Tradition in the Theological Thought of Basil of Caesarea:

Context and Connotations



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To my Mother and Father

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Abstract: Short

My thesis is an analysis of Basil's appeals to tradition in his theological works, with a focus on *Against Eunomius* and, most importantly, *On the Holy Spirit*. The work begins with an analysis of *Against Eunomius*, focusing primarily on the context of the work, the influences on Basil's thought and arguments in the treatise, and Basil's attempt to refute Eunomius' appeal to tradition. I have then traced ideas of tradition from *Against Eunomius* to *On the Holy Spirit*, and established the context of and purpose for the publication of the latter in 375 against Eustathius of Sebaste. Establishing the necessity of tradition for Basil's argument in *On the Holy Spirit*, I have broken down the jargon and reconstructed the exact nature of the "non-scriptural tradition" to which he appeals. Following this, I have analysed the context to consider whether this idea of non-scriptural tradition is an innovation, or a development of both Christian and Hellenistic influence (though of course the two are indelibly linked in the fourth-century Christian tradition). The latter appears to be the case. The final task has been establishing how this idea of tradition fits into Basil's theological epistemology. I argue, based on the tradition's apparent equality in establishing knowledge of divine things with Scripture, that Basil takes a holistic view of the Christian experience, in that all aspects of it have hidden within the (in Basil's eyes) undeniable truth of God as Trinity. To me, this holistic view is a natural product of his ascetic beliefs.

The scholarship on Basil's idea of tradition has, since the works of Hanson and De Mendieta in the mid-60s, been scant and cursory, with most generally agreeing with the pronouncements of De Mendieta on the matter. However, though De Mendieta's work is of significant value, it is very much a product of its time in the discipline of Patrology – the last fifty years have transformed the study of the early church, especially the fourth century. Both this, and the previous focus on *On the Holy Spirit* alone – often in far too small a space to explore the particularities of Basil's language, context and influences, and the theological implications of non-scriptural tradition – mean that, in my view, a new and more focussed study is very much required.

Abstract: Long

The particular brilliance of Basil of Caesarea as a theologian has been the subject of much recent patristic scholarship – we are currently seeing a resurgence of Basilian studies. With the contributions of Stephen Hildebrand, Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz in the form of both new translations and scholarly articles and monographs, the scholarly perspective on Basil has shifted significantly in the last two decades. However, so far the concept of tradition in Basil's thought – though central to both of his major theological treatises – has been largely unexplored. Gains were made in this area by Emmanuel Amand De Mendieta in conversation with R.P.C. Hanson in the 1960's, but scholarship has evolved significantly since then, and our understanding of the topography of fourth-century Christian discourse has been utterly transformed. It is my belief that a new work, which explores Basil's appeals to tradition and the implications of such ideas on his theological epistemology, is warranted, and would be a useful contribution to the new Basilian scholarship that has so recently emerged.

The main body of the thesis is in four parts. The first, *Tradition in Against Eunomius*, explores in depth the context for and content of Basil's appeal to tradition in *Against Eunomius*, his first major treatise. I will approach the context from two specific angles, beginning by exploring Basil's political alliances at this time with the homoians led by Basil of Ancyra, and more importantly the Caesarean Basil's mentor; Eustathius of Sebaste. Following that, I establish Basil's major influences in writing the work, finding an explicit connection to Didymus the Blind, and many allusions to Athanasius. We see the more direct influence of Athanasius in Basil's rejection of Eunomius' appeal to tradition, most notably in *Apology* 5: tradition for Basil here is the history of ecclesiastical assent to right scriptural exegesis, and though Eunomius feels vindicated by this tradition, Basil argues that it in fact condemns him. This does not mean that Basil's thought on tradition is devoid of innovation, however; Basil goes in some way beyond scripture, stating that the liturgy of baptism is also a tradition from which right beliefs on the Trinity can be ascertained: baptism is the church's exegesis of Matthew 28:19, and therefore guides the believer to understand a co-equal baptism and, as such, Eunomius' anomoianism must be rejected.I will end the chapter by considering the odd lack of – and sometimes disdain for – appeals to tradition in his late pre-episcopal works, and how his election to the bishopric of Caesarea led to an emboldened defence of tradition, in which Basil even goes so far in *Epistle* 125 to argue that the Creed of Nicaea itself – and therefore by extension the *homoousion* – is to be considered a *paradosis.*

My second and third chapters will be closely related. The second, entitled *Tradition and Conflict: Eustathius of Sebaste and the Appeal to Non-Scriptural Sources*, focuses on establishing the need for the appeal to non-scriptural tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*. This chapter begins by assessing the copious scholarship on to whom *On the Holy Spirit* was written and outlining the serious problem this poses for the text: it is dedicated to Amphilochius of Iconium but reads as an argument with Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil's estranged mentor. Herein I offer a new solution to the issue, where though the textual tradition and the conventions of book-dissemination in Late Antiquity make it indubitable that the work was intended for the eyes of Amphilochius, Eusthatius serves as the internal interlocutor, both as a result of Basil's recent theological conflict with him and as a means for Basil to work through the trauma of losing his friend and mentor to the fraught political landscape of the era. As such, I have closely related the content of *On the Holy Spirit* with *Epistle 223*, and claim that Basil's particular need to defend his doxological use of "with the Holy Spirit" is due to accusations of Sabellianism levelled against him by Eustathius. As it is through the defence of his doxology that Basil explores the secret and mystical

non-scriptural tradition of the church he claims to be drawing from, this connection is central to understanding the thrust behind Basil's major arguments. I then will deconstruct Basil's jargon to establish exactly what he means by *agraphos paradosis*, finding that he means non-scriptural sources of knowledge with visible patristic witness, legally equipollent with Scripture in the court of orthodoxy. The courtly language here is far from a metaphor: Basil sees himself as pleading his case to Eustathius in a forensic and legal environment, with Eustathius sat as the audience to his address. I will close the chapter by assessing the nature of the secrecy in which Basil claims the underlying meanings of these traditions – here *dogmata* – must be kept, exploring the idea in connection with the so-called *disciplina arcani*, considering whether Basil's idea of tradition aptly fits within this taxonomy and if there is truly an historical precedent for the secret doctrines and practices to which he appeals: in this regard Basil is rather more innovative than he can disclose.

Chapter three follows directly from two. Having established the philology and broad context of late antique religious practice, chapter 3 – entitled *The Secret and Mystical Tradition* – turns its gaze to the conceptual questions and Hellenistic influences that require addressing. I begin by observing practical or conceptual similarities with the mystery cults, the Pythagorean *akousmata*, and the unwritten doctrines (ἄγραφα δόγματα) of Plato. I then analyse a contemporaneous source that makes similar demands for secrecy; the corpus of Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril focuses on exegesis, and the call to secrecy that permeates his *Catechetical Orations* – particularly in *Procatechesis* 12 and *Catechesis* 5.12 – contains every interpretation of Scripture he imparts to his *phōtizomenoi*. A parallel is drawn here between Basil and Cyril; it appears Basil sees the esoteric meanings behind liturgical practices as the aspects of tradition that require hiddenness the most, while Cyril sees the true meaning of scripture as being worthy of the same secrecy. Basil is applying the same approach, but to a different object. A link between the two is hard to establish, but based on the Origenic method of exegesis used by Cyril in his *Homily on the Paralytic*, and his likely Caesarean training, a devotional link to Origen between the two can be established here. Both actively advocate a *theōrike* method of interpretation, in which the simple word or act is rightly contemplated to reveal the hidden and esoteric meaning behind it. This is coherent with Origen's idea commonly termed a doctrine of *reserve* contained within the preface to *On First Principles*. However, Basil is probably closer than Cyril to Origen; there are to him simple believers and those Christians within the church – the élite – who are capable of participating in the divine reality, and are therefore capable of beholding through contemplation in the Spirit the Son and, by extension, the Father. Non-scriptural tradition, then, is a source of knowledge equal in legal force to scripture that is decoded in exactly the same way – through applying the appropriate method of exegesis.

My final chapter, entitled *Tradition, Illumination and the Reconstruction of Basil's Theological Epistemology*, places this idea of tradition within the wider bounds of Basil's theory of divine knowledge. Basil believes non-scriptural tradition reveals truth in the same way that scripture does, through exegesis. However, Basil differs from both Cyril and Origen's ideas about who the élite are. While Cyril's focus is on the baptised, and Origen's on the spiritual exegete, Basil's is on the ascetic and the *koinonia* with the Spirit that ascetic discipline helps engender, along with divine and noetic illumination. *On the Holy Spirit* is written by an ascetic, for an ascetic, and dedicated to an ascetic. That all three men are bishops is a secondary concern, and an avenue which has been unsuccessfully exhausted by Basil in earlier efforts. It is in their shared asceticism, in which Eustathius was Basil's long-serving mentor, that Basil appeals as a final but calculated last-ditch. It is also the clearest method by which Basil can vindicate the Spirit's homotimity – and by extension consubstantiality – as I will demonstrate that the ascetic is only made élite, in Basil's eyes, because the purity of heart they attain through ascetical practice is the method by which one is sufficiently perfected to receive the noetic light of the Spirit in a more concentrated dose, as it were, than any other. Furthermore, since only God could reveal the mysteries of its attributes, it is in this most mystical aspect of revelation through the

contemplation of tradition that Basil completes his argument that the Spirit is *homotimos*, with the underlying implication that it is also *homoousios*. Basil's holistic view of the sources of divine knowledge – Scripture, tradition and nature – is so because all these things are created and inspired by God and are there for the ones capable of reading it to decipher them correctly. I will then return to the idea of illumination, observing that it is only through the right application of *theōria* while being illumined by the Spirit that such knowledge can be properly attained. Therefore tradition, as with Scripture and nature, rightly contemplated, leads to the vision of and participation in the divine existence.

My conclusion will deal with the three major implications of this work. The first, and most directly important to his Trinitarian thought – the major theme of both key works within this thesis – is how the Spirit is explicitly vindicated as *homotimos* and tacitly vindicated as *homoousios*, being made the source of all divine knowledge man can attain through *theōria* and *askēsis*. I will then explore what this means for the study of ascetic pneumatology and theological epistemology, in which I will argue that Basil's approach is unique, and that a separate monograph is warranted to explore early ascetic discourses on the attainment of the vision of God. Finally, I wish to posit that Basil appeals to tradition because arguments over scripture have failed. Basil is a man who is in a permanent state of anguish at the state of the church, comparing it in the final chapter of *On the Holy Spirit* to the Peloponnesian war, employing the military language of Thucidydes and the war-critical language of Aristophanes in his *Acharnians*. His defence of tradition is unusual for a theologian who otherwise is perfectly satisfied with scripture alone, and the question of why Basil appeals to tradition here has been a cause of fascination – and often irritation – for scholars for centuries. As such, I want to end the thesis by meditating on the fact that tradition is appealed to in the desperate hope that the church might once again become one, and that we must understand Basil's defence of non-scriptural tradition to be a final and impassioned attempt to mend the deep wounds the Arian controversy has caused on the church and the people whom he loved.

I believe this study contributes to the scholarship in three major ways. The first is, of course, our understanding of what Basil means when he refers so cryptically to tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*, where such an idea could have come from, and what implications it has on his wider theological thought. The second is a greater understanding of Basil's conflicts with both Eunomius and Eustathius and the influence of his loyalties on how he writes these works – in particular, I hope this thesis helps to humanize a man even we scholars too often think of as a set of works, and establish the importance of Eustathius as both influence and opponent; a source of inspiration and source of pain in Basil's life. Finally, my work touches strongly on how ascetic thinkers construct their idea of God from non-scriptural sources, and the application of contemplation, typified as *Theōria*. I believe this work will contribute to the few discussions on ascetic theological epistemology we have, and lay the groundwork for further research on this topic.

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INTRODUCTION

> For the Lord, either through me or through others, will give a full explanation of anything left over according to the knowledge supplied to the worthy by the Spirit. Amen.[1]
>
> Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit*

> *Traditions, when vital, embody continuities in conflict*.[2]
>
> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

It is perhaps unoriginal to use this second quotation epigrammatically, it also serving as the introduction to Rowan Williams' landmark monograph on Arius.[3] If such a statement was relevant to the scope of Williams' work, however, the same is true of this dissertation *a fortiori*. MacIntyre's observation would have no doubt upset Basil of Caesarea – or any other theologian of his age for that matter – yet his words and actions from the first years of his ecclesiastical career to his last prove MacIntyre quite right. The question of tradition is no less relevant than in times of church conflict, and so tradition is only really defined and shaped in these periods of division and upheaval.

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[1] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 30,79.

[2] MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 221.

[3] See Williams, Rowan. *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1987).

INSPIRATION

Basil of Caesarea entered this world on the slopes of a dormant volcano in his ancestral home of Pontus. The ecclesiastical environment into which he was born, however, was anything but dormant – Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge and the subsequent promulgation of the Edict of Milan were recent memories, and the council of Nicaea four years previous had done little to resolve the Trinitarian controversies that gripped the church. If he were from any other family, these events would likely have been of little consequence; Basil, however, was the descendent of martyrs and his maternal grandmother, Macrina the Elder, was mentioned in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* and was a follower of Gregory the Wonderworker – or Gregory Thaumaturgus – the most notable pupil of Origen. Basil's generation were no slouches either: he and three of his siblings – Macrina the Younger, Peter of Sebaste and his fellow "Cappadocian Father" Gregory of Nyssa – all were canonized as Saints by the churches, and Basil and Gregory are remembered as two of the most influential Christian thinkers to ever live. Coming, therefore, from a family to whom the living memory of the church was also their family history, it should be no surprise Basil held a healthy respect for tradition, and his commitment to it permeates his major doctrinal treatises to their very core.

Recent scholarship on Basil has tended to focus on his trinitarian theology, following Volker Drecoll's benchmark work on the development of Basil's thought on the matter.[4] In particular, there has been a resurgent interest in the treatise *Against Eunomius*, instigated by Lewis Ayres and carried forward by

[4] Drecoll, Volker. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea : sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, who have revolutionised our understanding of both the overarching argument and nuances of the treatises.[5] Bibliography on the Scriptural side is rather more scant, spearheaded by Stephen Hildebrand, generally in more introductory literature than that of the above scholars.[6] Within his theological – as opposed to the anthropological tone that dominates his monastic literature – thought, there remains one facet that needs re-exploring: the concept of tradition.

Basil's appeal to tradition in *Against Eunomius* is profoundly understudied – R.P.C. Hanson provides perhaps the longest gloss, and even then only to contrast it with the later and bolder theology of tradition Basil espouses in a later work: that of the closing chapters of *On the Holy Spirit*. That such a lacuna exists in the scholarship is rather remarkable: the argumentative body of Eunomius' *Apology* – to which Basil is responding in *Against Eunomius* – is prefaced with the asseveration that he is following tradition to the letter, and even evokes a creed to substantiate his claim.

[5] Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 187-221; Delcogliano, Mark and Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. *Against Eunomius* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2011); DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato*, 503-4. Vigiliae Christianae Vol.68(5), 2014, 498-532; *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); *Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341,* 471-6. Journal of Early Christian Studies 14 (2006), 459-84; *The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians on Basil of Caesarea's Decentralization of "Unbegotten."* Journal of Early Christian Studies, July 2011, Vol.19(2), pp.197-223; Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew & Ayres, Lewis. *Basil of Caesarea*, in Gerson, Lloyd Ed. *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* pp.459-470 (Cambridge: University Press, 2010); Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: University Press, 2009).

[6] Hildebrand, Stephen M. *Basil of Caesarea*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014); *Basil of Caesarea* (London: Routledge, 2018); *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth*. (Washington, D.C: CUA Press, 2007).

On the Holy Spirit has received significantly more interest from scholars, and with good reason. The argument of *Against Eunomius* has its brief moments of variation from the approach to tradition taken by earlier and contemporary patristic works, but is more stereotypical of its era and, given that the topic of tradition and its remit remain controversial to this very day, effects a less emotive response from a modern scholar or Christian. The same cannot be said of the appeal to tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*: it has often drawn interest from those who find its esoteric nature appealing and just as frequently has induced ire from those who find it to be gratuitous, and its critics include scholars as disparate in time and thought as Desiderius Erasmus and R.P.C. Hanson.

Basil's approach to the concept of tradition is inherently linked to his growth both as a theologian and as a human being. In *Against Eunomius*, Basil is as aggressive as he is assured: Eunomius is described as an idiot and a heretic, and the younger Basil relishes in bringing down the weight of tradition on his opponent. The work radiates youthful zeal and a love of argument for the sake of it. Reading *On the Holy Spirit*, if it weren't for Basil's telltale stylistic idiosyncrasies and grammatical dexterity, one might well think it to penned by a different man entirely. In many ways it was: *On the Holy Spirit* possesses all the tell-tale signs of a veteran's hand, one exhausted by conflict and desiring only peace, and Basil's approach to tradition changes with it. No longer is tradition a sword to cut down the enemies of the church, but is instead a needle and thread to stitch it back together – a much needed and long overdue means by which to nurse the church back to health after so many years of conflict. Being a bishop in the fourth century would have been tumultuous and exhausting for anyone, but it exacted a particularly heavy toll on Basil's health. Basil died at 49 years of age, and as his friend Gregory Nazianzen recounts, he was sallow and sickly for some time before that. He did not live to see his church at peace and the triumph of Pro-Nicene theology. Indeed, if he had, such a victory would to him have been bitter, won at too great a personal and ecclesiastical cost. As will be seen, this maturity and adversity is interwoven with his theological development, and his later idea and defence of tradition is a direct result of his

experiences. Finally, Basil's appeals to tradition are extremely revealing as to how Basil went about writing and engaging in theological discussion: they unveil, more than anything else, the extent to which Basil was a responsive theologian rather than a generative one. To analyse and interpret his theology of tradition is therefore to get to know Basil as a human being, and to watch his growth into the theologian who is remembered to this day as one of the greats.

STRUCTURE

This work is divided into four chapters, each exploring a specific aspect of Basil's thought on the concept of tradition, and each providing a contribution to the wider conversation on Basil's theological style and convictions. In particular, this thesis aims to challenge a major narrative of recent scholarship, and to return two aspects of Basil's personality to the forefront of the conversation on his Trinitarian thought. The narrative I wish to challenge is that of Basil as having *developed* into an orthodox Trinitarian, originally holding a view one would traditionally describe as *homoian,* advocating the persons to be *like* each other rather than the same in essence (homoousios). It is certainly true that Basil only became outspokenly Pro-Nicene in his later years, but where others have put this down to an authentic change of heart, I hope to demonstrate that it was instead a matter of political calculation; his outward position shifting towards Pro-Nicene thought where possible whilst compromising where expedient. This is directly related to the first facet of Basil's personality I wish to put forward: that he was foremostly a responsive theologian, writing only when necessary and usually with a mitigated version of his own position. Even *Against Eunomius*, his most forceful polemical work, is one formed out of political compromise, focussing on the refutation of Eunomius' doctrine of unlikeness rather than advocating for any specific alternative, satisfying many camps rather than planting his flag in just one. Much of the first two chapters thus provides what I believe to be a tenable alternative to the common narrative of Basil's theological development. In the second half of the thesis, I aim to propose that we must read

Basil's Trinitarian thought – and therefore by extension his understanding of tradition – through the lens of his ascetic understanding of the Christian life. Basil was an individual for whom the adherence to a pure Christian way of living was key to the attainment of the vision of God, yet this fact is often overlooked in favour of a more stringently intellectual view of his work, to the detriment of a full understanding of how Basil's perspective on Christianity influenced his theological thought, and vice-versa. A comprehensive study of tradition is arguably the best place to have this discussion – in contrast to the exploration of scriptural or philosophical sources, tradition manifests itself as the ideological and practical history of the church, and therefore is the best place to understand what Basil – in interacting with his forebears – understands Christianity to be, and who the individuals that most exemplify Christianity are.

Moreover, it must be understood that Basil was a man raised in Late Antique culture, and that the Christianity of his age was irremovably Late Antique. As a result, my method throughout this work will be to not only read Basil within the context of early Christian theology, but to compare and contrast his approach to the topics analysed herein with the intellectual and social cultures of his age. In many of the ways Basil innovates in his theology of tradition, it is not due to wholly original thought: instead, he often takes inspiration – both intentionally and unintentionally – from external sources, weaving them into his theology, as did every other Christian in the patristic period. This, along with the scant secondary literature on Basil's theology of tradition, will often lead me to quote him at some length. Not only does this enable a deeper analysis of his use of key concepts and language, but it also allows the man to speak for himself; on both sides of the scholarly debate, Basil has been judged too much on this subject by his similarity to his peers rather than by the nuances of his own argument.

The first chapter, *Tradition in Against Eunomius,* explores the political and theological context in which Basil authored *Against Eunomius,* and the nature of his appeal to tradition within the treatise. Where

others have been keen to define the Basil of this period as a *homoiousian* unaware of more homoousian literature and currents of thought, I instead wish to argue that Basil's alignment with Basil of Ancyra's party was a matter of political compromise, which is reflected in the sources he appears to employ in *Against Eunomius*. In particular, I want to question the common practice in scholarship of assuming that a lack of citation of a text is indicative of a lack of knowledge: Basil clearly knew Athanasius' works, but chose Didymus the Blind – a more reputable exegete and politically less controversial figure – as a source over him. Following this, I read *Against Eunomius* as a fundamentally responsive treatise, the notion of tradition outlined therein being formed as a response to Eunomius' simplistic non-Trinitarian creed, and Eunomius' belief that he is the inheritor and expositor of Patristic tradition. The idea of tradition expressed in *Against Eunomius* is mostly conventional for its era, being the history of ecclesiastical assent to right scriptural exegesis, and though Eunomius feels vindicated by this tradition, Basil argues that it in fact condemns him. This does not mean that Basil's thought on tradition is devoid of innovation, however; Basil goes in some way beyond scripture, stating that the liturgy of baptism is also a tradition from which right beliefs on the Trinity can be ascertained: baptism is the church's exegesis of Matthew 28:19, and therefore guides the believer to understand a co-equal baptism that directly contradicts the anomoianism of Eunomius. I will end the chapter by considering the odd lack of – and sometimes disdain for – appeals to tradition in his late pre-episcopal works, and how his election to the bishopric of Caesarea led to an emboldened defence of tradition, in which Basil even goes so far in *Epistle* 125 to argue that the Creed of Nicaea itself – and therefore by extension the *homoousion* – is to be considered a *paradosis.* Once more I suggest these shifts to be a matter of Basil's political awareness and of his tailoring of his views to the audience he is addressing, excusing himself where necessary whilst shifting towards Pro-Nicenism as much as possible without rousing dissent.

My second chapter, *Tradition and Conflict: Eustathius of Sebaste and the Appeal to Non-Scriptural Sources*, begins by assessing the copious scholarship on to whom *On the Holy Spirit* was written and

outlining the serious problem this poses for the text: it is dedicated to Amphilochius of Iconium but reads as an argument with Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil's estranged mentor. Herein I offer a new solution to the issue, where though the textual tradition and the conventions of book-dissemination in Late Antiquity make it indubitable the work was intended for the eyes of Amphilochius, Eusthatius serves as the internal interlocutor, both as a result of Basil's recent theological conflict with him and as a means for Basil to work through the trauma of losing his friend and mentor to the fraught political landscape of the era. As such, I have closely related the content of *On the Holy Spirit* with *Epistle 223*, suggesting that Basil's particular need to defend his doxological use of "with the Holy Spirit" is due to accusations of Sabellianism levelled against him by Eustathius. This is of particular importance to the discussion of tradition in the treatise, as it is through the defence of his doxology that Basil explores the secret and mystical non-scriptural tradition of the church he claims to be drawing from. With the purpose of authorship established, I will explore the difficult jargon in Basil's discussion on the nature of non-scriptural tradition to establish exactly what he means by *agraphos paradosis*, finding that he means a non-scriptural tradition with sufficient witness in the works of the fathers – mostly bishops, but Origen is included; perhaps due to his reputation as a castigator of heretics – that is legally equipollent to Scripture in the court of orthodoxy. Throughout this section, I will be pushing the fact that Basil always acts as a forensic when tradition is involved; it appears that Basil envisions himself as if he were a lawyer in court, defending the homotimity of the Spirit. As such, he acts not as the judge censoring Eustathius, but instead Basil is pleading his case towards the man. I will close the chapter by assessing the nature of the secrecy in which Basil claims these traditions – here *dogmata* – must be kept, exploring the idea in connection with the *disciplina arcani*, considering whether Basil's idea of tradition aptly fits within this taxonomy and if there is truly an historical precedent for the secret doctrines and practices to which he appeals.

Chapter three once more primarily focuses on *On the Holy Spirit*. However, where chapter 2 was far more philological and concerned with the immediate context of the appeal to tradition, chapter 3 – entitled *The Secret and Mystical Tradition* – is far more conceptual, exploring the wider context in the most depth. I begin by comparing Basil's commitment to the secrecy of doctrine to non-Christian religious and philosophical movements with particular focus on mystery cults, the Pythagorean *akousmata*, and the unwritten doctrines (ἄγραφα δόγματα) of Plato as alluded to in his seventh letter and explored by Aristotle in *Physics* 209b and *Metaphysics* 988b. I then analyse a contemporaneous source that makes similar demands for secrecy; the corpus of Cyril of Jerusalem. Cyril focuses on exegesis, and the call to secrecy that permeates his *Catechetical Orations* – particularly in *Procatechesis* 12 and *Catechesis* 5.12 – contains every interpretation of Scripture he imparts to his *phōtizomenoi*. A parallel is drawn here between Basil and Cyril; it appears Basil sees the esoteric meanings behind liturgical practices as the aspects of tradition that require hiddenness the most, while Cyril sees the true meaning of scripture as being worthy of the same secrecy. Basil is therefore applying the same approach, but to a different object. A link between the two is hard to establish, but based on the Origenesque method of exegesis used by Cyril in his *Homily on the Paralytic*, and his likely Palestinian Caesarean training, a devotional link to Origen of Alexandria between the two can be established here. Both actively advocate a *theōrētikē* method of interpretation, in which the simple word or act is rightly contemplated to reveal the hidden and esoteric meaning behind it. This is coherent with Origen's idea commonly termed a doctrine of *reserve* contained within the preface to *On First Principles*. However, Basil is probably closer than Cyril to Origen; there are to him simple believers and those Christians within the church – the élite – who are fit to participate in the divine reality, and are therefore capable of beholding through contemplation in the Spirit the Son and, by extension, the Father. Non-scriptural tradition, then, is a source of knowledge equal in legal force to scripture that is decoded in exactly the same way – through applying the appropriate method of exegesis.

My final chapter, entitled *Tradition, Illumination and the Reconstruction of Basil's Theological Epistemology*, takes up exactly where chapter 3 leaves off. Non-scriptural tradition is shown to reveal truth in the same way that scripture does, through exegesis. However, Basil differs from both Cyril and Origen's ideas about who the élite are. For Cyril, it is the baptised. For Origen, it appears to be the spiritual exegete capable of reading the text as only the most insightful can. For Basil, it is the ascetic. This should be no surprise considering the nature of the treatise in which this fully-formed and theologically mature appeal to tradition is found. *On the Holy Spirit* is written by an ascetic, in imagined dialogue with an ascetic, and dedicated to an ascetic. That all three men are bishops is ancillary, and appealing to Eustathius' episcopal sensibilities has thus far been a failure. It is in their shared asceticism, in which Eustathius was Basil's guide for so many years, that Basil appeals now. It is also the clearest method by which Basil can vindicate the Spirit's homotimity – and by extension consubstantiality – as I will demonstrate that the ascetic is only made élite, in Basil's eyes, because the purity of heart they attain through ascetical practice is the method by which one is sufficiently perfected to receive the noetic light of the Spirit in a more concentrated dose, as it were, than any other. Furthermore, since only God could reveal the mysteries about Godself, it is in this most mystical aspect of revelation through the contemplation of tradition that Basil completes his argument that the Spirit is *homotimos*, and the fullest possible picture of God as Trinity emerges. Though Basil remains unyielding in his view that the essence of God cannot be known, he contends that spiritual communion with and ascetical meditation on the divine persons unveils attributive knowledge that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

The four chapters into which this work is divided might also be considered as evaluations of the different dimensions of Basil as a thinker. The first helps us see Basil in his theological adolescence, taking his first few steps into the world of ecclesiastical politics. The second paints Basil as a mature theologian, careful in his words and consolatory in his tone. The third unveils him as a man of the

church, answering questions of doctrine with ecclesiological and liturgical responses. The final chapter shows him as an ascetic – an adherent to rigorous practice and a devotee to the philosophic life. These images – young and old, bishop and ascetic – might seem paradoxical, but as we will see, a writer like Basil cannot be understood in any other fashion.

