πάντα τοῦν δὲ αὐτοῦ, αὐτὸς δὲ λόγος ἐκ πατρός*).<sup>73</sup> He directs all, being the Firstborn Son of the Father, the light-bringing Voice before the dawn (*τὰ δὲ πάντα διαικεὶ ὁ λόγος ὁ Θεοῦ, ὁ πρωτόγονος πατρός παῖς, ἡ πρὸ ἐσπέρου φωσφόρος φωνή*).<sup>74</sup> In the third state, the Logos by becoming incarnate, becomes perfect Son. The Logos is called Son by anticipation, but does not become perfect Son until assuming flesh.<sup>75</sup> Hippolytus in his Logos speculations thus did not find a basis for Sonship in the inner life of God, nor even in relation to creation. The Logos was not perfect Son until the incarnation.

According to Hippolytus, then, the Logos is Firstborn, not from eternity, but from the time of creation. Although begotten from the substance of the Father, the Logos is Son only imperfectly until the Incarnation.

Novatian came into prominence during the long interregnum in the Papacy between the death of Pope Fabian in January, 250, and the election of Pope Cornelius in March, 251. In answer to Cyprian's inquiry from Carthage regarding the Lapsi, Novatian wrote two letters on behalf of the Roman clergy.<sup>76</sup> After the election of Cornelius, Novatian went into schism, and had himself consecrated bishop.<sup>77</sup> Nothing certain is known of his later life and end, but his schism spread beyond Rome and continued for more than a century. Novatian was the first at Rome to use Latin

<sup>70</sup> *Against Noctus X* (*P. G. X*, col. 817); *Philosophumena X*, 33 (III, 289, 3 ff.); cf. *P. G. XVI*, col. 3447 C.

<sup>71</sup> *Against Noctus XV* (*P. G. X*, col. 824).

<sup>72</sup> *Phil. X*, 33 (III, 290, 7 ff.).

<sup>73</sup> *Against Noctus XI* (*P. G. X*, col. 817).

<sup>74</sup> *Phil. X*, 33 (III, 290, 24-25).

<sup>75</sup> *Against Noctus IV* (*P. G. X*, col. 809); XV (X, col. 825).

<sup>76</sup> Cyprian, *Epist.* 30, 36.

<sup>77</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, 43; Socrates, *H. E.* IV, 28.

in a theological treatise. Of the many works ascribed to him by St. Jerome,<sup>78</sup> only the *De cibis judaïcis* and the *De Trinitate* have survived, although a number of works formerly current under the names of Tertullian and Cyprian have been claimed for Novatian.<sup>79</sup>

In his Trinitarian doctrine, Novatian resembles Tertullian, but his work is more than an epitome of Tertullian. He makes an advance in saying that the Son was always in the Father, since the Father was always Father (*Semper enim in Patre; ne Pater non semper sit Pater*),<sup>80</sup> yet he does not carry the idea through to its conclusion. The idea implies eternity for Son as well as Father, yet almost immediately Novatian adds that the Father must be before the Son (*Pater illum etiam quadam ratione præcedit, quod necesse est quodammodo prior sit qua Pater sit*). There seems to be an underlying thought here that they who are Father and Son may be eternal under some other aspect. As persons, however, he considers the one to be before the other. He who is without origin must be in some way before Him who has an origin (*Quoniam aliquo pacto antecedit necesse est eum qui habet originem, ille qui originem nescit*). The Word, who is in the Father, proceeded from the Father when the Father willed, and became the Son for the creation of the world. He who is Son was begotten first as Logos, and then born as Son.<sup>81</sup> That seems to be the general drift of Novatian's reasoning, in spite of some ambiguity in phraseology.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 70.

<sup>79</sup> D'Ales, *Novatian*, Paris 1924, pp. 19 ff.

<sup>80</sup> *De Trinitate* XXXI (*P. L.* III, col. 949).

<sup>81</sup> "Hic ergo cum sit genitus a Patre, semper est in Patre. Semper autem sic dico, ut non imatum sed natum probem. . . . Semper enim in Patre, ne Pater non semper sit Pater. . . . Ex quo quando ipse voluit, Sermo Filius natus est. . . . hic ergo, quando Pater voluit, processit ex Patre; et qui in Patre fuit, processit ex Patre; et qui in Patre fuit, quia

<sup>82</sup> "Le Père ne fut jamais sans son Fils, il fut toujours Père. Il semble qu'il l'engendre de toute éternité: autrement, comment serait-il toujours Père? Mais Novatian distingue manifestement la génération du Fils et sa naissance. La génération du Fils s'accomplit au sein du Père avant tous les temps; elle est mise en relations avec le titre de Dieu. La naissance du Fils s'accomplit au temps marqué par Dieu; elle est mise en

Novatian is the first to have any extensive comment on the primogenitus omnis creaturæ.<sup>83</sup> Taking up the phrase, he asks how Christ could be the Firstborn of all creation, unless by virtue of His Divinity He came forth from God the Father, as the Word, before all creation (*quomodo omnis creaturæ primogenitus esse potuit, nisi quoniam secundum divinitatem ante omnem creaturam ex Patre Deo Sermo processit*)? He maintains that if heretics will not accept this interpretation, they will be compelled to show that Christ is the Firstborn of creation as man, and this cannot be done since Christ as man is not before creation but after it. Either, then, He is before all creation, so as to be the Firstborn of all creation, and then is not man only, for man is after all creation; or else He is man only, and is therefore after all creation. He is the Firstborn of all creation by virtue of His being the Word, who is before all creation. The Word indeed is eternally in the bosom of the Father, but is not born into Sonship until the Father is about to create. In its birth it becomes the Firstborn of all creation.

Cyprian, the energetic Bishop of Carthage (249-258), was an able administrator rather than a theologian. Although he wrote extensively, there are but a few scattered references to Trinitarian speculation in his works. In his *Testimoniorum Libri Tres Adversus Judæos*, which is simply a collection of Scripture texts without comment, he has a chapter entitled "Christum primogenitum esse, et ipsum esse Sapientiam Dei, per quam omnia facta sunt."<sup>84</sup> Amongst these texts is our Col. I, 15 (*Qui est imago Dei invisibilis et primogenitus totius creaturæ*). As no comment is given, it is impossible to draw any conclusion regarding Cyprian's view.

relations avec le titre de Seigneur et donc avec la Création. La mission du Fils est prédestinée avant tous les temps, mais elle s'accomplit dans le temps; elle est mise en relations avec le titre d'Ange du Grand Conseil. Novatian marque expressément ces distinctions." D'Ales, *op. cit.*, p. 123. "Novatian, then, might hold that the Father was Father from eternity, because there lay hid within Him He, who had the nature of a Son (both as being the Word, and as being the Son in the event), yet might hold also that the actual genesis or nativitas was temporal." Newman, *Tracts Theol. and Eccl.*, p. 283.

<sup>83</sup> *De Trinitate* XXI (*P. L.* III, col. 927-929).

<sup>84</sup> *Liber II*, cap. I (*P. L.* IV, col. 696-697).

We do know that he was an admirer of Tertullian's writings,<sup>85</sup> and most probably he would have understood the text as did Tertullian.

Origen was born about 185, most probably at Alexandria.<sup>86</sup> He may have been a pupil of Pantaenus before following the lessons of Clement in the famous catechetical school of that city.<sup>87</sup> After the persecution of Septimius Severus (202-203), Origen, though but eighteen years of age, was chosen by Bishop Demetrius to succeed Clement, who had fled from the city.<sup>88</sup> Leonides, the father of Origen, suffered a martyr's death in the same persecution.<sup>89</sup> Excepting for a short trip in 212 to Rome, where he heard Hippolytus preach, and another to Arabia, Origen was busy at Alexandria with his teaching and his studies.<sup>90</sup> To gain leisure for his studies, he had Heraclas, a former pupil, to help with the teaching.<sup>91</sup> He himself attended the lectures of Ammonius Saccas,<sup>92</sup> the founder of Neoplatonism, and also studied Hebrew.<sup>93</sup> During the persecution of Caracalla (215-216), he fled to Palestine, where he was kindly received by Alexander, Bishop of Jerusalem, and Theoclitus, Bishop of Caesarea, who induced him though a layman to preach in their churches. Recalled to Alexandria by Demetrius, he resumed his teaching and writing. About 230, he undertook a trip to Athens, and while stopping at Caesarea was ordained a Bishop and Theoclitus without the knowledge of Demetrius, and in spite of his self-emasculation.<sup>94</sup> On his return to Alexandria, he was deposed from his office in the Catechetical School, degraded from the priesthood, and banished from the city.<sup>95</sup> Heraclas succeeded Demetrius, and Origen was allowed to return, but was soon excommunicated because of his teaching.<sup>96</sup> Origen then took up his permanent residence in Caesarea and established a flourishing theological school.<sup>97</sup> It was here that he labored over

<sup>85</sup> Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 53.

<sup>86</sup> DeFaye, *Origen and His Work* (Eng. trans.), New York 1929, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, vi, xiv, xix.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* VI, iii.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* VI, i, xiv; cf. Cadiou, *La Jeunesse d'Origène*, Paris 1935, p. 62 ff.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xv.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xix.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xix.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xvi.

<sup>94</sup> Photius, *Collect et démonstr.* 9; cf. Jerome, *Ep.* XXXIII ad Paulam.

<sup>95</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, xxxix.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xix.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* VI, xix.

his Hexapla. During the Decian persecution, he was imprisoned and tortured. He was released, but died soon at Tyre (254 or 255) in his sixty-ninth year.<sup>98</sup>

Origen is the most versatile and prolific of the Antenicene writers. Only a small fraction of his literary output, however, has been preserved, and that largely in translation.<sup>99</sup> St. Jerome and Rufinus were amongst his translators, and the Cappadocians, St. Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen, made a florilegium of his works known as the Philocalia (Ἑφρέϊους Φιλοκαλία). Origen was a pioneer in many fields of ecclesiastical learning, and his speculations aroused not only admiration, but also bitter opposition, which continued for centuries. That he was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (II Constantinople 553) is still disputed.<sup>100</sup> As his translators did not hesitate in making corrections in his works in the light of later theology, it is not always certain just what may have been Origen's own view on a given point.<sup>101</sup>

The expression *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* occurs frequently in Origen, particularly in his Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, where it becomes almost a stereotyped phrase for the pre-incarnate Logos.<sup>102</sup> Thus, he speaks of the unbegotten God as giving command to the Firstborn of all creation, through whom all things were made (Ὁ Θεὸς εἶπε, καὶ ἐγένθησαν· ἐντετέλατο, καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν. ἐντετέλατο γὰρ ὁ ἀγέννητος Θεὸς τῷ πρωτότοκῳ πάσης κτίσεως, καὶ ἐντετέλατο, καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* VII, i.

<sup>99</sup> Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der Altkirchlichen Literatur*, Freiburg in Breisgau 1903, II, 82-140; Cayré, *Précis de Patrologie*, Paris 1931, I, 186-192.

<sup>100</sup> Prat, Origen, in *Catholic Encyclopedia* XI, 311.

<sup>101</sup> Koetschau, *De Principiis* (G. C. S., Origenes V), Leipzig 1913, pp. cxxviii-cxxvxi; cf. *De adulteratione librorum Origenis*, Migne, P. G. XVII, 615; Bardy, *Recherches sur l'histoire du texte et des versions latines du De Principiis d'Origène*, Paris 1923.

<sup>102</sup> G. C. S., *Origenes* I, 10, 3; 32, 18, 29; 154, 17; 158, 27; II, 41, 21; 88, 21; 119, 15, 22; 120, 8; 133, 7; 135, 10; 139, 5; 167, 23; 178, 14; 194, 22; 215, 7; 219, 18; 234, 27; 242, 26; 361, 20; III, 7, 3; 8, 10; 130, 7; IV, 10, 5; 22, 20; 23, 6; 24, 21; 32, 27; 35, 1, 23; 36, 4; 54, 34; 71, 7; 88, 13; 114, 2; 215, 19; 219, 2; 300, 13; 321, 7; 324, 4; 325, 16; 372, 15; 381, 22; 413, 4; 452, 11; V, 25, 3; 28, 9; 33, 6; 130, 14; 139, 16; 349, 13; 354, 1; VI, 1, 4; 17, 3; 143, 23, 24; VII, 19, 9; 86, 1; 396, 7; VIII, 67, 10; 90, 9; 114, 24; 152, 14; 254, 4; 330, 5; etc.

ἐκτίσθσαν . . . πάντα γὰρ δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἐκτίσται, καὶ αὐτὸς ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων).<sup>103</sup> This Firstborn is no other than God's Son, begotten by an intellectual generation of the Father's substance from eternity.<sup>104</sup> He is the Only-begotten Son of God, God's Wisdom hypostatistically existing.<sup>105</sup> His generation is eternal and unique.<sup>106</sup> There was never a time when the Son was not.<sup>107</sup> The Father was always Father by an eternal and everlasting generation, as brightness is begotten from light.<sup>108</sup> This idea of the eternal, continuous generation of the Son is Origen's outstanding contribution to the theological speculation of his time.<sup>109</sup> He admits that the human mind cannot apprehend how the unbegotten God becomes Father of the only-begotten Son.<sup>110</sup> Although Father and Son are distinct, yet they are not separated.<sup>111</sup> The Son subsists in the Father's essence always, and there is but one God.<sup>112</sup> Although Origen speaks at times of the Son as possessing all things even as the Father does, including Omnipotence and Glory,<sup>113</sup> he nevertheless speaks of the Son elsewhere as being distinctly

<sup>103</sup> *G. C. S., Origenes* IV, 71, 5 ff.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.* V, 28, 13 ff.; cf. Cadiou, *op. cit.*, pp. 352-356.

