PROV 8:22FF IN EARLY CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS ON THE RELATION OF ORIGIN OF THE SON FROM THE FATHER: THE CASE OF JUSTIN, ATHENAGORAS, AND THEOPHILUS*

P A V E L   D U D Z I K

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the quotes of *Prov* 8:22–25 and references to this passage in three early Christian theologians of the 2nd century, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras of Athens, and Theophilus of Antioch. It examines the way how the three authors employ the present Biblical passage in their expositions concerning the relation of origin of the Son of God (Word and Wisdom) from God the Father. It argues for *Prov* 8:22 as a witness of the pre-existence of the Word–Wisdom and of the Word as the 'Beginning' of all creation, and it attempts to find hints at *Prov* 8:25 in the statements in which the three Christian authors employ the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) and the noun 'offspring' (γέννημα) as the terms for coming forth of the second divine person.

Keywords
Prov 8:22–25; Patristic Exegesis; Early Christian Apologists; Relation of Origin; Justin Martyr; Athenagoras of Athens; Theophilus of Antioch; Wisdom; Beginning; Pre-existence; to beget; γεννᾶν; Offspring; γέννημα

The speech of the Wisdom of God in the Old Testament book of *Proverbs* (*Prov* 8:4–36), during which, after introducing and recommending herself to all people, Wisdom relates her origin from God, her dwelling with God, and her presence at the moment when God was

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103

creating the universe, drew the recurrent attention of Jewish as well as early Christian exegetes of the Scripture. It is not only for its beauty and rareness of form but also for the content. The Jewish human author and the later Septuagint translator of this book depict a metaphorical scene of God's dealings before and during the creation of the universe. It is vivid and full of excitement in the portrayal of the intimate relationship between God and his Wisdom. God delights in her, she is glad to be with God all the time, and He rejoices when completing His creation and being with the sons of men.[1] In this scene, according to the Septuagint version, Wisdom is the first subject of God's dealing and the first witness of His creative activity. God's conduct toward the Wisdom is described in *Prov* 8:22–25 LXX particularly:

[22] The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways, for the sake of his works.
[23] Before the age he founded me, in the beginning.
[24] Before he made the earth and before he made the depths,
before he brought forth the springs of the waters,
[25] before the mountains were established
and before all the hills, he begets me.[2]

These verses, referring to the relation of origin of the Wisdom from God the Father, are the starting point for the analyses in the present

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[1]   *Prov* 8:30b–31 LXX: 'It is I who was the one in whom he took delight. / And each day I was glad in his presence at every moment, / when he rejoiced after he had completed the world / and rejoiced among the sons of men.' Translations from the Septuagint in this article are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under This Title*, ed. Albert Pietersma – Benjamin G. Wright (New York – Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), and they are occasionally slightly altered. For a literary analysis of the poem on the creation, which consists of two parts (*Prov* 8:21a–25: pre-existence of the Wisdom, and *Prov* 8:26–36: the joyful presence of Wisdom with God when He created the world), see David-Marc D'Hamonville, *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, vol. 17: *Les Proverbes* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 89–92; cf. also Johann Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs. Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs* (Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill, 1997), 201–204, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004275935. For the background of the Hebrew wisdom poem in *Prov* 8, see, e.g., Bernd U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15. A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs 1:1–15:33* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 282–294, doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvp2n3q7.

[2]   *Prov* 8:22–25 LXX: 22 κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, / 23 πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ, / 24 πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι, / πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων / 25 πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἑδρασθῆναι, / πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με.

study in which quotes of this Biblical passage and references to expressions and notions included in it are examined in the writings of the three early Christian theologians of the second half of the 2nd century, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras of Athens, and Theophilus of Antioch. All three authors have one thing in common. References to *Prov* 8:22–25 seem to be an important part of their expositions of the relation of origin of the Son of God (identified, often without saying, with the divine Word and Wisdom) from God the Father.

At the time when the early Christian authors started to publish their first treatises, *Prov* 8:22–25 was neither an unknown nor uninterpreted text. The first of these verses, *Prov* 8:22, was referred to in the Hellenistic Jewish deuterocanonical books, especially in the book of *Sirach*. Wisdom was treated as the first creation or as the creation before all creation of the universe.[3] The pre-existence of Wisdom and her coming into being 'before the age' was emphasised.[4] For the Septuagint translator, the creational status of Wisdom should have ensured the exclusive position of God as the only transcendent Creator. God acts as a creator toward Wisdom (*Prov* 8:22: ἔκτισεν) as well as toward the universe (which is expressed with the infinitive ποιῆσαι twice in *Prov* 8:24). The notion of immanence is also present in deuterocanonical statements on the Wisdom of God, though, in this case, the influence of other verses from *Proverbs* should be taken into consideration (e.g., *Prov* 3:19: 'God by Wisdom founded the earth').[5]

In the Hellenistic Jewish theology, the idea of a pre-existent Wisdom, which 'was before the heaven and earth', is preserved in Aristobulus in the first half of the 2nd century BC,[6] that is, possibly, at the same time when the Septuagint translation of the book of *Proverbs* into Greek was

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[3]   *Sir* 1:4: 'Before all things Wisdom has been created' (προτέρα πάντων ἔκτισται σοφία).
[4]   *Sir* 24:8.9: 'Then the creator of all commanded me, and he who created me put down my tent … Before the age, from the beginning, he created me, and until the age I will never fail.' For the Wisdom being with God when he created the world (without evident textual references to *Prov* 8:22ff), see also *Wisdom of Salomon* (*Wis* 9:9): 'With you is wisdom, which knows your works and was present when you made the world' (καὶ μετὰ σοῦ ἡ σοφία ἡ εἰδυῖα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ παροῦσα, ὅτε ἐποίεις τὸν κόσμον).
[5]   *Sir* 1:9: 'The Lord, he created her, and he saw and enumerated her and poured her out upon all his works.' For the influence of *Prov* 8:22ff on the deuterocanonical writings, see Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 219–220; Mark Edwards, 'Justin's Logos and the Word of God,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, no. 3 (1995): 261–280, especially 264–265, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.0.0039.
[6]   For the fragment from a writing by Aristobulus, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. evang.* XIII, 12, 9–11 (GCS 43,2: 195–196).

compiled.[7] Later, Philo of Alexandria (approx. 20 BC – 40 AD) used *Prov* 8:22–23 in *De ebrietate* 31 in the wording different from that in the Septuagint: 'God acquired me as the first of all of his works, and before the age he founded me' (ὁ θεὸς ἐκτήσατό με πρωτίστην τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἔργων, καὶ πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέ με).[8] Philo employed his quote in a proto-logical account in which God the Creator is depicted as the father of the universe, the knowledge of the Creator as the mother and the created world as the son. The idea of the pre-existence of the mother–knowl-edge (implicitly identified with the Wisdom of God) is clearly stated: 'It was necessary that all that came to the birth of creation should be younger than the mother and nurse of the All.'[9]

A Christian reader, however, understood the text of *Prov* 8:22ff LXX in a rather different way than it was meant by the Jewish Septuagint translator and often interpreted in the subsequent Jewish tradition. Hearing about a figure of the pre-existent Wisdom as a being dwelling with God at the moment of the creation of the universe, his or her con-viction could be encouraged that God was not alone when he created the world, but that there was another divine person with him. Though the plurality of divine persons could also be testified to from other pas-sages in the Old Testament,[10] the theologians of the early church did not hesitate to demonstrate it using the Old Testament Wisdom texts as well. On the other hand, the interpretation of *Prov* 8:22ff as a depiction of the relationship between God the Father and the Son before the ages was burdened with difficulty for the Christian reader that occurs in the first verse of that passage and arises only in the Septuagint translation[11]

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[7] D'Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 134–139, even considers Aristobulus as the author of the Septuagint translation of *Proverbs*. For the origin of the translation of *Proverbs*, see also, ibid., 21–25; James K. Aitken, *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* (London – New Delhi – New York – Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2015), 342–344. For Aristobulus, see Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus. Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts vor Christus* (Tübingen : J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988), 295–307.