TRADITION IN *AGAINST EUNOMIUS*

It is in *Against Eunomius*, Basil's first major theological treatise, that we see the earliest developments of his theology of tradition (παραδόσις). Though primarily reactionary and very much in agreement with the more common idea of tradition held by Basil's contemporaries the work nonetheless shows clear innovation in this regard, attacking Eunomius' own appeal to tradition as so unrepresentative and overly simplistic that it leads to out-and-out blasphemy, and presenting an unusual variation on the argument from Baptism and the Matthaean call for triple immersion. However, in discussing *Against Eunomius*, there is a significant amount of both general and proximate context that must be considered for two major reasons. The first is that Basil's movements during these early years and the theological preferences of the company he kept had a significant influence on a man that was still very much in the formative stage of his ecclesiastical career, and his use of particular sources place him in a position of straddling his own convictions and a Pro-Nicene sympathy with an argument that sources itself from several theological camps, seemingly advocating the party line of Eustathius of Sebaste and Basil of Ancyra whilst often echoing the expressly homoousian arguments of Athanasius and Apollinaris and - more openly – the exegetical thought of Didymus the Blind.[7] Much of *Against Eunomius* has recently been analysed in depth, and it as a text has experienced quite the revival in academic interest in the twenty-first century, especially through the work of Ayres, DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, who have documented its philosophical arguments most effectively. The role of tradition in the text, however, is

[7] Before continuing it is worth pointing out – a fact to which we will return – that the party of Eustathius and Basil of Ancyra, who argued in the words of the dated creed of Sirmium the Son is alike to the Father "according to all things" was one of several parties espousing conflicting *likeness*-theologies. Eudoxius of Antioch (also named Eudoxius of Constantinople) is also commonly identified – though not universally – as a *homoian* and expressed irreconcilable difference with Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius, serving as a patron to Eunomius and Aëtius and playing a role in their deposition at the 360 synod of Constantinople.

often overlooked – despite the fact that Eunomius' argument itself is heavily reliant on its appeals to tradition and Basil's naturally responds in kind. After establishing the context in which Basil authored this treatise, this chapter will primarily concern itself with Basil's emergent construction of a theology of tradition and the seeds of the high place in which it is held in the literature of his theological maturity.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE SYNOD OF 359/60 AND EUNOMIUS' *APOLOGY*

It was at Constantinople that Eunomius and Basil likely first crossed paths. Just as Eunomius was the protégé of the leader of the anomoean faction, Aëtius – and by extension the bishop of the city, Eudoxius – Basil was the protégé of Eustathius of Sebaste, one of the leaders of the other faction present at the synod.[8] It is perhaps helpful to give a short account of their relationship up to the synod of Constantinople, and therefore the circumstances by which Basil was present. Surprisingly little is known of Eustathius of Sebaste outside of his conflict with Basil, most of which comes from Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*. Indeed, he is most remembered by Sozomen for his monastic rules and his relationship to Basil:

> It is said that Eustathius, who governed the church of Sebaste in Armenia, founded a sect of monks in Armenia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus, and became the author of a zealous discipline, both as to what meats were to be partaken of or avoided, what clothes were to be worn, and what customs and exact manners of conduct were to be taken up. Some assert him to be the author of the ascetic treatises commonly attributed to Basil of Cappadocia (Basil of Caesarea).[9]

[8] For the relationship between Eustathius and Basil, see Gribomont, Jean. *Eustathe le philosophe et les voyages du jeune Basile de Césarée.* Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique, 54 (1959), 115–24.

[9] Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.14

Following this discussion of Eustathius as a bishop and a radical ascetic as regards religious practise, Sozomen goes on to note that Eustathius, with the other bishops deposed at the 360 council of Constantinople, embraced the Macedonian movement and was finally exiled by the emperor Valens to Thrace.[10] However, rather than the Macedonian he became – and indeed whatever such an affiliation entails – it was as the ascetic bishop that Basil first met Eustathius.[11] After finishing his education in 350-1, and a short stint teaching rhetoric in Caesarea in 355, Basil met Eustathius sometime between 356 and 357, a meeting which Stephen Hildebrand considers the point "Basil's religious spirit awakened."[12] Indeed, in his letter against Eustathius in June 375, Basil recalls the events leading up to his meeting with Eustathius:[13]

> Having mourned deeply my piteous life, I prayed that guidance be given me for my introduction to the doctrines of religion. And before all things else, I was careful to amend my ways, which for a long time had been perverted by my companionship with the indifferent. Accordingly, having read the gospel and having seen clearly there that the greatest means for perfection is the selling of one's possessions, the sharing with needy brethren, the complete renouncing of solicitude for this life, and the refusing of the soul to be led astray by any affection for things of earth, I prayed to find some one of the brethren who had chosen this way of life, so as to pass with him over life's brief and troubled waters…therefore, when I saw some men in our country trying to emulate their deeds (of ascetics in Egypt, Palestine and Syria), I thought I had found some assistance for my own salvation, and I considered the things seen as an indication of the things unseen.[14]

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[10] Ibid. 4,27; 6,13.

[11] I am generally in agreement – with one notable caveat – with Anatolios (*Retreiving Nicaea* 206-7) that "Macedonian" doctrine was to assert the homoousietēs of Father and Son while rejecting the homoousietēs of the Spirit with them. The caveat is that this can only really be said knowingly of Eustathius of Sebaste, since Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* assumes this to be common ground: considering the use of Macedonian as an invective, it is always troublesome to assume those tarred with such a brush did indeed possess the same Trinitarian proclivities. If not, perhaps we are better considering him ideologically as a *tropikos* à la the pneumatological opponents of Athanasius in his *Letters to Serapion*.

[12] Hildebrand, Stephen. *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth,* 19. Washington, D.C: CUA Press, 2007.

[13] For dating, see Fedwick, *A Chronology of Basil*, 16.

[14] Basil, *Ep. 223* (Deferrari, 127-8).

There can be no doubt that the "one of the brethren" in whom Basil found his prayers to be answered was Eustathius of Sebaste – *Letter 223* above was written in order to address their later disputes. As opposed to the monks in the desert, Eustathius was already a bishop, and so tried to straddle ascetic practise along with his pastoral responsibilities. This attempt, however, often put him in conflict with other members of the church, and he was arraigned before a council at Gangra in 355 for – among other things – his and his disciples' apparent reluctance to celebrate marriage in the churches under his purview, to pray and celebrate the Eucharist in the houses of married people, to celebrate sacraments with married priests, for dressing in ascetic habits rather than more traditional ecclesiastical clothing, and for fasting on days different to those prescribed by the church.[15] These ascetically-driven divergences from more accepted ecclesiastical norms have been stylised by Philip Rousseau as "a zealous reform of the church," and considering the heavy focus on rejecting marriage, traditional clerical garments and an intentionally rebellious choice of fasting days, any attempt to paint Eustathius at this point as anything other than a reformist would be difficult to maintain.[16] Though in line with the council of Gangra's decisions he dropped these more radical views, he maintained strongly ascetic leanings, and it is during this change in ideology that Basil came to be his protégé.[17]

[15] For the canons of the Council of Gangra in which these charges are brought forward and condemned, see LeClerq, Henri. *Histoire des Conciles: D'après les Documents Originaux*, (vol 1.2 of 8), 1029-1045. Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1907. Also, for the date of 355, see Barnes, Timothy D. *The Date of the Council of Gangra*, 121-4 in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Volume 40, Issue 1, 1 April 1989, 121–124.

[16] See Rousseau, Philip. *Basil of Caesarea*, 74-5. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.

[17] It is difficult to tell if Basil began to follow Eustathius because of his reputation as a holy man with respect for the church, or because of his attempts to reform the church in the image of ascetic ideology. Perhaps, in light of Basil's own reflections on himself as being somewhat rebellious against his Christian upbringing, his interests in joining up with Eustathius may be less to do with an interest in correct piety as he implies, but more to do with a need to satisfy the rebellious streak that by his own admission led him away from the church in early life.

Indeed, Basil's closeness to Eustathius was the catalyst for the authorship of *Against Eunomius*. By all accounts, Basil was present at the Council of Constantinople in 359/60 as a direct result of his relationship with Eustathius, and until very recently was viewed in the scholarship as, at this time in his career, a homoiousian in belief, as characterised by his use of *hypostasis* to describe the relationship between Father and Son.[18] This approach is based on the records of Basil's actions leading up to and during the 359/60 council by Philostorgius in his *Ecclesiastical History*:

> When the Emperor learned these things (the ratification of anomoian doctrine by Eudoxius and Aetius), he ordered everyone to Constantinople. And, in fact, nearly everyone from the West, the East and Libya came together there. Basil (of Ancyra) and Eustathius led those presenting the doctrine of "like according to essence," and they were supported by many others, among them also another Basil, who was still a deacon.[19]

Philostorgius then goes on to describe how Basil, "on account of his timidness shrank away from public debates." [20] However, some scholars, most notably Johannes Zachhuber, have contended that Philostorgius, as an anomoian himself, may have left out some of the more specific doctrinal positions

[18] See Zachhuber, Johannes. *Basil and the Three Hypostases Tradition*, 65. In *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* (5:1, *2001*), pp65-85, for a short treatment of this traditional approach to the question of Basil's orthodoxy in his early period.

[19] Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4,12 (PG65, 524-5).

[20] Ibid. 4,12 (PG65, 525).

of the other political factions at Constantinople because it was only their opposition to anomoian doctrine that was relevant to his narrative.[21]

The unreliability of Philostorgius' narration therefore creates a problem for our understanding of Basil's role in the synod of 360. One can assume that the portrayal of Basil as something of a quisling is an exaggeration, but that Basil is not considered a strong presence at the synod by any of other church historians also informs us that Philostorgius is not drastically underplaying Basil's importance, though perhaps besmirching his character through accusations of cowardice. Considering at this point Basil was neither a bishop nor even a priest, his failure to make a notable contribution to the proceedings of the Constantinopolitan synod should be unsurprising. Furthermore, being barely thirty years old and incredibly new to ecclesiastical affairs and politics, any contribution he may have made was likely of little importance to the wider narrative – the conflict between Basil of Ancyra and Aëtius and Eunomius (carrying with them the support of Eudoxius), all of whom had made a name for themselves in their own circles some time before 359. What we can assume, however, is that Basil was present at the synod and heard Eunomius recite some version of what would become his *Apology*.

The synod itself was – in part – the fruit of a years-long effort by a party of *homoians* (those who considered the Son and Spirit to be "like" the Father rather than of the same substance) led by Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste to fend off both staunch adherents to Nicaea and the anomoian party to which Eunomius was attached.[22] Philip Rousseau notes of Basil's attendance of the synod that "Basil

[21] Zachhuber, *Basil and the Three Hypostasis Tradition*, 74.

[22] Due to the existence of numerous parties that can be – and historically have been – named *homoian*, the particular group led by Basil and Eustathius shall at every instance hereafter be named "the Basilio-Eustathians," so as to avoid unnecessary confusion.

was in a perfect position to educate himself firsthand in the intricacies of the Arian conflict."[23] This is certainly true in an anti-Eunomian case, as Basil was able to see Eunomius deliver his *Apology*, and more importantly to view the subjects of debate concerning the Arian controversy at a synod that had gathered with the intent of bringing it to some form of resolution. Furthermore, the Basilio-Eustathian party to which he was allied found themselves on the losing side of the argument at this synod, and were summarily condemned. Basil did not shed his loyalty to the party of the ascetic mentor, and continued his association with them. In the years after the 359/60 synod, Basil continued to follow Eustathius to numerous different ecclesiastical gatherings, but the one of most importance to the composition of *Against Eunomius* – besides of course the 359/60 synod itself – was that of Lampsacus in 364. At this synod, though Basil was privately an advocate for the *homoousion* (confessing as much to the philosopher Maximus in his ninth letter), he sided with the Basilio-Eustathians in part as an effort to reinstate those bishops replaced by Arians as part of the decrees of Ariminum and Constantinople: though opposing the anomoians was probably sufficient reason – in Basil's eyes – to continue to ally himself with them, his devotion to Eustathius should be understood as an equal or greater influencing factor.[24] In later and more turbulent times between the two, Basil writes against him most ferociously, accusing him of betrayal in a manner so hurt that itself betrays the utmost respect and love Basil had

[23] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea,* 99.

[24] It is unlikely Basil would have considered the Basilio-Eustathians *Arians* as such, even though scholarship generally names them thus: seeing as Basil allied himself with them and his distaste towards Arius and those he views to be his theological successors is perhaps the most consistent in his career. Furthermore, as noted by Maurice Wiles in *Arianism: The Archetypal Heresy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 27, the consideration of homoiousianism as Arianism is an inheritance from the Athanasian strategy of "grouping all opponents of Nicene orthodoxy under the single title of 'Arian'." Basil only invokes Arius once in the treatise, conflating Eunomius' creed to one sent by Arius to Alexander (*Against Eunomius* 1.4), and the term 'Arianism' is absent entirely. Basil's suggestion that both Arius and Eunomius quote the creed in order to deceive more sympathetic but theologically orthodox Christians is likely indicative he neither saw himself nor his allies as inheritors to the mantle of Arius.

for the bishop of Sebaste, remembering with equal measures of fondness and pain their many conversations and moments together.[25]

At this point in his life, Basil was therefore very much in the shadow of Eustathius, but it was at Constantinople in 360 and his meeting with Eunomius – along with a later meeting at Lampsacus in 364 – that both Basil and Eustathius found a specific purpose for his talents: the refutation of Eunomius' *Apology* and the continuation of the fight against Arianism. In doing so, Basil could make a name for himself, and the Basilio-Eustathians could find vindication for their deposition at Constantinople through a belated but summary refutation of Eunomian doctrine.

DATING *APOLOGY* AND *AGAINST EUNOMIUS*

Eunomius' *Apology* is generally agreed to have been published for wide reading by the end of 361, but a first draft of the work was likely read at Constantinople as part of his campaign to retain his see. According to Gregory of Nyssa, our main source for the argument in Eunomius' later *Apology of Apologies*,– his response to Basil's work – Eunomius acknowledges this himself, though whether this refers to the events of Constantinople are left unclear.[26] Considering the question of Eunomius' removal from his position was one of the central purposes of the synod, however, a trial can be inferred, and due to the chosen genre, the *Apology* appears both by Eunomius' own words and the contextual evidence the fruits of his trial. The introduction to the *Apology*, however, has been noted by Vaggione

[25] See *Ep.* 223.

[26] See Eunomius, *Apology of Apologies* 1 (Vaggione, 100-1).

to imply a revision process, and considering his appeal to those reading his work "in the future," this seems fairly accurate.[27] As such, the dating of the *Apology* is rather straightforward, having been presented in an early form at Constantinople in 360, and having been revised and turned into a publication at some point before the end of 361.

Dating Basil's *Against Eunomius* is, however, more tricky. Rousseau believes it to be "a work written from the homoian and Eustathian point of view."[28] This is not a fully reasonable suggestion, as in the same chapter of Philostorgius' history as above, Basil of Ancyra is named as a champion of the *homoousion*, and from a very early time in his career, Basil of Caesarea's alliances with Meletius of Antioch speak strongly about his own Pro-Nicene leanings, as does his more nuanced acceptance of *homoios* if and only if the term "invariably (ἀπαραλλάκτως)" is used in conjunction to it in contemporary letters.[29] Stephen Hildebrand also notes this (though does not name Meletius himself), pointing out that Basil's "lack of subordinationism and attitude towards hypostasis identify Basil as moving in theological circles distinct from those with whom he attended the 359 synod in Constantinople."[30] Returning to Basil's letter to Maximus the Philosopher, though he himself was more comfortable with *homoousios* at this time than he was with *homoios* – requiring qualifications for the latter but none for the former – this was not something he was publishing abroad, and indeed tells Maximus that "I have definitely decided not to make my convictions public," a clear indication of his reticence to openly name himself an out-and-out homoousian.[31] In this sense, then, any theological turning point in Basil's work

[27] See Vaggione, *Eunomius* 5; Eunomius, *Apology* 1.2.

[28] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 99.

[29] See Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4,9 (PG65, 522-4). Zachhuber also notes the likely homoousian position of Basil of Ancyra (*Basil and the Three Hypostasis Tradition*, 74). See also Basil, *Ep.* 9.

[30] Hildebrand, *On the Holy Spirit*, 14.

[31] Basil, *Ep.* 9.

that might help us date *Against Eunomius* is difficult to identify, as Basil intentionally does not go so far in the treatise as to advocate the homoousian position he himself has come to hold, but only refutes Eunomius' position so far as to demonstrate that *anomoios* is an incorrect way of viewing the nature of the Trinity.

The best piece of information we have is his letter to Leontius "the Sophist," in which he discusses having sent *Against Eunomius* to him to both read and criticise.[32] Though Deferrari wishes to date the letter quite firmly in 364, Courtonne's stipulation of a date in early 365 appears more likely, as it allows Basil sufficient time after Lampsacus to complete *Against Eunomius* and to send it to Leontius, whom Basil holds as far more philosophically capable than himself.[33] On this matter, Fedwick concurs, though suggests Basil wrote *Against Eunomius* before Lampsacus based on Basil's discussion of dictating some anti-Eunomian sentiments in the company of Eustathius on the way to the Synod.[34] Though this is a possibility, this only tells us the date Basil began to author the text, and this provides us no estimation on when he completed it or published it. Indeed, if it were to be read at Lampsacus (a fact no church historian mentions), then the assumption of a publication date after the fact would be preferable in much the same way as we do not assume Eunomius' reading of the *Apology* at Constantinople in 360 to be the same date as publication.

[32] Basil, *Ep.* 20.

[33] See ibid. Basil suggests to Leontius the philosophical/theological discussions therein might be "child's play" to someone of Leontius' capabilities. One might chalk this down to feigned modesty, but since Basil requests honest criticism from his Sophist friend, it is far more likely Basil is being honest.

[34] See Fedwick, *A Chronology of Basil,* 11.

Similarly, the content of the letter to Leontius – as well as his *ekdosis* of the text to him – informs us that Basil had already finished and was comfortable with the work: no further revisions appear to have taken place. Though Basil requests honest criticisms from Leontius if he has any issues with the work, this is not done in such a way as to invite editing, but instead for Leontius to treat the treatise critically in his own debates with those theologically aligned with Eunomius.[35] DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz also advocate a similar date. They contend that *Against Eunomius* was likely written in order to ingratiate Basil to the Emperor Valens, Eunomius and Aëtius having beforehand sided with Procopius.[36] This, in their view, places it sometime between 364 and 365, Valens' ascension being on the 26th February 364 and Procopius the usurper declaring himself in Constantinople on the 28th September 365. Due to Valens' later alignment with Eudoxius of Constantinople, however, a connection to the emperor is problematic for two reasons: first, seeing as – to which we shall return – *Against Eunomius* was on the more theologically Nicene side of the Basilio-Eustathian camp and would doubtless have been far too Nicene for Eudoxius, and second, Eudoxius took the side of Eunomius and Aëtius at the synod of Constantinople: it would therefore be unlikely that he would express support for a treatise that so explicitly attempts to drag Eunomius' name through the dirt.[37] Indeed, though Eudoxius later abandoned his support of Eunomius, this appears to have been a matter of imperial command rather

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[35] Ibid. 11.

[36] Delcogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, *Against Eunomius*, 33. See also Van Dam, Raymond. *Becoming Christian: The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia*, 27. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

[37] Eudoxius' personal theological convictions have been a subject of debate: his sole extant work is a creed that rejects the notion a suffering Christ could be *homoousios* with the impassible God, and contains language that could be construed as either *homoian* or *anomoian* in content. Kopecek (*A History of Neo-Arianism* 153-4) considers him an *anomoian* at the time of the Constantinopolitan synod, whilst Hanson (*Search* 583-88) views him as an *anomoian*-turned-*homoian.* I would side with Mclynn's assertion in *The Use and Abuse of Eudoxius of Germanicia*, Kyoyo-Ronso 110 (1999), 69-99, that Eudoxius' patronage of Aëtius and Eunomius was likely not due to a shared theology but rather for the purpose of "securing the services of a brilliant but wayward talent for the Catholic (as he understood it) church (89)." Indeed, Eudoxius' alignment with the 360 creed of Constantinople – which attested the Son to be "Like the Father insofar as the holy Scriptures declare and teach" – indicates *homoian* sentiment, or at least that if he were an *anomoian,* he mustn't have been too married to the concept. For Eudoxius' creed, see Hahn, August & Hahn, Ludwig, *Bibliothek der Symbole und Glaubensregeln der Alten Kirche* (3rd ed.) (Breslau: Morgenstern, 1897), 261-2.

than a shift in personal or theological loyalties. So, then, we are left with a date sometime between the end of Lampsacus and the composition of *Letter 20*. With Lampascus occurring in the autumn of 364 and *Letter* 20's authorship placed in early 365, we can cut down from the rough estimate of 364-5 to some time between the autumn of 364 and early 365 as the near-certain date of the publication of *Against Eunomius*, though Basil may have been formulating its arguments for some time prior.

Basil's intended readership of the treatise is up for some debate, and much of the secondary literature has been ambiguous in its interpretation. DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz remain silent on the topic, and though their argument that it was likely written in part to ingratiate Basil with Valens is flawed, the rigorous and learned philosophical and grammatical arguments indicate the intended audience of the treatise would have been wealthy or influential individuals in the upper echelons of both the church and wider society.[38] Rousseau simultaneously suggests the possibilities of both a wide readership within these classes due to a likely commission of the work by Eustathius and a potentially constricted readership based on Eunomius' slow reply and the potential restriction of Basil's work to close personal friends like Leontius – in his own words, "it is hard to judge."[39] Van Dam has suggested that Basil's intention to trounce Eunomius extended far beyond the machinations of Eustathius and the re-establishment of bishops allied to the Basilio-Eustathian party, but also as a way for Basil to increase his own renown amongst that same collection of political allies.[40]

[38] See DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, *Against Eunomius,* 18-38.

[39] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 102-4.

[40] See Van Dam, *Becoming Christian,* 26-7.

This should be in no doubt whatsoever: the rhetorical excess of Basil's opening words in *Against Eunomius*, with all its accusations of blasphemy, stupidity and his intention to "make his (Eunomius') blasphemy clear as day for all," show all the traces of a man with something to prove not only to the wealthy laity, but also to the church.[41] It further serves to show Basil as the two characters that must have so often been in conflict for dominance in his earlier ecclesiastical years: the Exegete and the Rhetorician, though as Frances Young teaches us, the two were quite syncretic in fourth-century Christian literature.[42] Due to his status as an ascetic and (to Christians) one of the saints, it is often forgotten how calculating Basil could be when he put his mind to the achievement of some goal, a fact that Gregory Nazianzen – one of the frequent victims of Basil's later episcopal machinations – begrudgingly acknowledged in his belated eulogy to his long-time frenemy.[43] As regards Basil's intended audience, therefore, it is doubtful he was reticent to publish this abroad. Indeed, the very decision to tangle with Eunomius was one in no small part made to elevate Basil's own position, likely both by himself and his spiritual father Eustathius. We must as a result view *Against Eunomius* as an *epideictic* work intended to be widely disseminated amongst those opposing the heterousians, written with the conscious intent of making a name for its author and to serve as a demonstration of his rhetorical skill and theological acumen.

This has a strong implication for anything doctrinally contained within the treatise: Basil intended to root himself as an up-and-coming name in the Trinitarian debates and as a strong, Cappadocian opponent to Eunomius, and therefore *Against Eunomius*' express intent is to establish the theological

[41] See Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.1-2.

[42] Young, Frances. *The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis.* In Williams, Rowan ed. *The Making of Orthodoxy : Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 182-99.

[43] See Gregory Nazianzen, *On Basil*.

and exegetical reputation of Basil as a defender of the faith against Arianism. Our next step, therefore, must be to attempt to consider Basil's sources and his purposes in utilising them.

THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT: ATHANASIUS, DIDYMUS THE BLIND AND THE EXEGETICAL INSPIRATION FOR BASIL'S *AGAINST EUNOMIUS*.

As with most debates of the era, exegesis was at the core of the struggle. Indeed, when most theologians were to speak of something as a "tradition (παραδόσις)" in the fourth century, what they meant was a certain interpretation of a scriptural text – or texts – that they viewed to have precedent and therefore authority.[44] When discussing the notion of tradition in this debate, then, it is worth considering the interpretation of a text which holds prominence in it – one on which we can see the emergence of strong agreement among Nicene and Pro-Nicene theologians out of a number of differing interpretations, and how the development of an exegetical tradition might emerge out of a particular controversy. Such a passage was Amos 4:13, over which no Pro-Nicene exegetical consensus had yet emerged.[45] The Septuagint text of this passage reads thus:

[44] See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 1014-16.

[45] Original and excellent work on this subject has been done by Mark DelCogliano, both in *Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3*. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Volume 61, Issue 2, October 2010. Pp. 644–658 and the introduction to *Works on the Spirit* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012). This is very much a building on Ayres' *The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver: Didymus the Blind's De Spiritu Sancto and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology*. In Rutherford, Janet and Twomey, Vincent eds. *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2011), 57-72. Their findings are important, and here I intend to place them in their proper light as latchkey scriptures on which the Eunomian controversy appears to have tacitly revolved.

> διότι ἰδοὺ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτίζων πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ, ποιῶν ὄρθρον καὶ ὀμίχλην καὶ ἐπιβαίνων ἐπὶ τὰ ὕψη τῆς γῆς· κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ὄνομα αὐτῷ.
>
> Therefore behold he who strengthens thunder and creates Spirit and proclaims to mankind his Christ, making morning and darkness and mounting onto the high places of the earth: the Lord God almighty his name.

This text, due to its use of κτίζω (I create) and the subsequent implication that the Spirit is a creature, caused numerous problems for Pro-Nicene theologians in their conflicts with Non-Nicenes. For our purposes, it can be a great help in ascertaining Basil's theological influences in *Against Eunomius,* and to comprehend the overarching tradition-debate surrounding the Constantinopolitan synod and the fallout from it.

The approach taken by Athanasius in *To Serapion* is to re-establish what the word "spirit" means as opposed to what the word "creates" means:

> So what does it mean when he "proclaims to mankind his Christ?" nothing other than that he becomes human. It is the same as saying "Behold, the virgin will conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel* (Matt. 1.23)," and as many other things that were written about his visit. But if it is the incarnate presence of the Word that is being proclaimed, then how must the "spirit (πνεῦμα)" created be understood if not as the recreated and renewed spirit of mankind?[46]

What is perhaps more interesting about this passage is that after Athanasius goes on to justify his interpretation of the meaning of πνεῦμα in Amos 4:13, contrasting the Holy Spirit and the spirit of man

[46] Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.9.4.

through the exegesis of Ezekiel 36:26-7, and referencing the human spirit as πνεῦμα in Psalm 103, he then goes on to posit a different meaning: that one might understand κτίζω in Amos 4:13 to mean the Holy Spirit's (as God) renewal of the human spirit.[47]

In his *On the Holy Spirit,* on the other hand, Didymus assesses that the only literal interpretation possible for the term πνεῦμα in Amos 4:13 is "wind":[48]

> Therefore this expression "who creates Spirit" I judge to be the same as saying "who creates wind." Indeed, by his providence God directs those winds produced by motion of air, according to that passage we read elsewhere: "Who brings forth winds from his treasuries (Ps. 134.7)." but it is a good thing that in this text he did not say "who created" but "who creates" wind. For if the passage were about the existence of the Holy Spirit, he would have certainly said "who created," for he does not create the same thing continually. Thus it follows that "who creates" is said about the wind because winds were not made just once, but inasmuch as they exist, they come into existence daily.[49]

Once again, the passage has a strong philological slant, but in the case of Didymus, the notion that the term has anything do with spirit of any kind is strongly rejected. Indeed, Didymus goes further in his philological analysis to point out that the term in this case necessarily cannot mean "Holy Spirit" because of the lack of a definite article.[50] Again, then, though the interpretative methodology used by Didymus differs from Eusebius and Athanasius, the passage is once again used in such a manner as to reject Non-Nicene pneumatological exegesis of the passage.