<sup>105</sup> "unigenitum filium dei sapientiam eius esse substantialiter subsistentem." *Ibid.* V, 28, 18.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.* V, 32, 15 ff.

<sup>107</sup> οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν.

<sup>108</sup> "Est namque ita aeterna ac sempiterna generatio, sicut splendor μέγας ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμέρας." *Ibid.* V, 33, 1.

<sup>109</sup> ὅτι οὐκ ἔγενετο αὐτοῦ ὄψως οὐκ εἰσισκότην ὄψον καὶ ἀπέλασεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως ὁ πατήρ αὐτοῦ. *Ibid.* III, 70, 14-16.

<sup>110</sup> Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, London 1908, p. 148.

<sup>111</sup> *G. C. S., Origenes* V, 32, 20.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* V, 348, 1 ff.

<sup>113</sup> "Si vero omnia quae patris sunt, Christi sunt, inter omnia vero quae debet 'omnipotens,' ut omnia quae habet pater etiam unigenitus filius esse deī, quae est unigenitus filius eius quoniam in omnibus inconvertibilis est et incommutabilis, et substantiale in eo omne bonum est, quod utique praedicatur." *Ibid.* V, 43, 19 ff.

subordinate to the Father, and the Holy Spirit as being subordinate to the Son.<sup>114</sup> There is no division in the Divine Nature, for a spiritual substance cannot be divided,<sup>115</sup> and the subordination language of Origen probably refers to the division of function among the three Persons of the Trinity in reference to the Divine operations "ad extra."<sup>116</sup> Justinian<sup>117</sup> accused Origen of calling Christ a *κτίσμα*,<sup>118</sup> but his very quotation would indicate the relative sense in which Origen understood it. If Wisdom could speak in Proverbs VIII: 22 as being created the beginning of God's ways for His works (Κύριος ἐκτίσεν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ), Origen had Scriptural warrant for using the term in that restricted sense, as applying to a function assumed toward creation, and not to the essential nature of Divine Wisdom.<sup>119</sup> Origen speaks too frequently of the Son's generation from the Father to allow one to believe that this lone instance, if it be genuine, is to

<sup>114</sup> Ἐαυτὸν δὲ παρὰ πατέρα ὁ υἱὸς . . . ἐστὶ δὲ ἡττότερος τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον. *Ibid.* V, 56, 2 ff.; cf. V, 360, 1 ff.; II, 232, 9 ff.; IV, 66, 1 ff.

<sup>115</sup> "Observandum namque est, ne quis incurvat in illas absurdas fabulas eorum, qui prolationes quasdam sibi ipsi depingunt, ut divinam naturam in partes vocent et deum patrem quantum in se est dividant, cum hoc de incorporea natura vel leviter suspicari non solum extremæ impietatis sit, verum etiam ultimæ insipientiæ, nec omnino vel ad intelligentiam consequens, ut incorporeæ naturæ substantialis divisio possit intellegi." *Ibid.* V, 35, 9 ff.

<sup>116</sup> "It will then appear that the subordination of the Divine Persons, so much urged against Origen, generally consists in differences of appropriation (the Father creator, the Son redeemer, the Spirit sanctifier) which seem to attribute to the Persons an unequal sphere of action, or in the liturgical practice of praying the Father through the Son in the Holy Ghost, or in the theory so widespread in the Greek Church of the first five centuries, that the Father has a pre-eminence of rank (τάξις) over the two other Persons, inasmuch as in mentioning them He ordinarily has the first place, and of dignity (ἐξέταση), because He represents the whole Divinity, of which He is the principle (ἀρχή), the origin (ἀίτιος), and the source (πηγή). That is why St. Athanasius defends Origen's orthodoxy concerning the Trinity and why St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzus replied to the heretics who claimed the support of his authority that they misunderstood him." Prat, *Origen*, in *Cath. Enc.* XI, 309.

<sup>117</sup> *Ep. ad Menemam* (Mansi IX, 525), quoted in *G. C. S.* V, 349, 11 ff.

<sup>118</sup> Lowry, *Did Origen Style the Son a κτίσμα?*, in *Jour. Theol. Stud.* 39

(1938), pp. 39-42.

<sup>119</sup> Bigg, *The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, Oxford 1886, p. 181.



be understood in any Arian sense.<sup>120</sup> Although Origen's philosophy, no doubt, contributed its share to his subordinationalistic language regarding the Son and the Holy Spirit, Scripture passages, ill understood, such as "The Father is greater than I," were generally the starting point.<sup>121</sup>

Origen uses Son, Wisdom, Logos, Only-begotten, and Firstborn of all creation as practical equivalents in referring to the pre-incarnate Christ. All have reference to the one and only Son begotten of God the Father, but the reasons for the titles depend upon the various relationships of this Son. There is a long, wearisome discussion in the Commentary on St. John<sup>122</sup> regarding many of the titles of Christ, but the title of Firstborn of all creation, although used frequently in the section, is not commented upon as such. From a cursory comparison with some of the other titles, one may conclude that Origen connected the title, not with the Son's generation from the Father, but with the Son's office in respect to creation. Thus he writes in chapter 23 of the first book: "And if we go through all His titles carefully we find that He is the *ἀρχή* only in respect of His being Wisdom. Not even as the Logos is He the *ἀρχή*, for the Logos was in the *ἀρχή*. And so one might venture to say that Wisdom is older than all thoughts that are expressed in the titles of the Firstborn of all creation." (*πρῶτον πάντων τῶν ἐκτισθέντων τοῖς ὀνομασίαις τοῦ πρωτοτόκου πάσης κτίσεως ἔστιν ἡ σοφία*).<sup>123</sup> Wisdom and Firstborn, however, are by nature one and the same (Nec tamen alius est primogenitus per naturam quam sapientia, sed unus atque idem est).<sup>124</sup> Both titles refer to the same Divine Person of the Son, but under different aspects. The Son of God is the Only-begotten (*Μονογενής*) by reason of His being begotten from the Father's substance in an eternal generation; and although Origen does not state so explicitly, the Son of God appears to be the Firstborn of all creation (*Πρωτοτοκος πάσης κτίσεως*) by reason of His office towards creation. This view, adopted in the next century by St. Athanasius, seems to have been anticipated by Origen. Origen improved on the Apologists of the Second Century by abandoning the idea of

<sup>120</sup> Butterworth, *Origen on First Principles*, London 1936, p. 314, n. 6.

<sup>121</sup> Biggs, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

<sup>122</sup> *G. C. S. IV*, pp. 23-51.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.* IV, 24, 16-22.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.* V, 28, 10-11.

the temporal generation of the Son for that of His eternal generation.<sup>125</sup> He still held, however, to the generation by the will of the Father, although by will he may have meant will as identical with essence rather than an act of free will.<sup>126</sup> He seemed to realize that the Father and Son must be equal at least in some aspects, yet much of his terminology remains subordinationalistic, and his doctrine more or less enigmatic.<sup>127</sup>

The period between the death of Origen and the outbreak of the Arian heresy is a rather obscure one in Church history.<sup>128</sup> As the documents are so few and fragmentary, it is difficult at times to trace the course of ideas and of events. The influence of Origen, however, is manifest in the evidence such as it is. In the catechetical school of Alexandria, Origen had been succeeded by Heraclas, Dionysius, Theognostos, and Pterius.<sup>129</sup> Heraclas and Dionysius had been pupils of Origen, and succeeded each other, not only as heads of the catechetical school, but also as bishops of Alexandria. Pterius became known as Origen, the younger.<sup>130</sup> Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bishop of Neo-Caesarea in Pontus, had been a pupil of Origen at Caesarea in Palestine for five years, and before leaving had pronounced a panegyric on his beloved master.<sup>131</sup> Bishop Alexander of Jerusalem, Bishop Theoctistus of Caesarea in Palestine, and Bishop Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia were amongst his best friends. At the Synod of Antioch in 268, it was about the condemnation of the Adoptionistic views of Paul of Samosata, the bishop of that See, and the excommunication of

<sup>125</sup> Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, St. Louis 1910, I, 268.

<sup>126</sup> "qui utique natus ex eo est velut quaedam voluntas eius ex mente procedens. . . . Magis ergo sicut voluntas procedit e mente et neque partem aliquam mentis secat neque ab ea separatur aut dividitur; talem quaedam specie putandus est pater filium genuisse, imaginem scilicet suam, ut sicut ipse est invisibilis per naturam, ita imaginem quoque invisibilem genuerit." *G. C. S. V*, 35, 3 ff. Regarding the expression *θελησεν γεννησθαι* see Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, London 1908, pp. 193-196.

<sup>127</sup> Pohle-Precuss, *The Divine Trinity*, St. Louis 1912, p. 151.

<sup>128</sup> Tixeront, *op. cit.* I, 377.

<sup>129</sup> Bardenheuer, *op. cit.* II, 158-203; Radford, *Three Teachers of Alexandria*, London 1918.

<sup>130</sup> Cambridge 1908; Felloe, *St. Dionysius of Alexandria*, London 1918.

<sup>131</sup> "ut Origenes junior vocaretur." Jerome, *De vir. ill.* 76.

<sup>132</sup> *P. G. X*, 1052 ff.

Lucian, who is generally regarded as the real author of Arianism.<sup>132</sup>

Regarding our problem of the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* there is but little in the fragments surviving from this period. Dionysius of Alexandria wrote to Pope Xystus II in 257 regarding the Sabellianism prevalent in the Libyan Pentapolis, describing it as impious and full of blasphemy regarding the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and full of unbelief about His only-begotten Son, the Firstborn of all creation, the Incarnate Word, and displaying want of perception regarding the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup> Here *Firstborn of all creation* appears between *Only-begotten Son* and the *Incarnate Word*, but with no further explanation regarding the basis of the title. Dionysius continued to attack the Sabellians, and in his zeal he used language which left himself open to counter attack. He was reported to his namesake, Dionysius of Rome, as having in his combat against one heresy fallen into another.<sup>134</sup> Dionysius of Rome summoned a synod at Rome in 260, which condemned the suspected teaching, without, however, naming Dionysius of Alexandria. In connection with the decree of the synod, a private letter was sent by Dionysius of Rome to Dionysius of Alexandria, asking for an explanation. Dionysius of Alexandria prepared an extensive reply in four books, entitled *Refutation and Defence*, in which, while admitting some imprudent analogies, he called attention to others which express his true views.<sup>135</sup> Apparently, the reply was considered satisfactory, for no more is heard of the incident, and in the following century St. Athanasius, the champion of orthodoxy against the Arians, defended Dionysius with quotations from this same *Refutation and Defence*.<sup>136</sup>

Dionysius of Rome in his report of the Synod's findings speaks

<sup>132</sup> Bardy, *Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son Ecole*, Paris 1936, p. 46 ff.

<sup>133</sup> *ὁ ἄριστος ἀρεθῶν καὶ βλασφημίας πολλῶν ἔχοντος περὶ τοῦ παντοκράτορος Θεοῦ καὶ πατρὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἀπιστίας τε πολλῆν ἔχοντος περὶ τοῦ μονογενοῦς πατρὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ πρωτοτόκου πάσης κτίσεως, τοῦ ἐνανθροπιάσαντος λόγου, ἀνασθησίαν δὲ τοῦ ἀγίου πνεύματος.* P. L. V, col. 92.

<sup>134</sup> Athanasius, *On the Opinion of Dionysius*, P. G. XXV, col. 500.

<sup>135</sup> Fragments in P. L. V, 118-130; cf. Feltoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-107; *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Buffalo 1886, pp. 92-94.

<sup>136</sup> Athanasius, *op. cit.*, col. 502 ff.

of those who would make the Son a work (*ποίημα*) and asks: "And one may say to them, O reckless men, is He a work, who is the Firstborn of all creation, who is born from the womb before the morning star, who said as Wisdom, 'Before all the hills He begets me'?" Continuing, he states: "And in many passages of the divine oracles is the Son said to have been generated, but nowhere to have come into being; which manifestly convicts those of misconception about the Lord's generation, who presume to call His divine and ineffable generation a making." Previously, he had interpreted the true sense of the Proverbs text (*κύριος ἐκτίσεν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ*) by saying that we must understand *ἐκτίσεν* in this passage as 'He set over the works made by Him,' that is, 'made by the Son Himself.' "*ἐκτίσεν* must not be taken here for *ἐποίησεν*, for *creating* (as used here) differs from *making*."<sup>137</sup> The Firstborn of all creation is then not a creature. It is a title of the pre-incarnate Logos, but whether by reason of His generation from the Father or merely by reason of an appointment in respect to creation is not clear.

The outstanding feature of the third century speculation regarding the Trinity is the eternal generation of the Son as Son. The second century Apologists, while holding the eternity of the Logos as Logos, were inclined to speak of a temporal generation of the Logos into Sonship at the time of and for the purpose of creation. The Logos, who was eternally in the bosom of the Father, comes forth, yet without being separated from the Father, and becomes as it were the firstborn of the creation which the Father will bring into being through Him. Although through the influence of Origen the tendency during the third century and after will be to speak of the eternal generation of the Son, the title Firstborn of all creation will be coupled with the Son's function at creation and not with His generation from the Father. He will be considered as the Only-begotten by reason of His eternal generation from the Father, and Firstborn of all creation by reason of His function in respect to creation.