[8] Philo of Alexandria, *De ebr.* 31 (LCL 427, 334).

[9] See Philo of Alexandria, *De ebr.* 31 (LCL 427, 334): ἦν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τιθήνης τῶν ὅλων πάνθ᾽ ὅσα εἰς γένεσιν ἦλθεν εἶναι νεώτερα; see also Philo of Alexandria, *De virt.* 62 (LCL 341, 200) where the Wisdom is also treated as 'older than the whole world' (σοφίαν δὲ πρεσβυτέραν … τῆς τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς οὖσαν).

[10] E.g., in the plural 'let us make man' in *Gen* 1:26 or 'See, Adam has become like one of us' in *Gen* 3:22. For these witnesses, see below, the examination of the exegesis of *Prov* 8 in Justin, p. 116.

[11] In the Hebrew Masoretic text of Prov 8:22, the verb קנה occurs, which means 'to acquire' or 'to possess' in many instances in the Hebrew Bible; the meaning 'to create' for the same verb is not easy to testify (perhaps Ps 139:13). In the first part of Prov 8:22,

and that was felt as serious obstacle especially at the time of the Trinitarian controversies in the 4th century. As is well known, the formulation in *Prov* 8:22: 'The Lord created me…' (κύριος ἔκτισέν με), which is easily understandable in the context of the Jewish struggle to protect the transcendence of the only God and reject the existence of another uncreated person alongside the Godhead, was barely acceptable in the Christian Trinitarian concept. The relation of origin of the Son–Word–Wisdom from God the Father was expressed with the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) from the earliest Christian texts, whereas the verb 'to create' (ποιεῖν, κτίζειν) was reserved for statements concerning the creation of the universe by God the Creator through the Son of God. After the controversies with the Arians, the preference for γεννᾶν was emphasised in the creed of the Church at the Council of Nicaea (325) with the phrase 'begotten, not made'; the preference for γεννᾶν can nevertheless be seen in the texts of much earlier Christians authors, as will be demonstrated below.

Having in mind also this later development, I provide a survey of the early Christian employment of *Prov* 8:22ff and investigate how the Christian authors of the second half of the 2nd century used this Biblical witness in their statements when referring to the pre-existent Son of God. I examine the way the three above-mentioned authors employed this Scriptural witness, and I attempt to locate the terms and expressions they found crucial. My attention is primarily directed at the question which aspects of the relationship between the Father and Son the early Christian theologians intended to explain with reference to *Prov* 8:22ff.

1. The use of *Prov* 8:22ff by the Greek Christian apologists of the second century BC

In contrast with the Hellenistic Jewish tradition that – as has already been noted – referred to *Prov* 8:22ff and employed the concept of the

we read: יְהוָה קָנָנִי רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכּוֹ ('Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way'). Cf. Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 212–214; Pavel Dudzik, *Př 8,22nn v prvních ariánských výkladech: ariánská interpretace ve srovnání s textem Písma podle MT a LXX* [*Prov. 8:22 in the Early Arian Texts: Arian Interpretation and the Wording of Prov. 8:22 in Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Septuagint versions*], in *Patristická a středověká recepcia Šalamúna: Kazateľ – Príslovia – Pieseň piesní* [*Patristic and Medieval Exegesis of Salomon: Kohelet – Proverbs – Song of Songs*], ed. Miloš Lichner (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2017), 225–245, especially 232–236.

pre-existent Wisdom, there is no quote or a clear textual reference to *Prov* 8:22ff in the New Testament writings.[12] The early Christian fathers found the name Wisdom as a Christological title in *1 Cor* 1:24 ('Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God'), and they drew the notions of pre-existence from *Col* 1:15 ('the firstborn of all creation'). Both New Testament passages can be regarded, at best, as allusions to the concept of Wisdom in the book of *Proverbs*. Moreover, the apostle Paul, when formulating his notion of a secret and hidden wisdom of God comprising the mystery of our salvation (*1 Cor* 2:6–8), did not employ expressions from the text of *Prov* 8:22–25, as far as I can see; the same seems to be true in reference to the 'manifold wisdom' of God in *Eph* 3:8–12.[13] Later, in the texts of the Apostolic Fathers, statements on the relationship of the Son–Word of God with God the Father are rare, and there are no references to *Prov* 8. The pre-existent Son, being 'older than all his creation', is thematised in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, but without any hint at *Prov* 8.[14]

Quotes from *Prov* 8:22ff and the references to this passage, mainly in the Septuagint translation,[15] occur in the early Christian apologists in Trinitarian accounts, i.e., in statements concerning the relationship between God the Father and the other divine person, the Son–Word or the Spirit.[16] As for the relationship between God the Father and the

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[12] See D'Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 148–150.

[13] See Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 63. Cf. also Pavel Dudzik, 'The Expression "Before the Ages" in Early Christian Statements concerning the Origin of the Son from the Father in the Period before the Council of Nicaea (325),' *Communio Viatorum. A Theological Journal* 64, no. 1 (2022): 8-36.

[14] Cf. *Pastor Hermae*, *Sim.* 9, 12, 2 (LCL 25, 418): 'The Son of God is older that all his creation, so that he became the adviser of the Father in his creation' (ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ προγενέστερός ἐστιν, ὥστε σύμβουλον αὐτὸν γενέσθαι τῷ πατρὶ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ).

[15] Verses *Prov* 8:22–25 from the Septuagint translation are used in the absolute majority of instances in the pre-Nicene period. I am aware of two exceptions, both in Origen, where the verb κτᾶσθαι ('to acquire') is employed; see Origen, *Comm. in Matth.* XVII, 14 (GCS 40: 623) and *Homiliae in Psalmos, Hom.* I (in Psalmum LXXIII), 4 (GCS NF 19: 230). For the discussion on the Septuagint and non-Septuagint translations of *Prov* 8:22, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *De eccl. theol.* III, 2, 15 (GCS 14: 142); cf. also Dudzik, *Př 8,22nn v prvních ariánských výkladech* [*Prov. 8:22 in the Early Arian Texts*], 239.

[16] Irenaeus of Lyon interprets *Prov* 8 as referring to the Holy Spirit; see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 3 (SC 100.2, 632): 'I have also largely demonstrated, that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation, He declares by Solomon…' For Irenaeus' exegesis of *Prov* 8, see Jackson Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 168–176 (doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004281271).