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[47] Ibid. 1.9.5-6.

[48] See Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit* 68-9.

[49] Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit* 72 (Trans. DelCogliano, 165).

[50] Ibid. 73 (DelCogliano, 165).

It is perhaps a surprise, then, that Basil, in *Against Eunomius*, takes the exegetical method of Didymus over that of Athanasius:

> They (the Eunomians) cite two proofs that the Holy Spirit should be called a creature. The first from the Prophet, who says: "he who gives strength to thunder and creates Spirit," the other from the Gospel, which is "all things came to be through him (John 1.3)." As regards us, we have been convinced that the prophetic text does not refer to the Holy Spirit, but rather to the common wind, which is to say the spirit (πνεῦμα) of the air. This is clear from the following, for he did not say "who has created spirit" but "who creates spirit."[51]

What is perhaps more notable about Basil's use of this verse is that – in their extant works – neither Eunomius nor his spiritual father Aëtius quote Amos 4:13. The *Syntagmation* of Aëtius, being primarily a philosophical text that discusses the Trinitarian language, contains no direct scriptural citations, instead beginning with the promise that "I was obliged to clean up the treatise again like a father and send it off to you, heroes and heroines in the contest of true religion as you all are, that you might be assured my little treatise is based on the mind of the Holy Scriptures."[52] More intriguingly, Eunomius' *Apology* – which contains twenty-five scriptural allusions and is the very treatise against which Basil has authored his own – does not reference Amos 4:13 in any capacity. As opposed to the previous three authors, then, we have a clear indication that Basil is not using Amos 4:13 in order to refute anything within Eunomius' *Apology*, but rather – it would appear – because it fits his purpose to do so.

[51] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 3,7.

[52] Aëtius, Introduction to the *Syntagmation*.

Traditionally by scholars such as Bernard Sesboüé and Volker Drecoll, the assertion has been made that Basil's need to refute this text comes from its exegesis in Athanasius' *Against Serapion*, with Sesboüé claiming that "Basil takes the care to refute the interpretation of a text that Eunomius did not cite. *Amos* 4.13 belonged to the scriptural dossier of the *Tropikoi* of Thmuis, as is proved by the long argument of Athanasius in his *Letters to Serapion*." [53] However, recently Mark DelCogliano has demonstrated that a much more likely source for Basil's exegesis is – unsurprisingly given the similarity between the two – Didymus the Blind's *On the Holy Spirit*.[54] With the more recent date of 360-5 of the text, his *On the Holy Spirit* does (barely) precede *Against Eunomius*, and that this direction of influence maintains the long-held view of Cappadocia imitating Alexandria on exegetical issues, DelCogliano's argument is certainly convincing.[55] Just as Didymus, Basil takes *πνεῦμα* in Amos 4:13 to mean "wind," and just like Didymus, he differentiates between the past and present tenses in order to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit cannot, since it already exists, be created in any kind of present or ongoing sense. In fact, considering the differences between Eusebius, Athanasius and Didymus in their interpretational methods, Basil's own method is too close to Didymus' for this to be coincidental.

Indeed, Basil himself appears to note that "we have been convinced (πεπείσμεθα)" of this particular strain of anti-Pneumatomachian exegesis – a clear demonstration that he has taken the text from another author.[56] This should be no surprise, as it seems Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit* was viewed as

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[53] Sesboüé, Bernard. *Contre Eunome* (vol. 2), 171. (SC 305) Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983. See also Drecoll, Volker. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea,* 137-8. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996. It is difficult to know if Basil knew of *Against Serapion* when he authored *Against Eunomius* – Basil certainly knew of the text by 372 on writing his *Homily Against the Sabellians, Anomeans and Pneumatomachians* due to the similarity of *Against Serapion* 1.24 and *Sabellians* 6. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

[54] DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3*. *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Volume 61, Issue 2, October 2010. Pp. 644–658.

[55] See Ibid. pp. 656-8.

[56] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 3.7.

authoritative enough to be translated into Latin by Jerome in 385, and used heavily by Ambrose in authoring his own *On the Holy Spirit* in 381.[57] Indeed, the connection between these two texts appears quite strong – Ambrose's direct use of Didymus' exegetical arguments lead to Jerome – with an idiosyncratic aggression – accusing Ambrose of plagiarism, calling the text "a hideous little crow dressed in another's colours," and proof that "good Latin does not come from good Greek."[58] Indeed, Ambrose's reflections on Amos 4:13 are very close to Didymus', though unlike Basil he gives no indication he has taken it from another source:

> Nor does it escape my notice that the heretics have been prone to object that the Holy Spirit appears to be a creature, because many of them use as an argument for establishing their impiety that passage of Amos, where he spoke of the blowing of the wind, as the words of the prophet made clear.[59]

Again it is interesting to note that Ambrose, like Basil before him, has made use of Didymus' argument for reasons other than to directly refute his non-Nicene opponents – if indeed Ambrose had any direct opponents, being asked by Gratian to author the text rather than finding a pressing need within his own community.[60] The fact that Ambrose used Didymus' text to that extent, however, informs us of the regard in which it was held.

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[57] Both Louis Doutreleau and Mark DelCogliano find a date of 385 for Jerome's translation to be beyond dispute. Similarly, a date of 381 for Ambrose's *On the Holy Spirit,* on account of the listing of present bishops in the preface, is undeniable. See Doutreleau, Louis. *Didyme L'aveugle: Traité du Saint-Esprit,* 96-100. (SC 386) Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1992; DelCogliano, Mark. *Works on the Spirit,* 47-8. (PPS 43) New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012. See also for Ambrose's *On the Holy Spirit* – Ramsey, Boniface O.P. *Ambrose* 61-2. London: Routledge, 1997.

[58] Jerome, *Prologue to On the Holy Spirit* (Doutreleau, 138-40).

[59] Ambrose, *On the Holy Spirit* 2.6.48.

[60] See Ramsey, *Ambrose* 61-2.

It is a difficult question – the difference in interpretation between Athanasius and Didymus probably implies that Didymus did not use *To Serapion*, though – as seen above – Basil and Ambrose evidently used Didymus. Doutreleau finds *To Serapion* and *On the Holy Spirit* to be very different texts, but asserts nonetheless that Didymus is influenced by Athanasius, claiming him to be "well in the wake" of the Alexandrian Bishop.[61] This has since been questioned by Lewis Ayres and Mark DelCogliano, who both find the passing similarities on which Doutreleau focuses to be missing the forest for the trees. Considering the geographical and temporal proximity, *Letters to Serapion* being written between 357-9 and *On the Holy Spirit* in 360-5 both by Alexandrians, interpreting Amos 4:13 to assert the Spirit's creaturely status might be argued as a local Egyptian non-Nicene exegetical tradition.[62] This is a position that makes a lot of sense, especially in light of the fact that it is unlikely Didymus actively used *To Serapion* as a source text for his own work, or even that he knew of the letters at all.

Didymus and Athanasius: Why did Basil utilise the former so heavily?

This problem further deepens in the light of Lewis Ayres' observations that Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit* was written – to some extent – to refute Eunomius' *Apology*.[63] Separate to the discussion of Amos 4:13, Didymus – in *On the Holy Spirit* – quotes John 5:19: "The Son is not able to do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing," and John 16:14: "He will glorify me – that is, the Paraclete – because he will receive from what is mine," as connected verses in the establishment of the Spirit's

[61] Doutreleau, *Traité du Saint-Esprit*, 40.

[62] For dates of *Serapion* see the gloss in Haykin, *Spirit of God* 59-60. For Didymus, see *Works on the Spirit* 37-42.

[63] See Ayres, *The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver: Didymus the Blind's De Spiritu Sancto and the Development of Nicene Pnaeumatology*. In Rutherford, Janet and Twomey, Vincent eds. *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church,* 57-72. Dublin: Four Courts, 2011.

divinity.[64] According to Ayres, the linked exegesis of these passages comes straight from Eunomius' *Apology*, where these passages appear together for what is apparently the first time.[65] In *Apology* 20, Eunomius connects the two passages in passing to back up his assertion that "the Son is a 'thing made of the Only-begotten,' as the Paraclete is to the Only-begotten," arguing:[66]

> ἵνα μὴ τρίτον λέγωμεν ὅτι πάμπολυ διενήνοχεν ὁ δημιουργῶν ἐξουσίᾳ τοῦ νεύματι πατρικῷ ποιοῦντος καὶ μηδὲν ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ ποιεῖν ὁμολογοῦντος, ὅ τε προσκυνούμενος τοῦ προσκυνοῦντος.

> And let us mention a third thing – that the one who creates by his own power is totally different from the one who does so at Paternal command and confesses to do nothing of his own accord, in the same way as the one who is worshipped is totally different from the one who worships.[67]

Though Eunomius does not quote either of the passages from John directly, it is quite clear that this statement instead alludes to them, likely to preserve the flow of his argument and retain the centrality of the grammatical distinction between activity and passivity.[68] Even without an explicit citation, however, Eunomius' scriptural argument and reasoning is straightforward: since Scripture states the Son to follow the command of the Father and the Spirit to participate in worship of the Son, their relationships to each other must be both subordinate and different *kat' ousian*. The allusion to John 5:19 in the next section makes much the same case:

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[64] See Didmyus, *On the Holy Spirit* 160-163.

[65] See Ayres, *The Holy Spirit as Undiminished Giver*, 66. The gloss of non-Nicene exegetical passages in the rear of Vaggione's *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution,* p.390 (Oxford: University Press, 2000) corroborates this.

[66] Eunomius, *Apology* 20. In Vaggione, Richard Paul. *Eunomius: Extant Works*.

[67] Ibid. 20. I have included the Greek here with the English translation, as much of the importance of this passage is in the grammatical puns it makes.

[68] This was something of a habit of Eunomius': Responding to *Apology* 25, Basil ridicules Eunomius for not quoting his sources, and follows by quoting 8 verses from Scripture in immediate succession to labour this point (See *Against Eunomius* 3.1).

> For we confess only the Son was begotten from the Father, and that he is subject to him both according to essence and opinion – for he (the Son) confesses that he lives through the Father and that he does nothing of his own accord – believing him neither to be *homoousios* nor *homoiousios*, since one signals generation and division of essence, and the other equality.[69]

Though this second allusion only contains Christological analysis, much the same argument is given, and more importantly, the word accepted by Nicaea and the one by the Synod of Constantinople are both summarily rejected.

Didymus' interpretation of these two texts is very much a direct inversion of Eunomius'. As regards John 5:19, he claims:

> For if the Son of the Father is one, not according to the error of Sabellius who confuses the Father and the Son, but according to their inseparability of essence or substance, then he is unable to do anything without the Father. The works of separate individuals are distinct, but when the Son sees the Father working, he is himself also working, yet working not in a second rank after him. After all, the works of the Son would begin to diverge from those of the Father if they were not performed by equals.[70]

And then and the end of the immediately following exegesis of John 16:14, he observes:

> And so the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son by showing him and manifesting him to the pure in heart who are worthy of understanding him, seeing him, and knowing the splendour of his substance and the "image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)". The Image himself glorifies the Father in turn, by showing himself to pure minds, thereby introducing him to those who do not know him: "He who sees me sees the Father (Jn 14:9)." In addition, the Father glorifies his Only-Begotten by revealing the Son to those who have merited to attain the summit of knowledge, showing his magnificence and power. Furthermore, the Son himself glorifies the Holy Spirit by bestowing on him those who have prepared themselves to be worthy of his gift and by distributing to them the sublimity of his glorification and greatness.[71]

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[69] Eunomius, *Apology* 26.

[70] Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit* 161 (DelCogliano, 193).

[71] Ibid. 168-9 (DelCogliano, 194-5).

That the two texts are in such close proximity to one another is of particular note considering the uniqueness of their association in Non-Nicene circles to Eunomius at this point in time, but more importantly the very inversion of Eunomius' thought by Didymus necessitates that these sections of *On the Holy Spirit* are a direct response to him.[72] Didymus subverts and inverts Eunomius' exegesis of John 5:19 and suggests that the Son does not operate independently of the Father not as proof of subordination but instead proof of the Pro-Nicene assertion that the Father and Son, on account of their shared nature, cannot act but inseparably.[73] In Didymus' treatise, the entirety of John 16:14 is broken down and analysed in depth, but the exegesis of the passage here, which comes at the close of the section, is equally anti-Eunomian. In contrast to Eunomius' idea that glorification must imply subordination, Didymus emphasises that all members of the Trinity glorify each other within the Trinitarian mode of existence, and that it is in fact of total necessity that this glorification among equals occurs both for existential and theologically epistemic reasons. The possibility that Didymus could construct such a thorough response to Eunomius by mere chance is not even worth entertaining – and therefore we must view the above passages to be compelling evidence that he was aware of the *Apology*, and Ayres' claim to be well-founded.

[72] Again here Vaggione's aforementioned gloss of Non-Nicene proof texts is of extreme value: Whilst John 5:19 is well-represented, John 16:14 is viewed to not be a sufficiently cited text and therefore, as far as the extant literature is concerned, is quite uniquely Eunomian (Vaggione, *Nicene Revolution* 383-395).

[73] Ayres views this concept to be a central principle to Pro-Nicene doctrine due to it being a common talking point for fourth-century Pro-Nicene theologians. See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* 236 (Oxford: University Press, 2004).

The case for a Eunomian (or at least Aëtian-Eunomian form of anomoian doctrine) influence upon the texts used is also supported by the fact that, In addition to Basil and Didymus' evident knowledge of him and his works, in his third letter to Serapion, Athanasius mentions him by name:

> So after all of these things, will anyone still be audacious enough to say upon hearing "Son" and "Spirit", "is the Father a grandfather? Is the Spirit a Son?" Yes, some will dare, the Eunomiuses, the Eudoxiuses and the Eusebiuses – for having professed the Arian heresy, they are not able to keep their tongues from impiety.[74]

Once more Eunomius is held at the centre of the debate, and compared to Eusebius of Nicomedia – one of the greatest allies of Arius – no less. This also leads to questions about the dating of at least the third letter of Athanasius to Serapion – It was only at Constantinople and the publishing of his *Apology* shortly thereafter that Eunomius made his name as a champion of the anomoian cause. If we take Eunomius' *Apology,* as is universally agreed upon, to have been published between 360-361, it is not unreasonable to suggest a date between 360 and 362 for the third letter, its *terminus ante quem* being around 362 and the Synod at Alexandria of that year. Again, then, within the framework of Pro-Nicene pneumatological literature, all roads lead to Eunomius.

This makes the question of why Basil used Didymus over Athanasius all the more confusing. The obvious answer might be that Basil, due to the fact that he is utilising Didymus' exegesis, regards him as an established exegete in a way that he might not Athanasius. It is certainly true that Didymus' reputation as an exegete was widely asserted by the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth. Jerome, in his translation of *On the Holy Spirit*, names him "Didymus the seeing," a witticism that, combined with the nature of the works he cites of Didymus in *On Illustrious Men*, is indicative of Jerome's admiration for him as an exegete first and foremost.[75] One might also imagine, Didymus being

[74] Athanasius, *Serapion* 3.5.4.

[75] See Jerome, *Prologue to On the Holy Spirit*; *On Illustrious Men* 109.

a follower of the Origenistic exegetical method, that "the seeing" is itself an exegetical reference as well as a pun on his blindness. Beyond this, the research of Grant D. Bayliss has demonstrated that both Palladius and Sozomen assigned him the epithet of "commentator," which is a more explicit reference to his exegetical reputation.[76] Theodoret too is notably keen to admire Didymus' exegetical method, and that individuals like Jerome and Epiphanius were so comfortable to praise Didymus despite his obvious connection to and "second-to-the-apostles" devotion of Origen equally suggests that he was viewed as a figure of admirable authority and insight when it came to the scriptures.[77]

This possibility of Didymus' status as an influential exegete is especially likely when it comes to the apparent influence he had on Gregory Nazianzen and Basil. As regards Gregory, we know he spent a year in Alexandria at the same time Didymus was head of the catechetical school there, and though Christopher Beeley rejects the possibility of a connection – unless Didymus was influenced by Gregory – this is strongly unconvincing.[78] Part of his reasoning appears to be due to his conflation of Athanasius and Didymus as having similar and Pro-Nicene beliefs, and Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit* to be a work that borrows heavily from Athanasius' *Letters to Serapion*.[79] Perhaps in this case Beeley is the victim of the time in which his book was written: though similar arguments are given by Louis Doutreleau in his edition of Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit*, as we have seen earlier this connection has been quite strongly rejected by the most recent secondary literature, which has identified notable differences in tone,

[76] Bayliss, Grant D. *The Vision of Didymus the Blind: A Fourth-Century Virtue-Origenism,* 9-10. See also Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.15.1; Palladius, *Lausiac History* 4.

[77] See Theodoret, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.29.3-4.

[78] See Beeley, Christopher. *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God,* 283-4. Oxford: University Press, 2008.

[79] Ibid. 284. On this N.B. also that Athanasius himself did not retain the exact same form of homoousian defence throughout his *floruit*: see Ayres, *Athanasius' Initial Defence of the Homoousios: Re-reading the De Decretis*. Journal of Early Christian Studies 12 (2004), 337-59.

intention and style between Didymus' and Athanasius' pneumatological works. As for Basil, Bayliss has suggested that his later *On the Holy Spirit* is based strongly on Didymus' treatise of the same name, but this appears to be a confusion on his part between *On the Holy Spirit* and *Against Eunomius,* the former not containing any reference to Amos 4.13.[80] Due to the above evidence, there is no doubt that Basil utilised this text, but at the same time that Basil only explicitly makes use of Didymus' *On the Holy Spirit* over other commentary works has two potential implications: that this was the only text of Didymus of which Basil was aware, and that Basil used it because of its pertinence to the Trinitarian and specifically anti-Eunomian text he was writing. The latter is certainly more convincing than the former, though this does create some issues in establishing whether Basil chose Didymus over Athanasius as an exegete, when both Didymus and Basil are writing fundamentally polemic and Trinitarian treatises.

There is significant debate on how well Basil knew Athanasius based on his utilisation of theological ideas and exegetical notions. The value of this line of inquiry is difficult to overstate – Athanasius has until recently been given far more credit than deserved by historians due to the often teleological nature of the orthodox Christian historiographical narrative. Problematically, however, the extent to which Basil knew Athanasius and the frequency with which he actively utilised his ideas are often taken to be the same thing: to do so is to unintentionally remove the theological from the political – two things which are inextricable in the wake of Nicaea and the countless synodic responses to it. In particular, Basil evidently knows Athanasius' works well by his episcopate – Rowan Williams has demonstrated that Basil's appeal to baptism in *On the Holy Spirit* slowly moves "into a more Athanasian key," where a person is united with God in baptism through an ascent from Spirit to Son to Father, a process that is also present in *On Baptism* and several of his letters – though this is not mentioned by

[80] See Bayliss, *The Vision of Didymus the Blind*, 11.

Williams – and thus rather typical of his baptismal theology.[81] Athanasius is thus never quoted, yet Basil appears to possess a theological debt to him. Recent scholarly consensus has generally rejected the possibility of a direct Athanasian influence on Basil's *Against Eunomius*, with the exception of Volker Drecoll.[82] Perhaps the most convincing argument is that of Jeffrey Steenson in his doctoral thesis, who suggests the Basilio-Eustathians in general were in some sense reliant upon Athanasius, Basil of Caesarea particularly so.[83] DelCogliano has built on this, and considered Basil's Athanasian tendencies to be the result of his Basilio-Eustathian associations, but that his knowledge is direct and part of a critical tradition to Athanasius' works through both the aforementioned party and the Eusebians.[84] On this matter I find myself in agreement – a mind as voracious as Basil's certainly chose to delve beyond the literature his party supported, as the use of Didymus himself would suggest.

As such, I would like to propose a simpler answer: Didymus did not have the same stigma attached to him as Athanasius did within the theological circles in which Basil was at the time moving. Athanasius had openly attacked the Basilio-Eustathians in *De Synodis*, and had rejected as heresy the creeds asserted by them. Since it was most likely at Eustathius' request that Basil penned *Against Eunomius* – and according to Rousseau the text began as a putting to paper of their discussions around the time of

[81] See Williams, Rowan. *Baptism and the Arian Controversy*. In Barnes, Michel R. and Williams, Daniel H. ed. *Arianism After Arius* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993), 149-80.

[82] See Drecoll, Volker. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996). For rejections of the connection between *Against Serapion* and *Against Eunomius*, see DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato*, 503-4. Vigiliae Christianae Vol.68(5), 2014, 498-532. Troiano, Marina Silvia. *Il Contra Eunomium di Basilio di Cesarea e le Epistolae ad Serapionem di Atanasio di Alessandria: Nota Comparativa*, 60;86-90. Augustinianum 41 (1), 59-91.

[83] Steenson, Jeffrey. *Basil of Ancyra and the Course of Nicene Orthodoxy*. Unpublished DPhil dissertation, Oxford University, 1983.

[84] See DelCogliano, Mark. *The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians on Basil of Caesarea's Decentralization of "Unbegotten."* Journal of Early Christian Studies, July 2011, Vol.19(2), pp.197-223.

the 364 Lampsacus synod – such utilisation of the theological and exegetical insights of one of their greatest opponents would seem at best tasteless and at worst might open them up to accusations of homoousianism.[85] Though evidence from his roughly contemporaneous ninth letter shows Basil was reluctant to use the term *homoios* without a strong clarification that this meant "invariably (ἀπαραλλάκτως)," and was in fact a shy homoousian, in this matter he seems to more closely imitated the theological position of his mentor, mitigating his own – private – convictions in the process.[86]

This importance of this qualifying term cannot be overlooked. It is one of some philosophical testimony, seemingly stoic in origination and tends to mean "indistinguishable" in this context.[87] In fourth-century Christian terms, however, it has a notably Eusebian pedigree, is suggested to be Lucianic through the dedication creed of Antioch 341 – though this claim is questionable at best: whilst Bardy was convinced of Lucianic origin, Markus Vinzent instead suggests it to be a pre-Nicene creed of Asterius, and Sara Parvis has argued it to have been that of the prior 328 synod at Nicomedia.[88] Terminologically, though, this language is claimed by Lampe to be used based on its status as "the nearest permissible approximation to *ὁμοούσιος*,": its meaning in Basil's milieu, then, was rather more restricted, and part of the Trinitarian grammar-book for certain fourth-century parties.[89] Basil's usage of it might well be

[85] Rousseau, *Basil* 101-3.

[86] See Basil, *Letter 9.*

[87] See Liddell-Scott online entry 11810, ἀπαράλλακτος: it is taken to mean "indistinguishable" or "precisely similar." Lampe (174-5) considers the Trinitarian connotation to me "in no way differing, exactly like." Andrei Dragos Guilea has argued the term's meaning is Stoic in origin, but became a term for Father-Son relations in the work of Origen, though Dragos identifies this as an "Antiochene thread" in its implementation (*Antioch 268*, 200-1).

[88] Bardy, Gustave. Recherches sur Saint Lucien d'Antioche et son École, Études de Théologie Historique (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1936), 119-30; Vinzent, Markus. *Asterius von Kappadokien: Die Theologischen Fragmente, Einleitung, Kritischer Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 166; Parvis, Sara. *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 114-16.

[89] See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* 174.

considered a Eusebian inheritance – it is not something embraced by Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius, who seemingly preferred the less specific *ὅμοιος κατὰ πάντα*.[90] In this, Basil shows arguably the strongest deviation from the Basilio-Eustathian party line he makes in *Against Eunomius* – the term was not outwardly homoousian, but had some history of being used as an effective approximation for it. For this reason then – though even in its existing form *Against Eunomius* was likely a touch too Pro-Nicene for Ancyra and Eustathius' tastes – it is unsurprising Basil makes the more politically sensible choice of sourcing as regards Amos 4:13, going to an author of less controversial standing than Athanasius or the Eusebians, who had not condemned the party to which Basil was at the time pledged.

Basil's manoeuvring over seemingly innocuous variations on *likeness*-theologies in many ways demonstrates the acute political nature of these debates and the risks to one's position taken in choosing a side: the ecclesiastical controversies of the mid-4th century were an inhospitable environment for up-and-comers in the Christian world, where every qualifying word in your theology could well serve as the excuse for your opponents to depose you. *Against Eunomius,* therefore, in the arguments it makes and sources it prioritises, provides us with an insight into how an emerging voice in these conflicts went about making the case for their vision of Trinitarian theology. Though *Against Eunomius* consistently strikes a tone of reckless aggression, its arguments are carefully elucidated and uncontroversial sources are prioritised: indeed, when more contentious writers are used, it is through echoes rather than evocation. This is not, however, to say that Basil avoids taking a stance; in writing an anti-Eunomian treatise he is targeting an active and influential agent who wielded significant power and had no shortage of even more powerful friends. In this, Basil evidently takes a side and does so quite forcefully: to a Eunomian or Eudoxian, this treatise would have marked him as an enemy to their cause, and so we cannot imagine Basil cared much for their opinion. Instead, the nuance in Basil's

[90] For the creedal usage of *ὅμοιος κατὰ πάντα*, see e.g. the Sirmium creed, the 359 dated creed in Athanasius' *De Synodis* 8.

argument was more to protect himself from Pro-Nicene and Basilio-Eustathian criticism, sitting somewhere between the two. Basil's friendships with Pro-Nicenes – especially Gregory Nazianzen and Meletius of Antioch – and his political alignment with Eustathius had to be equally protected, and so though *Against Eunomius* is unequivocal in its opposition to anomoian and more Eudoxian expressions of *homoian* belief, it consistently stops short of supporting or rejecting the *homoousion*, and relies on sources that both parties would find agreeable.

It is perhaps here worth observing, then, that in addition to identifying the texts on which Basil is drawing for *Against Eunomius*, we can through considering the consistency of its citing posit one further thing: all of the major texts surrounding the Synod of Constantinople and the publication of Eunomius' *Apology* utilise Amos 4:13 as a proof-text for their Pro-Nicene exegesis. Since it has also been shown that Athanasius' exegesis of the passage is fundamentally different to that offered by Basil and Didymus, it would seem that they have either found this text to be important independently of each other, or, far more likely, that the text was in use by some party of which at least both Basil and Didymus are aware. Based on the evidence above, then, it seems the anomoians, and most likely the Eunomians, are the best fit. Seeing as *Apology* is not an exegetical text, it should be no surprise that Amos 4:13 is not contained therein. I believe, therefore – with no other working alternative available to us – that within the framework of the proceedings of the Synod of Constantinople and the first public reading of the *Apology*, the exegetical question of Amos 4:13 must have been at the forefront. It is thus in the literature surrounding the Synod of Constantinople that these two exegetical traditions emerge – Eunomius advocating the exegesis of John 5:19 and 16:14 to have a fundamentally anomoian slant and the emergence of a cohesive exegetical tradition for Amos 4:13.

Apollinaris and a Homoousian Influence

In addition to the figure of Athanasius, it is also helpful to consider Apollinaris of Laodicea here. Basil knew the man and corresponded with him, even requesting his advice on the authority of the *homoousion*.[91] Indeed, Basil seems to have been very aware of Apollinaris' writings, and – as first suggested by R.M. Hubner –sourced arguments in *Against Eunomius* and a later anti-Sabellian homily from an anti-Sabellian treatise now believed authored by the Laodicean bishop.[92] In the case of *Against Eunomius*, the interaction with Apollinaris is arguably more pertinent than the rare coincidences with Athanasian thought present in the text: G.L. Prestige has astutely noted Basil lapsed in communication with Apollinaris, only taking it up once more faced with the resolve of writing an anti-Eunomian treatise.[93] More recently, Stephen Hildebrand has suggested Basil's correspondence with Apollinaris is contemporaneous with *Against Eunomius*, for which he gives both an earlier date of 360-1 rather than

[91] See Basil, *Ep.* 361. These letters were once thought forgeries – they are conspicuously absent from the NPNF edition of Basil's works, and though they inhabit Migne's edition, their spuriousness is noted. The efforts of J. Dräseke in *Apollinarios von Laodicea* (Tübingen: Texte und Untersuchungen, 1904) in German, Henri De Riedmatten, *La Correspondance entre Basile de Césarée et Apollinaire de Laodicée*. (Journal of Theological Studies 7 (1956), 199–210, 8 (1957); 53–70) in French and C.E. Raven in *Apollinarism: an Essay on the Christology of the Early Church* (Cambridge: University Press, 1923) in English at the turn of the 20th century led to the beginnings of change in consensus, and the letters are now broadly considered authentic – Deferrari (FC28, 337;) and Courtonne (Vol.3, 220) were probably the last to consider them quite suspect, and the consensus is now strongly in favour of authenticity. For further reading on Apollinaris' influence as an early homoousian figure, see Spoerl, Kelly McCarthy. *Apollinarius* and the *First Nicene Generation* in Hwang, Alexander Y. and Roombs, Ronnie eds. *Tradition and the Rule of Faith: Essays in Honour of Joseph T. Leinhard, S.J.* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 109-27.