<sup>137</sup> Athanasius, *De Decretis Nicaenae Synodi*, P. G. XXV, 404-465.

than in his defence of Christianity.<sup>4</sup> The *Divinarum Institutionum Libri VII* is his principal work, and shows the influence of Tertullian regarding the generation of the Son. Like Tertullian, he regards the generation as taking place, not from eternity, but in reference to creation. Thus he writes: "Deus igitur machinator constitutorque rerum . . . antequam praeclarum hoc opus mundi adoriretur, sanctum et incorruptibilem spiritum genuit, quem filium nuncuparet, et quamvis alios postea innumerabiles creavisset, quos angelos dicimus, hunc tamen solum primogenitum divini nominis appellatione dignatus est, patria scilicet virtute ac maiestate pollentem."<sup>5</sup> The Son then according to Lactantius is *Firstborn* by reason of a true generation, and not because of a function.

The Son has two births (bis esse natum, primum in spiritu, postea in carne . . . qui cum esset a principio filius dei, regeneratus est denuo secundum carnem).<sup>6</sup> In His birth according to His divine nature, He was without mother (in prima enim natiuitate spiritali ἀψύχως fuit, quia sine officio matris a solo deo patre generatus est).<sup>7</sup> In His birth according to the flesh, He was without father (in secunda vero carnali ἀψύχως fuit, quoniam sine patris officio virginali utero procreatus est, ut medium inter deum hominemque substantiam genus nostram hanc fragilem inbecillamque naturam quasi manu ad immortalitatem posset educere). It was this Firstborn Son of the Father's nature who came into the world to teach mankind the true religion (sed illum filium suum primogenitum, illum opificem rerum et consiliatorem suum, delabi iussit e caelo, ut religionem sanctam dei transferret ad gentes).<sup>8</sup> For Lactantius as for Tertullian, *primogenitus* was a title belonging to the divinity of Christ by reason of His generation from God the Father.

Although the influence of Origen continued to be felt in the Greek-speaking Orient into the fourth century, some of his views, particularly those concerning the eternity of matter and the pre-

<sup>4</sup> "Utinam tam nostra affirmare potuisset quam facile aliena." Jerome, *Ep.* 58, 10.

<sup>5</sup> *C. S. E. L.* XIX, Pars I, 286, 5 ff.; cf. *ibid.* 129, 8 ff.; Amann, *Lactance*, in *Dict. Théol. Cath.* VIII, 2438.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* 295, 5 ff. <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 316, 16 ff. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 306, 10.

## CHAPTER III

### FOURTH CENTURY

From the death of Origen (255) and of St. Cyprian (258) until the Council of Nicaea (325) is a rather barren one in theological literature not only in the East, but also in the West. Reticus of Autun and Victorinus of Petavio (in Pannonia) were Latin bishops, but their influence was merely local, and their works have survived only in fragments. Arnobius, Lactantius, and the poet Commodianus, who were laymen with a rather meager knowledge of theology, are the chief representatives amongst the Christian Latin authors in the early part of the fourth century.

Regarding our problem of the *Firstborn of every creature*, there is but little to record in these authors. Commodianus has only a line:<sup>1</sup> "Hic est primogenitus per prophetas ante praedictus, ut vocitaretur in terris Altissimi prolis." Earlier in the poem, Commodianus had used Sabellian language, such as: "Hic pater in filio venit, Deus unus ubique Nec pater est dictus, nisi factus filius esset."<sup>2</sup> Like the Sabellians, he confounds the persons of Father and Son. As the Father becomes the Son by reason of the incarnation, for Commodianus the *primogenitus* is the Father incarnate.

Lactantius, most probably African born, was, according to St. Jerome, a pupil of Arnobius at Sicca in Numidia.<sup>3</sup> At the request of Diocletian, he taught rhetoric at Nicomedia in Bithynia, the residence of the emperor. Whether he was converted in Africa before going to Nicomedia is not certain, but when Diocletian began persecuting the Christians in 303, Lactantius lost his position, and was reduced to poverty for many years. Appointed tutor to Crispus by Constantine, Lactantius took up his residence at Trier. The exact date of his death is not known. Appointed tutor Lactantius has been called the Christian Cicero. His language is polished, but he is far more skilful in his attack on heathenism

<sup>1</sup> *Carmen Apologeticum*, verse 665 (*C. S. E. L.* XV, 158).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, verses 276-277, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> *De vir. ill.* 80.

existence of souls, were vigorously opposed. St. Peter, the bishop of Alexandria, and St. Methodius, the bishop of Olympus (both martyred about 311), were the most outspoken in denouncing certain speculative theses of Origen. As far as can be judged from their writings, neither St. Peter nor St. Methodius differed from Origen regarding the generation of the Son of God. There is no reference to *Firstborn* in the fragments of St. Peter,<sup>9</sup> and only a passing reference in St. Methodius.<sup>10</sup>

The attacks on Origen aroused the imprisoned St. Pamphilus of Caesarea, a former pupil of Pierius, to write, in collaboration with Eusebius of Caesarea, a *Defence of Origen*.<sup>11</sup> Only the first book of this treatise has been preserved in a translation by Rufinus. The third chapter gives a series of extracts from the works of Origen regarding his views on the eternal generation and divinity of the Son of God. Amongst these is a passage from Origen's *First Principles*<sup>12</sup> referring to the Son as the primogenitus omnis creaturae by reason of His being the medium or mediator between creatures and God (*superest ut harum omnium creaturarum et Dei, medium, id est mediatorum quæramus, quem Paulus apostolus primogenitum omnis creaturae pronuntiat*).<sup>13</sup> St. Pamphilus gives no comment, but very likely he accepts Origen's interpretation and understands the expression as referring to the function rather than to the nature of the Son.

Although the works of Origen were being keenly scrutinized at this time, it was not his views but those of Arius which were to become the main object of controversy during the greater part of the fourth century. Arius, a priest of Alexandria, was condemned about 320 by Alexander,<sup>14</sup> his bishop, and again by the first oecumenical council of Nicaea<sup>15</sup> in 325, for holding that Christ was a creature, and not the Son of God in the strict sense of the term.<sup>16</sup> The idea was not of Arius's invention. Origen<sup>17</sup> had detected it

<sup>9</sup> *P. G. XVIII, 467-522*; Pitra, *Analecta Sacra* IV, 189, 426.

<sup>10</sup> *Symposium* III, 3 (*G. C. S., Methodius* 29, 21; cf. 30, 20).

<sup>11</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, 33, 4.

<sup>12</sup> II, c. vi, n. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *P. G. XVII, col. 560 A.*

<sup>14</sup> *P. G. VIII, col. 548 ff.*

<sup>15</sup> *P. G. XXVI, col. 773 C.*

<sup>16</sup> Athanasius, *De Synodis* 15-16 (*P. G. XXVI, col. 705-711*).

<sup>17</sup> "Nay, it is a remarkable fact that it was he (Origen) who discovered the heresy outside the Church on its first rise, and actually gave the alarm,

in the preceding century, as had also Pope Dionysius of Rome,<sup>18</sup> and the Council of Antioch,<sup>19</sup> which had condemned Paul of Samosata. Arius, a Libyan, had studied with St. Lucian of Antioch, and it is there that the ideas which developed into the Arian system are generally sought.

St. Lucian<sup>20</sup> was the founder of a school of biblical exegesis at Antioch, which in contrast to the excessive allegorical method of the Alexandrian school, stressed the literal sense. In addition, St. Lucian is credited with a revision of the Septuagint and of the New Testament. As Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia, and other Arian leaders prided themselves on having been his disciples, it is generally thought that St. Lucian must have held views similar to those of Paul of Samosata. He was under excommunication during three episcopates, but seems to have been reconciled some time before his martyrdom in 312.

Arianism took various forms under the stress of controversy, but the fundamental idea always was that Christ was merely a creature, although the first of creatures. The Arians did not deny the pre-existence of Christ before His incarnation. They readily admitted that He was a pre-existent being, in fact the first of beings after God, and that through Him all other beings were created. They conceded Him divine powers, but they denied that He was a divine being by nature.<sup>21</sup>

Now the outstanding tradition from the very beginning of Christianity regarding Christ had always been that He was a divine being by nature. He was no creature adopted into divinity from without, or invested with divine powers, but the very Son of God, begotten from the substance of God the Father. There may have been variations in the explanations regarding the manner of His

sixty years before Arius's day." Newman, *The Arians of the Fourth Century*, London 1913, p. 97; cf. Athanasius, *De Decretis* 27 (*P. G. XXV, col. 465 BC*).

<sup>18</sup> *De Decretis* 26 (*P. G. XXV, col. 461 ff.*); *De Sent. Dionysii* 9 (*P. G. XXV, col. 492 ff.*).

<sup>19</sup> *De Synodis* 43 (*P. G. XXVI, col. 768 C*); Eusebius, *H. E.* VII, 27-30.

<sup>20</sup> Bardy, *Recherches sur Lucien d'Antioche et son école*, Paris 1936, pp. 33-81; Healy, *Lucian of Antioch*, in *Cath. Enc.* IX, 409.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Arius, *Thalia*, quoted by St. Athanasius in *De Synodis* 15 (*P. G. XXVI, col. 705-708*).

generation, and at times inaccurate language even in orthodox circles, but no one doubted the fact. Every Catholic believed that Christ was God in the proper sense of the term, and worshipped Him as God. The Arians then were rightly regarded as heretical innovators, and condemned as such. The conflict with Arianism forced theologians to re-study minutely the question of subordinationism, and the result was the acknowledgment of the perfect equality of the three Divine Persons. The subordinationistic language regarding both the Son and the Holy Spirit, which had plagued theological discussions for more than two centuries, then practically disappeared in orthodox circles.

The Arians, like all other heretics before and since their time, were inclined to make appeals to Scripture in justifying their views. Although most of the Arian writings have perished, we know from the works of St. Athanasius and others what texts were generally advanced by them.<sup>22</sup> Amongst these, it appears that Proverbs VIII:22 and Col. I, 15 held a prominent place. On the basis of these texts, the Arians held that the pre-incarnate Christ was not God by nature, but the first of His creatures, created by Him from nothing before all other creatures, and in turn creating all the rest.

Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria (312-328), acted swiftly and summoned a synod, which condemned the heretical doctrine and excommunicated Arius with his followers. An encyclical letter, written probably by Alexander's secretary, the deacon Athanasius, was sent to the other bishops of the world, notifying them of what had been done.<sup>23</sup> Arius appealed to his former classmate, Eusebius, the bishop of Nicomedia, and Eusebius in turn interested the Emperor Constantine in the controversy.<sup>24</sup> When Alexander refused to yield in a matter of so vital importance,<sup>25</sup> Constantine invited all the bishops of the world to assemble at Nicaea for a general council.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Athanasius, *Adversus Arianos, Oratio I*, n. 37 ff.; II; III (*P. G.* XXVI, col. 88-468); Didymus, *De Trinitate* III, 3 ff. (*P. G.* XXXIX, col. 805 ff.); cf. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christianity*, London 1903, pp. 161-162 and note.

<sup>23</sup> Athanasius, *P. G.* XXV, col. 393 ff.

<sup>24</sup> Theodoret, *H. E.* I, 4-6.

<sup>25</sup> Socrates, *H. E.* I, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Eusebius, *Vita Constantini* III, 6.

Alexander had written personally a long letter about the Arians and their heretical doctrines to his namesake Alexander, bishop of Constantinople. He states that it is an insane thing to think that the Son was made from things which are not, and that there was a time when He was not. Alexander argues subtly that as the Son made all things He must have made time, and so must have been before time. The Arians, in speaking of a time when the Son was not, put time before the Son, and thus made the Scriptures appear to speak falsely in calling the Son the *πρωτόροκος πάσης κτίσεως*.<sup>27</sup> Evidently, Alexander considers the term *πρωτόροκος* in the sense of priority to and exclusion from the class of all created things. Whether he considers it as a term of nature like *μωυγενής* is not clear. As the passage is concerned with the creative function of the Son, *πρωτόροκος πάσης κτίσεως* here probably refers to that function. He who is *μωυγενής* by nature is also *πρωτόροκος πάσης κτίσεως* by reason of His creative function.

The Council of Nicaea met in 325 with the Emperor Constantine in attendance.<sup>28</sup> According to Athanasius, who had accompanied Alexander to the Council, there were 318 bishops present. Pope Sylvester I was represented by two priests. The Acts of the Council, apart from the creed and canons adopted, have been lost, but it is generally believed that Hosius, Bishop of Cordova in Spain, presided. An Arian creed was submitted through Eusebius of Nicomedia, but was torn up by the bishops.<sup>29</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea then presented a creed which may have been the baptismal creed of Caesarea.<sup>30</sup> This creed was used as a basis, but several important changes were made to exclude the possibility of any Arian interpretation. The phrase *πρωτόροκος πάσης κτίσεως* was dropped. The main reason, no doubt, was the heretical interpretation which the Arians tried to fasten to the text in spite of the immediate context which disproved their view. As there were several current orthodox explanations, none could be insisted upon as absolutely traditional, and the bishops who framed the creed

<sup>27</sup> *P. G.* XVIII, col. 557.

<sup>28</sup> Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, St. Louis 1914, II, 32-36; cf. Bethune-Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-170 and notes.

<sup>29</sup> Theodoret, *H. E.* I, 7.

<sup>30</sup> Socrates, *H. E.* I, 8.

in its final form probably felt that the expression, even though scriptural, was too obscure for the creed.