Son–Word, which is the subject of my investigation, *Prov* 8:22ff is quoted and interpreted in several particular contexts:

- as a witness from the Scripture regarding the numerical distinction of the Word–Wisdom from God the Father;
- as a witness for the Word–Wisdom as a mediator of creation or a beginning of all creation;
- as a witness of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father expressed as the relationship between the begetting and the begotten.

In a broader sense, the quotes of *Prov* 8:22ff and the references to this passage appear in expositions arguing for the existence of the 'second' God alongside God the Father, i.e., the Son of God who mediates the relationship between God and the creation. Striving to conceive the relationship between the transcendent God and the creation, the apologists of the 2nd century used most probably a Middle Platonic model of the relationship between God and the World Soul[17] whose provenance could be traced to Stoic teaching concerning *logos*, which refers to both governing faculty of a human being and a pervasive, divine force creating the world, immanent to it and imposing order on it.[18] According to this philosophical concept, which was popular at the time of the first Christian apologists, God in his transcendence is unable to work in creation, so his Word assumes the role of mediator. A similar concept of the relationship of God to his creation through mediating and pervasive Word of God was present in Hellenistic Jewish tradition, as we have already seen.[19] Thus, the notion of Logos, which has its roots in the Hellenistic Jewish as well as in the Greek philosophical tradition, was employed by the early Christian apologists for an effectual power through which God acts in the world.

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[17] John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca – New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 45–49. For the Christian reception of this philosophical concept, see, e.g., Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 83–84.

[18] For the Stoic concept of pneuma, which is called *logos* or *nous* when the element of fire prevails, see Anthony A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 152–163; David Furley, 'Cosmology,' in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 432–451; Filip Karfík, *Duše a svět. Devět studií z antické filosofie* [Soul and World. Nine Studies in Ancient Philosophy] (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), 150–184.

[19] For the Jewish background, rather than sources deducible from the Greek philosophy, of the Christian notion of the Word of God argues, e.g., Edwards, 'Justin's Logos,' 261–280.

The Christian apologists also accepted and accommodated the concept of Logos as a 'beginning' (ἀρχή) which was present in the Jewish tradition as well.[20] The Word of God was often regarded as the beginning of all creation in the protological sense, and the passage from *Prov* 8:22ff was employed as an important witness for this concept next to other Scriptural witnesses, especially *Gen* 1:1 and *John* 1:1. While ἀρχή occurs in the prepositional collocation (ἐν ἀρχῇ, 'in the beginning') in these verses, which could indicate a rather 'instrumental' understanding (God creates through his Word), ἀρχή in *Prov* 8:22 is treated as a complement: 'Lord created me as the beginning' (κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχήν), which could more strongly imply that the Word–Wisdom is a pre-existent divine person – the Beginning. Thus, *Prov* 8:22 might indicate the existence of a second divine person alongside God as well as the mediating role of the Wisdom–Beginning; Wisdom is 'the Beginning of His (i.e., God's) ways, for the sake of His works'.

What the early Christian apologists did not comment on are the verbs used in the verses *Prov* 8:22.23.25 as expressions for the relation of origin of the Wisdom from God the Father; I mean the three verbs (κτίζειν, θεμελιοῦν, and γεννᾶν): 'The Lord created me (κύριος ἔκτισέν με) as the beginning of his ways …, before the age he founded me (πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με) …, before all the hills, he begets me (γεννᾷ με).' The pre-Origenian writings do not contain, as far as I am aware, any comments on the use of verbs in *Prov* 8:22–25. The three verbs expressing the relationship between Wisdom and God are ignored or, more precisely, the verb γεννᾶν is preferred without explanation. Moreover, the early Christian authors use two other verbs in their accounts on the relation of origin of the Word, 'to bring forth' (προβάλλειν) and 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι), both of which are drawn from the metaphor of a word of a human being that exists as reason or thought in man as well as 'outside' as an uttered word.[21]

Referring to the metaphor of the human word, the first Christian apologists clarified the relationship of the Son–Word of God with God the Father by stressing two aspects: first, the Word is dwelling in God,

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[20] See Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1964), 166–168. For the term ἀρχή and the collocation ἐν ἀρχῇ generally, see Jacobus C. M. van Winden, *Frühchristliche Exegese. „Der Anfang'*, in *Arche. A Collection of Patristic Studies by J. C. M. van Widen*, ed. Jan den Boeft and David T. Runia (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3–49.

[21] See below, p. 114 (Justin).

and second, the Word comes forth as a mediator in the creation.[22] The 'bringing forth' or 'begetting' of the Word before the creation of the world is conceived by the apologists as not necessary, but according to the will of God. They do not speak of any time or moment of the bringing forth or begetting of the Word, though they discern the two aspects in the way that implies a kind of subsequence. At this point, we probably come to the limit of their conceiving and formulating the relation of origin of the Word. At stake is both the inalterability of the Father, since the generation of the Son in this respect might imply change on the side of the Father, and the coeternity of the Son with the Father. The early apologists attempt to solve the first difficulty by relating our experience to the material world: it is not a diminishment of our capacity to speak when we utter a word, and the brilliance of the fire is not lessened when it enkindles another fire.[23] They however do not clarify whether God has his own separate word or whether he remains in contact with his Word after the Word became exterior to the Father.[24] The early Christian apologists do not discuss the second question – whether the Word as the 'second' one next to God is eternal in the same way as God the Father.[25] In so far as they speak about pre-temporal begetting of the Word, the apologists seem to have taken for granted that the implied succession of relations is meant as logical, not as temporal.

2. Justin Martyr

One of the first Christian apologists, Justin Martyr, quotes *Prov* 8 in his *Dialogue with Trypho* in the passage where he strives to conceive the Word of God as a divine person alongside God the Father,[26]

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[22] Leslie W. Barnard, 'God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras,' *Studia Theologica*, 24 (1970): 70–92, especially 86, describes this notion of Logos in Athenagoras of Athens: 'The Logos has two relations with the Father, immanent in the Godhead, and expressed in procession when He presides over the ordering of the universe. This is a difference of function rather than nature…'

[23] For these analogies, see below, Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 2; 128, 4.

[24] For this objection, see Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 110.

[25] For this issue in Justin Martyr, cf. Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr. An Investigation into the Conceptions of the Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaistic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968), 153–155.

[26] He calls the Word of God the second God (ἕτερος θεός); see Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 55, 1 (Bobichon I, 320): ἕτερος θεὸς παρὰ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων. For Justin's teaching concerning the Word of God, see, e.g., Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 139–175; Barnard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought*, 85–100; Denis Minns – Paul Parvis, *Justin Philosopher and Martyr, Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 61–65. For

numerically distinct (ἕτερός ἐστι ἀριθμῷ) from him.[27] In *Dial.* 48–62, after the Jew Trypho asks Justin for proof that Christ existed before the ages as God,[28] Justin comments on witnesses from the Bible[29] which support his conviction that the God who appeared before Abraham, Jacob, and Moses is different from God the Creator in number, but not in mind (ἕτερός ἐστι … ἀριθμῷ λέγω ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμῃ).[30] He then treats the Biblical account of the apparition of God to Moses in the burning bush (*Ex* 3) and agrees with Trypho that God who talked with Moses and the Angel who was seen 'were two' (δύο ἦσαν) in the apparition and assumes that it was not the Creator and Father of all things who was talking with Moses, but the one who was doing the will of the Creator of the universe.[31] To counter the objection of ditheism, Justin defends the union of the Word of God with God the Father and claims that the Son–Word was brought forth or begotten from the Father before the creation of the world. For the last-mentioned teaching, *Prov* 8 is Justin's most important Biblical witness. Let us examine the exposition in *Dial.* 61–62 in more detail.