[92] See Hübner, R.M. *Epiphanius, Ancoratus und Ps-Athanasius, Contra Sabellianos*. Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 92 (1981), 323-333; ibid. Die Hauptquelle des Epiphanius über Pauls von Samosata: Ps-Athanasius, Contra Sabellianos. Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte 90 (1979), 201-220. Though contended by Hübner, see esp. Leinhard, Joseph T. *Ps-Athanasius, Contra Sabellianos, and Basil of Caesarea*, *Contra Sabellianos et Anomoeos: Analysis and Comparison*. Vigiliae Christianae 40.4 (1986), 365-389. After Leinhard, Hübner furthered the discussion also in *Ps-Athanasius, "Contra Sabellianos": Eine Schrift des Basilius von Caesarea oder des Apolinarius von Laodicea?* Vigiliae Christianae 41.1 (1987), 386-395.

[93] Hildebrand, Stephen. *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 210-222. See also Prestige, G.L. *St. Basil the Great and Apollinaris* (London: SPCK, 1956), 9-11.

364-5 – I am more inclined to agree with Prestige on this matter.[94] First, both letters 361 and 9 find *homoios* on its own to be problematic, finding this term only preferable if qualified with the term "invariably (*ἀπαραλλάκτος*)." While it is true *ep. 361* prefers this to *homoousios* and *ep. 9* takes the opposite view, this is because *ep. 361* is rather specific in its discussion, focussing on the problem of defending the term *homoousios* from its detractors in absence of an effective term to describe their supposed differences in other forms, a space later filled by the *ousia-hypostasis* division. Mark Edwards argues that this might be construed as "an attestation of Eusebianism" in Basil's work.[95] This is fair, but I would contend instead that he is being more devious, fishing for Apollinaris' correction by taking a stance that – though deferential – comes across as playing devil's advocate to effect a response. Hildebrand's underlying concern of labelling Basil as duplicitous is also too cautious: as this thesis repeatedly argues, Basil was far more politically able than most remember, comfortably concealing his more radical Trinitarian views in contexts where they might work against him. Indeed, one only need consult Gregory Nazianzen to see how aggressively Basil played political games – the former often perceives himself to be a victim of the political machinations of the latter, to the frequent detriment of their friendship and, Gregory argues, the faith of other orthodox bishops in Basil's commitment to the Nicene faith. Hildebrand is, however, correct in linking the Apollinarian correspondence with *Against Eunomius* – Basil's statement of the Son as being "invariably alike" in *Letter* 361 is followed by an argument that often presents as an echo to the concerns of Eunomius:

[94] Aside from a date of *Against Eunomius* given by Thomas Kopecek at 360, Stephen Hildebrand has also suggested that *Against Eunomius* must predate *Epistle 9*, and that this can be corroborated by the homoiousian sentiment expressed in *Epistle 361* to Apollinaris. I rarely find myself in disagreement with Hildebrand, a scholar of Basil *par excellence*, but here I find his overarching thesis – that the redating of *Against Eunomius* fits better with a gradual disillusionment experienced by Basil towards the term *homoios* – to be somewhat problematic.

[95] Edwards, Mark. *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (London: Ashgate, 2009), 124.

> How, then, can we say the Son is *homoousios* with the Father without falling into any of the meanings discussed – please expound this more fully to us. In fact, we have interpreted that whatever through supposition the essence of the Father is understood to be, the essence of the Son must be understood to be. Thus, if anyone says that the essence of the Father is intellectual light, eternal and unbegotten, he will say that the essence of the only-begotten is also intellectual light, eternal and unbegotten.[96]

The discussion of the divine essence as unbegotten (*ἀγέννητος*) is central to Eunomius' argument, and is also a fundamental part of Basil's refutation.[97] Though in his *Letter* 9 he advocates for the *homoousion* over the *homoion,* here his position is altered and – most interestingly – he suggests that unbegottenness is not a quality of the Father but of the divine essence itself. In *Against Eunomius*, Basil contends instead that "unbegotten" is undoubtedly a quality of God, but that it imparts nothing substantial about the nature of God's essence – as Mark DelCogliano puts it, "each name applied to God contributes to our always-imperfect notion of God according to its distinct meaning."[98] Basil's own response to Eunomius follows somewhat in Apollinaris' closing – and quite pretty – statement where, in a quintessentially Apollinarian manner, the *homoousion* is considered the sole term applicable to the relationship between Father and Son:

> But those who realize that *homoiosis* is fitting for creatures, join the Son in sameness with the Father, but in a lower sameness, so that he may not be the Father himself, or any aspect of the Father, conditions which are expressed effectively by the statement "another is the Son, in this sense God," not as being him, but from him, not the prototype, but the image. Such a being is *homoousios*, transcendentally and in all ways

[96] Basil, *Ep.* 361.

[97] See Eunomius, *Apology* 7-24; Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.5-2.32.

[98] See esp. Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.16; DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 262.

> and uniquely, not as things divided, but as of one genus and kind of divinity, one and only offspring, with an indivisible and incorporeal movement, according to which that which begets, remaining in its genetic individuality, has gone forth into its genetic individuality.[99]

Basil's contention in *Against Eunomius* is that God can only be known as Father and Son when concurrently comprehending where they are the same and where they are distinct differs from this in approach. The divine essence may be unbegotten, and in this the Father and Son are invariable, but idiomatically the Son is also begotten: unless one can recognise both these things at once, knowing God as Father or Son remains an impossibility. This theology of the understanding of God through the simultaneous recognition of similarity and difference not only permeates Apollinaris' response to Basil's Trinitarian questions here, but is also central to his Christology as expressed in a work addressed to Serapion, where he assesses that understanding the body of Christ is to simultaneously recognise that the body of Christ was essentially *homoousios* with human flesh, but also divine due to the union of God with this consubstantially human body.[100]

Though Apollinaris is not mentioned by Basil in the treatise for obvious reasons – having been condemned roughly three years earlier in 362 – and the *homoousion* is still eschewed – likely due to his desire to remain in political concord with Eustathius and his other comrades from the Constantinopolitan synod – it does appear that, to some extent, Basil's argument in *Against Eunomius* is reliant on the fruits of his correspondence with Apollinaris. This correspondence and Basil's apparent use of it can also further reveal his approach towards the authority of the Nicene council in regard to his own Trinitarian beliefs: Basil might not reach out to Athanasius, but he does approach another

[99] Apollinaris to Basil, latter's *Ep.* 362.

[100] See Apollinaris, *To Serapion* fragment 161. In Lietzmann, Hans. *Apollinaris von Laodicea und Seine Schule* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1904), 254.

Nicene bishop of notable – if not necessarily good – standing whose commitment to the *homoousion* was no less resolute, even if history fails to remember him as fondly as his Alexandrian contemporary. Evidently for Basil, even if his character was questionable, his approach to the Trinitarian question was impactful, and echoes of it are present within the pages of *Against Eunomius.*

Here it must be noted that Basil's theological abilities of expression are often celebrated, whilst his methodology as something of a pragmatist is rarely explored. *Against Eunomius* has the feeling of a work that was – though in many ways innovative and brilliant – at times rushed in its philosophical engagement and left unedited. It is then rather intriguing that, where at times inconsistent in theology, the above shows that it was quite politically adept: it employs the scriptural interpretations of a fellow anti-Eunomian famous for their exegetical prowess, and skilfully blurs the line between Basilio-Eustathian and homoousian theological enquiry: its grammatical argument, despite its clarity, leaves room for interpretation and enables Basil to retain an argument that is Pro-Nicene whilst not having to rest on the homoousion. With this approach in mind, it is worth turning to the debate between Basil and Eunomius on the nature of tradition.

TRADITION IN EUNOMIUS' *APOLOGY*

What is perhaps most confusing about the exegetical responses above is that, insofar as Eunomius views the evidence, they are somewhat secondary. It has already been observed that Eunomius, like Aëtius before him, was not one for quoting the Scriptures. Indeed: much of Eunomius' reasoning behind the publication of the *Apology* instead turns on the source text he *does* quote – A creed:

> Πιστεύομεν είς ἕνα θεόν, πατέρα παντοκράτορα, ἐξ οὗ τὰ πάντα.

> καὶ εἰς ἕνα μονογενῆ υἱὸν θεοῦ, θεὸν λόγον, τὸν κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα.
>
> καὶ εἰς ἓν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, τὸν παράκλητον, ἐν ᾧ πάσης χάριτος διανομὴ κατὰ τὴν συμμετρίαν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον ἐκάστῳ δίδοται τῶν ἁγίων.
>
> We believe in one God, Father almighty, from whom are all things.
>
> And in one only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things.
>
> And in one Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, in whom is given to every saint a share of every single grace in correct measure for the sake of the common good.[101]

Though it may not be total innovation on Eunomius' part to cite a creed as evidence of his orthodoxy, it is certainly a new form of appeal within the context of Christian apologetic literature.[102] Sourcing this creed is a little difficult – Basil attributes it to Arius, claiming that "even if it is said that Arius put forth this faith to Alexander in order to deceive him (because this is claimed), Eunomius still puts forth this faith as if it agrees with his own opinion."[103] However, this seems unlikely as, though Eunomius seems to have been aware of Arius' letters to Alexander and Eusebius of Nicomedia, Bernard Sesboüé and Éphrem Boularand have noted that the letter from Arius to Alexander contains no such formula or anything similar in the texts used by Athanasius, Epiphanius and Hilary.[104] Some suggestions have been made that is was a baptismal creed originating in Cappadocia, Eunomius' home province, and it has

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[101] Eunomius, *Apology* 5.

[102] One should probably view this in the post-Eusebian context of Christian apologetic rather than through the lens of the more commonly-cited "apologists" of the Second Century. On this, see Frede, M. *Eusebius' Apologetic Writings*. In Edwards, M.J; Goodman, M.D & Price, S.R.F. eds. *Apologetics in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 223-50. See also Edwards, *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* 4-7 for a quick summary of the origins of the Christian Apologetic genre.

[103] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.4.

[104] For Eunomius' apparent knowledge of Arius' letters, see *Apology* 28 (to Alexander) and 15 (to Eusebius of Nicomedia). As regards the differences between Eunomius and Arius' confessions of faith, see Sesboüé, Bernard. *Contre Eunome II,* 241-3f (SC 305, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1983); Boularand, Éphrem. *L'hérésie d'Arius et la 'foi' de Nicée*, (vol.1) 49-51 (Paris: Letouzey & Ané, 1972).

been proferred by Richard Vaggione that Basil – a fellow Cappadocian – recognises it, and agrees that some fathers might have used it "in the simplicity of their hearts."[105] Though Basil's words are a little ambiguous, perhaps supplying the context to this might be helpful:

> First, he lays out a faith composed of simple and undefined terms that even some of the Fathers used. They did not concern themselves with the questions implied by the terms, but spoke in this way, imprecisely, for themselves in the simplicity of their hearts.[106]

Though Basil's words remain somewhat ambiguous, I would suggest Vaggione's claim something of a stretch. Rather than state the formula itself to be familiar, Basil instead finds that the terminology contained within the formula itself is. This is no surprise, as the language of "from whom" and "through whom" in relation to Father and Son respectively is taken from 1 Corinthians 8:6, a verse used frequently by Origen, Eusebius Cyril of Jerusalem, Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers.[107] The discussion of the Spirit and the distribution of different graces may be a reference to Romans 12:3-8 as they share similarities, but not sufficient ones to make the connection with any kind of certainty. As such, it is no surprise Basil knew the language contained therein, but it is clear enough from his words that he does not know the formula in which they are ordered above.

Considering the respect Eunomius clearly has for the fathers as an authority, it is equally unlikely he invented this profession of faith himself. Though it is probably not a widespread formula, and therefore most likely not a baptismal one, it is probably most likely of local, Cappadocian, origin. What is

[105] Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 39f.

[106] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.4.

[107] For a full list, see Sesbouë, *Contre Eunome* II, 241-3f.

important, however, is how he introduces it. In addition to calling it a "confession (ὁμολογία) of faith," he states:[108]

> After first setting out as a kind of judgement or rule (κάνων) the pious and right tradition (παραδόσις) that has come down from the fathers, they should agree to use this as an effective criterion by which to judge what is being said.[109]

Here Eunomius evokes explicitly the language of κάνων and παραδόσις to set out that – in his eyes – all the doctrines that follow must adhere to this creed and that this is, in his words, "that essential faith which is common to everyone who are concerned to appear or to be Christians."[110] This assertion of tradition is therefore used to control the narrative in two ways: as an ordering principle to which both his words and his audience must adhere, and also as a demonstration of his theological pedigree. Indeed, this state of theological pedigree is given even more weight by the fact that he understands the formula to be, as above, a ὁμολογία. According to Geoffrey Lampe, the use of the term ὁμολογία at this time was closely and forcefully related to a confession of faith in some kind of formula – it meant an authoritative creed that was used as a litmus test for right Christian belief.[111]

In fact, that Eunomius should begin with a creed is of no surprise given the context. As we have seen, the *Apology* was written for the express purpose of rejecting the decisions of the 359 council at Sirmium, and the (incredibly long-winded) creed drawn up there by Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius of Sebaste. The creed reads thus:

> We believe in one sole and true God, the Father almighty, creator and maker of all things: and in one only-begotten Son of God who before all ages and before all beginning and before all conceivable time and before all comprehensible substance

[108] Eunomius, *Apology* 4.

[109] Ibid. 4.

[110] Ibid. 6.

[111] See Lampe, G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 957-8. Oxford: University Press, 1961.

> (ουσία) was begotten impassibly from God, through whom the ages were set up and all things came into existence, begotten as only-begotten, sole from the sole Father, like to the Father who begat him, according to the scriptures, whose generation nobody understands except the father who begot him. Him we know as the only-begotten Son of God, who came down from the heavens at the Father's bidding in order to put an end to sin, and was born of Mary the virgin, and went around with his disciples and fulfilled all the strategy according to his Father's will.
>
> He was crucified and died and went down to the subterranean places and fulfilled his mission there, and the gate-keepers of Hell shuddered when they saw him' and he rose from the dead on the third day and conversed with his disciples and fulfilled all the dispensation and when the forty days were fulfilled he was taken up into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father and will come again on the last day of resurrection in his Father's glory to reward everyone according to his deeds.
>
> And in the Holy Spirit whom the only-begotten of God, Jesus Christ himself, promised to send to the race of men, the Paraclete according to the text.
>
> The word essence (ουσία), because when it was naively inserted by our Fathers though not familiar with the masses, caused a scandal, and because the scriptures do not contain it, we have decided should be removed, and that there should be absolutely no mention of *ousia* in relation to God for the future, because the scriptures make no mention at all of the *ousia* of the Father and the Son. But we declare that the Son is like the Father (ὅμοιον κατὰ πάντα) according to every respect, as the holy scriptures also declare and teach.[112]

Having read this formula in its entirety, the reasoning behind the simplicity of Eunomius' chosen formula should be self-evident. There is no doubt that Eunomius would have been familiar with this document - In addition to his presence at Constantinople, and his relationship to Aetius, when rejecting *homoousios* and an applicable term to the relationship between Father and Son in the *Apology*, he rejects the utility of the term *homoios* in the same breath, the central tenet of the Sirmium creed.[113] Furthermore, the unknowability of God's essence to all other beings but Father, Son and Spirit is key to

[112] I have here used R.P.C. Hanson's translation of the text, though with some alterations of my own. See Hanson, R.P.C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, 363-4. London: T&T Clark, 1988.

[113] See Eunomius, *Apology* 26.

Basil's refutation, most notably in *Against Eunomius* 1.14. Indeed, in rejecting both *homoousios* and *homoiousios,* he alludes to 1 Corinthians 8:6 – and therefore his creed – as his main proof text. In addition to its status as a proof text for all his following arguments, therefore, Eunomius' creed is also, by implication, a text that he considers to anathematize the Basilio-Eustathian party to which he is opposed.[114]

In addition to the above, Eunomius derives the authority of the text not from the scriptures it contains, but from its status as a παραδόσις from the fathers. That this is also the first thing Eunomius chooses to do after requesting that his audience be open-minded is a clear attempt to demonstrate his own theological and traditional pedigree before he attempts to reject that of his episcopally and exegetically equal opponents. Eunomius does not, as Didymus or Athanasius, begin with the direct quotation of scriptures but instead cuts to the question he sees to be at the heart of the issue – what is it that the fathers taught, and are my views in agreement with it? This demonstration of deep trust in patristic authority is something that had only begun to develop at this point in the fourth century, but for Eunomius it is clear, based on both his language and tradition's place at the forefront of his treatise, that adherence to the tradition of the fathers is the primary way in which one can ensure correct theological views. Indeed, in the *Apology,* he says as much, arguing that "it has been our practice to keep the arguments used by the saints in times before and now, again, by us."[115] Eunomius sees no difference between his own theological views and those of the exalted men of the church – to him there is no innovation, but simply restatement of what the saints have always professed. Indeed, this

[114] N.B. this does not mean that all those espousing *homoian* trinitarian theologies were hostile to Eunomius: he and his mentor Aëtius were there on account of Eudoxius' support for them, and one can likely attribute Eudoxius' friendship with Valens (and preceding, more rocky relationship with Constantius) as a substantial reason why the proceedings of the Basilio-Eustathian-led synod at Lampsacus was denied imperial assent.

[115] Ibid. 15.

is not the work of the "logic-chopper" that Basil and Gregory of Nyssa name him, but instead of an individual who sees themselves as a defender and expositor of the patristic tradition.[116]

The treatise itself is both structurally and theologically fenced by this appeal to the right tradition of the faith: the creed he sees as παραδόσις is a self-described summary of the Christian πίστις, and it is to that very same faith that he returns to at the close of his *Apology*, where he states "I beseech at least my followers to preserve the unshaken and firm faith (πίστις) for the sake of the one who gave it to them (παραδίδωμι)."[117] Eunomius begins the main body of the treatise with an appeal to the faith justified by its status as παραδόσις, and ends with the call to guard that same faith that has been handed down. However, what Eunomius has subtly done here is to double down on his previous assertions of patristic witness, understanding the faith he has laid out to not only be from the fathers, but from "the one who gave it to them," a reference that here can only mean Christ. Again, then, Eunomius desires above all to have his introductory creed be of unquestionable authority, a παραδόσις from both the fathers and Christ himself.

However, despite the fact that he uses a creed, the contents of it are almost entirely scriptural. Though there is some adherence to the norms of creeds such as an expression of belief and the use of the divine names (which are themselves scriptural), the content of the formula alludes to the language used by 1 Corinthians 8:6 and Romans 12:3-8. From observing this, we can ascertain two things. The first is that, for Eunomius, these scriptures are the fundamental litmus test by which one can confirm or put into question an individual's commitment to the Christian faith. The second – and far more interesting

[116] My thanks to Dr. Pui Him Ip for this precise summary in review of my work.

[117] Ibid. 4; 27.

– is that the structure of the patristic παραδόσις by which this faith might be confirmed is a mixing of both scriptures and an ordering, patristic, tradition that placed them together. That Eunomius uses this particular creedal formula is no accident either, and can essentially be seen as a double invocation of authority on his part. Since the important contents of the creed are strong allusions to scripture, and he invokes it as part of an authoritative tradition with the backing of the fathers, he provides his reader with a serious dilemma: deny this creed and deny the authority of both scripture and tradition. It is therefore no surprise that in replying to it, then, Basil can only criticise its simplicity rather than its content or its provenance.

It should also be noted that the *Apology* is replete with possible references to non-Christian literature, with likely allusions to a number of different Greek writers all being present within the text.[118] Most of these revolve around the idiom quoted in *Apology* 14: "curing one evil with another evil, the lesser by the greater," for which there are several potential sources, including Plato, Aeschylus and Euripides.[119] Similarly, much of the argument given about the nature of time in *Apology* 10 is taken directly from Plato's *Timaeus*. Mark DelCogliano has suggested a potential origin for this argument in either Plato himself, or the *Commentary on Job* written by Julian the Arian, a contemporary of Eunomius.[120] Though the two are strikingly similar in their argument, which would indicate one using the other, it is difficult to say that Eunomius is only using Julian's argument here, seeing as he does not allude to Job in his

[118] See Eunomius, *Apology.* Aeschylus (14, lines 10-11), Aristotle (8, lines 7-8), Diogenes (19, lines 4-6), Euripides (14, lines 10-11), Herodotus (14, lines 10-11), Plato (14, lines 10-11; 10, line 6), Sophocles (14, lines 10-11) and Thucydides (14, lines 10-11). For an excellent discussion of Eunomius' use of Greek philosophical sources for his arguments, see DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names,* 50-95. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

[119] Eunomius, *Apology* 14.

[120] DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato*, 503-4. Vigiliae Christianae: A Review of Early Christian Life and Language, 2014, Vol.68(5), pp.498-532

discussion of the nature of time.[121] Seeing as Eunomius appears to also demonstrate awareness of the *Protagoras* in the *Apology* and the *Phaedrus* in his later *Apology of Apologies*, in addition to the sheer dominance of Plato's ideas within the realm of Late Antique cosmology, it seems more likely a mixture of the two has been used in producing Eunomius' own argument.[122] Here though we see a mixture of exegesis of scripture and the use of non-Christian sources to justify his argument, a staunch reminder that the *Apology,* following in the footsteps of Aëtius' *Syntagmation* before it, is more a philosophical text than it is exegetical – Eunomius' notoriety by his mocking epithet, "the philosopher," was in many ways well-deserved. Eunomius is quick to reject the notion that this predilection for philosophical arguments rather than scriptural might be a deviation from his ecclesiastical predecessors, ending his philosophical observations on time by returning to "the words of the saints," and in doing so attempts to justify his more philosophical predispositions as not only in agreement with the saints, but in fact harmonious with them. In this way, therefore, even the more philosophical aspects of the treatise are defended as having patristic (or at least saintly) witness, and Eunomius' claim to be an inheritor of the doctrines of those who went before him upholds and frames all aspects of the *Apology*: creedal, scriptural and philosophical.

Eunomius' approach to the invocation of tradition is, therefore, the employment of a simplistic and scripturally-founded creed with alleged patristic witness in order to achieve several aims. First, he ensures that his arguments are encircled by an agreeable and allegedly well attested to framework, the denial of which would be a denial of both tradition and scripture, in this case being the same. Second, the scriptural content, according to his argument, invalidates the decisions made and creeds promulgated at the councils of Nicaea and Sirmium while promulgating a different – and in his eyes

[121] See Julian the Arian, *Commentary on Job* 38:7; Eunomius, *Apology* 10.

[122] *Protagoras* 340d-e is possibly alluded to in *Apology* 14, and *Phaedrus* 245c frames the discussion of *Apology of Apologies* 224:4-14.

more patristic – one. Finally, and most importantly, he employs his παραδόσις to signify that his views do not contradict the patristic tradtion that he views himself to have inherited. Eunomius' appeal to tradition is therefore one which is based on a wise mix of both real respect and veneration for the tradition of the fathers, and rhetorical technique by which his claims are given weight due to their patristic association.

AFTER NICAEA: CREEDS AND SYNODAL DECISIONS AS TRADITION

Eunomius' conception of an authoritative tradition based on right scriptural interpretation is nothing new. Jewish writers of the Mishnah considered tradition (*Masoret)* to be "a fence to the Torah,"[123] Apostolic tradition in the thought of Irenaeus is founded upon the idea that the church has a monopoly on right scriptural exegesis that traces itself back to the apostles themselves, and Origen, in his preface to *On First Principles*, argues that both the hidden and patent things that are contained within the rule of faith are also the right exegesis of the scriptures as intended by the apostles themselves.[124] By the fourth century, this approach to tradition as a history of correct scriptural interpretation seems to have become extremely normalised, being a kind of authoritative handing-over of the fruits of exegesis: such attitudes were prevalent in the East with *paradosis* and the West with *traditio* by this point, as Everett

[123] *Pirqe Aboth* 11 & 55.

[124] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.10.1; 3.1.1; 3.2.22-3. See also Origen, *On First Principles* preface 3.

Ferguson has noted.[125] According to Georges Florovsky, there was a common appeal to tradition in which the σκόπος and χαρακτὴρ of scripture was discussed, and in which the decisions of Nicaea in particular were seen as a monument to doctrine based on the right method of biblical exegesis.[126] Michael Haykin has followed suit, and both use the works of Athanasius as a main point of focus.[127] In his *De Synodis*, Athanasius brings the charge of transgressing tradition before those who called councils in the hope of nullifying Nicaea, stating:

> Therefore, though there is no reason on their side, they are struggling whichever way they turn – despite their falsification – having nothing left to say but "for as much as we contradict our predecessors and transgress the traditions of the fathers, we thought it right a synod should come together."[128]

For Athanasius, then, it would seem that there is inherent value to the decisions made by Nicaea, to the extent that an attempt to nullify it can be considered an act of transgression (παραβαίνειν). In fact, it seems as if "the fathers" above hold the same authority as the successors to apostolic authority envisioned by Irenaeus, and in such a way we can see a new authoritative epithet begin to emerge out of a more mature Christianity through the common synodal history that itself has emerged out of its first three centuries. Indeed, if we contrast Athanasius' condemnation of Arian factions here with the way he glorifies the bishops at the synod of Ariminum, we can see that tradition and respect for it is at the front of his mind in these post-Nicene synods:

> Who, then, must approve of the conscientious conduct of the bishops assembled at the synod in Ariminum? The same bishops who endured such a laborious path and

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[125] Ferguson, Everett: *Paradosis and Traditio: A Word Study* in Hwang, Alexander Y. and Roombs, Ronnie eds. *Tradition and the Rule of Faith: Essays in Honour of Joseph T. Leinhard, S.J.* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 3-29.

[126] Florovsky, Georges. *The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church,* 82. In *Bible, Church Tradition: An Orthodox View* (vol.1). Belmont, MA: Nordland, 1972.

[127] Haykin, Michael A.G. *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century,* 93-4. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

[128] Athanasius, *De Synodiis* 7.

> perilous sea; this they desired so that they might depose the Arian thinking by method of sacred and canonical resolution, that they might guard without violation the definitions of the fathers.[129]

Again the position Athanasius takes is one of respect for those who maintain the doctrines confessed by their spiritual fathers, seeing Nicaea as a fundamentally pan-ecclesial council to which all subsequent conciliar doctrinal definitions must conform.

Of particular importance, however, is the way in which Athanasius understands the fathers of Nicaea to have authority – through a monopoly on the correct interpretation of scripture. Florovsky has noted that the Arians in general based their own beliefs on the words of the scriptures. This is a charge Athanasius levels both at the Arians and the *Tropikoi* – a term he uses to describe those who assert the nature of the Son as not a creature, but believe the Spirit to be one.[130] In his *Against the Arians*, Athanasius poses the debate between the Pro-Nicenes and the Arians as one that is fundamentally due to disagreement on the meaning of scripture, rejecting the Arian exegesis and instead saying, "let we (Pro-Nicenes) that possess the object of the faith (τὸν σκόπον τῆς πίστεως) restore the correct understanding of what they (the Arians) have incorrectly interpreted."[131] Later in the same oration, he also states:

> Thus if the Christ-fighters (χριστομάχοι) had these things in mind, considering the ecclesiastical *skopos* as an anchor of the faith, they would neither have been shipwrecked about the faith, nor would they also shamelessly resist those who wished to recover them from their falling into sin, and think of those encouraging them into right religion as enemies.[132]

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[129] Ibid. 13.