Only two of the bishops present refused to subscribe to the Nicene Creed, and these were promptly exiled with Arius. Were it not for the intrigues of Eusebius of Nicomedia, Arianism probably would have been soon forgotten. Eusebius of Nicomedia conveniently signed the creed, and then became the leader of an unscrupulous group which for the next generation tried to set it aside.<sup>31</sup> Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Marcellus of Ancyra, Hosius of Cordova, and particularly Athanasius, who succeeded Alexander in 328, became the staunchest defenders of Nicene orthodoxy. Marcellus, however, because of some extreme views, became an embarrassment to the Nicene group.<sup>32</sup> There was still another party, led by Eusebius of Caesarea, who looked upon themselves as conservatives between the Nicenes and Arians, and were continually seeking compromising formulas that might satisfy all concerned.<sup>33</sup> Although Eusebius of Caesarea was not an Arian in doctrine,<sup>34</sup> the Arians knew that they could generally depend upon his support. The whole matter became complicated by personal friendships, political and ecclesiastical alignments, and at times doctrinal considerations became rather secondary.

Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340) received his scholarly training from St. Pamphilus, the founder of a magnificent library at Caesarea. During the persecution of 307, he collaborated with the imprisoned Pamphilus on a *Defence of Origen*.<sup>34</sup> Pamphilus was martyred, and Eusebius fled first to Tyre and then to Egypt, where he suffered for the Faith. When the persecution ceased, he returned to Caesarea, and was made bishop of that See. He was an able bishop, and exercised considerable influence, not only in his diocese and in ecclesiastical circles generally, but also on the Emperor Constantine. His Ecclesiastical History is a work of first importance, and he is rightly called the Father of Church History. His friendship, however, with many of the Arian party cast a shadow over his orthodoxy. Unlike the Arians, who held

<sup>31</sup> Gwatkin, *Studies of Arianism*, Cambridge 1900, pp. 75-79.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84-87; cf. Newman, *Select Tracts of Athanasius II*, 196-203.

<sup>33</sup> Gwatkin, *op. cit.*, p. 69, n. 2.

<sup>34</sup> Eusebius, *H. E.* VI, 33, 4.

that the pre-existent Son was by nature a creature, Eusebius believed that He was the true Son of God, begotten of the substance of the Father, and consequently God by nature and not by adoption. There are, it is true, some scattered phrases in his earlier works to which objection has been made, but the general line of his thought is clear. Eusebius always held the Divine Sonship in the strict sense of the term, and in his later works he explicitly condemned the Arian thesis that Christ was a creature.<sup>35</sup>

In respect to the *πρωτότοκος πλάσιος*, it may be said that for Eusebius the expression was always a title of the pre-existent Son. He connects Col. I: 15 with St. John I: 1 and with Proverbs VIII: 22, and interprets all three of the pre-existent Son.<sup>36</sup> Only-begotten and Firstborn occur frequently together, and apparently as titles based on the generation of the Son (*καὶ τῆς τοῦ μονογενοῦς αὐτοῦ καὶ πρωτότοκου γενέσεως*).<sup>37</sup> He protested strongly against Marcellus, Bishop of Ancyra, who interpreted *πρωτότοκος πλάσιος* of the incarnate Son.<sup>38</sup>

Marcellus, a staunch Nicene, had written a book, attacking the views of Asterius, the leading literary light of the Arians. Eusebius felt that Marcellus in his refutation of Asterius had fallen into the older heresy of Sabellius. He spent the remaining years of his life in battling against the Sabellianism of Marcellus, and succeeded in having Marcellus removed from his See in a council held at Constantinople in 336. On the basis of a profession of faith which Marcellus made subsequently, Pope Julius I vindicated Marcellus at Rome in 340, as did also the Council of Sardica in 343, and St. Athanasius remained in communion with him.<sup>39</sup> Eusebius wrote two lengthy treatises against the views of Marcellus, and from the extracts which he quotes, he seems to prove his contention. Marcellus probably fooled his friends. Ultimately, he was discredited.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *De Ecc. Theol.* I, ix (*P. G.* XXIV, col. 840 A); cf. Socrates, *H. E.* II, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Dem. Evang.* V (*P. G.* XXII, col. 348 ff.).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 352 D.

<sup>38</sup> *Contra Marcellum* II, iii (*P. G.* XXIV, col. 800-805).

<sup>39</sup> Athanasius, *Historia Arianorum ad Monachos* 6 (*P. G.* XXV, col. 700-701).

<sup>40</sup> Cayré, *Précis de Patrologie*, Paris 1931, I, p. 320; cf. Epiphanius, *Haer.* 72.

In regard to our question, Eusebius quotes Marcellus as interpreting Col. I: 15 of Christ's humanity (*πρωτότοκος οὐν ἀνάσῃς λέγειν* διὰ τὴν κατὰ σάρκα γένεσιν).<sup>41</sup> He represents Marcellus as saying that the most holy Logos was not the Firstborn of all creation before His incarnation (*οὐ τοῖνον οὐτός ὁ ἀγιοτάτος λόγος πρὸ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως πρωτότοκος ἀνάσῃς κτίσεως ὠνόμαστο*), but became the Firstborn of all creation on becoming the first new man in whom God willed to recapitulate all things (*ἀλλὰ τὸν πρῶτον καὶνὸν ἀνθρώπον, εἰς ὃν τὰ πάντα ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι ἐβουλόθη ὁ Θεός, τοῦτον αἰ θεῖα γραφαὶ πρωτότοκον πάσης ὀνομάζοναι κτίσεως*).<sup>42</sup> In his *De Ecclesiastica Theologia*, Eusebius quotes Col. I: 15-17 again, and says that all this is spoken of the divinity of the Son, Marcellus to the contrary notwithstanding (*ταῦτα γὰρ περὶ τῆς θεότητος τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ μὴ Μαρκέλλω δοκῆ ἔρηται*).<sup>43</sup> Against this new interpretation of Marcellus, Eusebius insisted that the expression was to be taken of the Son's divinity. Although Eusebius is not always very clear on the point, *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* is not based on nature rather than function (*ὁ ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεννηθεὶς τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν μορφῇ ἦρχε Θεοῦ, εἰκὼν τ' ἦν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου καὶ πρωτότοκος ἀπάσης κτίσεως*).

St. Athanasius (296-373) was the ablest and most uncompromising foe of the Arian heresy during this period. He had seen Arianism in its beginnings at Alexandria, and had witnessed its condemnation at the Council of Nicaea in 325. From his accession to the See of Alexandria in 328 until his death in 373, he waged unceasing warfare against the detractors of our Lord's divinity. Five times he was exiled from his See through the machinations of his enemies, but he lived to see the Arian party practically broken, and he died peacefully in his See surrounded by his clergy.

St. Athanasius's contribution to the development of doctrine consisted chiefly in his insistence on the full divinity of the Son. Father and Son were equal in all things in that each possessed individually and completely the one unchangeable Divine Nature.<sup>44</sup> That Jesus Christ was the Son of God in the strict sense of the term was the traditional teaching of the Church from the beginning. Speculation, however, regarding the relation of Father and

<sup>41</sup> *P. G.* XXIV, col. 800 D.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 801 A.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 855 D.

<sup>44</sup> *Oratio c. Arianos* III, 6 (*P. G.* XXVI, col. 332 C).

Son within the Godhead, and other related matters, was not uniform, and the subordinationistic explanations of the Apologists would lead ultimately into the blind alley of heresy. Origen made an advance with the idea of an eternal generation, but he retained much of the subordinationistic language of the Apologists before him. It remained for St. Athanasius to rid theological speculation of subordinationism in regard to the Son.

In respect to our text, St. Athanasius has a long discussion in the *Second Discourse against the Arians*,<sup>45</sup> who used *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* to prove that Christ was merely the first of creatures. He who is the *μωνογενής* cannot be a creature. Christ is both *μωνογενής* and *πρωτότοκος*, but for different reasons, "for the same can not be both only-begotten and firstborn, except in different relations, that is, only-begotten, because of His generation from the Father (*μωνογενής μὲν διὰ τὴν ἐκ πατρὸς γέννησιν*), and firstborn, because of His condescension to the creation and His making the many His brethren (*πρωτότοκος δὲ διὰ τὴν εἰς τὴν κτίσιν συγκατάβασιν, καὶ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἀδελφοποίησιν*)."<sup>46</sup> St. Athanasius thought of a firstborn as the first of a series, forgetting that among the Jews a firstborn was called such from birth, and redeemed before there was any possibility of other brothers and sisters.

According to St. Athanasius, the Son was called Firstborn, not because He was from the Father, but because in Him creation came to be (*οὐ διὰ τὸ ἐκ πατρὸς ἀρα πρωτότοκος ἐκλήθη, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ γεγενῆσθαι τὴν κτίσιν*), and because in Him creation was delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (*ἀπὸ τῆς δουλείας τῆς φθορᾶς εἰς τὴνλευθερίαν τῆς δόξης τῶν τέκνων τοῦ Θεοῦ*).<sup>47</sup> Not only of the original creation, but also of the new creation of redeemed mankind is He the Firstborn. St. Athanasius thus makes the expression refer to Christ's headship of both the original and the renewed creation. In both cases the expression denotes not the nature but the function of the Son.

With this double reference, St. Athanasius combined the interpretations of Origen and Marcellus regarding the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*. Origen had referred the expression to the function of the

<sup>45</sup> *Oratio c. Arianos* II, 62 ff. (*P. G.* XXVI, col. 277 ff.).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 280 A.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 280-281.

Son at creation, while Marcellus referred it to the function of the incarnate Son in the redemption of mankind. St. Athanasius had great admiration for the genius of Origen; however, without accepting all of Origen's views. Marcellus he had befriended for years in spite of the charges against him.

Twenty-five years before St. Athanasius wrote his Discourses against the Arians, Marcellus had written against Asterius. In the extracts of Marcellus quoted by Eusebius is the view that an only-begotten cannot be a firstborn, a view also found in St. Athanasius. In these same extracts is also the view that the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* is to be referred to the incarnate Son, a view which St. Athanasius did not use in his earlier works, written before the Arian controversy. In his *Against the Heathen*, St. Athanasius interprets the expression of the Son's function in creation, and one is tempted to believe that he added the interpretation referring it to the function of the incarnate Son in the redemption referring it influence of his friend Marcellus.

The *Statement of Faith* sometimes ascribed to St. Athanasius most probably is not from his pen.<sup>48</sup> It does, however, belong to this period. The author affirms that St. Paul calls the Son the Firstborn of all creation to show that He is not a creature but the offspring of the Father. All things were created by the Father through the Son, but the Son alone was eternally begotten from the Father (*τὰ γὰρ πάντα ἐκτίσθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ· ὁ δὲ υἱὸς μόνος ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἄιδεως ἐγεννήθη*), hence God the Word is the Firstborn of all creation, unchangeable from the unchangeable (*διὸ πρωτότοκος ἐστὶ πάσης κτίσεως ὁ Θεὸς λόγος, ἀρπεντος ἐξ ἀρπεντος*).<sup>49</sup> Here the expression denotes nature and not function as elsewhere in the works of St. Athanasius, and for this additional reason we are inclined to believe that the *Statement of Faith* is not from his pen. The view expressed is the same as that of St. Justin. The Son is the Firstborn of all creation because of St. Justin. The begotten by the Father before all things.

The three great Cappadocians, St. Basil of Caesarea (330-379), St. Gregory of Nazianzen (328-389), and St. Gregory of Nyssa (335-394), had an important place in the development of Trinitarian doctrine. They helped particularly in formulating the

<sup>48</sup> *P. G.* op. cit. I, p. 338.

<sup>49</sup> *P. G.* XXV, col. 206 A.

theology concerning the Holy Ghost, and in clarifying the distinction between *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις*. Regarding our problem of the Firstborn, we have only St. Gregory of Nyssa to consider, as neither St. Basil nor St. Gregory of Nazianzen used the text.

An Arian bishop named Eunomius had written a book called *Defence*,<sup>50</sup> which St. Basil refuted with his *Against Eunomius*. Eunomius replied with another work entitled *Defence of the Defence*. As St. Basil died in the meantime, St. Gregory of Nyssa, his brother, entered the controversy, and replied to Eunomius in a lengthy work of twelve books. What is generally printed as the second of these books is really another treatise of St. Gregory's, written a few years later, but much of its material is a repetition of the fourth book of the larger work.<sup>51</sup> In both books,<sup>52</sup> St. Gregory discusses four passages of St. Paul where the term *πρωτότοκος* occurs, namely, Col. I: 15, Rom. VIII: 29, Col. I: 18, and Heb. I: 6, concluding that in all these passages *πρωτότοκος* has reference to the incarnate Son as the head of the new creation of redeemed mankind. He maintains that the term Only-begotten cannot be understood with brothers, while the term Firstborn cannot be understood without them (*οὐτε γὰρ μονογενὴς μετὰ ἀδελφῶν ποιεῖται, οὐτε χωρὶς ἀδελφῶν ὁ πρωτότοκος*).<sup>53</sup> He states further that the words of St. John, In the beginning was the Word, refer to the Only-begotten, while the words And the Word was made flesh refer to the Firstborn (*ὅταν μὲν γὰρ εἴπη ὅτι Ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, τοῦτο τὸν μονογενῆ ἐνόησαν· ὅταν δὲ εἴπῃ ὅτι Ὁ λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, διὰ τούτου τὸν πρωτότοκον τῆ διανοίᾳ παρεδέξιμεθα*).<sup>54</sup> According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, Christ is the Firstborn of all creation by becoming in His flesh the head of the new moral creation of grace. In the treatise *On Perfection*, St. Gregory calls Him explicitly the Firstborn of the New Creation (*τῆς καινῆς κτίσεως πρωτότοκον*).<sup>55</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa thus falls in line with Marcellus of Ancyra and St. Athanasius in taking the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* of the incarnate Son.

<sup>50</sup> *P. G.* XXX, col. 835-868.

<sup>51</sup> Cayré, *op. cit.*, p. 415.

<sup>52</sup> *P. G.* XLV, col. 500-505, 632-637.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 500 C; cf. col. 504 D, 637 CD.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 504 D.