In *Dial.* 61, 1, Justin announces the Biblical proof for the existence of a 'certain power endowed with reason'[32] (δύναμίν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικήν), begotten of God Himself before all creation. He adds that this power has many names, including the Glory of the Lord, Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, Lord, and Word, and that it lays claim to these because of the service it performs according to the will of the Father and its begottenness from the will of the Father.[33] In *Dial.* 61, 2, Justin compares the Son–Word to an uttered human word that is not separate from the word/

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the edition, see Philippe Bobichon, *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec Tryphon*, I–II (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003).

[27] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 56, 11; 62, 2; 128, 4 (Bobichon I, 328, 350, 530). In his *First Apology*, Justin also defines him as being 'in the second place' (ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ) regarding God the Father; see Justin, *Apol.* I,13,3–4 (Minns–Parvis 110); '… we have learnt that he is the son of the true God, and we hold him in the second place, with the prophetic Spirit in the third rank' (υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντως θεοῦ μαθόντες καὶ ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ ἔχοντες, πνεῦμά τε προφητικὸν ἐν τρίτῃ τάξει).

[28] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 48, 1 (Bobichon I, 302).

[29] As proofs that they were two, Justin mentions *Psalm* 109:1 LXX ('The Lord said to my Lord…'; Εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου…,) and *Psalm* 44:8 LXX ('Therefore, God, your God, anointed you with oil of rejoicing beyond your partners'; διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου).

[30] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 56, 11 (Bobichon I, 328).

[31] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 60, 2 (Bobichon I, 344).

[32] Or better: 'identified with the Word'; see my argumentation below. Justin argues against an unhypostatical understanding of the term Power in *Dial.* 128–129, see p. 117.

[33] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 1; for the text and translation, see below, p. 113 and note 35.

reason in us nor is it diminished and to the fire that does not lessen the brilliance of the fire that enkindles it. Moreover, as Justin claims, this enkindled fire exists on its own (αὐτὸ ὂν φαίνεται). Thus, he introduces the Word of God as a subsisting being of God begotten before the creation of the universe according to the will of the Father and subsequently proves this with a long quote taken from *Prov* 8, verses 21a–36 LXX. But how does Justin employ the terms typical of this Biblical passage in his own exposition?

The expressions originating from *Prov* 8 occur particularly in two accounts: first, in the opening section of Justin's exposition (*Dial.* 61, 1) and second, in the statement that is made just before the quote itself (*Dial.* 61, 3). To be able to follow the whole Justin's argument, I will go through the section *Dial.* 61, 1–3. In *Dial.* 61, 1, we read:

> 'So, my friends,' I said, 'I shall now show from the Scriptures that God has begotten of Himself a certain power endowed with reason as a beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this power by various titles, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, at other times Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word. He even called Himself Commander-in-chief when He appeared in human guise to Josue, the son of Nun. Indeed, He can justly lay claim to all these titles from the fact both that He performs the Father's will and that He was begotten[34] by an act of the Father's will.'[35]

Justin writes about the generation of the power of God, which is identified with the Word ('the λογική power/Power') and with the beginning/Beginning (ἀρχή) before the creation of the universe. Several

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[34] Or: 'He was made'. In the modern editions (Bobichon, *Justin Martyr*, I, 346; *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich, *PTS* 38 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 175), the emendation γεγεννῆσθαι (made by Thirlby) is preferred, whereas γεγενῆσθαι (from γίγνεσθαι) occurs in the only preserved manuscript (*A – Parisinus Graecus* 450). If the phrase 'He was begotten/made' is considered in the context of Justin's previous exposition, which deals with the generation of the Power of God according to the will of God, the emendation seems to be justified – the form γεγεννῆσθαι fits to Justin's argument better than γεγενῆσθαι.

[35] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 1 (Bobichon I, 346): Μαρτύριον δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ὑμῖν, ὦ φίλοι, ἔφην, ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν δώσω, ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δύναμίν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικήν, ἥτις καὶ δόξα κυρίου ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου καλεῖται, ποτὲ δὲ υἱός, ποτὲ δὲ σοφία, ποτὲ δὲ ἄγγελος, ποτὲ δὲ θεός, ποτὲ δὲ κύριος καὶ λόγος, ποτὲ δὲ ἀρχιστράτηγον ἑαυτὸν λέγει, ἐν ἀνθρώπου μορφῇ φανέντα τῷ τοῦ Ναυῆ Ἰησοῦ· ἔχει γὰρ πάντα προσονομάζεσθαι ἔκ τε τοῦ ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ πατρικῷ βουλήματι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς θελήσει γεγεννῆσθαι.

expressions and notions can be considered as references to *Prov* 8:22ff. It is obviously the case of the term or the name beginning/Beginning (ἀρχή) and the notion of the existence of the divine person alongside God before the creation of all living beings. The notion of the pre-existence is expressed with the collocation πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων which may be regarded as a hint at πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν in *Prov* 8:25. Similarly, the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) could also refer to *Prov* 8:25, but the reference cannot be conclusively proven from the Justin's just quoted exposition and other instances should be explored. Finally, the name Wisdom is mentioned only in the list of the names of the begotten Power of God, so it cannot be taken as a clear reference to *Prov* 8:22ff. The clearest expression of *Prov* 8:22ff thus seems to be the term ἀρχή, which is used as the complement, i.e., in a similar grammatical structure as in *Prov* 8:22.

In the subsequent exposition (*Dial.* 61, 2), Justin demonstrates by means of the parallels to a human word and to fire what it means for him that the Word was brought forth or begotten:

> But, does not something similar happen also with us humans? When we bring forth a word, it can be said that we beget the word, but not by cutting it off, in the sense that our power of bringing forth words would thereby be diminished. We can observe a similar example in nature when one fire kindles another, without losing anything, but remaining the same; yet the enkindled fire seems to exist of itself and to shine without lessening the brilliancy of the first fire.[36]

For Justin, when people bring forth or utter a word it is as if they have begotten it. He supposes that a word is present in us (as reason or thought) and is brought forth whenever we utter it.[37] When uttered, the word is not diminished, just as a new fire, when enkindled, does not lessen the brilliance of the enkindling fire. Justin employs the verb γεννᾶν both when he describes his notion of bringing forth the human word and when he expresses the relation of origin of the Word from

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[36] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 2 (Bobichon I, 346): ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τοιοῦτον ὁποῖον καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν γινόμενον ὁρῶμεν; λόγον γάρ τινα προβάλλοντες, λόγον γεννῶμεν, οὐ κατὰ ἀποτομήν, ὡς ἐλαττωθῆναι τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν λόγον, προβαλλόμενοι. καὶ ὁποῖον ἐπὶ πυρὸς ὁρῶμεν ἄλλο γινόμενον, οὐκ ἐλαττουμένου ἐκείνου ἐξ οὗ ἡ ἄναψις γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ μένοντος, καὶ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀναφθὲν καὶ αὐτὸ ὂν φαίνεται, οὐκ ἐλαττῶσαν ἐκεῖνο ἐξ οὗ ἀνήφθη.

