ON THE WORDS

ΜΟΝΟΓΕΝΗΣ ΘΕΟΣ

IN SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

THE purpose of this Dissertation is to investigate the true reading of the last verse in the Prologue to St John’s Gospel (i 18). The result, I think it will be found, is to shew that μονογενής θεός should be accepted in place of the received reading ὁ μονογενής θεός, alike on grounds of documentary evidence, of probabilities of transcription, and of intrinsic fitness. The reading of three primary Greek MSS. has been known only within the last half-century; so that naturally this verse has not shared with other disputed texts of high doctrinal interest either the advantages or the disadvantages of repeated controversial discussion; and thus it offers a rare opportunity for dispassionate study. The history of the phrase μονογενής θεός in early Greek theology, of which I have attempted to give a rude outline, has also an interest of its own.

The verse stands as follows in the better MSS.:

θεοὶ οὐδεὶς ἐφόρακεν πώποτε μονογενής θεός ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκεῖνος ἐξηγήσατο.

H. 1
The Documentary Evidence for μονογενής θεός consists of manuscripts: NBC*L 33 (N* omits the following ὅ ὅν; \(\text{N}\) and 33 prefix ὅ). Versions: the Vulgate (‘Peshito’) or Revised Syriac; the margin of the Harclean Syriac; the Memphitic; and one of the two Ἑθιopic editions (the Roman, reprinted in Walton’s Polyglott), in accordance with one of the two earlier British Museum MSS., a third of the MSS. yet examined having both readings. The article is prefixed in the Memphitic rendering. The Thebaic and the Gothic versions are not extant here.

ὁ μονογενής νῦς is found in manuscripts: AC*EFGHKMSUVXΓΔΛΠ and all known cursive except 33.

Versions: the Old Latin (q has u. filius Dei); the Vulgate Latin; the Old Syriac; the text of the Harclean Syriac; the Jerusalem Syriac Lectionary; the Armenian; and Mr Pell Platt’s Ἑθιopic edition, in accordance with many MSS.

The Patristic evidence, though remarkable on any possible view, admits of various interpretation on some points. The grounds for the chief conclusions here stated will be found in a note at the end: it must suffice here to mark the limits of doubtfulness as clearly as the circumstances permit.

The reading μονογενής θεός, with or without ὅ, in direct quotations from St John or clear allusions to his text, is attested as follows. Two independent reports of VALENTINIAN doctrine furnished by Clement of Alexandria (Exc. ex Theodoto, p. 968 Pott.: a paraphrastic allusion a little later has νῦς by a natural combination, see p. 32), and Irenæus (p. 40 Mass.: corrupted in the inferior MSS. of both Epiphanius, who supplies the Greek, and the old translation, which in this allusion is faithfully literal). Irenæus himself at least once (256), and I strongly suspect two other times (255, 189): in all three places the original Greek is lost. Clement himself twice (695, 956: in the second place, where the language is paraphrastic, 1 It is impossible to convey a true impression of the Ἑθιopic evidence in few words. Some particulars will be found in Note C.
Clement has δuros theos, as in a still looser paraphrase at p. 102 he has δ μ....λόγος τῆς πίστεως). Origen at least three times (on John i 7 [the commentary on i 18 itself is lost], iv. p. 89 Ru.; [on John i 19, p. 102, the reading of two MSS. only is recorded, and they vary suspiciously between δ μ. viōs theos and δ μ. viōs τοῦ θεοῦ; in an indirect reference shortly afterwards τοῦ μ. stands without a substantive;] on John xiii 23, p. 439; c. Cels. ii 71, p. 440, certainly in two MSS., apparently in all except two closely allied MSS., from which De la Rue introduced viōς). Eusebius twice, once as an alternative not preferred by himself (De Eccl. Theol. p. 67, δ μονογενὴς viōs, δ μονογενῆς θεος), and in one other exceptional but seemingly unsuspicious place, p. 174. Epiphanius three or four times (Ancor. p. 8 [the clear statement here confessedly leaves no doubt as to the quotation at p. 7, hopelessly mangled in the printed text]; Panar. 612, 817). Basil at least twice (De Sp. Sanct. 15, 17, pp. 12, 14 Garn., quotation and statement confirming each other, as the Benedictine editor notes, adding that earlier editions, unsupported by any of his six MSS., read viōs; the quotation with viōs at p. 23, which has no note, may therefore be only an unwary reprint). Gregory of Nyssa ten times, always somewhat allusively, as is his usual manner in citing Scripture, (c. Eunom. ii p. 432 [469 Migne]; 447 [493]; 478 [540]; iii 506 [581]; vi 605 [729]; viii 633 [772]; ix 653 [801]; x 681 [841]; De vit. Mos. 192 [i 336]; Hom. xiii in Cant. 663 [i 1045]: on the other hand viōs is printed twice, c. Eun. ii 466 [521]; Ep. ad Flav. 648 [iii 1004]). The (Homoeusian) Synod of Ancyra in 358 (in Epiph. Pan. 851 c: the allusion here is reasonably certain). Didymus three times (De Trin. i 26 p. 76; ii 5, p. 140 [cf. i 15, p. 27]; on Ps. lxxvi 14, p. 597 Cord. [with absolute certainty by the context, though viōs is printed]: an allusion on Ps. cix 3, p. 249 Cord. or 284 Mai, drops the substantive). Cyril of Alexandria (ad l. 