<sup>55</sup> *P. G.* XLVI, col. 254.



The unknown author of the work printed in Migne as the fourth and fifth books of St. Basil's *Against Eunomius* was as anti-Arian as St. Gregory of Nyssa, and yet he held that it was not necessary to have brothers in order to be called a firstborn. He pointed out that Christ according to the flesh was the only son of the Virgin Mary, but was also called her firstborn (καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου μόνος γεννηθεὶς, πρωτότοκος αὐτῆς ἔργηται). In the Colossian passage, however, instead of taking πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως as a title denoting nature, he takes it as a title of function in respect to creation. He argues that if Christ is called the *Firstborn of the dead* since He is the cause of the resurrection from the dead, so also is He *εἔργηται, διὰ τὸ αἴτιος εἶναι τῆς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστάσεως, οὕτω καὶ πρωτότοκος κτίσεως, διὰ τὸ αἴτιος εἶναι τοῦ ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγαγεῖν τὴν κτίαν*).<sup>56</sup>

Didymus the Blind (313-398) was the head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria during the last quarter of a century of St. Athanasius's episcopate, and then for almost another quarter of a century. He was an admirer of Origen, but in His Trinitarian views he profited by the ideas of St. Athanasius and of the Cappadocians.<sup>57</sup> His own work on the Trinity was written after 380. In regard to the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, Didymus prefers to interpret the expression of the incarnate Son, although he admits that it could be interpreted of the pre-existent Son; in fact, he suggests several interpretations.<sup>58</sup>

The entire fourth chapter of the third book (*De Trinitate*) is devoted to the problem of Christ as Firstborn. Against the Arians, who held that the title of Firstborn of every creature put Christ into the category of creatures, Didymus quotes the whole passage (Col. I, 12-20) to show that the very context excludes such an interpretation, and then suggests several orthodox explanations. Christ is indeed the Only-begotten, because in His divine nature He has no brother (οὐκ μονογενὴς μὲν, ἄτε οὐκ ἔχων κατὰ τὴν αἰὼν ἀββέυστον γέννησιν ἕτερον παρ' αὐτὸν κατὰ φύσιν ἀδελφόν).<sup>59</sup> He is

<sup>56</sup> P. G. XXXIX, col. 701.

<sup>57</sup> Chapman, *Didymus*, in *Cath. Enc.* IV, 784; Bardy, *Didyme l'Abéugle*, Paris 1910, pp. 73-109.

<sup>58</sup> *De Trinitate* III, c. iv (P. G. XXXIX, col. 828-840).

<sup>59</sup> P. G. XXXIX, col. 829 D.

the Firstborn of every creature, not because He was created first, for then He would be called First-created (πρωτόκοκος δὲ πάσης κτίσεως, οὐ διὰ τὸ προεκτίσθαι αὐτῆς, ἐπεὶ ἂν πρωτόκτιστος ἐκλήθη), but because He was born, as it were in the (divine) foreknowledge, of the holy Virgin before everything created (ὡς τῆς προγνώσεως . . . πρὸ παντὸς δημιουργήματος ἀπὸ τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου τεχθεὶς). He became the πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως when He decreed to save mankind, in His goodness proposing to repair the ancient failure and to make us worthy of participating eternally in heavenly bliss (διὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ ἀγαθότητα ὁ Σωτὴρ τὴν παλαιὰν ἡμῶν ἀμείψαι κακοπραγίαν, καὶ ἐξῴσαι ἡμᾶς διαωνίως ἀπολαύειν τῆς τοῦ αἰὼν ἀπόου φωτὸς μετουσίως προβέμενος, πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως ἐγένετο).<sup>60</sup> In the preceding chapter, where he considers Proverbs VIII:22 (κύριος ἐκτίσέ με ἄρχῃν ὁδῶν αἰῶν) in reference to the Divine Foreknowledge, he speaks of salvation as having been pre-determined before the ages (ὡρηθῆριον πρᾶγμα πρὸ αἰῶνων τῆ θεῆς προγνώσεως ἐγένετο).<sup>61</sup> St. Paul had written to the Ephesians that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world (ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἑαυτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου), and predestined for adoption (προορίσας ἡμᾶς εἰς υἰοθεσίαν).<sup>62</sup> To Timothy he had written in a similar manner, saying that we were saved, not according to our works, but according to God's design and the grace given us in Christ Jesus before time began (ὡς κατὰ τὰ ἔργα ἡμῶν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ ἰδίαν πρόθεσιν καὶ χάριν, τὴν δωθεῖσαν ἡμῖν ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ πρὸ χρόνων αἰώνων).<sup>63</sup> Didymus, however, feels that the interpretation of Proverbs VIII:22 in reference to the decree of the Divine Foreknowledge before creation is a forced one (ὥστε καὶ βεβαίαν ἐδόχῃν τὸν γενόμενον σύμμορφον τῆ ἀβθρωπότητι, τῷ

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 832 AB; καὶ ὁ προγνωστικῶς συνῶντα καὶ συνδιαρτίβοντα πρὸ αἰῶνων τῷ ἑαυτοῦ πατρὶ (Semi-Arian Creed called Macrosthich in Athanasius, *De Synodis* XXVI, 5, P. G. XXVI, 732 B); cf. Eusebius, *Contra Marc.* I, 2, P. G. XXIV, 737 B; cf. *Letter to Paul of Samosata* (Routh, *Rel. Sacr.* III, 290; Labbe-Cossart, *Sacr. Conc.* I, 845; τούτων δὲ τὸν υἱὸν γεννηθῆναι, μονογενῆ υἱὸν, εἰκόνα τοῦ ἀοράτου Θεοῦ τυγχάνοντα, πρωτότοκον πάσης κτίσεως, σοφίαν καὶ λόγον καὶ δόναμα Θεοῦ, πρὸ αἰῶνων ὄντα, οὐ προγνώσει, ἀλλ' οὐσιᾶ καὶ υφουσίᾳ Θεοῦ, Θεοῦ υἱόν. Regarding the authenticity of this letter, cf. Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. I, 1, Paris 1907, p. 200, n. 4; Bardy, *Paul de Samosate*, in *Dict. Théol. Cath.* XII, 46-51).

<sup>61</sup> P. G. XXXIX, col. 820 B.

<sup>62</sup> *Ephesians* I, 4-5.

<sup>63</sup> *I Timothy* I, 8-10.

γάρ τῆς θείας προγένεως ὄντι πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως ἐγένετο οὗτος).<sup>64</sup> Although he does not say the same of the Colossian text (I, 15), he does offer a better interpretation (ἄμεινον), suggesting that Christ could be called the *Firstborn of every creature* because of those who in sacred baptism are born of God through adoption by the Holy Spirit (ὅτι πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως οὐνόμαστα, διὰ τοῖς γεννωμένους).<sup>65</sup> Both interpretations have reference to the incarnation and redemption; the first, from the standpoint of the divine standpoint pre-determined before creation, the other, from the standpoint of salvation as realized.

For those who would prefer to take *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* as a title connected with the divinity rather than with the humanity of Christ, Didymus suggests three interpretations. Christ may be called the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* because He was generated before every created generation (ἢ ὡς πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως γεννήσεως γεννηθείς). This is the interpretation of St. Justin and others, and the title is considered as denoting nature. He may also be called *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* because as the first and only Logos Son who produced all things from nothing He is the cause of all (ἢ ὡς πρῶτος καὶ μόνος ὡς λόγος παρακομίνας καὶ τεκτονάμενος ἐκ μηδέντων πάντων προσηγομένην κτίσεως κτίων, καὶ αἴτιος πάσης ὄν). This interpretation denotes the function of the Son in creation. Then again He may be given this title because He is the foundation supporting all things by the word of His power (εἶτα καὶ θεμέλιος φέρων αἰτήν τῆ ρήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ).<sup>66</sup> This interpretation also indicates a function, namely that of the conservation of what has been created.

Didymus also considers the other *πρωτότοκος* titles, and although he allows each its individual shade of meaning, he seems to prefer taking them all in reference to the incarnation. Christ is both *μονογενὴς* and *πρωτότοκος*, but the title *πρωτότοκος* fits Him better in reference to the incarnation (ἀρμάξει δὲ μάλλον αὐτῷ πρὸς τὴν οἰκονομίαν ἢ τοῦ πρωτότοκος λέξις).<sup>67</sup> Creatures are called the sons of God, by grace and not by virtue (κτιστοὶ, ὡς ἐκλήθημεν τοῦ Θεοῦ, κατὰ χάριν, οὐ κατὰ φύσιν). In a similar way, the Only-begotten of God, when He came on earth and became our salvation, is called

<sup>64</sup> P. G. XXXIX, col. 821 D.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 833 B.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 833 C.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 836 C.

our brother and Firstborn, not because of the nature which He has from the Father, but according to His flesh, which is from the Virgin and similar to hers (ἀδελφὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πρωτότοκος ἐκλήθη, οὐ κατὰ τὴν ἐκ Πατρὸς φύσιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου καὶ κατὰ τὴν παρθένον σάρκασιν αὐτοῦ).<sup>68</sup>

St. Cyril of Jerusalem (313-386) became bishop of Jerusalem about 348. He is generally considered as orthodox in his views on the Trinity,<sup>69</sup> even though he used the ambiguous semi-Arian formula "like the Father in all things" (ὡς τὸν πατέρα ἐν πᾶσιν ὁμοίως τῷ γεννηκῶτι)<sup>70</sup> in place of the Nicene ὁμοούσιος. It must be remembered that Cyril like Eusebius and other bishops of Palestine and Syria knew that ὁμοούσιος had been rejected at Antioch in 268 although in another sense,<sup>71</sup> and the term still connoted Sabellianism to their minds. St. Cyril, however, acknowledged the ὁμοούσιος in 381 at the Council of Constantinople.<sup>72</sup> In his Catechetical Lectures delivered in the Basilica of the Resurrection perhaps the same year in which he became bishop, St. Cyril emphasizes again and again that Christ was the Son of God by nature and not by adoption (ὡς τῶν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐστὶ φύσει, καὶ οὐ θέσει, γεννηθείς ἐκ πατρὸς).<sup>73</sup> He is an only-begotten son because in the dignity of the Godhead and in His generation from the Father, He has no brother (μονογενὴς ὅτι εἰς τὸ τῆς Θεότητος ἀξίωμα καὶ τὴν ἐκ πατρὸς γέννησιν ἀδελφὸν οὐκ ἔχει). He is a firstborn, but not like the firstborn of men who have other brothers also (καὶ πρωτότοκον ὁμοίως ἀκούων μὴ νομίσης εἶναι κατὰ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους. οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ἀνθρώποις πρωτότοκοι καὶ ἄλλους ἔχουσιν ἀδελφοὺς).<sup>74</sup> For St. Cyril, the term *πρωτότοκος* as applied to the pre-existent Son denotes nature and not function.<sup>75</sup>

St. Epiphanius (315-403) had been the head of a monastery near Eleutheropolis in Palestine for many years before becoming the bishop of Constantia in the Island of Cyprus. He attained a

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 840 A.

<sup>69</sup> Lebon, *S. Cyrille de Jerusalem et l'arianisme*, in *Rev. Hist. Eocl.*, 1924, pp. 385-386.

<sup>70</sup> P. G. XXXIII, col. 696 B; cf. Socrates, *H. E.* V, 8; Fortescue, *The Greek Fathers*, London 1908, p. 156.

<sup>71</sup> Athanasius, *De Synodis* 45 (P. G. XXVI, col. 772 D).

<sup>72</sup> Socrates, *H. E.* V, 8.

<sup>73</sup> P. G. XXXIII, col. 697 B.

reputation for sanctity even during his lifetime. His knowledge of languages and vast reading made him one of the most erudite men of his time. He became a kind of specialist in the refutation of heresy, and wrote two treatises on the subject.<sup>76</sup> Not being critically gifted in evaluating the ideas of others, he became more and more inclined to see mountains of heresy in the mere opinions and unintentional errors of others.<sup>77</sup> His works have a value, however, not so much in his refutation as in the documents he quotes. Origenism became almost an obsession with him, and although he was already 78 years old, he came to Jerusalem and carried on an aggressive campaign against its bishop, and unfortunately ruptured the long friendship of St. Jerome and Rufinus.<sup>78</sup> Ten years later, St. Epiphanius was egged on by the wily Theophilus of Alexandria to undertake a similar campaign in Constantinople against the supposed Origenism of St. John Chrysostom. He was not long in Constantinople before he realized his mistake, and that Theophilus was using him as a tool for his own purposes. Without waiting for the synod which was to take place shortly at the Oak, St. Epiphanius sailed for Cyprus and died at sea in his eighty-ninth year.

St. Epiphanius held that one need not be disturbed if the Only-begotten Son is called the *Firstborn of every creature* (εἰ δὲ ἐραδίη πρωτότοκος ἐστὶ πάσης κτίσεως ὁ μονογενῆς, μὴ θρηνηθῶν).<sup>79</sup> He was thus called by the Apostle, not because of any connection with creation, but because of His generation before creation (οὗτος γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ παρὰ τῷ ἀποστόλῳ εἰρημένος πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, μὴ συνημμένος τῇ κτίσει, ἀλλὰ πρὸ κτίσεως γεννημένος).<sup>80</sup> Being truly the Firstborn of the Father on high before every creature, He is called Firstborn, not that there were others begotten after Him by the Father, for as the Only-begotten He had no brother (ὁ γὰρ πρωτότοκος ὢν ἀληθῶς Πατὴρ ἄνω πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως, οὐκ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἄλλου μετ' αὐτὸν ἐκ Πατρὸς γεννηθῆναι λέγεται πρωτότοκος· οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν αὐτῷ ἀδελφὸς δεύτερος, διότι μονογενῆς).<sup>81</sup> St. Epiphanius thus takes πρωτότοκος in the strict sense, as a term denoting nature

<sup>76</sup> *Anchoretatus* (P. G. XLIII, 17-236); *Adversus Haereses* (P. G. XLII, XLIII).