[37] Cf. also Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 151.

the Father. We have already read in *Dial.* 61, 1 that, according to Justin, God begot (γεγέννηκε) his Power–Word; the generation of the Word is emphasised again when he introduces the quote from *Prov* 8:21a–36 in *Dial.* 61, 3:

> My statements will now be confirmed by none other than the Word of Wisdom, who is this God begotten from the Father of the universe, and who is the Word and Wisdom and Power and Glory of Him who begot Him. Here are His words as spoken by Solomon… (the quote of *Prov* 8:21a–36 follows)[38]

Justin employs the terms originating from or hinting at the wording of *Prov* 8:22ff throughout his exposition in *Dial.* 61,1–3 prevailingly to explain the pre-existence of the divine Power–Word: the Power of God, identified with Word, is the Beginning before all creatures came to be. The notion of begottenness is elaborated on in the same passage, but it is not clear whether Justin draws this notion from *Prov* 8:25. The relationship between the speech of the Wisdom in *Prov* 8 and the notion of begottenness has not been expressed. In the last quoted passage, the phrase 'begotten from the Father of the universe' is not grammatically bound directly with the name of Wisdom (though her generation is witnessed with the statements of Wisdom in the quote from the Scripture) but with the expression 'this God' (οὗτος ὁ θεός) and 'the Word of Wisdom'.[39] Although we may infer that the expression 'the Word of Wisdom' (ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας) indicates that the Word and Wisdom are identified – similarly as above, the Power and Word were identified in the expression 'certain Power endowed with Word' (δύναμίς τις λογική) –, the notion of begottenness, the name of Word–Wisdom and the statement of the Wisdom in *Prov* 8:25 are, in my view, interconnected in Justin's so far analysed statements only indirectly or loosely.

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[38] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 3 (Bobichon I, 348): μαρτυρήσει δέ μοι ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὢν οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθείς, καὶ λόγος καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις καὶ δόξα τοῦ γεννήσαντος ὑπάρχων, καὶ διὰ Σολομῶνος φήσαντος ταῦτα.

[39] The term 'word' in the expression ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας might be understood as 'word' or 'speech' of the Wisdom since Justin quotes a part of Wisdom's speech (*Prov* 8:21a–36) immediately afterwards. But the extensive parenthesis following the expression 'the Word of Wisdom' demonstrates that Justin takes it as a Christological term: 'the Word of Wisdom who is this God begotten from the Father of the universe.' For the translation of the expression 'the Word of Wisdom', see Edwards, 'Justin's Logos,' 268, 270; Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 100. Bobichon, *Justin Martyr*, I, 349, translates otherwise: 'the Word of wisdom' (le Verbe de la sagesse).

In the exposition which follows immediately after the quote from *Prov* 8:21a–36 (*Dial.* 62, 1–3), Justin produces other Biblical witnesses to demonstrate the distinction between God and his Word in number. First, he refers to the Biblical description of the creation of man in *Gen* 1:26–28, where the exhortative plural 'let us make' is found: 'Let us make man according to Our image and likeness' (*Gen* 1:26). For Justin, this is not an exhortation of God to Himself nor to the elements (πρὸς τὰ στοιχεῖα), that is, to the earth or other similar substances. God spoke with One different in number from Himself (ἀριθμῷ ὄντα ἕτερον) and endowed with the Word (λογικόν).[40] Afterwards, Justin reminds the reader of the Biblical scene of Adam's expulsion from paradise (*Gen* 3:22), in which God says: 'See, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.' The phrase 'like one of us' clearly shows, as Justin claims, that there was a number of persons together – they were 'at least two' (τὸ ἐλάχιστον δύο).[41] Then, after rejecting the erroneous opinion that angels are God's partners in this dialogue, Justin identifies the person talking with God as God's offspring:

> But this offspring, who was truly begotten of the Father, was with the Father[42] before all creation and the Father talked with Him, as the Scripture through Solomon clearly showed us. It says that this offspring, who is called Wisdom by Solomon, is both a beginning before all His works and an offspring who was begotten by God.[43]

Thus, the plural forms in the book of *Genesis* ('let us make' and 'like one of us') are explained by Justin as references to the talk of the Father with his offspring (τὸ γέννημα) who was with the Father before all creation. This exegesis is supplemented by the witness from the Scripture made through Solomon that includes expressions 'before all (his works)' and 'Beginning' (πρὸ πάντων, ἀρχή). As we have seen above, these are important references to the pre-existence of the Word in Justin's statements, as well as indications of *Prov* 8:22ff. For the

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[40] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 2 (Bobichon I, 350).
[41] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 3 (Bobichon I, 350).
[42] Cf. 'I was present with him' (συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ) in *Prov* 8:27 and 'I was besides him' (ἤμην παρ᾽ αὐτῷ) in *Prov* 8:30.
[43] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 4 (Bobichon I, 350): ἀλλὰ τοῦτο τὸ τῷ ὄντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθὲν γέννημα πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνῆν τῷ πατρί, καὶ τούτῳ ὁ πατὴρ προσομιλεῖ, ὡς ὁ λόγος διὰ τοῦ Σολομῶνος ἐδήλωσεν, ὅτι καὶ ἀρχὴ πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ καὶ γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο, ὃ σοφία διὰ Σολομῶνος καλεῖται…

formulation of the relation of origin of the offspring from the Father, Justin avoids the verbs 'to create' (κτίζειν) and 'to establish' (θεμελιοῦν) from *Prov* 8:22–23 and uses the verb γεννᾶν only. It is employed as a verbal noun (τὸ γέννημα) and as an indicative of the verb in the pleonastic formulation 'the offspring (literally: 'the begotten one') who was begotten by God' (γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο). Thus, there are several references to the Scripture in Justin's account: there is the offspring who 'was with the Father before all creation' (cf. *Prov* 8:27.30), with whom the Father talked (cf. *Gen* 1:26), and who is 'both a beginning before all His works' (cf. *Prov* 8:22) and 'the offspring who was begotten by God' (cf. *Prov* 8:25?). The reference to *Prov* 8:25 is implied in the syntactical structure of Justin's, partly tautological, sentence: the offspring who is called Wisdom by Somolon is the beginning, as well as the offspring begotten by God. For Justin, the notion of generation implies the name of Wisdom and her speech as it was composed by Solomon.

Before I close this section on Justin's use of *Prov* 8, I will briefly discuss the last passage in which Justin quotes *Prov* 8:22ff. In *Dial.* 128–129, in the summary of his exegeses of the Old Testament theophanies, Justin reminds us of Moses' vision in the burning bush and apparitions of God's Power to Moses, Abraham, and Jacob. He argues against the notion of an (unhypostatical) power of God that goes forth from the Father and returns to him again, whenever the Father wishes. According to Justin, the Power, which the prophetic word also calls God,[44] does not differ from God in the name only (as in the case of light of the sun), but it is distinct in number (ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν τί ἐστι).[45] In *Dial.* 129, 3–4, Justin refers to other witnesses from *Genesis* (*Gen* 19:24 and 3:22)[46] and cites *Prov* 8:21a–25. He comments on the last quote as follows:

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[44] In *Dial.* 126, 2 (Bobichon I, 524) Justin quotes *Ex* 6:2–3 LXX: 'Then God spoke to Moyses and said to him: I am the Lord and I appeared to Abraam and Isaak and Iakob, being their God' (NETS).