[130] See Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.2.

[131] Athanasius, *Against the Arians* 3.35.

[132] Ibid. 3.58.

Athanasius, framing the church – by which he tacitly means the Nicene church – as having a monopoly on right interpretation of the scriptures through their possession of the right *skopos* of scripture, clearly shows us the nature of tradition in his thought: Tradition, in his eyes, is simply the church's history of correct exegesis of scripture.

This can also be seen in the way he ascribes later heterodox movements fighting against the Spirit as *Tropikoi*. The relation of this method of exegesis Athanasius deems correct and by which the Son and Spirit can be justifiably understood as God is, late in the first letter, spoken of as such:

> But let us look beyond these same sayings and at the very tradition, teaching and faith of the catholic church from the beginning, which the Lord gave, the apostles proclaimed and the fathers guarded.[133]

This tripartite understanding of tradition as originating from Christ himself, made public by the apostles and vigilantly kept by the fathers is an indication of the way in which the fathers inherited the *tropoi* by which to interpret scripture from the apostles, and therefore by extension the Lord. Their role, unlike the apostles and Christ himself, however, is one of watching vigilant over this correct interpretation. As 'father' in both *To Serapion* and *De Synodis* has the particular meaning of one present at councils Athanasius himself deemed authoritative, there is a clear and tacit statement about both the nature of tradition and the role of Pro-Nicene councils within the above passage: to Athanasius, tradition is nothing more than the *tropoi* handed down from the Lord himself by which scripture is to be rightly understood, and the actions of the fathers in ensuring these *tropoi* are the method by which all Christians are to understand scripture.

[133] Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.24

References to patristic traditions or respect for the 'fathers' in strictly Arian and anomoian works are somewhat frequent. Arius' own letter to Alexander begins with the assertion that the Christian faith he and Alexander hold to is "from our forefathers (ἐκ προγόνων)," and what follows is a rejection of named heterodox thinkers: Valentinus, Manichaeus, Sabellius and Hieracus – all of whom might have been assigned the title of arch-heretic at the time.[134] Both of these claims are an attempt by Arius to lay claim to the same ecclesiastical ancestry as Alexander, holding both the same forefathers and the same enemies, by which he finds his beliefs to be justified and conforming to tradition. As we have seen, Eunomius also holds to what he considers tradition that has come down from the fathers. We also see this in Gothic Christian thought: according to Auxentius (the Arian bishop of Durostorum), Ulfila – a Goth of Cappadocian descent and key player in the Arian controversy – too believed "according to the tradition and the authority of the holy scriptures."[135] Tradition therefore was at the centre of the debate between the Arians and the Pro-Nicenes, each claiming to be witnesses to and defenders of it and both laying claim to it as theirs and theirs alone in contrast to their innovating opponents.

Our evidence of appeals to tradition in non-Nicene circles beyond this are generally from the proceedings of Basilio-Eustathians. The appeal to creedal and conciliar traditions made by Eunomius, however, is far from unique, and other Non-Nicenes also appear to have had a respect for certain conciliar decisions or interpretative methods with prior ecclesiastical witness to which they held as some form of authoritative tradition. Though the scholarship on Non-Nicene appeals to conciliar decisions is scant, work has been most notably done by Winrich Löhr on this topic. In particular, Löhr notes that at the council of Sirmium, one of the major reasons given by the Basilio-Eustathian party for rejecting *homoousios* as a term, besides its apparently unscriptural status and the problems it posed by

[134] See Athanasius, *De Synodis* 16.

[135] See *Letter of Auxentius* in Maximinus, *Scolies* 250.63.

positing a *substantia prior* in which the Father and the Son participated was the rejection of *homoousios* at the 268 synod of Antioch that condemned Paul of Samosata.[136] By respecting the rejection of *homoousios* made at the synod of 268, and thus naming a council that predated Nicaea by over half a century, the Basilio-Eustathians appealed to their own conciliar tradition by prioritising its superior antiquity over that of Nicaea, which they (just as Athanasius does with Nicaea in his rejection of the decisions made at Seleucia in 359) accordingly find to have pan-ecclesial authority that superseded the later and contrary statements made at Nicaea.

To argue that this was a common method by which the Trinitarian beliefs of a certain camp were vindicated is, however, difficult. Though we are quite fortunate to have knowledge of the appeal to the 268 synod in the proceedings of Sirmium through Hilary of Poitier's *De Synodis*, there is elsewhere a paucity of evidence that could suggest widespread use of appeals to prior conciliar decisions.[137] Athanasius records an Arian creed of dedication from the Antiochene synod of 341 in his own *De Synodis* 23.2, which is according to Sozomen founded upon the creed of Lucian of Antioch, who lived from around 240-312A.D.[138] The creed begins with "we believe, following the evangelical and apostolic tradition…" and ends with the statement that "for all that has been handed down (παραδεδομένοις) in the divine scriptures, whether by prophets or apostles, we truly and reverently believe and follow."[139] The language herein contained evokes tradition in the more traditional, apostolic sense, but the likely

[136] Löhr, Winrich A. *A Sense of Tradition: The Homoiousian Church Party*, 88. In Barnes, Michel R. & Williams, Daniel H., *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 81-100.

[137] See Hilary of Poitiers, *De Synodis* 29-33.

[138] See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.5. This attribution is given credence both by J.N.D. Kelly in *Early Christian Creeds,* 268 and Gustave Bardy in *Recherches sur Saint-Lucien et son École* (Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1936), 86-94, both believing Sozomen's testimony to be more likely true than not.

[139] Athanasius, *De Synodis* 23.2. N.B. it is no surprise that no source is mentioned by this Arian creed of 340/1 due to the fact it is a creed and not a treatise.

relationship between it and the creed of Lucian assumes an additional appeal to patristic authority, or at the very least a healthy respect for their Antiochene predecessors. Perhaps the most difficult question that arises from the creed of 341 is, based on the Lucianic attribution, whether the appeal to tradition is an inclusion of those present at the synod or something kept from Lucian's own creed. Lucian's not being extant, this is unfortunately a question to which there is no definitive answer, but perhaps an answer is not in this case necessary: Even though those at Antioch find scripture to be the underlying criterion by which all right religious belief is confirmed or condemned, that the fruits of their exegesis corresponds with that of their predecessors is always central to their concerns, creating an assurance that any statement about the faith held within is read with, as it were, a patristic guarantee of authenticity.

It is interesting, however, that Lucian is named, being neither a bishop nor having any strong role in the earlier synod of 268 at which Paul of Samosata was condemned. Despite this, his status as a presbyter and martyr carries enough weight to ostensibly be the source material of a creed intended to correct the decisions made at Nicaea. Perhaps the solution to this is that Lucian's own theology was sufficiently homoiousian – the language of the dedication creed is said to originate from his work and thoughts; we historians are unfortunately not privy to those works – and his reputation sufficiently stainless that it could be seen as a worthy compromise. Indeed, those present at 341 are not the first non-Nicenes to appeal to Lucian: Arius believed himself to be a Lucianist, and his letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia ends by noting their communion as being "co-Lucianists."[140] In any sense, it is in this dedication creed that we once again see a forceful and overriding respect for the beliefs espoused and the formulae professed by those who have come before and who have proved their worth either by synodal participation or – in this more unusual case – martyrdom.

[140] See Arius, *To Eusebius of Nicomedia*.

Due to the gradual disappearance of the Non-Nicene record, it is beyond surprising that such a paucity of documents would contain so many references to the doctrines they espouse as tradition. The dated creed of Sirmium (which we have already seen) and that of Constnatinople 360 after it, both end in similar ways by considering the "Nicene" fathers not to have erred, but instead to have overestimated the reasoning capabilities of the many in ascertaining the language of *ousia*. The relevant passage of the dated creed reads thus:

> The word essence (ουσία), because when it was naively inserted by our Fathers though not familiar with the masses, caused a scandal, and because the scriptures do not contain it, we have decided should be removed, and that there should be absolutely no mention of *ousia* in relation to God for the future, because the scriptures make no mention at all of the *ousia* of the Father and the Son. But we declare that the Son is like the Father (ὅμοιον κατὰ πάντα) according to every respect, as the holy scriptures also declare and teach.[141]

Almost identical, the creed professed at the synod of Constantinople reads so:

> But as for the word essence (ουσία) which was adopted simply by the fathers, but being unknown by the masses caused a scandal, and because the scriptures do not contain it, it has pleased us that it should be abolished and that no mention at all should be from this point forward made of it, since in fact the holy scriptures make no mention at all of the *ousia* of the Father or Son. Nor in fact should the term *hypostasis* be used of Father and Son and Holy Spirit. But we say that the Son is like the Father, as the holy scriptures declare and teach.[142]

In both these creeds, it should be noted that the fathers are not seen as the origin of the interpretative problem, but instead the laity are. Indeed, beyond this, the creeds are fundamentally framed as inheritors of, and revisers to, the creed of Nicaea. In both of these ways we can perceive a respect for prior creeds and synodal decisions as authoritative, even when they promulgate something that can be

[141] See Hanson, R.P.C. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, 363-4. I have made some alterations to this translation for the sake of clarity and accuracy.

[142] For a version of this creed, see Athanasius, *De Synodis* 30.

seen as incorrect or even – in these cases – scandalous. It represents a stark difference from Athanasius, whose approach to the Nicene creed as *paradosis* led him instead to reject and repudiate as heresy any creed which did not follow directly in its footsteps. Athanasius, then, likely due to his idiosyncratic rigidity, does not in this case appear to be representative of the general current of thought among the creed-makers and revisers of the period of synods between Nicaea and Constantinople.

Indeed, the treatise *On the Faith* attributed to Basil of Ancyra by Epiphanius in his *Panarion* – and one of the few preserved texts written by a theologian commonly viewed to be of the Basilio-Eustathian party – contains probably the strongest non-Nicene appeal to conciliar tradition available in the literature:[143]

> Yet since the Son is also "that which is (Ex. 3.14)," and since Paul of Samosata and Marcellus have taken the occasion to use the prologue to the Gospel according to John, which says, "in the beginning was the Word (Jn 1.1.)," without willing to say that the Son of God is truly the Son, but taking the name "Word," simply because they wanted to say that the Son of God is discourse and language - as if from a mouth! The Fathers who condemned Paul of Samosata for the same heresy were constrained in demonstrating the Son possessed a hypostasis, which is existent and a being, and was not a discourse, and to say that the Son himself is an ousia, by means of the word *ousia*, the difference between them being that which is itself devoid of existence and that which exists.[144]

Before we continue it is perhaps useful to indicate what this passage means, as it is rather opaque. Basil is likely here referring to the theological problem that deposing Paul of Samosata entailed – by rejecting

[143] A recent and convincing argument for the authorship of the treatise has been proffered by Xavier Morales in *Basil of Ancyra's Treatise on Faith: Confirming the Authorship* (Vigiliae Christianae, January 2018, Vol.72(1), pp.71-92), itself a response to two of Mark DelCogliano's articles attributing it to George of Laodicea: *George of Laodicea: A Historical Reassessment* (Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 2011, Vol.62(4), pp.667-692) and *The Literary Corpus of George of Laodicea* (Vigiliae Christianae, 2011, Vol.65(2), pp.150-169). I am convinced by Morales' argumentation, especially based on similarities between Basil's *De Virginitate* and the treatise *On Faith.*

[144] Basil of Ancyra, *On the Faith,* 12:2-4 (In SC563, 116-19).

the *homoousion,* and in particular Paul's belief that the Son had no subsistent existence distinguishable from the Father, Malchion (the *didaskalos* tasked with making the actual argument against Paul) had to maintain a kind of relationship between Son and Father by which they remain conceivably distinct but also by which the Son is not profaned by being considered entirely unlike the Father.[145] For Basil of Ancyra, it seems, the answer lies in the term *homoios*, which he observes to be the term that the acts of the Synod lead to necessarily. He continues to evoke the fathers as authorities, concluding that – at the 268 Synod of Antioch to which he refers – those present "called, therefore, this subsistence (ὑπόστασις) substance (οὐσία)," and that by this synodal decision, his own view of the Son being *homoios* to the Father was vindicated.[146]

That the Basilio-Eustathians in particular had a strong interest in respecting the will and decisions of the fathers from the 341 synod of Antioch to the 360 synod of Constantinople is demonstrative of one thing above all: that by Constantinople, the concept of patristic tradition was fundamental to the formulation of creeds for the Basilio-Eustathian party and therefore the synods at which they were present. Perhaps this in itself can give us some insight as to why Eunomius might have been so keen to frame his own discussion around tradition beyond his own interest in conforming to the teachings of his ecclesiastical predecessors: as demonstrated by the number of different creeds advocating a Father-Son relationship of "likeness" that lead up to the synod of Constantinople, tradition was evidently important to the Basilio-Eustathians, and it was only in sight of tradition and with reference to the fathers that has preceded them that any kind of authoritative declaration on the Trinity could be made, and therefore any creed to be promulgated as the *pistis* of the true church. Basil of Ancyra and

[145] It should be noted that the Synod of Antioch itself was not so much a Trinitarian conflict as a Christological one, but that the Trinitarian problem, particular the kind of divinity the *logos* possessed, was central to the issue. For more information on the Synod, see Lang, U.M. *The Christological Controversy at the Synod of Antioch in 268/9*. Journal of Theological Studies, Apr 2000, Vol.51(1), pp.53-80.

[146] Ibid. 12:8 (SC563, 120). See also ibid. 13:1 (SC563, 120).

Eustathius were always keen to ensure that their creeds had patristic witness of some form and referred to the fathers with due respect. Indeed, this tradition of witness, in unison with the right application of scripture and careful use of only scriptural names, was the only way to move forward as regards drafting such a document. It is therefore no surprise, then, that Eunomius, when tasked with winning over Basil of Ancyra and Eustathius to his own Trinitarian theology, found it necessary to appeal to tradition first and foremost, and to frame his discussion within it.

BASIL'S RESPONSE – TRADITION AS PATRISTIC ASSENT TO RIGHT EXEGESIS

In *Against Eunomius,* Basil uses *παράδοσις* six times, referring to three or four different kinds of tradition. Once the term is used to invoke the "pious tradition of the scriptures (*τὴν εὐσεβῆ τῶν Γραφῶν παράδοσιν*) against Eunomius' attempt to redefine the term "only-begotten."[147] Twice the term is used to denote the triple immersion used in baptism, in reference to Matthew 28:19.[148] The term is also used twice to refer to the "tradition of the Fathers," the usage which Basil later comes to defend most frequently.[149] Finally, there is a more opaque reference to tradition, the exact nature of which is difficult to decipher. Here Basil states:

> It was delivered to you to succeed at your command, provided always that you persuade us to judge the tradition that has reigned throughout past times, to which the righteous subscribed, as less deserving of respect than your impious conception.[150]

[147] Basil, *Against Eunomius*, 616,A. It should also be noted that Basil employs an interesting literary technique here – encircling "the pious scriptures" with "the tradition," indicating subtly within his word order that one can be used to order the other.

[148] Ibid. 665,C; 665,D.

[149] Ibid. 509,C; 513,A.

[150] Ibid. 1,3 (PG29, 508B).

This particular kind of *παράδοσις* could be in reference to any of the previous concepts – baptism, scripture or a tradition of the fathers. The latter is most likely, due to both the textual proximity of this particular variant to the appeals to a tradition of the fathers and the notion of historical prominence of the doctrine and its status as the preferred belief confessed by the righteous. From this, we can see that in the earlier period of Basil's theological writings, typified by *Against Eunomius*, the focus is on a multiplicity of different kinds of traditions in the church, all of which are viewed as having superior authority to the heterodox traditions from which Eunomius develops his Trinitarian theology (or indeed lack thereof).

R.P.C. Hanson has noted that Basil's approach to tradition in *Against Eunomius* in rather akin to Athanasius' in *De Synodis.* Though Basil clearly believes that "scripture is doctrinally sufficient," Hanson argues, based on his view that Basil's definition of tradition in this case is "the course of Christian doctrine up to his day."[151] This is a fairly accurate assessment, as Basil is quite keen to dismiss the ideas of Eunomius as having no basis in church doctrine, using his opening statements in the treatise to reject the views of Eunomius as a deviation from correct church doctrine, stating:

> If all those upon whom the name of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ has been invoked preferred to neither be content with the truth of the Gospel or with the tradition of the apostles and the simplicity of the faith, there would be no need for our present discussion.[152]

[151] Hanson, R.P.C. *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit,* 244-5. *Vigiliae Christianae* Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 241-255.

[152] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1,1 (SC 299, 140).

By interpreting Eunomian doctrine as the fruits of the discontent Eunomius and his allies had with "the truth of the Gospel or with the tradition of the apostles and the simplicity of the faith," Basil expressly judges Eunomius' Trinitarian theology to be in direct contrast to both scripture and the total assent to its words that has always been held by the church.[153] Indeed, Basil at this point is reluctant to assert that anything held by the church from any source other than scripture is necessary to believe or state, finding naming the Father *agennētos* and the son a *gennēma* to be problematic, since neither is found in scripture, to be useful but unnecessary, claiming "one should be content with abiding by the names which one finds in scripture, through which one can appropriately glorify God."[154] In this way, therefore, we can see that at this point in time Basil views tradition not as an authoritative body of work by the church that can be added to Scripture, but rather as simply the history of Christian assent to the same truths that were held in the very earliest days of the faith.

Hanson's assumption of Basil's knowledge of the works of Athanasius, of all people, however, is far from a convincing or even necessary one.[155] Based on our prior observations concerning Amos 4:13 and its exegesis in controversy with Non-Nicenes, it seems unlikely that Basil had Athanasius in mind as an inspiration in *Against Eunomius*, considering he opted to use Didymus' exegesis over Athanasius' in this case. Though it would be absurd to claim that Basil was not at least aware of Athanasius by this point (and indeed later in life they corresponded), but it is no more reasonable to indicate Athanasius as the inspiration for Basil's appeal to tradition. Indeed, here Basil does not share a common goal with

[153] Ibid. 1,1.

[154] Ibid. 2,7 (SC 305, 30).

[155] This critique has been levelled at Hanson many times, but his assumption here made was simply due to the widespread assumption by scholars of the twentieth century that there was a definitive link – either because the scholarship had not been done or because of a long-standing devotional desire to construct a teleological understanding of "Cappadocian" theology as the natural inheritor of strict Nicene orthodoxy – between Athanasius and the Cappadocians and that the former was the most profound influence on the latter.

Athanasius. Though it is extremely likely that at this point Basil was a homoousian in belief, as Johannes Zachhuber has suggested (based on his friendship with Meletius of Antioch) and Basil himself appears to profess in *Letter 9*, Lewis Ayres has noted that the term *homoousios* appears only once in the text, and in such a way that – though Basil can now affirm it – he does not do so with the forcefulness of someone to whom the defence of the *homoousion* is a primary concern.[156] Indeed, Basil's argument from tradition also contains nothing identifiably Athanasian from the fragments we have: I would however suggest this is more a political action than any kind of theological one; Basil's association with the Basilio-Eustathians at Constantinople 359/60 – and especially with Eustathius of Sebaste – likely precluded him from expressing the same kind of enthusiasm shown in private.[157]

As opposed to the theological framework of the text, no connection between Basil and Apollinaris' ideas of tradition can be made: Apollinaris uses the term *paradosis* twice in his extant corpus, both in his biblical commentaries: once it is used to discuss Jesus' criticism in Matthew of the "ancient *paradosis* according to the Jews" of washing the inside of a cup in ritual to prevent the transmission of sins, and the other time it is used to discuss the Johannine depiction of Christ's institution of the Eucharist at the last supper.[158] No similarity is really visible here. Indeed, unlike the lack of the *homoousion*, the notion of any external source for Basil's idea of tradition is in fact totally unnecessary. As we have seen, Eunomius, before Basil even wrote his text, centralised the importance of tradition to this particular Trinitarian conflict. Indeed, even before then, the entire Basilio-Eustathian party (on whose side was Basil at Constantinople) considered the upholding of tradition to be of the utmost importance to any synod which hoped to resolve the Nicene problem. Basil, as regards tradition, is far from bringing a new

[156] See Zachhuber, *Basil and the Three-Hypostases Tradition*, and Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy,* 194-5.

[157] For the (early) private acceptance of the *homoousion*, see Basil, *Ep.* 9.

[158] Apollinaris, *Fragmenta in Matthaeum* 117; *Fragmenta in Johannem* 135.

dimension to the debate but instead deals with it in the very same way as all prior contributors – as the framework on which any debate of such universal scope must be built. *Against Eunomius* is fundamentally a response to the *Apology* and a contribution to the debate that reached a head at the 360 Constantinopolitan synod. For it not to deal with tradition in such a direct and central way would be a significant oversight on Basil's part.

What Basil adds to the table, however, is twofold. First, Basil extends beyond a creed and the fathers who relate to it, rejecting Eunomius' assertion that his creed in *Apology* 1.5 can be considered a tradition and rule by which true Christianity might be ascertained. Basil turns directly to address Eunomius, saying:

> Tell me: is the pious tradition of the fathers, the same that you have professed, the rule, the measure and the inerrant criterion, now designated in turn as a tool of deceit, a skill of pretence, and similar things? If it is not so, then what else ought we understand it to be? For it does not apply to those who are truly Christians, but to those who place more value on seeming to be rather than actually being Christians![159]

In doing so, he directly undermines and refigures Eunomius' argument that his creed, "that essential faith which is common to everyone who are concerned to appear or to be Christians," can be viewed as a criterion if it is utilised in such a way as to justify that which is unjustifiable.[160] Indeed, Basil's rhetorical skill is shown most strongly here – Eunomius, taking an apologetic stance, uses soft language to indicate his position, hoping to convince others by his use of an uncontentious creed that his anomoian beliefs are vindicated by the body of tradition. Basil's response is to find this to be insufficient as a *kanōn,* not rejecting its inerrancy – as Basil was most certainly aware it was taken wholesale from Scripture – instead seeing it as inerrant but also insufficiently clear in its meaning. In not criticising the

[159] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1.4.

[160] Eunomius, *Apology* 6.

errancy of the creed, but instead the problems with its simplicity, Basil avoids falling into the trap of being unscriptural, and tacitly manages to question Eunomius' knowledge of the tradition around which such a creed might have been developed. In other words, by accusing Eunomius of the most fundamental misinterpretation of a scriptural and creedal text, he effectively manages to deprive Eunomius of any claim to the *paradoseis* by which scripture is rightly understood: rather than necessarily being a wilful heretic – though Basil also levels this accusation elsewhere – Eunomius is simply neither intelligent nor apostolic enough to be viewed as a credible theologian.

Innovations and Theological Implications

Secondly, Basil adds another dimension to the debate, and in doing so gives his most unique contribution to the tradition-debate at the heart of the anomoian controversy. In addition to creeds and other forms of patristic witness to right exegesis, Basil moves onto baptism, naming it a tradition in its own right:

> This (Eunomius' claim that the Trinity has an order of natures) clearly is inconsistent with the tradition of saving baptism: "go forth and baptise all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28.19). For Baptism is the seal of faith, and faith an assent to the godhead. For first one must believe, then one is sealed with baptism. Our baptism is according to the tradition of the Lord – it is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Neither creature nor servant is ranked with Father and Son, as the godhead becomes completed in Trinity. All things external to them are co-servants, even if, on account of superior dignity, some are held above others.[161]

The meaning is clear. The sacrament of baptism, for Basil, is a *paradosis* given by Christ by which right Trinitarian faith might be ascertained. Since the Lord gave no distinction to the persons invoked within

[161] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 3.5.

the baptismal command, neither should we. Indeed, Basil is directly responding to Eunomius' claim that the Spirit is third in "dignity and order" within the Trinity, which Basil assumes to be a reference to Matt. 28:19 (Eunomius gives no citation himself).[162]

Basil is not the first to consider baptism in relation to tradition - Pseudo-Cyprian, in his *On Rebaptism*, finds himself concerned whether bishops who "have spoken otherwise than befits the tradition of the sacrament (*in traditione sacramenti*)" are able to give the sacrament authoritatively.[163] Origen, in his *Commentary on Romans*, also relates the two, stating that infant baptism is an apostolic tradition.[164] Tertullian, in his *On the Crown*, claims the aspects of baptismal liturgy not taken directly from scripture are forms of unwritten tradition.[165] However, beyond these relations of baptism to tradition, the notion of baptism as tradition in a total sense is a *bona fide* innovation on Basil's part. There is a reference to Baptism as *paradosis* in the *De Trinitate* traditionally attributed to Didymus the Blind, but since it considers Basil a "holy father" and paraphrases an exegetical discussion of Mark 13.32 found in his *Epistle* 236, a date for this text before 365 seems very unlikely indeed.[166] Furthermore, Paul Robert Saieg has noted on this matter that the author of *De Trinitate* knew Eunomius' *Apology of Apologies* but not Gregory of Nyssa's *Against Eunomius*, making a date a short time after Basil's death likely.[167]

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[162] See Eunomius, *Apology* 25 and Basil's response in *Against Eunomius* 3.2-5.

[163] Pseudo-Cyprian, *On Rebaptism* 10. Wolfram Kinzig considers an accurate date for this to be 256 AD in *Faith in Formulae* (Vol. 1), 151.

[164] Origen, *Commentary on Romans* 5:8-9.

[165] Tertullian, *On the Crown* 4.

[166] See Didymus(?), *De Trinitate* 805b; 920b. See also Basil, *Ep. 236*,2. N.B. Didymus quotes Basil as saying "εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατὴρ οἶδεν, οὐδὲ ὁ Υἱὸς οἶδὲν," Basil actually says "ἀλλ' οὐδ' ἂν ὁ Υἱὸς ἔγνω, εἰ μὴ ὁ Πατὴρ." This connection is also noted in Migne, PG39, 805 ff.41.

[167] See Saieg, Paul Robert. *The "De Trinitate" of Didymus the Blind: Book I: Translation and Introduction*, 3. University of Colorado at Boulder: ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2006 (accessed 30/4/18). For further (but earlier) explorations on the sources of the *De Trinitate,* see Heron, Alasdair. *Some Sources used in the De*

Similarly, other texts that consider Baptism as *paradosis* in the fourth-century Trinitarian conflicts post-date Basil, the term being used by Theodoret, Chrysostom, Amphilochius of Iconium and Gregory of Nyssa.[168] In all of these cases, all authors wrote after Basil, and in the case of Amphilochius and Gregory of Nyssa (especially the reference in his own *Against Eunomius*), were both strongly influenced by Basil, the former being his protégé and the latter his brother.[169] This use of *paradosis* to indicate the Trinitarian invocation of baptism is, then, a unique argument given by Basil.

It should also be noted that the *paradosis* in this case is once more based on an exegetical interpretation of a scriptural text, but this is very much a stepping off point for Basil. Though he begins with identifying the proof text from which a Trinitarian baptism receives its authority, it is the entirety of what occurs in baptism – the contents of the "saving tradition," as Basil calls it: the affirmation of the Trinitarian nature of the godhead, the placing of the seal of the Spirit and the confession of faith give the notion of the Son and Spirit as divine its authority. This is not to say any of these are innovations – in fact quite the opposite. By Basil's understanding of tradition in *Against Eunomius*, one must instead view the entirety of the baptismal liturgy as the logical and correct application of Matthew 28:19 into the practise of the church: the rites of baptism are not tradition because they are liturgy, but because they are to Basil the result of the application of right exegesis into the very core of the Christian life.

Trinitate Attributed to Didymus the Blind. In *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 173-81.

[168] See Theodoret, *Ep* 84; Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 2.26; Amphilochius, *Against the Heretics* 17; Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.24.*2 & *Against Eunomius*, 3.9.61.

[169] The particular influence of Basil's idea of tradition on Gregory and Amphilochius will be contained within my conclusion.