<sup>77</sup> Tixeront, *Handbook of Patrology*, St. Louis 1923, p. 193.

<sup>78</sup> Jerome, *Adv. Rufinum* III, 6.

<sup>79</sup> P. G. XLII, col. 725 D.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 728 A.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 733 A.

rather than function. The relation to creation in the expression is merely one of priority. Because of His generation from the Father, He is both Firstborn and Only-begotten. He is the Son of the living God, truly begotten of the Father, without beginning and apart from time (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ζῶντος, τὸν ὄντος ὄντα ἐκ Πατρὸς γεννημένον ἀπάχως καὶ ἀχροῦς). Having been begotten in a manner beyond comprehension and without defilement, He is one essence with the Father (γεννημένον δὲ ἀκαταλήπτως καὶ ἀχροῦς, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρὶ ὄντα).<sup>82</sup>

Returning to the Latin writers, we find little on our subject, even in the works of St. Hilary of Poitiers, and of St. Ambrose of Milan. Arianism was an eastern heresy, and most of the literature about it was in Greek, a language no longer widely understood in the Latin West. Arianism, however, did gradually filter into the West, and it was helped politically when Constantius, who favored the Arian parties, gained power over the West.<sup>83</sup>

St. Hilary (315-368) became bishop of Poitiers about 350. He had been baptized only a few years before, and he tells us himself that he had been a bishop for some time before even hearing of the Nicene Creed.<sup>84</sup> When Arian difficulties broke out in the West, St. Hilary sided against the Arianizing parties, and was promptly exiled by Constantius to the East. During his three years of exile he made himself more familiar with the Arian controversy, and wrote his work *De Trinitate* as a refutation of it.<sup>85</sup> As the Arians found him too influential in the East, Constantius allowed him to return to Poitiers.

Regarding our problem, St. Hilary, after quoting Col. I, 15-17, says among other things: "Primo genitus itaque omnis creaturae est, quia in ipso creata omnia sunt . . . primogenitus quoque omnis creaturae est, continens in se universitatis exordium."<sup>86</sup> The same view is expressed in the fragments which remain of an historical work: "idcirco primogenitus omnis creaturae, quia in eodem, jam

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 704 A.

<sup>83</sup> Gwatkin, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>84</sup> "Regeneratus pridem, et in episcopatu aliquantisper manens, fidei Nicaenam nunquam nisi exsulatarus audivi." *De Synodis* 91 (P. L. X, col. 545 A).

<sup>85</sup> *De Trin.* I, 17 (P. L. X, col. 37).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.* VIII, 49-50 (P. L. X, col. 272-274).

a principio, omnium quae effecturus erat, omnia generationum initia constituerunt. Atque non ita in ordine creaturarum, quae in ordine constitutae sunt, primus in numero est; sed ipse imago Dei invisibilis, manens per virtutem efficiendi semper in ipso, se primogenitum habuerit eorum, quae per ipsum in coelo et in terra visibilia et invisibilia crearentur exstantia.”<sup>87</sup> St. Hilary thus takes the primogenitus as a title of the pre-existent Son of God in respect to His function in creation.

Marius Victorinus, an African Rhetorician, who was converted about 355, wrote his *Adversus Arium libri IV* about 359, in which he attempts to refute the Arians by means of the Neo-platonic philosophy.<sup>88</sup> Regarding the *primogenitus omnis creaturae*, however, he offers no new interpretation. The Son is called *primogenitus* and not *creatus ante omnem creaturam*.<sup>89</sup> If He had been created, He would not be spoken of as being before every creature (si enim et ipse creatus esset, non diceret ante omnem creaturam). He is begotten as Son (ergo hic genitus ut filius), nor is there any other begotten after him (non autem quod et alium postea genuit). He who is born of Mary (qui natus est ex Maria) existed before He was born of her (erat et ante quam ex Maria). As the image of God, He is the image from eternity (imago enim Dei ab aeterno imago). He then argues as follows: Quis primogenitus? Filius. Quis filius? Filius qui ex Maria. Quis filius ex Maria? primogenitus totius creaturae. Quis totius creaturae primogenitus? qui creaturam imaginem Dei. . . . Ex iis manifestum esse ante omnem redemit nos per sanguinem suum, qui de Maria filius est, et ipse imago est Dei; Dei est filius: si enim totius creaturae primogenitus, necessario filius, numquid alius? Absit: unigenitus enim Dei est et eum qui de Maria. Quomodo enim imago Dei filius, si non primogenitus totius creaturae? Et quomodo imago Dei, qui filius de Maria post omnia facta nata est? Manifestum ergo, quod ipse primogenitus. Quid vero quod natum est de Maria? non creatura est: sed si filius Dei, imago Dei ante omnem creaturam natus est,

<sup>87</sup> *Fragmentum II*, 29-30 (P. L. X, col. 655-656); cf. *Tract. in II Psalm.* (P. L. IX, col. 278).

<sup>88</sup> Cayré, *op. cit.*, I, p. 321.

<sup>89</sup> P. L. VIII, col. 1058 B.

ipse est in eo, qui de Maria natus est. Manifestum igitur quod ipse unigenitus.”<sup>90</sup> Thus, for Marius Victorinus, Christ is both *primogenitus* and *unigenitus* by reason of His generation from the Father, and *primogenitus* is taken in the strict sense as a title denoting nature rather than function.

St. Ambrose (333-397), while still only a catechumen, was chosen in 374 to succeed Auxentius in the See of Milan.<sup>91</sup> He had a fruitful ministry, exercising a wholesome influence in Church and State. St. Augustine of Hippo was his most famous convert. Among his extensive literary labors is a treatise *De Fide* in five books, based largely on the works of St. Athanasius, St. Basil, and Didymus. Regarding the primogenitus, St. Ambrose writes: “Apostolus dicit imaginem Patris Christum esse; ait enim quod ipse sit imago Dei invisibilis, primogenitus omnis creaturae. Primogenitus, inquit, non primocreatus; ut et genitus pro natura, et primus pro perpetuitate credatur.”<sup>92</sup> St. Ambrose thus also takes the expression as a title of the pre-existent Son in respect to His generation from the Father and priority to everything created. The Son is both Firstborn and Only-begotten—Firstborn, because there was no one before Him, and Only-begotten because there was no one after Him (primogenitum quia nemo ante ipsum; unigenitum, quia nemo post ipsum).<sup>93</sup>

The Commentary on Thirteen Epistles of St. Paul, ascribed to an unknown Ambrosiaster, and written about 370, likewise takes the expression as a title of nature. The comment on primogenitus universae creaturae reads: “Ante omnem creaturam, genitum Filium non creatum, testatur; ut secerneret nativitatem ejus a creaturae factura.”<sup>94</sup>

Toward the end of the fourth century, the Church in both the East and the West was blessed with a galaxy of authors, many of whom had already attained distinction, but as their best work matured in the beginning of the following century, we shall postpone their treatment to the next chapter. On summarizing the

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 1067-1068.

<sup>91</sup> Paulinus, *Vita Ambrosii* (P. L. XIV, 6).

<sup>92</sup> *De Fide ad Gratianum Augustum I*, 48 (P. L. XVI, col. 538 C).

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 549.

<sup>94</sup> P. L. XVII, col. 425.

fourth century regarding the interpretation of the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, we find that the main tendency in Catholic circles was to shift the title from the pre-existent to the incarnate Logos. The Arians were interpreting the expression of the pre-existent Logos, but in such a way as to reduce the pre-existent Logos to the status of a created being. They connected the expression with Proverbs VIII: 22 (*καπιος ἐκτίσέ με ἐρχίνω*), and concluded that the pre-existent Logos was simply the first of creatures, unlike other creatures indeed in that He was endowed by God with certain creative powers, yet fundamentally only a creature, since He possessed a created and not a divine nature. Marcellus, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa and others apparently thought that they had cut the Arian argument at the root by transferring the title to the incarnate Logos. Didymus advanced still another interpretation, basing the title in God's Foreknowledge and Predestination of Christ's incarnation for the redemption of the human race.<sup>55</sup> There were others, however, who continued to interpret the expression of the pre-existent Logos, either as a title of nature, or of function in reference to the creation and conservation of the world. There was no uniformity of interpretation, and evidently no appeal to any traditional view.

<sup>55</sup> Scotists and others also interpret this text from the standpoint of Predestination, but with another implication. "Ergo est primogenitus in productionis creaturarum. . . Ipse est prima creatura praecedit decretum adeoque licet homo non peccasset, nihilominus Verbum divinum carnem induisset." *Collectanea Franciscana IV*, p. 551; cf. *Antonianum XI*, p. 25.

## CHAPTER IV

## FIFTH CENTURY

The Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century gave way to the Christological controversies of the fifth. As the problems concerning the divinity of the Son reached a solution, attention was turned to His humanity, and the questions arising concerning the two natures in the hypostatic union. As early as 360 there were already two extreme views attracting attention.<sup>1</sup>

Diodorus of Tarsus (330-392), the head of a monastery school in Antioch before his appointment to the See of Tarsus in 378, had laid such stress on the perfect humanity of Christ that there seemed to be two persons in Christ. In opposition to him, Apollinaris of Laodicea (310-390) held that the humanity of Christ consisted of a body and a sentient soul, with the Logos taking the place of the rational soul. A synod held at Rome in 377 under Pope Damasus condemned the view of Apollinaris. The sentence was promulgated by various Oriental synods,<sup>2</sup> and in 381 by the General Council of Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> The error of Diodorus was not so apparent, and he died, esteemed for both his virtue and his learning.

The views of Diodorus were developed by Theodore of Mopsuestia, who likewise escaped condemnation during his own lifetime.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 428, when Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople, became involved in the *θεωρώκος* controversy, that the heretical character of these views became apparent. The great champion of orthodoxy against Nestorius was St. Cyril, the Patriarch of Alexandria, who traced the error to Diodorus and Theodore.<sup>5</sup> Nestorius was condemned in 430 by Pope Celestine I,<sup>6</sup> and in the following year by the General Council of Ephesus.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tixeront, *History of Dogmas*, vol. II, 94 ff.; vol. III, 10 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Rufinus, *H. E.* II, 20 (*P. L.* XIII, 353); cf. Denzinger, *Ench.* #65; *P. L.*

XIII, 352, 371.

<sup>3</sup> Canon I; cf. Denzinger, *Ench.* #85.

<sup>4</sup> Theodore of Mopsuestia was condemned by the Fifth General Council

(II Constantinople) in 553; cf. Canon 12 (Denzinger, #224).

<sup>5</sup> *Epistula LXVII* (*P. G.* LXXVII, 335 B); cf. *P. G.* LXXXVI, 1437-1452).

<sup>6</sup> Mansi, IV, 1017, 1025, 1036, 1047, 1292.

<sup>7</sup> Mansi, IV, 1471; Denzinger, #127.

Regarding the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, there is less to record than in the preceding century, when the Arians were using the expression in support of their views. It does not enter directly into any of the Christological theories current at this time. There are, however, some new interpretations.

Theodore of Mopsuestia (330-428) had come to the school of Diodorus at Antioch at the suggestion of St. John Chrysostom. Ordained in 383, Theodore acquired a reputation almost immediately at Antioch as a forceful controversialist against the Arians, Eunomians, and Apollinarians. Rufinus, Theodore, and John of Antioch were his disciples at this time. In 392 he became Bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. The faithful protested his denial of the *Θεοόροκος*, and he made a public retraction. Whether Nestorius was ever his disciple is not certain, but it is known that Nestorius stayed with Theodore when on his way to Constantinople in 428. Shortly afterwards, Nestorius became involved in the *θεοόροκος* controversy, and expressed views similar to those of Theodore.

In the fragments which remain of a commentary on Colossians,<sup>8</sup> Theodore interprets the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* as a title of dignity. He states that *πρωτότοκος* is used frequently to indicate not only time, but also pre-eminence in dignity (*τὸ, πρωτότοκος, οὐκ ἐστὶ χροῖον λέγεται μόνον, ἀλλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἐπὶ προτιμῆσεως παλλακίς*), and he quotes Psalm LXXXVIII, 27-28, Hebrews XII, 25, and Exod. IV, 22. The *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* then should be interpreted as if St. Paul had written "honored above all the creation" (*ἀντὶ τοῦ παρὰ πάντων τῆν κτίσιν τιμώμενος*).

St. John Chrysostom (344-407) was a friend and fellow-student of Theodore's, first with the rhetorician Libanius and then with Diodorus. Flavian ordained him in 386, and entrusted him with the preaching in Antioch. He was a gifted orator, inclined to the practical rather than to the speculative, and to avoid theological disputes. In 398, he was made Patriarch of Constantinople. His brief episcopate was filled with troubles, and he died in 407, worn out by the hardships of his three years of exile.