[45] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 128, 3–4 (Bobichon I, 530), especially: καὶ ὅτι δύναμις αὕτη, ἣν καὶ θεὸν καλεῖ ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος, διὰ πολλῶν ὡσαύτως ἀποδέδεικται, καὶ ἄγγελος, οὐχ ὡς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ὀνόματι μόνον ἀριθμεῖται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν τί ἐστι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς προειρημένοις διὰ βραχέων τὸν λόγον ἐξήτασα, εἰπὼν τὴν δύναμιν ταύτην γεγεννῆσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρός, δυνάμει καὶ βουλῇ αὐτοῦ.

[46] The first verse (*Gen* 19:24) can be read as a statement about two Lords ('And the Lord rained … fire from the Lord out of heaven), the second (*Gen* 3:22) is the already mentioned scene of the expulsion of Adam ('Adam has become like one of us').

> At this point I said, 'Gentlemen, if you have followed me closely, you can see that Scripture declares that the offspring was begotten by the Father before entirely all creatures, and … that the begotten (Son) is numerically distinct from the begetting (Father).'[47]

Once again, Justin employs *Prov* 8:22ff as the Biblical proof of the pre-existence of the offspring before all creation and the numerical distinction between the Son and the Father. The Son's pre-existence is even emphasised in the phrase: '… the offspring was begotten of the Father before entirely all creatures', where 'entirely' (ἁπλῶς) seems to be Justin's deliberate intensification of the collocation 'before all' (πρὸ πάντων). The preference of the verb γεννᾶν for the formulation of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father arises again: Justin uses a pleonastic phrase 'the offspring was begotten by the Father' (γεγεννῆσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦτο τὸ γέννημα) which is remarkably similar to that in *Dial*. 62, 4 (γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο). However, the relationship between Wisdom and the generation of the offspring is referred to *Prov* 8:25 less clearly in *Dial*. 129 than in *Dial*. 61–62.

Thus, if we ask whether Justin's expositions of the pre-existence of the Word are based on the authority of *Prov* 8:22, it may be, in my view, concluded that the analyses of *Dial*. 61–62 and *Dial*. 128–129 have proven so. He refers to *Prov* 8:22 in the statements in which Justin most comprehensively treats the pre-existence of the second divine person. As for the relation of origin of the Word from the Father, the verb γεννᾶν is preferred in both passages which were examined. In *Dial*. 61–62, the relationship between the notion of begottenness of the offspring and the name of the Wisdom of God in the prophetical statements of Solomon is clearly referred to by Justin, which might indicate an implicit reference to *Prov* 8:25.[48]

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[47] Justin Martyr, *Dial*. 129, 3–4 (Bobichon I, 532), with Justin's comment: καὶ εἰπὼν ταῦτα ἐπήγαγον· Νοεῖτε, ὦ ἀκροαταί, εἴ γε καὶ τὸν νοῦν προσέχετε· καὶ ὅτι γεγεννῆσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦτο τὸ γέννημα πρὸ πάντων ἁπλῶς τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ λόγος ἐδήλου, καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον τοῦ γεννῶντος ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν ἐστι…

[48] cf. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 147–148, who claims that the Biblical witness for γεννᾶν is *Col* 1:15 in Justin Martyr, but he acknowledges the influence of *Prov* 8 as well.

3. Athenagoras of Athens

So far, I have analysed two passages in Justin Martyr in which the apologist treats, with reference to *Prov* 8, the pre-existence of Son–Word before the creation of the world, the numerical distinction of Son–Word from the Father, and the divinity of the Son (Word or Wisdom) regarding his begottenness from the Father. Athenagoras of Athens, another 2nd–century apologist, uses only one quotation from the passage *Prov* 8:22–25. It occurs in his *Legatio pro Christianis* ('A Plea for Christians') and the only verse cited from the passage is *Prov* 8:22.[49] After he finishes his exposition on the transcendent God who is taught by Christians so that they cannot be regarded as atheists, and who made everything through the Word issuing from him (*Leg.* 10, 1: διὰ <τοῦ παρ᾽> αὐτοῦ λόγου),[50] Athenagoras focuses on the Word of God. He confesses that alongside the uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite God, Christians apprehend that there is also a Son of God (*Leg.* 10, 1–2, especially: νοοῦμεν γὰρ καὶ υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ). Athenagoras strives to express both the unity of the Word with God the Father and the coming forth of the Word from the Father. On the one hand, he shows from the Scripture (especially from the *Gospel according to John*) that the Word is united with God, on the other, he describes the role of the Word as mediator between the transcendent God and the universe which is formulated with the terms 'form' (ἰδέα) and 'power' or 'activity' (ἐνεργεία). These terms may have been borrowed, as David Rankin has demonstrated, from a Middle-Platonic source, but Athenagoras adapts their meaning.[51] He writes in *Leg.* 10, 2:

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[49] For Athenagoras and his treatises, see, e.g., Athenagoras, *Legatio and De resurrectione*, edited and translated by William R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1972); there is also a Czech translation of *Legatio pro Christianis*, see *Athénagorás z Athén, Přímluva za křesťany*, úvod, překlad a poznámky [introduction, translation and notes] Monika Recinová (Praha: Pavel Mervart, 2019). For Athenagoras' teaching concerning the Father–Son relationship, see Barnard, *God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras*, 70–92, especially 81–87; Bernard Pouderon, *Athénagore d'Athènes, philosophe chrétien* (Paris: Beauschesne, 1989), 115–142, doi: https://doi.org/10.14375/NP.9782701020303; David Rankin, *Athenagoras. Philosopher and Theologian* (Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 107–108 and 129–135.

[50] The collocation 'from him' is the editor's conjecture (SC 379, 100). For similar formulations, see *Leg.* 4, 2 (πάντα δὲ διὰ τοῦ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ λόγου πεποιηκότα), 10, 5; 12, 3; 18, 2; 30, 6 (SC 379, 84.102.108.128.190). The Spirit is also 'from him', see *Leg.* 6, 2 (SC 379, 90).

