

This study seeks to interpret Athanasius' concept of deification in close connection with his doctrine of God. It asks where Athanasius placed the source of divinity (in the generic essence or the Father?), in which way he used the Nicene homoousios formula, and what he meant by arguing that the Son was equally divine with the Father. It asks further how Athanasius' understanding of God affected the way he described salvation as deification and related three major soteriological aspects to each other: relational, ontological, and juridical. To answer these questions, this thesis examines the way Athanasius responded to the pagan worldview (in his early treatise *Contra Gentes—De Incarnatione*) and the Arian thought (mainly in his *Orationes Contra Arianos* and several other later writings). It observes that Athanasius' understanding of God was in sharp contrast to Arius' theology, and that his interpretation of the homoousios formula makes most sense in the context of his anti-Arian arguments. It comes to the conclusion that Athanasius' understanding of the Father-Son relationship led him to consider incarnation and crucifixion within the relational framework. In this framework the qualities of godlikeness (whether ontological or juridical) are tied to the way God gives us himself and restores us to the original state of relationship with him.