In his third homily on Colossians, St. John Chrysostom comments on Col. I, 15-18. Against those who would infer from *Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* that the Son was a creature, he points

<sup>8</sup> P. G. LXVI, 927-928.

out that St. Paul did not say First-created, but Firstborn (*καὶ μὴν οὐ πρωτόκτιστος, εἶπεν, ἀλλὰ πρωτότοκος*). Firstborn does not express dignity and honor but time only (*τὸ γὰρ πρωτότοκος οὐχὲ ἀξίας καὶ τιμῆς, ἀλλὰ χρόνου ἐστὶ σηματικόν*).<sup>9</sup> This seems to be in opposition to his friend, Theodore of Mopsuestia, who had interpreted the expression as one mainly of honor and dignity. A few lines further on, in commenting on the *πρωτότοκος* in this connection and Chrysostom asks the meaning of *πρωτότοκος* in this connection and answers: "Who was created first or rose before all; as in the former place it means, 'Who was before all things.'" (*ὁ πρόωτος κτισθεὶς ἢ πρὸ πάντων ἀναστὰς, ὡσπερ καὶ ἐκεῖ ὁ πρὸ πάντων ὤν*). The *ἐκεῖ* points back to the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* as being "the one who is before all" (*ὁ πρὸ πάντων ὤν*). This again is simply the idea of priority. Chrysostom, however, takes *πρωτότοκος* also in the sense of a foundation to sustain creation (*οὕτω καὶ τὸ, πρωτότοκος, ὡς Θεμέλιος λέγεται. Τοῦτο δὲ οὐ τὸ ὁμοούσιον τῶν κτισμάτων, ἀλλὰ τὸ δ' αὐτοῦ πάντα εἶναι, καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ δηλοῦν*).<sup>10</sup> This same idea of foundation appears also in his sixth homily on Ephesians (*καὶ πρωτότοκος φησὶ, πάσης κτίσεως· τούτῃσι, πάντα αὐτὸς διαβασιλεύει*).<sup>11</sup> According to this interpretation, *πρωτότοκος* is a title based on function in reference to creation, and not on origin by generation.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (?-444) accompanied his uncle, Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria, to the Synod of the Oak, which deposed St. John Chrysostom in 403 from the See of Constantinople. Theophilus was succeeded by St. Cyril in 412. Under the influence of St. Isidore of Pelusium, in whose monastery St. Cyril had been a monk for a time, St. Cyril restored the name of St. John Chrysostom to the diptychs of Alexandria in 417.

When Nestorius became the Patriarch of Constantinople in 428, and began disseminating the teachings of Diodorus of Tarsus and of Theodore of Mopsuestia, St. Cyril rose up as the champion of orthodoxy, as St. Athanasius had done a hundred years previously against the Arians. Both St. Cyril and Nestorius appealed to Pope Celestine I, who pronounced against Nestorius in 430, as did also the General Council held at Ephesus in the following year.

St. Cyril is generally regarded as the greatest of the Greek theologians. What St. Augustine was amongst the Latins of the

<sup>9</sup> P. G. XLII, 318.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 320.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 44.

same period, St. Cyril was amongst the Greeks. There were indeed "giants in those days."<sup>12</sup> Though somewhat verbose and inelegant in his writing, St. Cyril was penetrating in thought. His best work is concerned with the person and natures of Christ.

Regarding our problem, he follows in the footsteps of Marcellus, St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and Didymus, in taking *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* of the incarnate Christ. In his *Thesaurus* on the Trinity, he has a long chapter on the question, beginning by considering the objection that Christ would not have been called the Firstborn of every creature if He were not a creature (*εἰ μὴ κτίσμα . . . οὐκ ἂν ἐκλήθη πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*).<sup>13</sup> The Scriptures call Christ both Only-begotten and Firstborn. He is Only-begotten, since He is the Logos of the Father, the one and only Son of God (*μονογενῆς . . . καθὸ λόγος ἐστὶν ἐκ πατρὸς . . . εἰς γὰρ καὶ μόνος ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ*). He is Firstborn, since it was decreed that there be many sons of God according to grace (*πρωτότοκος, ὅτε πολλοὺς κατὰ χάριν υἱοὺς ἀπέδειξε Θεοῦ*). He is the God from God, and Light from Light (*ἐστὶ τοῦτον μονογενῆς μὲν κατὰ φύσιν . . . μόνος ὢν ἐκ πατρὸς, Θεὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός*). He is Firstborn because of us (*πρωτότοκος δὲ δι' ἡμᾶς*). He is called Firstborn of every creature, not because He is the first of creatures in point of time or of the same essence with them, but because of His condescension to creatures and of His similarity with us (*πρωτότοκος πάσης καλεῖται κτίσεως, οὐχ ὡς πῶτος αὐτῆς κατὰ χρόνον ὑπάρχων, οὐδὲ τῆς αὐτῆς τοῖς κτίσμασιν ὑπάρχων οὐσίας, ἀλλὰ καθάπερ . . . διὰ τὴν πρὸς τὰ κτίσματα συγκατάβασιν, καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἡμᾶς ὁμοίωσιν*).<sup>14</sup>

In the First Dialogue on the Trinity, St. Cyril speaks in much the same way. Christ is Only-begotten and Logos because of His generation and birth from the Father, but Firstborn when He became man (*μονογενῆς μὲν καὶ λόγος, ὡς ἐκ Θεοῦ Πατρὸς ἀναφῆς καὶ γεννημένος, πρωτότοκος δὲ αὐτῷ ὅτε γέγονεν ἀνθρώπος*). The title of Only-begotten is proper to Christ as Logos (*ὄνομα τὸ μονογενῆς, ἴδιον δὲ τοῦ λόγου*), but the title of Firstborn became His only with the flesh (*τὸ πρωτότοκος, αὐτοῦ κυρίως οὐχ ὄν, γέγονεν ἴδιον αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῆς σαρκός*).<sup>15</sup> St. Cyril thus restricts the title to the incarnate Son.

<sup>12</sup> *Genesis* VI. 4.

<sup>13</sup> *P. G. LXXV*, 401 C.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 404 A.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 693 B.

St. Isidore of Pelusium (?-440?), a priest and abbot of a monastery in the eastern part of the Nile delta, is known chiefly through a collection of more than two thousand letters,<sup>16</sup> many of which are concerned with religious topics. Most probably he was an Alexandrian by birth, but trained in the school of Antioch. He was a great admirer of St. John Chrysostom, and may have been his disciple at Antioch. St. Cyril of Alexandria was for a time a monk at Pelusium, and St. Isidore ever regarded him as his spiritual son, writing letters of admonition to him even after St. Cyril had become the Patriarch of Alexandria.<sup>17</sup> St. Isidore was an able theologian and exegete.

In a letter to a certain Ophelius, a grammarian, St. Isidore proposes what he realizes may seem to some a new interpretation of the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* (*εἰ καὶ δόξαμί τισι καινοτέρων ἔργων, ἡ βίαις ἀνατέμεναι ὀδόν*).<sup>18</sup> He points out that if the second syllable is accented (*πρωτότοκος*), the word has reference to one who was born first (*εἰ μὲν ἡ δευτέρα ἐξήνοιτο συλλαβὴ, τὸν τεχθέντα πρῶτον*). If, however, the penultima is accented, the reference is to one who begets or brings forth for the first time (*εἰ δ' ἡ παρεσχάτη, τὸν πρῶτος τεκόντα μνησεί*). This active meaning of *πρωτότοκος* is familiar to readers of Homer, and St. Isidore conjectures that St. Paul may have had it in mind when he wrote *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*. The expression does not mean that Christ was the first of creatures to be created (*οὐ πρῶτον τῆς κτίσεως αὐτὸν ἐκτίσθαι*), but that He was the first to beget or bear them, that is, to create them (*ἀλλὰ πρῶτον τεκόνται, τούτῳ, πεποιημένα τὴν κτίσιν*). This interpretation is practically the same as that which considers the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* as a title based on the function of the Son in reference to creation, and this function is expressed figuratively in terms of generation.

Theodoret of Cyrus (393-457), born and trained in Antioch, was a monk in a monastery at Nicerte for several years when in 423 he was made bishop of Cyrus, a difficult See about sixty miles north of Antioch. John and Nestorius, who were destined to become the Patriarchs of Antioch and Constantinople, respectively, were his contemporaries and friends at Antioch. Theodoret was

<sup>16</sup> *P. G. LXXVIII*, 177-1646.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* 749 CD.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 197, 361, 369, 565.

a learned and zealous bishop, also an orator of note, who was invited year after year to preach courses of sermons in Antioch.

When Nestorius was condemned by Pope Celestine in 430, Theodoret advised him to submit, but when St. Cyril of Alexandria issued his twelve anathemas against Nestorius, Theodoret, believing that the anathemas contained the old heresy of Apollinaris, entered the fight himself.<sup>19</sup> At the General Council of Ephesus, Theodoret was on the side of John of Antioch against St. Cyril of Alexandria. Although the primary object of the Council was to promulgate solemnly the condemnation pronounced against Nestorius by Pope Celestine,<sup>20</sup> the Council became also a struggle between the two rival patriarchs and the schools of thought which they represented.<sup>21</sup>

Theodoret refused to condemn Nestorius, and wrote a long treatise in five books (now lost) against the Council and St. Cyril.<sup>22</sup> Peace was effected between the two patriarchs in 435 with a formula of union, which is supposed to have been drawn up by Theodoret, but Theodoret himself did not join until two years later, and then without condemning Nestorius, or subscribing to the anathemas of St. Cyril. In 438, Theodoret defended the memory of Theodore of Mopsuestia against the attacks of St. Cyril, who had traced the Nestorian heresy to his works.<sup>23</sup> It is to Theodoret's credit, however, that he detected and fought the monophysite heresy of Eutyches when it arose.<sup>24</sup>

In 449, the "Robber Council" of Ephesus deposed him from his See. He appealed to Pope Leo,<sup>25</sup> and was reinstated by the Pope's legates at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, but only after he had solemnly condemned Nestorius and his teachings before the assembled Council.<sup>26</sup> Theodoret's action seems to have been sincere, and he died a few years later in communion with the Church. The letter of appreciation ascribed to Pope Leo most probably is not genuine.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Mansi, IV, 1061, 1068; P. G. LXXXVI, 316, 392.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* 1288, 1289, 1296.

<sup>21</sup> Tixeront, *op. cit.* III, 47-51.

<sup>22</sup> P. G. LXXXVII, 340; cf. LXXXVI, 1437-1452.

<sup>23</sup> *Eranistes* (P. G. LXXXIII, 27-336).

<sup>24</sup> P. L. LIV, 847-854.

<sup>25</sup> Mansi, VII, 189.

<sup>26</sup> *Testus et Documenta, Series Theologica #20, Roma*

Theodoret stood in relation to St. Cyril of Alexandria much as did Eusebius of Caesarea to St. Athanasius in the preceding century. Like Eusebius, he is perhaps best judged in his later works. It must be remembered that a fixed theological terminology was not at hand in these early centuries, but had to be hammered out of the data furnished by Scripture and Tradition. Terms, which at first were satisfactory, were found later, in the strife of controversy, to be inadequate. Even St. Cyril's *μία φύσις τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου ασαφικομένη* was ultimately abandoned.<sup>28</sup> Without approving all that Theodoret said or did, one may, as with Origen, concede his genius. He was the last of the great Greek theologians.

Regarding the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*, we find that Theodoret usually refers the expression to the Incarnate Son as the head of the new creation (*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, ὡς πρῶτος ἐν τῇ καινῇ κτίσει τεχθεῖς*). . . ἡγορούμενος δὲ ἡμῶν ἐστὶ κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον ὡς πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως, τῆς νέας δημιουργίᾳ.<sup>29</sup> He sees in the term *πρωτότοκος* the implication of others whose nature the *πρωτότοκος* shares (ὁ δὲ πρωτότοκος τὴν αὐτὴν ἔχει διηκουσθεὶν φύσιν ἐκείνους ὡν καλεῖται πρωτότοκος).<sup>31</sup> A *πρωτότοκος* is one who is born before others, or precedes others in birth (ὁ δὲ πρωτότοκος τὸν πρὸ ἐτέρων τεχθέντα, καὶ ἐτέρον τῷ τόκῳ προτείνοντα).<sup>32</sup> He is the eldest among brethren (*πρωτότοκος δὲ ὁ παλλῶν ἀδελφῶν πρῶτος*). A *μονογενῆς*, however, is the sole offspring of a person (*μονογενῆς μὲν ὁ μόνος ἕκ τῶος γεννηθείς*).<sup>33</sup>

God the Word has no brother since He is the Only-begotten (ὁ Θεὸς δὲ Λόγος ἀδελφὸν οὐκ ἔχει, *μονογενῆς γάρ*).<sup>34</sup> How then can He

1935, pp. xxxiv-xxxviii; cf. *Νέοι Στуди sulle Antiche Lettere dei Papi*, Roma 1932, pp. 81, 155.

<sup>28</sup> "Monophysitae falso dicebant, suam de una natura in Christo doctrinam iam a S. Cyrillo propugnatam fuisse. Et revera saepissime loquitur de una φύσει Verbi Incarnati. Φύσις enim non habet illam significationem, quam postea concilium Chalcedonense determinavit. Est ei ut plurimum natura concreta individua, seorsum subsistens, idem ac persona." DeGroot, *Conspectus Historiae Dogmatum*, Roma 1931, II, 161; cf. Newman, *On St. Cyril's Formula of the μία φύσις*, in *Tracts Theological and Ecclesiastical*, London 1913, pp. 333-382.

<sup>29</sup> P. G. LXXV, 1160 A.

<sup>30</sup> P. G. LXXXIII, 1429 A.