[51] See Alcinous, *Didasc.* 10 (Les belles lettres 336, 22–24), where this Platonic philosopher speaks of the Primary Mind which is 'everlastingly thinking itself and its own thoughts – and this activity is Form' (ἑαυτὸν ἂν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ νοήματα ἀεὶ νοοίη,

On the contrary, the Son of God is the Word of the Father in form and power; for from him and through him all things came into existence (*John* 1:3), which presupposes that the Father and the Son are one (cf. *John* 10:30). Now since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son (cf. *John* 14:10) by a unity and power of spirit, the Son of God is the mind and reason of the Father.[52]

Thus, Athenagoras refers to the Father and the Son as a cause and as a mediator, emphasising their unity and calling the Son of God the mind and reason of the Father. Then he explains the relation of origin of the Son from the Father. He rejects the idea that the Son came to be (οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον); the Son–Word is 'the first offspring' (πρῶτον γέννημα) and came forth to serve as ἰδέα and ἐνεργεία for all creation (*Leg.* 10, 3–4):

If … you would like to know what 'Son' means, I will tell you in a few brief words: it means that he is the first offspring of the Father. The term is used not because he came into existence (for God, who is eternal mind, had in himself his word/reason from the beginning, since he was eternally endowed with word/reason). … He (*sc.* the Word) came forth (to serve) to the creation as form and power. The prophetic Spirit also agrees with this account, for it says: 'The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways for his works.'[53]

The Son–Word came forth (προελθών) to mediate the creation of the universe as the offspring (γέννημα) of the Father. Athenagoras differentiates between the Son (who is called a 'child' here: παῖς) and the creation by distinguishing the expressions γέννημα and γενόμενον (that are a derivation and a form originating from the different verbs γεννᾶν

καὶ αὕτη ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτοῦ ἰδέα ὑπάρχει). Athenagoras seems to have deliberately chosen the language of contemporary Platonism, using it for his own purpose and without accepting Alcinous' concept of the Primary Mind. For Athenagoras' use of the terms ἐνέργεια and ἰδέα and his possible source, see Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 131–132.

[52] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 2 (SC 379, 100): ἀλλ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ· πρὸς αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο, ἑνὸς ὄντος τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ. ὄντος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ἐν υἱῷ ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος, νοῦς καὶ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

[53] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 3–4 (SC 379, 100–102): εἰ δὲ … σκοπεῖν ὑμῖν ἔπεισιν, ὁ παῖς τί βούλεται, ἐρῶ διὰ βραχέων· πρῶτον γέννημα εἶναι τῷ πατρί, οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον (ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ θεός, νοῦς ἀίδιος ὤν, εἶχεν αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, ἀιδίως λογικὸς ὤν), … ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἰδέα καὶ ἐνέργεια εἶναι, προελθών. συνᾴδει δὲ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα·"κύριος γάρ", φησίν, "ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ."

and γί[γ]νομαι). He uses the verb 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι): the Son–Word, which is in the Father through the unity and power of spirit (*Leg.* 10, 2),[54] comes forth as γέννημα of the Father to mediate the creation. Nowhere in his exposition does Athenagoras employ the verb 'to create', though he cites *in extenso* only *Prov* 8:22 (which does use it) and prefers 'to come forth'. On the other hand, he does not produce any Biblical witness for the term γέννημα, as far as I can see. Athenagoras seems to quote *Prov* 8:22 as the evidence for the creation of the relationship of the Son–Word to the world that would be created, the relationship that is formulated with collocations 'as the beginning of his ways' and 'for his works' in the Biblical verse. *Prov* 8:22 is the witness to the creation of the relationship between the Son–Word (–Wisdom, though Athenagoras does not mention this divine name in the passage[55]) and the on-coming universe.[56] In my view, it cannot be demonstrated from the wording of Athenagoras' exposition that the verb 'to beget' is used with reference to the text of *Prov* 8:25.

4. Theophilus of Antioch

The last early Christian apologist whose usage of *Prov* 8 I plan to consider, Theophilus of Antioch, shares with Justin and Athenagoras

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[54] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 2 (SC 379, 100): ὄντος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ἐν υἱῷ ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος.

[55] For an explicit identification of the Son with Wisdom, see Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 24, 2 (cf. also note 56).

[56] In the quote from *Leg.* 10, 3–4, *Prov* 8:22 is introduced with a reference to the Holy Spirit ('The prophetic Spirit also agrees with this account, for it says…'). Athenagoras treats the Holy Spirit as the divine person inspiring predictions of prophets in other statements as well (cf. *Leg.* 7, 3; 9, 1 / SC 379, 94.98). But does the present reference not indicate that Athenagoras regards *Prov* 8:22 as a statement on the Holy Spirit? Is it possible that the prophetic Spirit speaks of himself saying: 'Lord created me…'? Athenagoras continues: 'Further, this same holy Spirit, which is active in those who speak prophetically, we regard as an effluence of God which flows forth from him and returns like a ray of the sun' (*Leg.* 10, 4 / SC 379, 102). This statement seems to have been added with reference to the previous account of the Son–Word: as the Word comes forth (προελθών), so the Spirit is effluence of God (ἀπόρροια). The metaphor of effulgence is subsequently developed into the figure of a ray of the sun which flows forth and returns. Therefore, I assume that the last statement applies to the Holy Spirit, while the quote of *Prov* 8:22 closes the section concerning the Son. In addition, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinguished in a similar way in *Leg.* 24, 2 (SC 379, 160–162): the Son is the mind, reason, and wisdom of the Father, while the Holy Spirit is an effulgence, like the light from a fire. For Athenagoras' pneumatology, see Barnard, *God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras*, 87–90; Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 135–139.

the concept of the Word everlastingly being in the Godhead and coming forth from the Father before the creation of the world. He employs the terms λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός, which originated from the Stoic teaching on the human soul and were also used by Philo of Alexandria in a similar context.[57] Theophilus distinguishes the Word and the Wisdom as the two hands God used when he created man (*Ad Autol.* II, 18).[58] For him, God, the Word, and the Wisdom are three (τριάς), though he adds that there is also the fourth – man (*Ad Autol.* II, 15).[59] On the other hand, Theophilus identifies the Wisdom of God with the Word and employs the names Wisdom and Beginning for the Word of God, which are of interest in our investigation. Consequently, he does not seem to develop a consistent notion of the Trinity and come to invariable distribution of names to divine persons. As with the other apologists of his time, Theophilus emphasises the instrumentality of the Word and Wisdom in God's creation of the world.[60]

Theophilus does not quote *Prov* 8:22ff *in extenso* in his treatise *Ad Autolycum*, but he refers to this Biblical passage at least in two instances. In his remarks and expositions on the relationship between the Father and the Word, two tendencies stand out that were discussed in the theologians examined earlier. First, Theophilus seems to have tended to indicate coming forth of the Wisdom from the Godhead with the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν). In *Ad Autol.* I, 3, he puts it thus: 'If I say Wisdom, I speak about His offspring' (σοφίαν ἐὰν εἴπω, γέννημα αὐτοῦ λέγω). Second, Theophilus describes two notions of the relationship between the Word and the Father: when the Word is in God and when the Word comes forth for the creation of the universe. Regarding the first kind of relationship, the expressions '(the Word is) immanent' (ἐνδιάθετος), 'in

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[57] According to Sextus Empiricus, following Chrysippus, man differs from the irrational animals not in the words he utters, for crows and parrots and magpies utter distinct sounds, but in his inner word/reason (see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VIII,275 / Bekker 347). For the two *logoi* in each human being, see also Philo of Alexandria, *De vita Mosis* II,129 (LCL 289, 510). Cf. Robert M. Grant, 'Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus,' *Harvard Theological Review* 40, no. 4 (1947): 227–256, especially 245–246.

[58] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 18 (SC 20, 144).

[59] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 15 (SC 20, 138).