It should be no surprise to any habitual reader of Basil that his theological brilliance often shines through strongest in the tiniest details. His theology of tradition in *Against Eunomius* is certainly no exception. As we have seen, at initial glance, Basil's representation of tradition as the body of all things established from right and authoritative exegesis is one which is incredibly common within the fourth-century patristic context. However, his far more unique take on Baptism as a *paradosis* identifies the place of baptism as the ideal way in which to reject Eunomius' claim to the weight of Trinitarian *paradoseis*: if the rite of baptism itself refutes him, then Eunomius doesn't have a leg to stand on, as no Christian – especially in the early church – would deny the utter centrality of the baptismal rite to the notion of Christian identity and belief. As such, for Basil to consider baptism as authoritative specifically in the light of his coequal Trinitarian view of Matthew 28:19, he subtly universalises such a Trinitarian confession as the only right way to have been baptised. In other words, Basil has two additional purposes beyond the establishment of baptism as an exegetical tradition: The first is to demonstrate that any appeal to tradition made by Eunomius is in utter defiance of the tradition in practice, and the second and more important is that any believer baptised is, by virtue of rite and baptismal confession, a confessor of God as Trinity *ab initio*.

Though *Against Eunomius* is quite clearly not written to bring Eunomius back to the fold, it is particularly difficult to assess whether he would have found Basil's argument from baptism convincing. As we have seen, both Volker Drecoll and Marina Silvia Troiano have suggested that part of *Against Eunomius* III was not written against Eunomius at all, but as a response to early Pneumatomachians. Troiano contends of a group possessing "theological affinity with the *tropici* of Athanasius," but believes – counter to Drecoll – that Basil's stance here does not indicate he knew of Athanasius' letters to

Serapion.[170] This may be possible, but his appeal to Baptism is undoubtedly written Contra Eunomium: it treats baptism as a tradition, and is a direct refutation of Eunomius' attempt to claim the church's *paradosis* as being in harmony with his teaching.[171] Non-Nicene Christians tended to have slightly different baptismal rites, as Eunomius' followers appear to have practised one that was quite radically different from others. As Vaggione and Wiles have observed, perhaps the most notable and innovative deviation from other baptismal forms – a tradition which can be viewed as far back as the *Didache* in some regions – was the removal of triple immersion in favour of a singular one.[172] The continual ante-Nicene evidence for triple immersion from the second century to the fourth is rather convincing of its ubiquity, and is far from indicative of a Pro-Nicene Trinitarian theology *per se*.[173] Such an approach to baptism is unsurprising considering Eunomius and his followers' radical anti-Trinitarian worldview, and contemporary and closely postcedent Christian literature seems to have viewed the single immersion baptismal form as in equal measures unusual and heterodox.[174] Williams has further shed light on this matter, indicating that such a change to the baptismal liturgy was probably effected at some point after the 361 synod at Antioch.[175]

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[170] Troiano, Marina Silvia. *Il Contra Eunomium di Basilio di Cesarea e le Epistolae ad Serapionem di Atanasio di Alessandria: Nota Comparativa*, 60;86-90. Augustinianum 41 (1), 59-91. See also Drecoll, Volker. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 133.

[171] See e.g. Eunomius, *Apology* 5; 20.

[172] See Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), 332-44; Wiles, M. *Triple and Single Immersion: Baptism in the Arian Controversy*. *Studia Patristica* 30 (Peeters: Leuven, 1997), 337-49. N.B. The geographical connection of the *Didache* to G.Matthew should be noted here – if the triple immersion itself had one specific point of origin, it would have almost certainly been Syria.

[173] See e.g. *Didache* 8; (potentially) Ps. Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition* 21; Tertullian, *Adversus Praxean* 26.

[174] See e.g. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76.54.32-3; Sozomen, *HE* 6.26; Socrates, *HE* 5.24; *Apostolic Constitutions* Canon 50;

[175] See Williams, Rowan. *Baptism and the Arian Controversy*, 173. In Barnes, Michel R. and Williams, Daniel H. ed. *Arianism After Arius* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1993), 149-80.

It is similarly uncertain whether this change had been made by the composition of *Against Eunomius*. Eunomius himself is – from the fragments we have – unresponsive to Basil's appeal to baptism in the *Apology of Apologies,* and his *Confession of Faith* makes no mention of baptismal rite, also being far too long to work as a liturgical confession. Socrates speaks of a baptism not in the name of the Trinity but "into the death of Christ" – one can consider this a reference to single immersion, but this is ascribed to a schismatic group of Eunomians and not to the man himself. Sozomen similarly believes it was more likely this single immersion was an "innovation" of later schismatics Eutyches and Sophronius, believing Eunomius to baptise in triple immersion as Arius did before him.[176] Philostorgius, the anomoian church historian, asserts a single immersion, but prescribes this to the "Eunomians" and neither asserts Eunomius to be a follower of this tradition nor makes any distinction between Eunomius and his followers.[177] That such a sympathetic voice does not delve further into the origins of such a tradition is irritating, though not surprising – Philostorgius is likely echoing Romans 6:3 here, and it would be more shocking to see an anomoian such as himself make the suggestion that the Eunomians' baptism in one death of Christ was an innovation.[178] Similarly it would be quite surprising, considering Philostorgius' clear admiration for Eunomius, if he were to suggest Eunomius himself to not hold to a doctrine that is considered most righteous and biblical.

Indeed, only Epiphanius seems to believe Eunomius or his followers always baptised in triple immersion, "in the name of the unmade Father and in the name of the created Son and in the name of

[176] See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.26.

[177] See Philostorgius, *Ecclesiastical History* 10,4.

[178] Such is the contention of Ferguson.

the Sanctifying Spirit who is made by the created Son."[179] Ferguson follows suit, arguing Eunomius to have baptised with triple immersion, the single immersion being the later work of Eunomian schismatics.[180] Epiphanius is rarely the most honest historian of his era on a matter, and the general bias of historiographical practice of the time makes that a rather damning fact: Ferguson is perhaps taking too much stock in the wrong sort here. Williams, on the other hand, suggests instead a triple *invocation* united with a single immersion in an act of synthesis, "disentangling two strands of tradition" as to retain the paschal imagery of baptism along with the "conventional anti-monist exegesis of Matt. 28:19," though remains silent on the matter of whether this was instituted by Eunomius himself or later followers.[181] This is an interesting idea, but I fail to find the evidence convincing: Williams is, however, certainly correct to contextualise this Eunomian approach as a way to resolve the problem the earlier tradition posed to them: how to retain baptismal orthopraxy whilst still conveying the idea of the strongly non-Trinitarian God in which they believed. If the opening of the *Apology* tells us anything about his concerns, it is that he considers his views to be concordant with the historic tradition of the Church – it only makes sense this would translate into the taking of practical measures to ensure such traditions were kept while their meaning was – in their view – made more explicit.

With Williams' considerations in mind, then – and in absence of any concrete evidence of Eunomius' own preferred baptismal liturgy – it is fair to say Basil's appeal to tradition would be one with which Eunomius would have disagreed, even if he himself retained the triple immersion. Though the same practice might be shared, it is quite evident in light of later developments of the liturgy by either himself or his followers that the three names of God invoked at baptism were no indicator of their equality in

[179] Epiphanius, *Panarion* 76.54.33.

[180] See Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* 575-7.

[181] Williams, *Baptism and the Arian Controversy* 175.

honour or essence, and if Eunomius ever kept them, it was out of the respect for the tradition that he and Basil quite evidently shared, even if they disagreed on the *intima* of this particular one. Basil's appeal is thus not to Eunomius but instead to an audience that – while not necessarily going so far as a homoousian perspective – would still see the triple immersion as utterly sacrosanct and strongly indicative of a threefold power in heaven, even if not all these powers could be named 'God' in the fullest sense. We can then consider Basil's argument as preaching to the choir somewhat, though this does not necessarily reduce its centrality to his attempt to refute Eunomius: just as elsewhere, Eunomius is portrayed as disregarding the true implications of the tradition out of either ignorance of – or distaste for – the advocacy for some form of Trinitarianism, to which Basil contends it unfailingly leads.

If, as Williams suggests, Basil's later baptismal theology operates in "an Athanasian key," his idea of baptism as tradition appears more Eusebian. Eusebius makes a very similar traditional claim to Basil in his *Against Marcellus*:

> These things have been laid out in part to the same Galatians from the sole letter intended for them, and that the saving faith gives the mystical regeneration *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt.28:19), and that in addition to the sacred Scriptures the universal church of God from one end of the earth to the other confirms the testimonies from the sacred Scriptures by non-scriptural tradition (ἐξ ἀγράφου παραδόσεως)…[182]

Basil's reasons for echoing Eusebius to such an evident degree here are a little difficult to establish: as Christopher Beeley has noted, Eusebius is rarely afforded the credit he deserves when it comes to his influence over later thinkers due to the "Athanasian-centred picture of the fourth-century" into which,

[182] Eusebius, *Against Marcellus* 1,36.

even now, we often find ourselves falling.[183] On this, the work of David Gwynn is helpful to remind us that such associations of Eusebius with Arianism were very much part of Athanasius' rhetoric and political manoeuvring.[184] As identified by David Gwynn and Mark DelCogliano, however, Eusebius' focus on the Son as product of the Father's will is a different approach to Basil's Trinitarian methodology, and not one to which he would be actively sympathetic.[185] As with all other capable theologians, however, Basil is not above repurposing arguments from those that they might consider heterodox. Stylistically, *Against Eunomius* does share some similarities with Eusebius' *Against Marcellus*: both are direct refutations of quoted works, focussing primarily on the relationship between Father and Son, and contain a fairly important but rather swiftly dealt with appeal to Baptism as a *paradosis*. This idea of tradition is something Eusebius is open to elsewhere: in his *Ecclesiastical History,* non-scriptural traditions are considered the source for certain teachings and parables of Christ in Papias, though Eusebius is more skeptical of its value here.[186] Similarly, in both *Ecclesiastical History* and *Preparation for the Gospel*, the term *paradosis* is used broadly as a way of referring to traditions from Christian and non-Christian sources and implies no inherent value. In his more theological works, however, baptism as tradition is more common. In addition to *Against Marcellus*, baptism is named as

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[183] Beeley, Christopher. *The Unity of Christ: Continuity and Conflict in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2012), 55.

[184] Gwynn, David. *The Eusebians: The Polemic of Athanasius of Alexandria and the Construction of the `Arian Controversy'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). See also Lyman, Rebecca J. *A Topography of Heresy: Mapping the Rhetorical Creation of Arianism*. In Michel Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (eds.), *Arianism after Arius* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 45–62; Luibhéid, Colm. *Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arian Crisis* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1981).

[185] On this matter, See Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* 58-61; DelCogliano, Mark. *Eusebian Theologies of the Son as Image of God before 341,* 471-6. Journal of Early Christian Studies 14 (2006), 459-84; *Against Eunomius* 23-4; Leinhard, Joseph T. *Contra Marcellum* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1999). For a wider – and excellent – discussion of Eusebius' Trinitarian theology, see Drecoll, Volker Henning. *How Binitarian/Trinitarian* was Eusebius? In Johnson, Aaron and Schott, Jeremy ed. *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 289-305. This final work focuses primarily on Eusebius' pneumatology, but has some interesting ideas to proffer about the Trinitarian economy and relation of Father to Son.

[186] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.11.

something "handed-over" from Christ in *On Ecclesiastical Theology* 3.[187] Both it and *Against Eunomius* 3 utilise the baptismal formula – stated as a handed-over inheritance – as evidence for the Spirit being idiomatically part of the Trinity and therefore above all other things but the Father and Son. If Basil's theology of baptism in *On the Holy Spirit* is in an Athanasian key, then his theology of baptism as tradition here is in a Eusebian one.

Ending discussion of *Against Eunomius* here, then, we should consider it a treatise that very much reads as the work of a supremely well-read individual finding their own theological feet. If we read his *Letter* 9 as a confession of homoousian persuasion – and I contend that we should – internally he probably sympathises most with the Athanasian party. Scripturally, he leans on Didymus in times of crisis, a result of his fairly universal reputation as a sound exegete. Argumentatively, the treatise skirts between the theological language of Apollinaris and the political concerns of Eustathius. Finally, though, Basil's idea of baptismal tradition, though broadly innovative, shares strong similarities with a small excerpt from Eusebius' *Contra Marcellum*: in this case, it is very difficult to establish a connection, but the notable similarity – especially in a treatise that is a rather piecemeal sewing-together of influences – is hard to ignore. Its uniqueness as an argument in this manner to Eusebius and Basil, however, implies either that they independently stumbled upon this rather unique approach to the argument from baptism, or that Basil is riffing over a Eusebian chord. Regardless, it is in this area, in the theology of tradition, that Basil makes one of his most intriguing contributions to the Trinitarian conversation – what can be used as evidence when talking about God?

TRADITION AFTER *AGAINST EUNOMIUS:* FROM RELUCTANCE TO ENTHUSIASM

[187] See Eusebius, *On Ecclesiastical Theology* 3.5.22.

In the late 360's this approach to tradition changed, and Basil began a strong shift in his writings towards a more critical approach towards tradition, and especially the notion of human, non-Christian traditions as opposed to authoritative ecclesiastical *paradoseis*. Rather than the previous focus on ecclesiastical tradition as the assent to the truth of scripture and the faith of the fathers, in the mid-late 360's Basil instead focuses on the rejection of "traditions of men." In Both Basil's works *On Baptism* and *On the Judgement of God*, the idea of tradition is used in a primarily derogatory sense. In *On Baptism*, the term *παράδοσις* is used twice to describe the tradition of baptism as received by the church, but the dominant usage here is the rejection of human traditions concerning baptism.[188] This statement is made clearest when Basil states:

> Now, while preserving the attentive care of legal justice, certain persons who have taken their baptism before God no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and resurrected for them, attract a judgement of adultery. As the preceding words have clearly demonstrated, what can be said of human traditions? With regard to legal justice, the apostle pronounces himself with more force. he says in effect: "Indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as refuse, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Phil. 3:8-9)." Concerning, therefore, human traditions, their condemnation is revealed by the words of the Lord.[189]

The approach Basil here takes is clear – the traditions of men, even the laws by which man judges one another, have no sway against the law given by God. In other words, the human paradosis will always be surpassed in every way by the divine paradosis – that which is held within the church.

[188] See Basil, *On Baptism*, (SC357) 1:14 line 30; 2:1 lines 23-4.

[189] Ibid. 1.19 lines 9-24.

This view can also be seen in Basil's treatise *On the Judgement of God*, where all forms of tradition discussed are condemned. Indeed, Basil opens the treatise thanking God for his Christian upbringing, by which he was preserved "against the delusion of pagan tradition (κατὰ παράδοσιν τῶν ἔξωθεν πλάνης ῥυσθεὶς)."[190] This is then followed in the text by an exhortation against the "tradition of men (τῶν ἀνθρώπων παράδοσις)," in which Basil points out that perverted human traditions are fundamentally fallible, shying away from some sins but embracing others with equal fervour.[191] These "human traditions (οἱ ἀνθρωπίνοι παραδόσεις)" are then at the close of the treatise considered again as the fundamental desires that are rejected through participation in Christ and the Holy Spirit.[192] In all of these cases, human traditions and the traditions of the pagans are placed in direct contrast to faith in the Trinity and self-alignment with what the scriptures profess.[193] It would appear from this, then, that Basil's approach to the idea of tradition in the late 360's is a critical one, with the term παράδοσις understood as being opposite to – and more importantly in contrast to – the words of scripture and right faith in the Trinity.

On the Judgement of God is not the only ascetical work that considers the notion of human traditions. In the *Short Rules,* Basil consistently warns against their use over scripture, claiming that "it is necessary to follow scripture, both so that piety is perfected and human traditions are not employed."[194] This is

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[190] Basil, *On the Judgement of God* (PG31, 653). Jacob Van Sickle, in *St. Basil the Great: On Christian Ethics,* 30-1 (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014), suggests 365-372 as a good dating range, with a very early date in Basil's episcopate as a more exhaustive *terminus ante quem.* This seems accurate, as the reference to the Anomoeans and the Anomoeans alone as the Trinitarian heresy *du jour* is indicative that Basil's engagement with the pneumatomachians (which was typical of Basil's Trinitarian writings between 372 and 377) had not yet begun.

[191] Ibid. (PG31, 669).

[192] Ibid. (PG31, 676).

[193] See ibid. (PG31, 676).

[194] Basil, *Regulae Brevius* 95.

clearly an attempt by Basil to follow the direction of scripture itself, and he often quotes biblical literature warning against the following of human traditions to back himself up, devoting a section of the *Moralia* to the idea that "it is necessary not to follow traditions of men, which might cause you to reject the commandment of God."[195] Basil then goes on to utilise Mark (7:58), in which Jesus and his disciples "do not live according to the traditions of the elders," and Isaiah (29:13) in which human precepts are rejected. Basil then returns to Mark, reciting Jesus' words: "for having left behind the commandment of God, you hold to the traditions of men."[196] In his most forceful attack on human tradition, Basil's intention in directly contrasting it and scripture is clear: that holding on to human tradition is tantamount to the rejection of God's commandments in scripture an act that leads neither to piety nor salvation.

It is difficult to understand why Basil makes this shift from a focus on glorifying ecclesiastical tradition to attacking human traditions. Indeed, that such a different approach to the notion of tradition can be found between *Against Eunomius* and *On the Judgement of God* is of particular note, as both texts are written to combat anomoian Trinitarian beliefs. In the case of *Against Eunomius*, it could be argued that Basil only brings up the notion of tradition as a way to counter Eunomius' own invocation of church teaching on the oneness of God in his *Apology*, which he uses to state that the Son and Spirit share in the nature of the Father as they do not share in his being *agennētos*.[197] As such, Basil perhaps only laid claim to being on the side of tradition because Eunomius first "puts forth the faith of the fathers as his defence."[198] Returning to Hanson's observations that at this point in his life Basil was quite reluctant to

[195] Basil, *Moralia* 12:2 (PG31, 724).

[196] Ibid. 12:2 (PG31, 724).

[197] See the fragments of Eunomius' *Apology* found in Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1,5 (PG29 513c-521b).

[198] Basil, *Against Eunomius*

venture outside beliefs or names not made evident by scripture, it does stand to reason that Basil's appeal to tradition in *Against Eunomius* is one made only out of necessity – to discredit Eunomius by laying claim to the same tradition Eunomius considers to be on his side.[199] Since he has no particular opponent in mind in *On the Judgement of God*, but instead simply the anomoeans as a whole, he has free rein to keep within the linguistic boundaries of scripture.

In fact, Basil says much the same himself. In *On Faith*, he reflects on a prior appeal to tradition:[200]

> I found it necessary, following those before me, to use language designed against the many impieties sown by the devil, so that I might obstruct or overthrow the blasphemies that were brought forward, though the language I used at some times, according to the requirements of the needs of those afflicted, was non-scriptural (ἄγραφος), though it was not therefore estranged from the pious meaning of the Scripture, like the apostle, who often taught using Hellenistic sayings in order to achieve his aim. For the current purpose I considered it right to our common aim to fulfil the injunction of your love in Christ with the simplicity of the sound faith.[201]

With references to non-scriptural sources, and the direct allusion to the "simplicity of the sound faith" that he finds insufficient in *Against Eunomius*, it would appear that Basil, in the early stages of his episcopate, is reflecting on this text written several years beforehand. The dates on this matter would appear to line up, with the *terminus ad quem* slated at roughly 365, and the *terminus post quem* at 375. It has been suggested by Van Sickle that it was written to serve as a pre-prepared confession of faith if any bishop doubted his orthodoxy, and this seems a convincing argument.[202] The voice of the treatise

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[199] Hanson, *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition*, 244.

[200] NB this is the *De Fide* classed as CPG 2886, or *In Moralia Prooemium De fide* attached to the *Moralia*, as opposed to the *Homily on Faith* classed as CPG 2859 (See Fedwick, 16-17). estimates a date between 365-75, but the most reasonable date based on content and an allusion to unwritten doctrines is likely 372-5.

[201] Basil, *On the Faith*. (In Van Sickle, Jacob. *On Christian Ethics*, 70. New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012). NB. The term here, ἄγραφος, literally means "unwritten" but the direct contrast to scripture (γραφὴ) makes it evident he means "non-scriptural."

[202] See Van Sickle, *On Christian Ethics,* 22.

is defensive, and Basil likely restricts himself to using scriptural names and arguments so that his belief can be defended on scripture alone. If this purpose is indeed the one for which Basil drafted the treatise (as seems likely), then it would make sense that he would express contrition for having to defend the faith through non-scriptural sources, as he had done in previous doctrinal debates, though he does reiterate its necessity at the time.

Basil's rejection of the use of non-scriptural sources in this particular treatise is likely more a deflection than an honest reluctance, a learned defensive mechanism from his experience in ecclesiastical politics. As we have seen above, one of the openings Basil used most effectively to dismiss the arguments of Eunomius' *Apology* was through attacking his underuse of scriptures and his preference to allude rather than to cite. Basil was no fool, and will have learned from his own experiences of being on the offensive that keeping to scripture was the best way to retain his position. By this point in his career, even if he might have been reluctant to use to term in an ecclesiastical sense between the authorship of *Against Eunomius* and his early episcopate, Basil was by no means hesitant to employ the language of *paradosis* to defend Nicene orthodoxy against those who rejected it. Indeed, his use of the term skyrocketed shortly after *On Faith* was written, with it appearing in multiple letters, homilies and treatises, all of which utilised the term to refer to authoritative ecclesiastical traditions.

One can put this down to Basil's newfound confidence in his status as bishop, and his growing outward comfort with Nicene orthodox doctrine on the Father and Son, which he began to publically attest as having supreme authority. In his letters to the Canonicae and the bishops of the West (dated 370 and 372 respectively), the creed of Nicaea is lauded as "that great proclamation (κήρυγμα) concerning true religion," and "that famous proclamation (κήρυγμα) of the fathers that destroyed the heresy of Arius

and builds up the churches in sound doctrine."[203] The question of whether Basil was always an adherent to Nicene orthodoxy is uncertain, traditionally with many citing his familiarity with Basil of Ancyra and his allies to be a demonstration of a chequered past with the doctrines of Nicaea, while other newer scholars such as Johannes Zachhuber have suggested his longstanding relationship with Meletius of Antioch is a testament to his underlying pro-Nicene beliefs even as early as 360.[204] It is not a subject for debate, however, that by the time he became bishop of Caesarea, his works demonstrate a strong allegiance to – and deep respect for – the council of Nicaea and the creed that was promulgated there.

Though he never relates Nicaea and its creed as a *paradosis* (though the spurious *Homily XIV On the Faith* does make this connection), the way he utilises the language of *paradosis* in his *Letter* 125, which appends to itself the Nicene Creed, he claims of the doctrine of the three persons that it is "according to what the fathers themselves have evidently set forth," and that "we have been taught one only-begotten in the tradition of the faith."[205] In both these cases, key concepts contained within the Nicene creed are themselves considered to be *paradoseis* either by clear use of the term or by their association with the fathers. Indeed, in the latter case, he implies that same is true of the divinity of the Spirit, saying "also having been taught that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father, we confess that it is from God without an act of creation."[206] Even if Basil did not consider the creed itself to be a tradition in its own right, he certainly considers most – if not all – doctrines contained within it to be so. In fact, Basil even considers the *homoousion* by this point to be something of a *paradosis*, evoking it in the same breath as the doctrine of the three persons as tradition, and accepting its authority simply by

[203] See Basil, *Ep.*50.1; 90.2.These dates are very much consensus. Fedwick (*A Chronology of Basil*), DeFerrari (*Basil: Letters*) and Courtonne (*Saint-Basile: Lettres*) are all in agreement on this.

[204] See Zachhuber, *Basil and the Three Hypostases Tradition*.

[205] Basil, *Ep.*125.

[206] Ibid. 125.

stating "as it is written."[207] The creed of Nicaea, for Basil, therefore must be considered a *paradosis* in its own right. In embracing Nicaea as tradition, the theologically mature Basil is able to emerge, and with terms like *homoousios* now covered by the remit of tradition, a new idea of what constitutes a *paradosis* is developed.

IMPLICATIONS

In *Against Eunomius*, when Basil is rejecting the assertions about tradition that Eunomius makes, Basil and Eunomius both employ the pre-existing and dominant idea of what tradition is – the authoritative and right methods of scriptural interpretation that are enshrined within the church as the words and teachings of the fathers. For the most part, then, Basil fits neatly into the discussion of tradition and patristic authority that surrounded him, where opposing forces continually convened synods to revoke their condemnation at prior ones and proffer their own doctrine and tradition as right and true. Though Basil does innovate in the sense that he considers the rites of baptism as a *paradosis* derived from the church's historical interpretation of Matthew 28:19, it is still very much within this exegetical paradigm. Indeed, in much the same way, the theological implications this has for any cohesive idea of tradition Basil might hold in the years prior to his episcopate are much the same as the common view of the time – tradition is informative because it is founded on right exegesis alone, and that scripture, the true rubric of faith, is only complemented by tradition in that it makes the meaning of scripture evident.

All this changes with his election to the episcopate. Not only is Basil emboldened to push beyond the purely scriptural names and more non-specific appeals to tradition, in the early years of his episcopate

[207] See Ibid. 125.

he has already begun to appeal to tradition for the most particular of theological terms, and non-scriptural ones at that. It is here, then, that a new idea of tradition begins to emerge – one which extends beyond the rigid and purely scriptural form expressed in *Against Eunomius* and in which we can see Basil developing his own idea of what *paradosis* may mean. This is a drastic shift, and one that cannot have come about through anything other than some kind of need to redefine tradition. We must, then, consider what in the early years of Basil's episcopate and the particular problems he faced during that time could have led him to believe such a redefinition of what he viewed as tradition was necessary.

Tradition and Conflict: Eustathius of Sebaste and the Inspiration for Appeal to Non-Scriptural Tradition

Basil's strong shift towards an openly Pro-Nicene theological perspective was noticed by his non-Nicene allies. As we have seen, his letters from this time were clear in their defence for and praise of the Nicene synod, though interestingly reference to it cannot be found in any of his sermons.[208] It seems, then, that while Basil might have only advocated the *homoousion* to close – and lay – friends in the early to mid-360's, during his episcopate he felt empowered enough to admit such things more openly to his fellow bishops. However, his new open fervour for Nicene orthodoxy – in opposition to his more theologically chequered past – created no shortage of personal problems for Basil, many of which revolved around or were directly caused by his mentor, Eustathius of Sebaste. As Basil's reputation was rising, and his Pro-Nicene credentials becoming more and more recognised, Eustathius was gaining a reputation as a *persona non grata* amongst the influential and homoousian bishops with whom Basil was hoping to make alliances. After attempts by Basil to establish Eustathius' orthodoxy, and significant sparring between the two, their friendship ended abruptly and unceremoniously. Basil was no stranger to losing friends, but the loss of Eustathius, his spiritual father and close ally of the past decade, was utterly devastating.

Pain has throughout history been a motivator for some of the most beautiful and expressive creations, and as a direct result of the pain Basil underwent, a work of theological thought *par excellence* was produced. Compelled both by the desire to return his mentor back to the fold and the pressing

[208] Nicaea is referenced 24 times across Basil's epistolary corpus, but never in an authentic homily. It is mentioned in the pseudepigraphal *Sermon 14*, however.

questions of his own protégé, Amphilochius of Iconium, Basil undertook the task of authoring a treatise on the Holy Spirit, in which his student might find resolution to his problems, and Basil himself might finally find closure for lost friendships. *On the Holy Spirit* was, to say the least, well-received by those who read it. Gregory Nazianzen considered it a work of such great theological insight, "moving the pen as if it were from the Spirit's own pen-box," and the text also received a Syriac translation in the early fifth century.[209] The treatise also contains Basil's most forceful and vivid depiction of tradition as something non-scriptural but equal to it, kept and transmitted in silence from the outside world, and of immense theological and ecclesiastical worth. It is the greatest Trinitarian work of Basil's theological maturity, and the idea of tradition contained therein is of similar richness of thought.

This chapter will begin by exploring the breakdown of the relationship between Basil and Eustathius, and will frame the internal dialogue of *On the Holy Spirit* as an imagined discussion between the two men. However, rather than simply identify the intended subject, I will argue that the language of the treatise is explicitly and powerfully apologetic, to the end that *On the Holy Spirit* was not written to condemn Eustathius, but instead for Basil to complete a debate that had been – in his eyes – prematurely ended by the severance of contact between the two men. Understanding this intention allows us to frame the appeal to tradition more authentically as Basil defending himself against Eustathius' accusations of heterodoxy, and strikes a tone more concerned with reconciliation than polemic. I will then look at the language of tradition itself, and explore what exactly Basil means by it in this treatise, to the end that we can effectively discuss what tradition contains, what it can be used for in ascertaining religious truth, and how this is utilised to argue for the equal honour of the Spirit.