<sup>31</sup> P. G. LXXV, 1160 B.



be the Firstborn who alone was begotten of the Father? (Πῶς αὖν πρωτότοκος ὁ μόνος ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθείς;). According to Theodoret, He can be Firstborn, not in His Divine Nature, but in His relation to others (πρωτότοκος οὐκ ἔστι τῆς θείας φύσεως, ἀλλὰ τῆς οἰκονομίας ὄνομα . . . οὐκ αἰὶν εἰδῆλον, ὡς τῆς οἰκονομίας τὸ πρωτότοκος ὄνομα). He is called Firstborn as man, and Only-begotten as God. As God, He has no brothers, but as man, He has Firstborn those who believe in Him, and of whom He is the ἐστὶν ὡς Θεός. Οὐκ ἔχει γὰρ ἀδελφοὺς ὀνομάζεται· μονογενὴς γὰρ τοὺς πεπιστευκότας καλεῖ, τούτων ἐστὶ πρωτότοκος).<sup>35</sup> He who is Only-begotten becomes also the Firstborn when He assumes our nature of the Virgin, and deigns to call brothers those who believe in Him (γίνεται δὲ καὶ πρωτότοκος ὁ μονογενὴς, τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν εἰληφὼς ἐκ τῆς παρθένου, καὶ ἀδελφοὺς τοὺς εἰς αὐτὸν πεπιστευκότας προσηγορεύει κατὰ φύσιν).<sup>36</sup>

Theodoret smiles at the ignorance of those who prefer to take the title of God the Word (οἱ . . . προσημῶντες περὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ λόγον τὸ πρωτότοκος εἰρησθαι πάσης κτίσεως, τὴν μὲν ἀμαθίαν αὐτῶν γελασόμεθα).<sup>37</sup> For such, he suggests the meaning "begotten before all creation" (πρὸ πάσης ἐγένεθη τῆς κτίσεως), but evidently it is not the view which he favors. The same interpretation is found in Theodoret's commentary on Col. I, 15, where it is stated that Christ is the Firstborn, not because He has creation for a sister, but because He was begotten before all creation (πρωτότοκος τοῦν ἐστὶ τῆς κτίσεως, οὐχ ὡς ἀδελφὴν ἔχων τὴν κτίσιν ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸ πάσης κτίσεως γεννηθείς).<sup>38</sup> Christ is not a creature, and St. Paul did not call Him First-created, but Firstborn, which is simply first (ἄλλος τε οὐδὲ πρωτόκτιστον αὐτὸν εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς ἀπόστολος, ἀλλὰ πρωτότοκον, τούτεστι, πρώτων).<sup>39</sup> That πρωτότοκος is to be taken in this place as simply first, Theodoret proves from what follows (ὅτι δὲ ἐνταῦθα τὸ πρωτότοκος ὄνομα τὸ πρώτων δηλοῖ, τὰ ἐξῆς ἡμᾶς διδάσκει), for St. Paul does not say that Christ was made before all, but that He is before all (οὐκ εἶπεν, αὐτὸς ἐγένετο πρὸ πάντων, ἀλλ', αὐτὸς ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων).<sup>40</sup> In this interpretation Theodoret stresses the idea of

<sup>35</sup> P. G. LXXVII, 141 C; cf. P. G. LXXV, 1587 BC.

<sup>36</sup> P. G. LXXV, 1229 A.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* 1160 D.

<sup>38</sup> P. G. LXXXII, 597 C.

the priority of Christ to the original creation, much as did St. John Chrysostom, whose view he here reflects. More frequently, however, Theodoret stresses the idea of Christ's priority in the new creation of grace.

Returning to the Latins, we find three men of outstanding genius, namely, St. Jerome (347-420), St. Augustine (354-430), and Pope St. Leo I (400?-461), but as their writings have nothing new on our problem, we need not linger. It would be interesting to know St. Jerome's opinion on the *Primogenitus omnis creaturæ*, but there is no evidence that he ever commented on the text. The *Commentarii in Epistolas S. Pauli*,<sup>41</sup> formerly ascribed to him, is now generally acknowledged to be the work of Pelagius.<sup>42</sup> St. Jerome quotes the text in his commentary on Jeremiah,<sup>43</sup> but no conclusion can be drawn regarding the meaning he attached to it. In defending the perpetual virginity of the Blessed Virgin against Helvidius, who argued from the Primogenitus of St. Matthew I, 25, that the Blessed Virgin must have had other children, St. Jerome held: Omnis unigenitus est primogenitus, non tantum post primogenitus est unigenitus. Primogenitus est, non tantum quem et alii sed ante quem nullus.<sup>44</sup> St. Jerome called attention to the Scripture definition of a Firstborn (Definivit sermo Dei, quid sit primogenitum. Omne, inquit, quod aperit vulvam), and to the fact that the redemption price of a firstborn was paid to the Jewish priests before there was any possibility of other brothers and sisters. Unlike so many of the Greeks and Latins, who thought that the idea of a firstborn necessarily implied others later born, St. Jerome knew that according to the Jewish law an only-begotten was also a firstborn. St. Jerome should then have no difficulty in taking Firstborn as a title of the Eternal Son by reason of His generation from the Father, but as a matter of fact, he seems to avoid using the term altogether. In the commentary formerly ascribed to St. Jerome, but now believed to be the work of Pelagius, *Firstborn of every creature* is interpreted of the Incarnate Son as a title of honor (Primogenitus secundum assumpti hominis

<sup>41</sup> P. L. XXX, 645-902; cf. Bardenhever-Shahan, *op. cit.*, p. 462; Pohle, *Pelagius*, in *Cath. Enc.* XI, 604.

<sup>42</sup> *C. S. E. L. LIX*, II, i, p. 269, l. 6.

<sup>43</sup> P. L. XXIII, 192 ff.

formam, non tempore, sed honore, juxta illud: Filius meus primogenitus Israel).<sup>44</sup> This was the interpretation given by Theodore of Mopsuestia.

St. Augustine usually takes *Unigenitus* as a title of the pre-existent Son, and *Primogenitus* of the incarnate Son. Thus in his treatise *Contra Secundinum*, written about 405, he states that the Scriptures give both titles to Christ, but not because of His Divine Nature (itaque cum et unigenitum et primogenitum eum divina testentur eloquia—unigenitum, quia sine fratribus, primogenitum, quia cum fratribus—non invenies, quomodo utrumque de illo secundum eandem naturam divinitatis intelligas).<sup>45</sup> He states further that the Catholic Faith, which distinguishes between the Creator and the creature, finds no difficulty with the terms, but accepts the unigenitus of the divine nature and the primogenitus of the human nature in the sense that the incarnate Son has brothers, not by nature, but by the adoption of grace (fides vero catholica, quae inter creatorem creaturamque distinguit, nullam patitur in his duobus nominibus intelligendi difficultatem, unigenitum eum accipiens secundum id, quod scriptum est: in principio erat verbum et verbum erat apud deum et deus erat verbum. primogenitum autem universae creaturae secundum id, quod apostolus ait: ut sit ipse primogenitus in multis fratribus, quos ei pater ad fraternam societatem non aequalitate substantiae, sed adoptione gratiae generavit). Christ is Only-begotten in reference to the Father, but Firstborn in reference to us (apud se unigenitum, ad nos primogenitum). As Only-begotten, He was born, not of flesh and blood, but of God; as Firstborn among brethren in the church, He is the Word made flesh (ex illo igitur, quod unigenitus est, non ex carne, non ex sanguine, non ex voluntate viri neque ex voluntate carnis, sed ex deo natus est; ex illo autem, quod primogenitum in ecclesia fratribus factus est, verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis). The same interpretation is found in his *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum Libri VII*, written in 419 (nam et quod dicitur: primogenitus omnis creaturae, quae et ibi *πρωτοτοκος* graece legitur, potest ita intellegi secundum novam creaturam, . . . eundem dicit primogenitum quem unigenitum: primogenitum, quia etiam nos filii dei sumus, unigenitum vero, quoniam

<sup>44</sup> P. L. XXX, 854.

<sup>45</sup> C. S. E. L. XXV, p. 911, l. 21 ff.

solus ille de substantia patris et patri aequalis atque coaeternus est).<sup>46</sup>

In the *De Trinitate*, which was begun in 400 and not completed until sixteen years later, St. Augustine takes another view. Here classifying various texts according as they refer to Christ in the form of God, or that of a servant, he states that it is in the form of God that Christ is the primogenitus omnis creaturae (Secundum formam Dei, Primogenitus omnis creaturae, et ipse ante omnes, et omnia in illo constant).<sup>47</sup> This same view is also proposed in argument in the *Contra Secundinum* mentioned above (ut Jesus Christus et unigenitus sit secundum id, quod verbum dei est, deus apud deum pariter incommutabilis et pariter aeternus, non rapinam arbitrans esse aequalis deo, et primogenitus omnis creaturae secundum id, quod in ipso condita sunt omnia in caelis et in terra, visibilia et invisibilia).<sup>48</sup> The unigenitus is thus a term expressing nature, while primogenitus expresses a function toward the original creation. St. Augustine like St. Athanasius uses *primogenitus* of Christ in reference to His function toward either the original or the new creation.

Pope Leo I, in his sermons and letters, has much to say regarding the Incarnation of the Son of God. While the term *Unigenitus* occurs frequently, the term *Primogenitus* is a rare word in his writings. He seems to avoid it. In his *Sermo LXVI*, he states that man's nature has been received by the Son of God into such a union that not only in that Man who is the Firstborn of all creation, but also in all His saints there is one and the selfsame Christ (ut non solum in illo homine, qui est primogenitus totius creaturae, sed etiam in omnibus sanctis suis unus idemque sit Christus).<sup>49</sup> Pope Leo thus takes the expression of the Incarnate Son in the new creation of grace. In *Sermo XXVII*, he explicitly calls Christ the Firstborn of the new creation (primogenitum novae creaturae). This interpretation of the Firstborn of every creature (or of all creation) as a title of the Incarnate Son, first proposed by Marcellus of Ancyra, and favored by St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, and St. Augustine, now appears in the work of a Pope of Rome. This,

<sup>46</sup> C. S. E. L. XXV, p. 915, 23.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* XXVIII, 2, p. 389, l. 19 ff.

<sup>48</sup> P. L. LIV, 355.  
<sup>49</sup> P. L. XLII, 837 D; cf. XLII, 706.

however, does not settle the matter, unless the Pope, acting with the fullness of his power as the supreme Teacher of Christendom, explicitly indicates his intention of defining the meaning of the text. Even had the text appeared in such a dogmatic document as Leo's Tome to Flavian in 449, that in itself would not settle the matter, unless the text appeared as the express object of a definition "ex cathedra."<sup>50</sup>

We bring our dissertation to a close with Pope Leo, the Great. The investigation was carried through to modern times, but there is practically nothing new to record. Most of the comments on the text after the middle of the fifth century are merely repetitions of the interpretations already noted, with only an occasional, slight variation in terminology or viewpoint. Even the reference of the expression to the Divine Foreknowledge favored by the Franciscan School and others is as old basically as Didymus, and the interesting interpretation recently attempted by Professor Lattanzi of Rome is fundamentally that of function.<sup>51</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The earliest interpretation of the *πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως* referred the expression to the Pre-existent Son of God as a title of nature, with the meaning "begotten before all creation." Unfortunately, the Apologists in their speculations attempted to explain the Son as begotten or born for the purpose of bringing creation into being. He who was in the bosom of the Father from eternity as Logos came forth as Son to bring creation into being. The Son was born to be the *ἄρχὴ* of creation, and the ideas of nature and function were thus fused into the expression.

As the Son is God, He must be as eternal and unchangeable as the Father. When theological speculation began to follow this line of thought, a tendency arose to take *μονογενὴς* of the Son by reason of His eternal generation from the Father, and *πρωτότοκος* by reason of His function in respect to creation. He who was *μονογενὴς* from eternity became *πρωτότοκος* or *ἄρχὴ* at the creation. *Μονογενὴς* was thus used as a title of nature, and *πρωτότοκος* as a title of function.

In the fourth century, when the Arians began to infer from the expression that the Pre-existent Son was simply the first of creatures, the tendency developed in orthodox circles to shift the title from the Pre-existent to the Incarnate Son. Creation was taken in the sense of the new creation, in which we are the sons of God and brothers of Christ by adoption through grace. This view, introduced by Marcellus of Ancyra, and adopted by St. Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Augustine, and Pope St. Leo I, was the prevailing interpretation for more than a century, without, however, excluding other views. The older view of St. Justin was still mentioned with respect, and after the heat of the Trinitarian controversies abated, it began to return into favor again, and still enjoys considerable prestige.

There were also other attempts at interpretation. Theodore of Mopsuestia and Pelagius stressed the idea of dignity; St. John Chrysostom, that of priority. St. Isidore of Pelusium made a new approach through the active meaning of *πρωτότοκος* used in Homer.

<sup>50</sup> "Definitio extenditur solum ad rem ipsam definitam, non autem ad ea quae dogmaticae, historice aut philosophice definitionem praecedunt aut comitantur." Tanqueray, *Synopsis Theologiae Dogmaticae* praecedunt aut ed. 24, Paris 1937, p. 589, #877. "Ex eo solo quod textus biblicus includatur in definitione infallibili non sequitur sensum illum esse infallibiliter definitum, variis enim modis et ad diversos scopos includi potest." *Fer-Biblicae*, ed. 4, Romae 1933, p. 477.

<sup>51</sup> Lattanzi, *Il Primato universale di Cristo secondo le S. Scritture*, Roma 1937, p. 85.

All these views, with the exception of the Arian (which is disproved by the very context), are in perfect conformity with Catholic Doctrine. The General Council of Nicaea (325) eliminated the expression from the creed which was first proposed, most probably because of its obscurity and the possibility of mis-interpretation. Pope Leo I in his Tome to Flavian in 449 apparently avoided it. Exegetes, however, will always be interested in the question. As far as the history of the text in the first five centuries is concerned, there is no definite answer.

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