[60] For Theophilus' Trinitarian teaching, see Grant, 'Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus,' 245–252; id., 'Scripture and Theology in Theophilus,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 13, no. 1 (1959): 33–45, especially 37–43; id., 'Introduction,' in *Theophilus, Ad Autolycum*, ed. Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Oxford univ. Press, 1970), XV–XVII; id., *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia – The Westminster Press, 1988), 169–171; Rick Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch. The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham – Boulder – New York – Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000), 73–118.

his own bowels' (ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις), and 'in the heart of God' (ἐν καρδίᾳ θεοῦ) occur.[61] The relation of origin is expressed with the verbs 'to beget' and 'to erupt', whereas the verbs 'to come forth' and 'to bring forth', which we also read in the statements of Justin and Athenagoras, are not used.[62] Theophilus writes in *Ad Autol.* II, 10:

> Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his own bowels, begot him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth (cf. *Psalm* 44:2a LXX) before everything else. He used this Logos as his servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things. He is called Beginning because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him (cf. perhaps *John* 1:3).[63] It was he, Spirit of God and Beginning and Sophia and Power of the Most High (cf. *Luke* 1:35),[64] who came down into the prophets and spoke through them about the creation of the world and all the rest. For the prophets did not exist when the world came into existence; there were the Sophia of God which is in him and his holy Logos who is always present with him.[65]

Theophilus writes about the origin of the pre-existent Word. He treats this topic before commenting on what he describes as 'the first teaching which the divine Scripture gives', i.e., the account of the creation of the world that God made for man.[66] As for the relation of origin

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[61]   See Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10.22 (SC 20, 122.154).

[62]   Theophilus deals with the same topic (the relation of origin of the Word from the Father) in *Ad Autol.* II, 22 (SC 20, 154). The verb γεννᾶν is used here again. As for witnesses from the Bible, the exposition of the Word ἐνδιάθετος and προφορικός is based on *John* 1:1c–2, the pre-existence of the Word is testified to with reference to *Col* 1:15, and the constant conversation of the God with his Word is referred to with *Gen* 1:26. Theophilus makes no hint at the text of *Prov* 8:22ff, as far as I can see.

[63]   If this is a reference to *John* 1:3, Theophilus' wording differs substantially from John's; whereas we read in *John* 1:3: πάντα δι᾿ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, Theophilus' wording is: πάντων τῶν δι᾿ αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων.

[64]   The title 'Son' is missing from the list of names for the second divine person; it occurs in *Ad Autol.* II, 22 (SC 20, 154: ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν καὶ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ).

[65]   Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): Ἔχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας ἐξερευξάμενος πρὸ τῶν ὅλων. τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἔσχεν ὑπουργὸν τῶν ὑπ᾿ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων, καὶ δι᾿ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν. οὗτος λέγεται ἀρχή, ὅτι ἄρχει καὶ κυριεύει πάντων τῶν δι᾿ αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων. οὗτος οὖν, ὢν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου, κατήρχετο εἰς τοὺς προφήτας καὶ δι᾿ αὐτῶν ἐλάλει τὰ περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἁπάντων. οὐ γὰρ ἦσαν οἱ προφῆται ὅτε ὁ κόσμος ἐγίνετο, ἀλλ᾿ ἡ σοφία ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ἐν αὐτῷ οὖσα καὶ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἅγιος αὐτοῦ ὁ ἀεὶ συμπαρὼν αὐτῷ.

[66]   See Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): Ταῦτα ἐν πρώτοις διδάσκει ἡ θεία γραφή.

of the Word, Theophilus does not quote any Biblical witnesses for the verbs 'to beget' and 'to erupt' (ἐξερεύγεσθαι). In the just quoted passage, the latter verb might be regarded as an implicit reference to the verse of *Psalm* 44:2 LXX: 'My heart erupted with a goodly word' (Ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν); as for the verb 'to beget', following observation can be made. The Word, which seems to be Theophilus' preferred term for the coming-forth mediator in the quoted passage, is identified with Wisdom in the section where 'to beget' is used: God 'begot him (i.e., the Word) together with his own Sophia'. Theophilus' formulation is awkward enough to suppose that it was his intention to mention the name of Wisdom while thematising 'to beget'. His statement from *Ad Autol.* I, 3: 'If I say Wisdom, I speak about His offspring (γέννημα),' can now be reversed: when Theophilus speaks of the begetting of the pre-existent mediator, the Word, he has in mind God's Wisdom as well. Although *Prov* 8:25 is not quoted, it might be hinted at, particularly when the quote from *Prov* 8 occurs just after the above-cited Theophilus' exposition. It is a reference to *Prov* 8:27 and 8:29–30a as Biblical witnesses of Theophilus' statement that 'the Wisdom of God … is in him and his holy Word … is always present with him'.[67]

Conclusion

The analysis of the usage of quotes and references of *Prov* 8:22–25 in the writings of the three early Christian theologians, Justin, Athenagoras, and Theophilus, has led to several conclusions, some appliable to all of them, some others valid for one or two of them. We have seen three different ways of referring to the present Biblical text: Justin quotes the present passage twice (in the first instance, he includes *Prov* 8:22–25 in the longer passages from *Prov* 8), Athenagoras incorporates just one extract (of the single verse *Prov* 8:22), and Theophilus makes reference to the same verse without quoting it *in extenso*.

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[67] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): 'For this reason he speaks thus through Solomon the prophet: When he prepared the heaven, I was with him, and when he made strong the foundations of the earth I was with him binding them fast' διὸ δὴ καὶ διὰ Σολομῶνος προφήτου οὕτως λέγει· Ἡνίκα δ᾽ ἡτοίμασεν τὸν οὐρανόν, συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ, (*Prov* 8:27a) καὶ ὡς ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς, ἤμην παρ᾽ αὐτῷ ἁρμόζουσα (*Prov* 8:29–30a). For Theophilus' usage of *Proverbs*, see also Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 81.

Prov 8:22ff is employed by all three authors in expositions in which they formulate the relation of origin of the Son from the Father before and for the creation of the world. The most emphasised characteristic of the coming forth of the second divine person is pre-existence: the Son–Word comes forth before the creation of the world and man. Another characteristic is the designation of the Son–Word as the 'Beginning', which is used as the expression for the distinction 'in number' in Justin and with respect to the creation of the world in Theophilus; it does not occur in Athenagoras. Both these characteristics (pre-existence of the Word and the Word as 'Beginning') are witnessed with reference to the verse *Prov* 8:22.

None of the three apologists attempts to express the coming forth of the Word with the verbs 'to create' (κτίζειν) and 'to establish' (θεμελιοῦν) from *Prov* 8:22–23. Next to the verbs 'to bring forth' (προβάλλειν) and 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι), all three authors predominantly employ the verb γεννᾶν ('beget') or the verbal noun γέννημα ('offspring') in their formulations of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father. Justin and Theophilus indicate that the begottenness of the Son is connected with the name of Wisdom in their thought. However, no explicit reference to *Prov* 8:25 can be established in any statements of the three early Christian authors with regard to the usage of γεννᾶν in the given context. It can be argued (*ex silentio*) that none of the authors attempted to base his notion of the generation of the Son of God (the Word or Wisdom) on another Biblical witness. But it is more appropriate to say that they seem to have not considered it necessary to corroborate their usage of the verb 'to beget' with any explicit Scriptural reference. Still, in Justin, and perhaps in Theophilus as well, it can be traced from several hints that they could have had in mind *Prov* 8:25 when they spoke of begetting of the Wisdom.

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