[209] Gregory Nazianzen, *On St. Basil*, 68. For the dates of the Syriac translations of *On the Holy Spirit*, see Taylor, D.G.K. *The Syriac versions of the De Spiritu Sancto by Basil of Caesarea*, Leuven: Peeters, 1999.

THE QUESTION OF EUSTATHIUS' ORTHODOXY

A significant issue in establishing the actual theological problems at the heart of the split between these two figures is, at first glance, quite difficult. Eustathius is far from lauded by the historians and theologians who came after him, and none of his own work remains. At some time before August 373, Eustathius came out in support of Macedonius and, according to Sozomen, openly professed himself to be a "Macedonian."[210] Even after this, Basil kept faith with his mentor, and tried to assure himself of Eustathius' orthodoxy by arranging meetings with him during May 373, openly defending him in letters written over the next few months, until finally in that August obtaining a signed commitment by Eustathius to the Nicene Creed.[211] Though Basil thought the dispute to now be settled, this turned out not to be true. As Roy DeFerrari has suggested, Eustathius "seems to have been a vacillating character and to have signed practically all the creeds of his age," and his apparent accession to Nicene doctrine was short-lived if ever it were authentic.[212] Indeed, by the summer of 374, Basil and Eustathius had apparently severed ties completely, with Basil even expressing great dismay at the fact that he:

> …Cut himself off from communion with me, since he refused to meet us at the appointed place and did not bring his students as he had promised, but, together with the Cilician Theophilus, denounced me publically in the general synods, saying with plain and undisguised slander that we were sowing in the souls of the people doctrines which were foreign to his teachings.[213]

Basil's pain from the betrayal of his friend and mentor is readily apparent in this letter, and from this point on, contact between the two was ended permanently. However, this was by no means the end of Basil's efforts to bring Eusthatius back to the fold.

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[210] See Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 5,20.

[211] See Basil, *Ep.*98; 99; 125.

[212] DeFerrari, Roy. *St. Basil: Letters 1-185*, 269. (FC13) Washington, D.C: CUA Press, 1951.

[213] Basil, *Ep. 130* (FC13, 269).

Though we have Basil's report of their conflict, and the Pro-Nicene and creedal *Letter 125* drafted by Basil and signed by Eustathius, we have no evidence of Eustathius' own words beyond his apparent assent to Nicaea as signed in this letter, which themselves betray no theological insight or nuance, going simply:

> I, Eustathius, bishop, have understood and have approved after reading to you, Basil, that which has been written before this. I have signed this in the presence of my brothers, our Phronto, and the assistant bishop Severos, and some other clerics.[214]

Indeed, Eustathius appears to have attested to multiple creeds over the period between Nicaea and his death, many of which contain contradictory assertions. As we have seen in the previous chapter, he was a strong presence in the homoian party during the late 350's and early 360's, and therefore helped author creeds – e.g. the dated creed – that explicitly rejected the *homoousion* and in fact the word *ousia* itself. The fact that he signed agreement with the Nicene creed in *Letter* 125 – which of course prominently contains the *homoousion* – could imply that by 373 he had become a Pro-Nicene. One might argue that this is unconvincing due to the liberality with which bishops of Eustathius' standing and age signed up to different creeds depending on the theological climate to ensure their episcopate was not torn from them, but in Eustathius' case there was no risk of his being deposed: he appears to have had the support of the secular authorities. In this sense, then, it is difficult so say why Eustathius signed this creed – perhaps the Nicene formula was to him a reasonable compromise for the time being, or perhaps he grew tired of his student's pleas. All we know for certain is that he did so, and at Basil's behest.

[214] See Basil, *Epistle* 125.

Some of Eustathius' fellow bishops were quite evidently under the impression he was a vocal non-Nicene, and he was ostracised by many Pro-Nicene bishops during the early-mid 370's. That Basil received such significant grief at the hands of figures such as Theodotus of Nicopolis as a direct result of their continued friendship is compelling evidence of this, for such a *persona non grata* was Eustathius that to be his friend was to be perceived by many as an enemy of the church. Not only did Theodotus ban Basil from a synod in 372, but in 373 ceased all communication and co-operation with Basil over the appointment of new Bishops in Armenia. It was only through the arrangement between the two that Eustathius agreed to the Nicene Creed in writing, an act which served to warm Theodotus to Basil. Roy DeFerrari has proposed the two may well have worked on the preamble of *Letter 125* together in order to ensure a conclusion to the question of Eustathius' Trinitarian orthodoxy might be reached.[215] It is likely they considered the events described in *Letter 125* a success, but this success was short-lived and led to still greater trouble in the long run.

Basil attempted to ensure Eustathius' continuation of conduct befitting a man of (supposedly) orthodox standing by positing a greater level of co-operation and liturgical alignment between the sees of Caesarea and Sebaste – it is also likely that Basil retained some suspicion of Eustathius' orthodoxy, and so wished to keep him and his church under close watch. Eustathius failed to show, and Basil's disappointment can be seen in the section of *Letter 130* reproduced above. In this manner, Basil's continuing suspicions of his mentor proved wise, though he was not sufficiently precognizant in how far Eustathius would go in rejecting his own concessions to the Nicene Creed. It further appears Basil overestimated the refractory period of Eustathius' writing hand, as before he could prepare himself for the ramifications of his mentor's absence from the meeting they had arranged, Eustathius published

[215] Deferrari, R. *Saint Basil: The Letters* (vol. 2), 258-61 ff. 1. Cambridge, MA: Heinemann, 1950.

an old letter of Basil to the ignominious Apollinaris of Laodicea, along with a vigorous accusation of Sabellianism.[216] Out of either shock or grief, Basil took almost two years to reply to Eustathius in an open letter.[217] However, it was at this point – with that accusation – that contact between the two was severed.

On the Holy Spirit - Apologetic Intended for Eustathius?

Perhaps the most telling way in which his personal relationship with Eustathius altered the composition of *On the Holy Spirit* is in the quite different tone it takes than both other contemporaneous anti-Macedonian works and Basil's other anti-heretical treatises, even those written by his brother Gregory of Nyssa and his friend Gregory of Nazianzus. In his treatise, *Against the Macedonians*, Gregory of Nyssa consistently attacks the Macedonians for their views:

> He who makes an orthodox confession of the Spirit sees in the Spirit the glory of the only-begotten and beholding the Son sees the image of the infinite one. In this way, through the image the archetype is impressed on the mind. So too, a contemptuous attitude, when it is insolently bold against the glory of the Spirit, by a natural consequence transfers the blasphemy upwards through the Son to the Father. Wise men, therefore, should be on their guard against such brazen effrontery, the result of which is the total destruction of the one who so dares…such is their arrogance that they even judge the Holy Spirit unworthy of some titles counted honourable; and they rate their own power so high that it exceeds that of the honour due to the Spirit. What a pitiful and wretched lunacy![218]

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[216] Some debate exists over whether this was *Ep* 361, an edited version to incriminate Basil, or another – non-extant – letter entirely. For more information, see p.41 ff.91.

[217] N.B. This is *Ep.* 223.

[218] Gregory of Nyssa, *Against the Macedonians*, 20-1. trans. Meredith, Anthony. *Gregory of Nyssa*, 40-1. London: Routledge, 1999.

In this short passage, Gregory accuses the Macedonians of contempt, blasphemy of God the Father, self-destruction, arrogance and even insanity. Gregory refuses to pull his punches, and the aggression with which he attacks the Macedonians shows no love for them nor any strong interest to bring them back into the fold of the church – instead, they are summarily condemned by every name Gregory can muster.

Similarly, though with less fury, Gregory Nazianzen has no qualms about attacking and insulting his opponents in his *Fifth Theological Oration*:

> What right do you have to worship the Son, even though you have revolted from the Spirit, to call us tritheists? Are not you ditheists? For if you deny also the worship of the Only Begotten, you have clearly ranked yourself amongst our enemies. And why should we deal kindly with you as *not quite dead*? [219]

Indeed, this forceful attack in consistent throughout the text, and most notably found in the introductory statements, where Nazianzen states, "I would have them clearly understand that their love for the letter is but a mantle for their impiety."[220] As with Gregory of Nyssa, Nazianzen is clear that he sees nothing but enmity between himself and the pneumatomachs, and even though he recognises their heresy is lesser than the anomoians, he condemns them nonetheless as wilfully impious and, through this impiety, are nearing their own spiritual deaths.

[219] Gregory Nazianzen, *Fifth Theological Oration,* 13 (NPNF7, 322).

[220] Ibid. 3.

In like disposition to his brother and friend, Basil, in most of his anti-heretical works, does not hesitate to show his distaste for his theological opponents, as evidenced most strongly in the introduction to *Against Eunomius*, where he openly mocks Eunomius for his anomoian beliefs:

> But the one who has taken up the impiety and perfected it is Eunomius the Galatian. He has acquired for himself a fame of the most shameful kind – for it says *their glory is in their shame* (Phil 3.9) – preferring the infamy of writing things that no one else has ever dared to say rather than the good things reserved for the pious. In this *brilliant handbook* he was roused up to publicise the blasphemy so long spoken under his breath, striving with all his strength to be proclaimed the pioneer and patron of the whole heresy.[221]

Just as with his brother Gregory, Basil gives no quarter to Eunomius' idea, first naming him a Galatian – a multipurposed invective to both alienate him from the Cappadocian church to which he belonged and to echo Paul's attack on the Galatian community as "foolish" and bewitched" (Gal. 3.1-6) by nefarious forces – and then treating the entire treatise with nothing more than sarcastic scorn.[222] Shortly after this, he begins simply throwing insults as Eunomius, naming him "lying, stupid, wanton, dissembling and blasphemous," a heavy-handed character assassination that continues throughout the entire treatise with very little respite.[223]

Considering Basil's close relationship with Eustathius and the great pain it caused him to sever contact, it is perhaps no surprise that, in authoring *On the Holy Spirit*, he uses a more conciliatory tone than either his fellow Cappadocians or his previous self, for his opponent was not unknown to him or

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[221] Basil, *Against Eunomius*, 1,1.

[222] As noted by Mark Edwards in *Religions of the Constantinian Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 287, this is also an invective employed by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Contra Marcellum*: the exegesis of Galatians is frequent within the first book, and Eusebius names Marcellus himself "the Galatian (ὁ γαλάτος)" in the opening sentence of book 2. Basil's use conveys an additional geographical distinction, Cappadocia and Galatia bordering each other, and Eunomius likely having been born a Cappadocia.

[223] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1,2 (FC122, 83).

someone to whom Basil had always felt enmity, but a man he once viewed as a friend and spiritual father. This approach of avoiding conflict can first and foremostly be seen through the language used in *On the Holy Spirit.* Though Basil rarely uses the term *homoousios* in any situation, it being found only 54 times in his accepted corpus (though it appears 16 times in the disputed chapters of *Against Eunomius* alone), the term is never used in *On the Holy Spirit.* This is quite noticeable when he considers the *ousia* and the will of the Father and Son to be shared, but describes it as "similar and equal (ὅμοιον καὶ ἴσον), or rather the same (μᾶλλον δὲ ταύτὸν)."[224] Here Basil is happy to use language of similarity and even sameness of essence, but tactfully avoids using either ὁμοούσιος or ὁμόβουλος despite their utility here, and this is no accident. In his closing chapter, Basil mentions the Arian controversy, and though he evidently has no love for Arianism, naming it "heretical trickery," he nonetheless finds the approach all Christians took to the controversy to be incorrect, as it leads to widespread conflict and the "destruction" of a significant number of churches.[225] Similarly, the ill intent of those "eager to hold office (σπουδαρχίδαι)" is a clear admonition of those who take leadership positions in the church for no other reason than to hold power. Indeed, Bloomfield Jackson has pointed out that the use of the term σπουδαρχίδαι itself is almost certainly a literary allusion to Aristophanes' *Acharnians.*[226] The poignancy of alluding to this particular text would not be lost on his audience, as *Acharnians* is itself a call for an end to hostilities, specifically the Peloponnesian war, and extolls the values of peace-making and listening to those with whom one disagrees.[227] From this, therefore, Basil's intention is made clear – the expression of commonality between his own Trinitarian views and those of Eustathius and the Macedonians is the clear way in which to foster peace in the church once more.

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[224] Basil, *Holy Spirit* 8,21.

[225] Basil, *Holy Spirit* 30,77.

[226] Jackson, *Basil*, 49; Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 595.

[227] For a useful summary of the anti-war sentiment in *Acharnians*, see Henderson, Jeffrey. *Aristophanes* vol. 1 (LCL 178), 48-50. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

It is in this closing chapter that Basil personally recognises the soft touch and hope for peace in the Church with which *On the Holy Spirit* was penned. In his final remarks, Basil reiterates his intention that the treatise might bring those lost to heterodoxy back to the fold, stating:

> So great an evil is ostensibly established in us, that we have become more irrational than beasts – they at least flock with their own, while for us the cruellest conflict is waged against our kin. Because of all this I should have kept quiet, but instead the love of others seized me, a love that did not seek its own advantage, and thought it right to overcome all the difficulties of our times and circumstances. The children of Babylon taught us that when there is no support for right belief (*eusebeia*), we should attain the goal by ourselves…and so, we did not shrink from the cloud of enemies, rather, we have placed our hope in the help of the Spirit and promulgated the truth without fear. Or else the most abominable thing of all would have happened: first, the blasphemers of the Spirit would have been so easily encouraged against a true religious understanding; then, though we have so great a supporter and advocate, we would shrink from the service of this understanding that has been preserved by the tradition of the fathers and handed on to us through unbroken succession of memory.[228]

In contrast to the language of conflict, and the allusions to great wars of times past, Basil clearly states that it is the love for others that must motivate bringing those coerced into heresy back to the fold, and that the neglect of this itself is part of why those with doubts concerning the divinity of the Spirit were "so easily encouraged against an orthodox understanding," for though the truth must be proclaimed by those who know it, the aggression with which this truth was forced upon those who saw the appeal in non-Nicene Trinitarian beliefs would be discouraged from returning to faith. Then, in one final appeal to the tradition of the fathers, he points out that this method of leading by example in keeping and imitating the faith of the fathers was the only true way to heal the Christian church and to ensure heresy did not take permanent hold on those it ensnared. In reading these closing words, it is plain to see that, for Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* was written to be an example of just that – an exposition of right belief

[228] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 30,79.

concerning the Spirit that sought to educate rather than admonish and to reconcile rather than engender further conflict.

None of this section, however, is more clear an indication of Basil's own personal turmoil than the first words, in which he laments that "the cruellest war is waged against our own kin."[229] This pointed reference to his own bitter conflict with Eustathius and the regret he evidently feels over it shows that, rather than what could be considered a general discussion on the state of the church and the way forward, it is more a personal reflection of his own losses during this time. The concept of *On the Holy Spirit* as in some way an outstretched hand to Eustathius in particular is further evidenced by the language he uses elsewhere to describe the Macedonian faction in previous works. In his anti-Sabellian, Anomoian and Pneumatomachian homily, the tone is far less one of consolation and one more of aggression and chiding. In stark opposition to the anti-war sentiment expressed in *On the Holy Spirit*, the battle with heretical factions is related to war throughout the first part of the homily, and Basil sees himself as engaged directly and fully in conflict with these opposing forces, "not allowing this foolishness to go unrefuted."[230] Indeed, he ends the homily with a direct address to his opponents: "you are so stupid that not even by the term itself can you be brought to worthy notions about the Spirit." Again in contrast to *On the Holy Spirit*, the impiety of the Macedonians is viewed to make them almost irredeemable, and due only to the heinous stupidity of his opponents rather than the machinations of power-hungry men.

[229] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 30,78.

[230] See Basil, *Homily Against the Sabellians, Anomoians and Pneumatomachians* 1-4; ibid. 7.

Therefore, based on the tone taken and the stark difference between it and Basil's other anti-heretical works, there is little doubt that, though *On the Holy Spirit* was dedicated to his disciple, Amphilochius of Iconium, Basil's wayward teacher nonetheless serves as the primary internal interlocutor. Of *On the Holy Spirit's* writing, Phillip Rousseau states:

> That work did not appear accidentally, therefore: it marked a moment of new assurance, of self-definition, of choice in Basil's life…the bitterness of those experiences (with Eustathius) might now be dispelled by this new young friend, with whom he had so much in common – family, education, ascetic enthusiasm – and who was ready to applaud, indeed to imitate, his ideas and way of life. Upon Amphilochius, therefore, he now focussed a fatherly affection. In collaboration with him, he saw the potential fulfilment of his own vision of the community of churches. From his loyalty, his orthodoxy, his effectiveness, Basil would draw fresh strength. The *De Spiritu Sancto* was the chief fruit of these blessings.[231]

There is, of course, a significant amount of truth to this. Basil certainly looked upon Amphilochius as the future of the central Anatolian church – the dedication of *On the Holy Spirit* to him is a clear enough indication of Basil's intentions for him – Amphilochius was a young bishop, and the tone of letter 199, in which Basil praises him for his humility and willingness to learn, is unmistakably paternal – a tone Basil maintains in his later letters 231-6, where he patiently answers theological questions posed to him.[232] However, Rousseau's positive interpretation of the way in which Basil emotionally handled his split with Eustathius in the pages of *On the Holy Spirit* is a little optimistic. By the time of the authorship of chapters 1-9 and 25-30, Basil was still locked in a deep battle with Eustathius in June of 375, who had begun to accuse him of Sabellanism, and though Amphilochius likely only received *On the Holy Spirit* sometime after December 375, the work is generally agreed upon to have been finished by the September.[233] As such, considering mere months had passed since the most recent conflict with Eustathius and his followers, it is difficult to see how Basil's bitterness and sorrow could have waned so

[231] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea,* 264.

[232] See Basil, *Ep.* 199; 231-6.

[233] See Fedwick, *A Chronology of Basil*.

quickly. Indeed, though certainly self-assured and lacking bitterness or anger, *On the Holy Spirit* was still written with Eustathius in mind, though now Basil faced him as an equal, spurred on by his hope in his followers – and Amphilochius in particular – and the encouragement that the church, despite the ravages of so many theological conflicts throughout Basil's life, would endure and heal. Indeed, perhaps this is why Basil – usually so reluctant to put pen to paper – was so receptive to Amphilochius' request for a treatise in defence of the Holy Spirit: In contrast to the fractured relationship with his own mentor, Basil had the opportunity to foster a shared ascetic vision of the Spirit with this new generation, one which eschewed the vitriol that had come to typify the politics of the fourth-century church. Amphilochius certainly made use of the work in advising the bishops in his care: his *Synodal Letter* reads as a reaffirmation of Basil's writings on the Spirit – a fact which has been well-catalogued in M. Bonnet's recent edition – and ends by echoing the central argument of *On the Holy Spirit,* that it should be co-glorified with Father and Son.[234] It is troublesome, however, to suggest that *On the Holy Spirit* is primarily concerned with a positive future for the church, predisposed as it is with a painful past: it reads more as a desperate plea to resolve a rift that had already become irresolvable.

This then leads us to a serious problem: why does a text ostensibly addressed to Amphilochius read as if it were tailored for the eyes of Eustathius? It is only within the last half-century or so that this dilemma has been identified, and many solutions have been put forward. Hermann Dörries suggested the work likely consists in part of a transcript between Basil and Eustathius' meeting in 372, an argument which often sits at the centre of more recent discussions as a point of contention or of initial – but soon-

[234] See Amphilochius, *Synodal Letter* esp. 4.19-24. For Bonnet's version, along with helpful introduction and Basilian parallels in the footnotes, see Bonnet, M. *Amphiloque D'Iconium: Homélies, Fragments, Lettres* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2012), 312-31.

diverging – agreement.[235] While J.R. Pouchet rejected Dörries' initial premise and wished to reread *On the Holy Spirit* as an anti-Eunomian work, Stephen Hildebrand takes Dörries' argument one step further in suggesting that "he is trying to persuade the Macedonians of the Spirit's divinity."[236] As seen above, Rousseau perceives the treatise as Basil's act of rising above the bitterness that typified his relationship with his own mentor to focus instead on being a positive influence on the man to whom he was a mentor in turn.[237] All these arguments are insightful, but leave something to be desired. Pouchet here is the outlier, and though the early chapters of *On the Holy Spirit* read in part as a refutation of the use of 1Cor.8.6's "from whom" and "through whom" to differentiate between Father, Son and Spirit – the central argument of Eunomius' *Apology* 5 – from chapter seven onwards this facet of the Trinitarian relationships is broadly left behind.[238] Indeed, since Basil states that the co-glorification of Father and Son is something he and his silent interlocutor find to be "common" to them, one would struggle to assert that the imagined conversation of *On the Holy Spirit* is between Basil and a Eunomian: it feels more as an eirenic appeal to the shared co-glorification of the Son, beginning on an initial point of agreement over a shared foe before moving to the address theological differences. Rousseau's interpretation of the text encounters a similar problem, mistaking the apologetic tone of *On the Holy Spirit* for confidence and renewed vigour. Dörries' argument feels closer to the mark, but nonetheless encounters its own issues. It is true that *On the Holy Spirit* reads as a conversation with a Macedonian – Eustathius, to be exact – but it is hard to see why Basil would publish in writing the transcript of a series of discussions that failed to convince in person: whether or not he intended Eustathius to ever read the work, re-exploring an exhausted avenue would have been rather futile. Hildebrand's

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[235] Dörries, Hermann. *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschsluß des Trinitarianischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956).

[236] See Pouchet, J-R, *Le Traité de Saint Basile sur le Saint-Esprit: Son Milieu Originel.* Recherches de Science Religieuse 84 (1996), 325-50; Hildebrand, *On the Holy Spirit* 22-5.

[237] Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* 264.

[238] Such is the main argument of Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 1-6.

suggestions are the most appealing, and best recognise the apologetic tone *On the Holy Spirit* takes. It does, however, overreach in imagining that the Macedonians – and Eustathius in particular – would read or be convinced of Basil's argument.

It is unlikely that Basil believed *On the Holy Spirit* would ever fall into Eustathius' hands. From a historical perspective, it was certainly improbable. In its dedication to Amphilochius – and indeed the delay of Basil's sending of the manuscript to accommodate a request for it to be on parchment – the work seems to have been written to satisfy the questions of his protégé, and follows the contemporary conventions of *ekdosis;* the "handing-out" of a work to close friends, family and supporters.[239] After handing it over to Amphilochius, Basil would have had no control over where it went next and who might request their own copy: though Amphilochius and Eustathius were likely connected somehow through ascetic circles, this connection would have been distant and it is unlikely that Eustathius, hearing that such a book existed, would commission the copying of it, and books were rarely – if ever – sent without prior request.[240] In accusing Basil of Sabellianism and throwing him to the dogs, one should assume he cared little for what Basil might have had to say in the aftermath. Similarly, had Basil sent a copy directly to Eustathius, there was no guarantee that his mentor would not immediately burn it.[241] Indeed, since the

[239] Basil, *Ep.* 231. As noted by Stroumsa in *On the Status of Books in Late Antiquity* (in Harrison, C.; Humfress, C. & Sandwell, I eds. *Being Christian in Late Antiquity: a Festschrift for Gillian Clark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 57-72), 59, the commission of a parchment copy of a treatise was rare indeed. For the conventions of the publication of works in Late Antiquity, see Gamble, H.Y. *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1995), 82-5. For a more specific discussion of the term *ekdosis*, see van Groningen, B.A. *Ekdosis*. Mnemosyne Series 4, Vol. 16 (1963), 1-17.

[240] Gamble, *Books and Readers* 84-5; 140-3. For greater detail, see Haines-Eitzen, Kim. *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 77-104.

[241] Burning books as common practice and cathartic exercise is touched upon by Rousseau in *From Binding to Burning* (Klingshirn, William E. & Safran, Linda eds. *The Early Christian Book* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 1-9), 9.

ekdosis of a book was to give the recipient free reign over its dissemination, Basil would not have trusted Eustathius with another of his writings: his anger at Eustathius' publication and apparent recension of his correspondence with Apollinaris is plain to see in *Ep.* 223, and would be sufficient cause to be wary in the delivery of any other of his writings to someone who had so recently used one in bad faith.

Based on these conventions, we cannot assume Basil meant for anyone to have receipt – and the control over dissemination thereafter – of the treatise other than Amphilochius, and – due to the immediate context – certainly not someone such as Eustathius. Similarly, as we have seen, one cannot imagine Basil would have been confident it would reach Eustathius through dissemination. We are therefore left with one explanation as to why the work reads as apology rather than polemic: catharsis. There was no question that Eustathius had deeply hurt Basil, and the memory of his betrayal would have been fresh. In writing *On the Holy Spirit* for his mentee, the disagreements with his mentor would have been consistently and inescapably present in his mind, and either as a conscious act or a subconscious one, this provided the opportunity for Basil to say what Eusthatius would not hear, and to give himself closure where circumstance had denied it to him. The work is therefore not truly a response to Amphilochius' questions, but to Eustathius' – a last word in a conversation that was long since over. This is not to say, however, that there is no possibility that Basil hoped Eustathius might come across *On the Holy Spirit* and repent, even though as historians we must question its likelihood. As human beings, it is difficult to read the final chapter of *On the Holy Spirit* and not see the faint glimmer of hope in Basil's mind that the church might heal, old wounds knit together and that his friend, mentor and ascetical inspiration might return to the fold.

Unfortunately, if this hope existed, it was in vain. Eustathius died in 377, still in conflict with Basil and the Pro-Nicenes. Furthermore, though Basil's vision of a church unified by an Orthodox confession of the Trinity was to some extent realised at Constantinople in 381, Basil died in 379, succumbing to one

of the many illnesses that had plagued him throughout his episcopal career, never seeing the most tireless and important work of his ecclesiastical career realised. Though fraught with conflict and personal sorrow Basil's conflict with Eustathius may have been, the works produced during this time held such a strong focus on tradition that this can be no accident. It is therefore, through this conflict that Basil came – for whatever reason – to recognise the specific value of tradition in defending the equality of the Spirit with the Father and Son as regards worship. As such, it is worth considering the wider context to see why an appeal to tradition, of all things, might be viewed as particularly useful and timely by Basil in attempting to provide an answer to the Macedonian crisis and bring about the ecclesiastical peace he so craved.

On the Holy Spirit: Dating the Treatise

There is almost universal assent in the scholarship that *On the Holy Spirit* was penned between 373 and 375 AD. However, the exact nature of its composition is debatable. Paul Fedwick, following the suggestions of Hermann Dörries, suggests that chapters 10 to 27 were written in May or June 373 after several meetings with Eustathius of Sebaste in Armenia, and chapters 1-9 and 28-30 being written two years later in September of 375.[242] In the case of the ninth and tenth chapters, a difference can be observed that may suggest a radically different date of authorship between the two. Whilst chapter 9 discusses the illuminative power of the Holy Spirit and the gifts that come from it (with 1 Corinthians 12-13 firmly in mind), chapter 10 shifts drastically to a discussion about the equality of ranking between

[242] Fedwick, Paul. *A Chronology of Basil,* 16-17. In Fedwick, Paul (Ed.) *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic: A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Vol.1). Rome: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979. See also Dörries, Hermann. *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschsluß des Trinitarianischen Dogmas*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956.

Father and Son and the Holy Spirit.[243] This shift in topic becomes even more apparent with Basil's unusual closing statement to chapter 9:

> Such, then, are a few from many of our thoughts on the Holy Spirit, that we have been taught to hold about his greatness, his dignity, and his activities. Now we must advance against those who contradict us and who attempt to prove the opposite points of view proposed to us "from the knowledge falsely so-called (1 Tim 6:20).[244]

This closing statement does indeed link chapters 9 and 10, but the link is extremely tenuous, and is in fact noticeably different from the way Basil moves from book to book in the surrounding sections of the treatise. Between chapters 8 and 9, Basil moves from the knowledge of the Father the Spirit gives to the other gifts that come by its light, and between 10 and 11, Basil discusses the Trinitarian implications of the baptismal confession and then points out his opponents ignore or spite that confession. It is, then, a possibility that this linking paragraph was written to connect the two so as to prevent something of a non-sequitur.