1 The laxity of a reference to Prov. viii 35 (viōς for γενομένου) in the same sentence was unavoidable, and it was guarded by ample previous exposition (552 BC, 853 B—D); here it would have been gratuitous and misleading.
p. 103 [without ð] by Mr Pusey's best MS. and repeated references in the following comment), and in at least three other places (Thes. 137, [without ð] 237; Dial. quod Unus, 768: twice (Thes. 365; Adv. Nest. 901) Aubert's text has viós, which will probably have to give way, as it has had to do in the commentary. To these might perhaps be added the emperor Julian (p. 333 Spanh.), for though the full quotation and one subsequent reference have viós, another has ðeós, which the argument seems on the whole to require.

The patristic evidence for [ð] μυσογενής viós has next to be given. Irenæus twice, but only in the Latin translation (see above), and exactly in the Old Latin form, with nisi inserted before unigenitus, and once with Dei added to Filius, so that we seem to have the reading of the translator, as often, not of Irenæus. Hippolytus (c. Noetum 5) without ð: all depends on Fabricius's editing of a modern copy of a single Vatican MS., and the context is neutral. An Epistle from certain bishops at Antioch (260—270 A.D.) to Paul of Samosata (Routh, R. S. iii 297), again dependent on a single MS., unexamined for some generations, and with the detached phrase τὸν μυσογενήν vión τοῦ ðeou ðeōs occurring not long before. The Latin version of the "Acts" of the disputation between Archelaus and Mani, c. 32, where again the inserted nisi shews the impossibility of deciding whether author or translator is responsible. Eusebius of Cæsarea six times, De Eccl. Theol. p. 67 (with ðeōs as an alternative, see above), 86, 92, 142; in Ps. lxxiv. p. 440 Mont.; in Es. vi. p. 374. Eu-

1 In this case the text is also Pusey's (p. 170); but it rests on a single MS. of the fifteenth century: it is followed in a few lines by ð γε μὴν ἐν κόλπῳ τοῦ ðeou καὶ πατρός μυσογενῆς ðeōs λύγος.

2 In the "Dialogues" of an unknown Cæsarius (Inter. 4, post Greg. Naz. iv 864 Migne), probably of the fifth if not a later century, the context implies ðeōs, though viós is printed. The apparent conflict of text and context has been lately pointed out by Prof. Abbot, who still regards the reading as only doubtful. The possibility of reconciling with the actual language an inferential argument from John i 18 containing viós seems to me infinitesimal: but I am content to leave Cæsarius in a note.
STATIUS, De Engastr. p. 387 All. ALEXANDER of Alexandria, Ep. ad Alex. in Theodoret, H. E. i 3; but with the detached phrase τοῦ μονογενοῦς θεοῦ on the next page. ATHANASIUS seven times (Ep. de Decr. Nic. 13, 21; Or. c. Ar. ii 62; iv 16, 19, 20, 26). GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Orat. xxix 17. Basil of Caesarea, Ep. 234, p. 358, besides one of the three places in the De Spiritu Sancto already mentioned, where at least one Moscow MS. has θεὸς: but the evidence adduced above casts doubt on both places. Gregory of Nyssa twice (see p. 3); but the reading is most suspicious. TITUS OF BOстра (adv. Man. p. 85 Leg.: but p. 93 ὁ μ. νιὸς θεὸς). THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA (ad l. bis in Mai, N. P. B. vii 397 f.). CHRYSOSTOM ad l., and later writers generally. On Julian see p. 4.

It is unsatisfactory that so much of the patristic testimony remains uncertain in the present state of knowledge; but such is the fact. Much of the uncertainty, though not all, will doubtless disappear when the Fathers have been carefully edited. In familiar passages scribes, editors, and translators vie with each other in assimilating biblical quotations to the texts current among themselves; and from the nature of the case the process is always unfavourable to ancient readings, whether true or false, which went out of use comparatively early. It would therefore be absurd to treat the uncertainty as equally favourable to both readings. Where we have a Greek original, without various reading noted, and without contradictory context, νιὸς has a right to claim the authority provisionally, in spite of private suspicions: but it would be unreasonable to concede to νιὸς any appreciable part in Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus, or Cyril—I ought to add, in Ire- næus or Basil—notwithstanding the variations already mentioned. Serious doubt must also rest on an isolated νιὸς in a neutral context, when, as in the case of the Epistles of the Antioch bishops and of Alexander, μονογενῆς θεὸς is found at no great distance, though without any obvious reference to John i 18: the doubt is not removed by the fact that one or