At the other end of the treatise, however, the opposite appears to be the case. Chapter 28 follows directly on from the latter half of 27, maintaining the exact same momentum in defending Basil's doxological use of "with the Holy Spirit" in contrast to the more common "in the Holy Spirit." As such, though chapters 9 and 10 were likely not written at the same time, I would personally contend that chapters 27 and 28 are so heavily intertwined they cannot have been written two years apart. Stephen Hildebrand has pointed out that thematically there is a distinct shift between 24 and 25, and this may be a more reasonable point at which to differentiate between the earlier and later texts.[245] With this split in dating in mind, therefore, two separate dates can be ascertained for writing, with the sections

[243] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9,23-10,24.

[244] Ibid. 9,23.

[245] Hildebrand, *On the Holy Spirit*, 22.

that deal most exhaustively with unwritten tradition – namely chapters 1-9 and 25-30 – being written in 375, whilst the central chapters that focus more on scriptural exegesis and the implications of the triple confession made at baptism being written in 373.

Some discussion has been had about the state of *On the Holy Spirit* 9 as a separate source written earlier than the rest of the treatise, more influenced by Plotinian philosophy than its surrounding sections.[246] I would be inclined to question this assertion. The language of the section in particular indicates that Basil had been reading his philosophy, and Benoit Pruche in his translation has aptly demonstrated the allusions to the works of Plotinus and Plato here.[247] It is also undeniable that Plotinus' influence in particular permeates this section of *On the Holy Spirit*, with Ennead 5 – unsurprisingly considering its quasi-Trinitarian content – providing the most inspiration.[248] That this section is so replete with philosophical learning, something which is often perceived to be lacking from much of the rest of *On the Holy Spirit*, the above authors have tended to consider such an excursus to have been an originally separate document, stapled into *On the Holy Spirit* at a later date. This in part might be due to the way both Hanson and Pruche translate the words τὰς κοινὰς ἡμῶν ἐννοίας, which Hanson describes to mean "the pronouncements of contemporary philosophy and in particular neoplatonic philosophy," and Pruche considers to also be a distinct reference to philosophical thought.[249] This is something De

[246] See Hanson, R.P.C. *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition*, 248; De Mendieta, *Unwritten and Apostolic Traditions*, 25-7; Dörries also has an extensive discussion of this in *Der Beitrag des Basilius*. Pruche asserts the same in *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, 322-331.

[247] See Pruche, *Sur le Saint*-Esprit, 322-31. This is a subject to which we must return – to claim Basil's idea of tradition and how it effects his theological epistemology was influenced by his reading of philosophy is to understate. On the Cappadocians' direct interactions with Greek Philosophy see Meredith, Antony. *Christian Philosophy in the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2012) for a good textual gloss. As I will suggest shortly, however, such direct interactions are very much in the minority due to a rather nebulous set of concerns.

[248] Again see Pruche, *Sur le Saint-Esprit* 322-331 for a full list.

[249] See Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church,* 181; Pruche, *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, 323.

Mendieta also notes, choosing instead to translate τὰς κοινὰς ἡμῶν ἐννοίας as "our common conceptions or ideas."[250]

De Mendieta is correct to do so and rightly identifies that this is not a reference to philosophy directly – the term, though philosophic, was not a particularly profound one nor usually alluded to profound doctrines – but rather to two sources: scripture and, more elusively, "that which we have received from the non-scriptural tradition of the fathers (ἃς ἐκ τῆς ἀγράφου παραδόσεως τῶν πατέρων διεδεξάμεθα)," as Basil here terms it.[251] It is of course the latter of these sources on which this chapter (and much of this thesis) is primarily focussed, and it is due to this particular reference that one must consider *On the Holy Spirit* 9 – though notably distinct from the rest of the treatise in its broadly philosophical slant – to have been written in tandem with the rest, and as an irremovable part of Basil's argument therein. One must, therefore, rather than read this section as simply a Christianisation of philosophical ideas – which is undoubtedly is – read it as the summary of what a sufficiently intellectual – and thereby philosophical – exegesis of the scriptures and of the patristic tradition imparts to all Christians. This is nothing more than the grounding of Basil's entire argument: that tradition and the scriptures unite together to vindicate the Spirit as ranked with equal honour to the Father and Son. Without it, *On the Holy Spirit's* argument would be incomprehensible and its most unusual discussion – that of tradition – only introduced as a core concept in the final chapters.

The influence that this has on when we can view Basil to have formulated his doctrine of tradition is of distinct value. Chapters 9 and 27 should be considered roughly contemporaneous in authorship: not,

[250] De Mendieta, *Unwritten and Apostolic Traditions*, 26.

[251] De Mendieta ibid. 26; Basil, *On the Holy Spirit,* 9,22.

as others have argued, to have been written two years apart. This analysis of the dating of the text also helps us notice the importance with which Basil treats his appeal to tradition – to him it is at the very centre of his establishment of the homotimity of the Spirit, and therefore it is not solely by scripture, but also by tradition, that both Basil and the Spirit are vindicated from what Basil perceives to be Eustathius' attacks against them.

BASIL'S MOTIVATION TO APPEAL TO TRADITION

Though the notion of tradition is appealed to during earlier sections of *On the Holy Spirit,* what Basil means by tradition is expounded in great depth in the 27th chapter of the treatise:

> Concerning the *dogmata* and *kerygmata* that are guarded in the church, we have some from written teachings, whilst others we have from that which we have received in a mystery through the teachings of the tradition of the apostles. Both have the same power as regards true religion.
>
> Τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ πεφυλαγμένων δογμάτων καὶ κηρυγμάτων, τὰ μὲν ἐκ τῆς ἐγγράφου διδασκαλίας ἔχομεν, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τῆς τῶν ἀποστόλων παραδόσεως διαδοθέντα ἡμῖν ἐν μυστηρίῳ παρεδεξάμεθα· ἅπερ ἀμφότερα τὴν αὐτὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχει πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν.[252]

This section is by no means clear, and is replete with some rather difficult jargon – there are very few key words here that are not up for interpretation. What we can ascertain, however, is the purpose for which Basil has appealed to tradition in this case and in this form.

[252] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit,* 27,66.

At the core of this appeal to tradition – whatever this notion of tradition might be – is the justification of a certain doxological formula employed by Basil, in which he glorifies the Father and Son *with* (σύν) the Holy Spirit.[253] It appears by Basil's own admission that he was strongly criticised by his opponents for using this particular form of doxology, rather than their preferred glorification of the Father and Son *in* (ἐν) the Holy Spirit:

> Why, then, they say, being that "in" is particularly suitable for the Spirit and is sufficient for every thought concerning him, why then do you introduce this new word – saying "with" the Spirit and not "in" the Holy Spirit and using words that are neither necessary nor in common use by the churches?[254]

The name of his critic(s) is not revealed, but one can assume such a criticism would be levelled by *pneumatomachoi*. More likely than not, Eustathius or his followers are those who are criticising Basil with such fervour on this matter, as it fits the *modus operandi* demonstrated by Eustathius in his accusations of Sabellianism towards Basil, and the fact that the treatise itself is in many ways an answer to the concerns raised by his mentor. Though the doxology is not mentioned in Basil's letter 223 – in which he attempts to refute Eustathius' accusations – the utilisation of such a doxology, in which there is no distinction in the glorification of Father, Son or Spirit, is a formula to which such allegations would be particularly suited.

Indeed, the most significant issue with Basil's doxology for a non-Nicene is that – if vindicated by tradition – it tacitly demonstrates that the Spirit is *homotimos* (of equal dignity) to the Father and Son, a term that this treatise favours over the more inherently controversial *homoousios*.[255] The term has

[253] This is the central theme of *On the Holy Spirit* chapters 25-9.

[254] Ibid. 27,65.

[255] The use of this term is concentrated in *On the Holy Spirit* 5,8-6,15 and 17,42-20,51.

significant ancient witness as an appellation for a peer of those in the highest level of office, even being a designated rank in the court of the Ptolemies.[256] The aptness of using such a courtly term to discuss the relationship between Father, Son and Spirit aside, an admission by any party that the Spirit is *homotimos* would be a tacit agreement that the Spirit must be considered God. The task set before Basil, then, is to prove that the doxological use of "with" is not only adequate for use in the churches but that it can be designated as having a significant patristic pedigree.

Basil's appeal to tradition, therefore, comes out of the need to respond to this problem. In the previous chapters, he argues strongly that scriptural witnesses to the word "and" is synonymous to "with" to ensure his doxology is not explicitly unscriptural.[257] However, finding no direct evidence of the usage of "with" in Scripture, tradition is his next avenue. In this way, Basil begins by outlining a vast number of liturgical traditions that have no identifiable scriptural basis:

> Those who hope in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ are marked by the sign of the Cross: by what scriptures? Which scripture teaches us to turn to the East during prayer? The words of the epiclesis at the moment of the consecration, the bread of the Eucharist and the cup of blessing – what saint has left us a scriptural account of this? We are not content with the words mentioned by the Apostle or the Gospel, but also

[256] See Liddell-Scott, *Lexicon* 1228. It appears Plutarch also used the term to describe the "chief nobles" of the Persians, and intimates it was a rank they themselves employed: "οἱ 'τῶν ὁμοτίμων' καλούμενοι" (*Life of Fabius Maximus*, 9).

[257] See *On the Holy Spirit*, 25-26.

> add others before and after, receiving in unwritten (ἄγραφος) teaching that they have great power as regards the mystery.[258]

Basil has been clever here. The examples given cover both simplistic practice and key aspects of sacramental celebration – mundane and lofty worship equally relies on a notion of tradition in order to determine its authority. The mention of the signing of the cross and the use of epiclesis is no vague choice either: both are key to any level of Christian worship, and the first and third of these are strongly related to areas of practice that could be considered Trinitarian in their formulae – the epiclesis, being the distinctly pneumatological part of the anaphora, is of most importance here. Basil's argument, then, is evident: if even the epiclesis and the consecration of the Eucharist by which all worship has its source in tradition, not in scripture, then employing his doxology – so long as he can demonstrate patristic witness – makes it neither less valid nor heretical.

The method Basil uses consistently remains apologetic – further evidence that it was Eustathius who accused Basil of Sabellianism on account of his doxology. Indeed, this is made clear not only by his attempt to refute the accusations of his opponents by appeal to common liturgy, but the patristic sources that he invokes – Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, Dionysius of Rome, Dionysius of Alexandria and Origen – are a mix of figures Basil considers orthodox and those whom he considers heterodox. Origen is used despite the fact that "he is a man who does not in all ways have perfectly correct ideas about the Spirit."[259] However, scholars have drawn particular interest to Basil's invocation of Dionysius of Alexandria, a frequent object of Basil's ire. Mark Edwards has noted the "qualified applause" Basil gives

[258] Ibid. 27,66.

[259] Ibid. 29,73.

to the tract of Dionysius he reproduces in this section.[260] Basil simply states that "it is strange to say" that Dionysius settles on using "with" in the doxology here replicated, a tone different to how he deals with Dionysius elsewhere. Basil's disposition towards Dionysius' thought is generally negative, accusing him in one of his letters of both tritheism through establishing "a difference in substance" between the persons of the Trinity and even of disregarding the place of the Spirit, "banishing him from the divinity we worship, and listing him somewhere below, along with the created and ministering class of things."[261] In the same letter, Basil is even more cutting towards the man himself, saying "this man (Dionysius) – so far as we can recognise – is more or less the first person to have exhibited the seeds of this impiety that now resounds: I speak of the Anomoian doctrine."[262] This leads us to a very interesting problem – why exactly would Basil, in a treatise that sought to state the divinity of the Spirit, appeal to the man who, according to him, was the originator of the exact heterodoxy he sought to combat?

Aloys Grillmeier, following Martin Tetz, is satisfied to consider these references to be a florilegium of Fathers.[263] This is in one sense true – the section is certainly an anthology created to settle a matter of theological relevance. However, it is more unique in its use of figures deemed orthodox and heterodox on the particular matter of the Spirit. Indeed, unlike Athanasius in *De Sententia Dionysii,* Basil is not interested in claiming Dionysius for the Pro-Nicenes. Instead, his approach is to embrace his heterodoxy, and employ it as an apologetic and rhetorical tool against his critics: if even someone so confused in Trinitarian matters as Dionysius of Alexandria can be right on this matter and in agreement

[260] Edwards, Mark. *Porphyry and Cappadocian Logic,* 65. The Greek Orthodox Theological Review, 60 no 3 - 4 2015, p 61-74.

[261] Basil, *ep. IX* (Deferrari I, 95-6).

[262] Ibid.

[263] Grillmeier, Aloys. *Christ in Christian Tradition* (Vol.2.1) (London: Mowbray, 1987), 52.

with the orthodox fathers, then how can one disagree? Once more, then, we come to the realisation that Basil has acted out of apologetic rather than a desire to hammer orthodoxy into his foes.

In fact, it would be quite reasonable to suggest the use of Dionysius here would be an effective dog whistle to Eustathius, the imagined interlocutor of the treatise. Eusthathius' endeavours to combat anomoian beliefs were well-documented, and so the positive use of a figure often touted as the originator of anomoian doctrine feels like an argument levelled directly at Eustathius and his followers.[264] This is more convincing when we consider the nature of those prominent figures other than Dionysius who are given a lengthy treating here – Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus. Basil himself was a devotee of Origen, and history remembered this well by attributing the *Philocalia of Origen* to a collaborative effort between him and Gregory Nazianzen. Though Neil McLynn has of late questioned this traditional attribution, believing the text to be the work of "an inky-fingered drudge, who knew Origen very well, but not much else," Basil's awareness of the text is made highly likely by its attachment to Gregory Nazianzen's *Letter 115.*[265] The extent to which Basil quotes Gregory Thaumaturgus, and names him "Gregory the Great," is self-evidently an admittance of devotion. Basil's reverence for Gregory Thaumaturgus is to be expected: he was part of a family to whom Gregory was deeply dear, and his own personal ascetic connection to Pontus – the historical see of the wonderworking bishop – is well-established, it being the site of his sister Macrina's ascetic widow-community. Both of these men were instrumental in the establishment of a Christian asceticism, and it was in their paths that figures

[264] Much of these previous endeavours have been discussed at length in the prior chapter. For a quick summary and rundown of the creeds in which Eustathius was participate in drafting, see e.g. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, chapter 9.

[265] Mclynn, Neil. *What was the "Philocalia of Origen?"* 37. Meddelanden Från Collegium Patristicum Lundense 19. Lund, 2004, pp.32-43. McLynn considers a Caesarean origin to be most likely – considering Origen's connection to the place, and the local episcopate's unmatched devotion to him in the early 4th century, such an origin is both probable and fitting. We shall to return to this question in greater detail later in the chapter. On the subject of Gregory Nazianzen and the *Philocalia of Origen*, see *Letter 115.*

such as Eustathius strode towards their ascetic vocations. Indeed, the whole text is brimming with ascetic concepts and language.[266] Hildebrand has noticed this, saying the text is "not written as one theologian to another, or as one bishop to another, but above all as one ascetic to another."[267] Indeed, one must go a little further: *On the Holy Spirit* is not only a treatise written from one ascetic – Basil – to another – Amphilochius – but is also the imagined conversation between Basil and Eustathius. Even where the arguments feel more tailored towards the silent interlocutor than the actual addressee, the word of the day unwaveringly remains asceticism.

On the question of episcopacy versus asceticism, one might initially imagine Hildebrand to be too clear-cut between the two. In a post-Gangran reality, asceticism and the episcopate seem to have rather coalesced both within the Pro-Nicene camp and outside it: Basil of Ancyra, Athanasius, Eustathius of Sebaste, Basil himself and Amphilochius of Iconium were all of one ascetic mind, even if one might struggle to unite them at a negotiating-table. It is also of note that, other than Jovinian in the West, there were few notable opponents of asceticism by the late fourth-century, and the pro-ascetic response was overwhelmingly from bishops, spearheaded by Ambrose, and Augustine after him. However, though asceticism might be viewed as intrinsic to the idea of the episcopacy and religious office a natural end to any ascetic not anchoretically or cenobitically inclined, it is in the apologetic nature of this particular treatise that the difference can be seen. Though ideologically the episcopal and the ascetical duties possess some form of synonymy to Basil and to the older Eustathius, Basil avoids utilizing his episcopal status to censure him, and instead appeals to his ascetical sensibilities. In direct opposition to his previous failed attempts to rehabilitate his spiritual father through the channels of the church – since Eustathius simply signed the Nicene Creed appended to *Ep. 125* and then continued

[266] I shall return to this at a later point. The sheer asceticism of this treatise and its appeal to tradition warrants half a chapter alone.

[267] Hildebrand, Stephen. *Basil of Caesarea,* 166. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.

very much as he was – his efforts changed course from appealing to their shared rank and ecclesiastical membership to appealing to their shared principles and heritage. Whilst therefore Basil appeals primarily to bishops in his anthology – Origen and Julius Africanus being the clear exceptions – the actual argument of *On the Holy Spirit* contends that, though bishops have particular supremacy in this matter, to understand the words of these men as the truth of the tradition is predicate on the ascetical way of living. While bishops possess the licence to profess the doctrines of the church with authority, ascetics possess the insight that confirms their truth. It is a soft touch, but one that should be considered the central motivator behind Basil's style in this treatise: in this way Hildebrand's view is very much vindicated.

It is at this point, therefore, that we must reject the claim that Basil has written a simple florilegium to prove his point here. The sources and structure used here is a direct appeal to Eustathius of Sebaste on a number of different platforms – most importantly the shared enmity towards Dionysius of Alexandria, and a shared devotion to Origen and Gregory Thaumaturgus through a common ascetic vision. The aim of this particular appeal to patristic tradition is, though liminally a matter of authority, is more precisely one of apology – and at that an apology specifically tailored to one man: Eustathius.

"Unwritten" or "non-scriptural?"

One of the most common themes of Basil's idea of tradition in *On the Holy Spirit* is its nature as ἄγραφος – but what Basil might exactly mean by this is difficult. Liddell and Scott consider the word to broadly mean "unwritten," or as a blanket term for religious laws and customs – which one should probably

consider to be religious rites in opposition to corresponding texts of that religion.[268] Initially this might be appealing, as Basil's examples of traditions are all liturgical customs. However, this cannot be what Basil means, as he produces an anthology of explicitly written patristic sources to demonstrate his doxological use of "with" has tradition-status.[269] As the tradition itself is very much written, even if the liturgical customs to which the writings refer are not, "unwritten" is – though not entirely incorrect – insufficiently descriptive. Lampe, being more focussed on Patristic literature, also considers the term to mean "unwritten" in some senses, but points out that the term is also on occasion used to mean "unscriptural," and – more intriguingly – "Orthodox use of non-scriptural phrases."[270] Here, then, we must make an important distinction between "unscriptural," which implies an idea is in direct contradiction of Scripture, and "nonscriptural," where the idea is not necessarily in opposition to Scripture, but is nonetheless absent from it. Indeed, an argument that utilises this particular definition is made by Gregory Nazianzen in his *Fifth Theological Oration* – his own extended exposition on the Holy Spirit. Gregory states:

> τί δ' ἂν εἴποις, φασί, περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος; πόθεν ἡμῖν ἐπεισάγεις ξένον θεὸν καὶ *ἄγραφον*;
>
> "What might you string together," they (the Arians) say, "about the Holy Spirit? From where are you introducing this alien and *non-scriptural* God?"[271]

it is quite clear that Gregory here would deny the divinity of the Spirit – which he authored the oration to advocate – was unscriptural in its content. We can, then, assume that the term ἄγραφος was being used to mean non-scriptural in the fairly immediate context of the authorship of *On the Holy Spirit*.

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[268] Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed.), 14. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996.

[269] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29,72.

[270] Lampe, G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 23. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961.

[271] Gregory Nazianzen, *Fifth Theological Oration*, 1.

Indeed, Basil himself elsewhere appears to use the term in such a way. In his homily *On the Faith*, he has this to say:

> I found it necessary, following those before me, to use language designed against the many impieties sown by the devil, so that I might obstruct or overthrow the blasphemies that were brought forward, though the language I used at some times, according to the requirements of the needs of those afflicted, was non-scriptural (ἄγραφος), though it was not therefore estranged from the pious meaning of the Scripture, like the apostle, who often taught using Hellenistic sayings in order to achieve his aim. For the current purpose I considered it right to our common aim to fulfil the injunction of your love in Christ with the simplicity of the sound faith.[272]

One cannot translate – given the qualifying statement he provides us – Basil's use of the word ἄγραφος here in any other way than "non-scriptural." In addition to it being part of the late 4th-century ecclesiastical vocabulary, therefore, ἄγραφος as non-scriptural also belongs to Basil's own. One must therefore consider that when Basil speaks of an *ἄγραφος παραδόσις*, he speaks not of a literal unwritten thing, but of a truth of the church to which there is no direct scriptural witness.

It is this meaning of ἄγραφος – non-scriptural – that Basilian scholars tend to agree is the right way to render its use in *On the Holy Spirit*. Bloomfield Jackson was strongly under the impression ἄγραφος here and elsewhere in the treatise means "non-scriptural."[273] Johnston also tacitly assumes ἄγραφος to mean the same.[274] Such an interpretation has been more recently echoed by Hildebrand in his translation of *On the Holy Spirit*, who indeed directly renders the following thus:

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[272] Basil, *On the Faith*. (In Van Sickle, Jacob. *On Christian Ethics*, 70. New York, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012). NB. The term here, ἄγραφος, literally means "unwritten" but the direct contrast to scripture (γραφὴ) makes it evident he means "non-scriptural."

[273] See Jackson, Bloomfield, *Basil*, 40-1 ff.2.

[274] Johnston, *The Book of Basil*, 133 ff.37.

> ὡς μεγάλην ἔχοντα πρὸς τὸ μυστήριον τὴν ἰσχύν, ἐκ τῆς *ἀγράφου* διδασκαλίας παραλαβόντες.
>
> Since we have received *non-scriptural* teaching that these words (of the epiclesis) have great power as regards the mystery.[275]

It is quite clear from this consideration that by ἄγραφος Basil intends the reader to understand liturgical rites and the words associated with them as inheritances from tradition. In introducing his anthology of Patristic sources, in fact, he says exactly that, calling his doxological use of the word "with" as a "Paternal inheritance (κλῆρον πατρῷον)."[276] Such a departure from the scriptural is, to say the least, a risky play. However, considering the battleground on which Basil fights is a specifically liturgical one, it is a play that is utterly necessary to his argument if one is to accept that the liturgy can be sourced from anything other than the rigid language of scripture. Considering that is exactly what Eustathius appears to be claiming, the existence of a non-scriptural tradition is the only effective way to counter him.

It is perhaps here that we see the beginnings of significant departure from the idea of tradition Basil espoused in *Against Eunomius*. Rather than the sense of tradition therein contained, in which the authority of tradition was mostly relegated to jurisdiction over the right exegesis of scripture with some time given to liturgical and sacramental rites, exegesis now takes a back seat to the non-scriptural aspects of Christian thought, and the patristic witness to them. However, this does not mean that Basil's approach to the problem has necessarily changed. Such an argument has been made by R.P.C. Hanson, who accused Basil of abandoning his more scripture-centric position of *Against Eunomius* for his non-scriptural one in *On the Holy Spirit* – a decision he calls "unfortunate and unnecessary."[277] Hanson is

[275] Hildebrand, Stephen. *On the Holy Spirit,* 104.

[276] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 29,71.

[277] Hanson, R.P.C. *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit*, 255. Vigiliae Christianae Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1968), pp. 241-255.

not at his best here. Not only does *Against Eunomius,* as we have seen in the previous chapter, contain references to non-scriptural aspects of tradition, but also the context is entirely different. The discussion of Baptism in the third book of *Against Eunomius* is a clear reference to non-scriptural tradition to refute Eunomius, as even though Basil finds the scriptures sufficient to reject Eunomius' claim in this case, the demonstration of the application of the exegesis of Matthew 28:19 in baptismal rites is further indicative of Eunomius' error. It is, in many ways an addendum and clarification to a point already sufficiently made.

In *On the Holy Spirit*, by contrast, Basil is responding to claims that his non-scriptural doxology is invalid based on its lack of scriptural attestation. By the point in the treatise at which he sets out his idea of non-scriptural traditions, there has been significant discussion of scriptural evidence that vindicates his use of "with" in a doxological setting, but finds this insufficient to fully defend himself. As a result, Basil moves to demonstrate that non-scriptural evidence – in opposition to the staunch biblical zealotry of Eustathius – is itself a valid thing from which liturgy and therefore by extension doctrine can and should be extracted. In this way, Hanson's accusation that Basil has sold out his principles is unsustainable, and the appeal to tradition – for the point that he was making – was indeed fortunate and necessary.

"Non-Scriptural Tradition of the Fathers"

At the start of a discussion of the many qualities of the Holy Spirit, Basil states this:

> Let us now consider our general ideas concerning the Holy Spirit, both those gathered about him from the Scriptures for us, and those we have received from the non-

> scriptural tradition of the fathers (ἃς ἐκ τῆς ἀγράφου παρα- δόσεως τῶν πατέρων διεδεξάμεθα).[278]

When Basil refers to the apostles, the meaning is self-evident. The same cannot quite be said for when he uses the term "fathers (πατέρες)." We have already seen that these figures are of an importance to Basil's argument it would be difficult to overstate, being the authorities by which any point he makes has its weight. They are ranked with the apostles, and have acted to preserve the tradition and have handed it over in the same way as the apostles, having "ordained from the first the matters of the church." Some parallels can be drawn here to Basil's earlier works, in which patristic authority is considered of significant note. Letters 52 and 90 both work hard to describe the bishops at Nicaea as "fathers," and one need not stretch the imagination to appreciate that this is a term applied to give them authority. The "fathers" to whom Basil appeals are not the fathers of Nicaea, however. All of those mentioned except Eusebius were long dead before Nicaea and so unsurprisingly were not present. Basil must therefore mean "father" in a more general sense here, but one which is equally symbolic of their particular authority on doctrinal matters.

The apologetic importance of the individuals appealed to in Basil's anthology of literature in *On the Holy Spirit* 29 has already been established: we have seen that it is a combination of thinkers that Basil considered either theologically orthodox or heterodox or, in the case of Origen, somewhere in between. However, this is not the only peculiarity of his choice of patristic authors. From Irenaeus right up until the late fourth-century – and even ostensibly in Basil's own work as we have seen from letters 52 and 90, along with the "fathers" discussed in his anti-Sabellian homily – the implication of linking patristic tradition to apostolic tradition was to connect the two through one specific institution: the episcopacy. It is true that Basil generally appeals to the works of bishops within his anthology – Clement,

[278] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9,22.

the Dionysioi, Irenaeus and Gregory Thaumaturgus were all of that rank. It is with Origen – so often the outlier in these discussions – that things are complicated. Origen was no bishop, and even his ordination as a presbyter was, according to Eusebius, contested by his own bishop, Demetrios.[279] When we combine this with the fact not all Basil's "fathers" from which he has gleaned his own doxology are orthodox Trinitarians, one must ask the question of what a "father" within the context of non-scriptural tradition can possibly mean.[280] Two questions must therefore be asked – what do we make of Origen as a non-bishop father, and if even the heterodox can be considered fathers of this non-scriptural tradition, what meaning does that have for the veracity of traditions?

Both these answers are, perhaps aptly considering Origen is at the centre of both, speculative. Though Origen was certainly not a bishop, to consider him to have the same authority as any other presbyter is plainly untrue. Though his orthodoxy was already being questioned, no-one either then or now could question the unparalleled influence he was on the theological landscape of the fourth century, and Basil – as both a devotee of Origen and an ascetic – would have had even more respect for him than most. Though it is appealing to consider that the fathers of non-scriptural tradition might extend to all non-bishops, the only other non-bishop in the anthology mentioned is Julius Africanus, who Basil is clear to identify as "the historian (τὸν ἱστοριογράφον)": a clear separating factor from the others. One must therefore err on the side of caution and suggest that Origen is merely – as always – the exception to the rule and not indicative of Basil trying to form some new kind of authoritative paternity within the church. When it comes to Dionysius of Alexandria, it is perhaps a similar example of exception. Though Dionysius was heterodox in Basil's eyes, he was the bishop of Alexandria, and held significant influence

[279] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.8.4.

[280] It is of course true that the historian might not – and perhaps should not – consider "orthodox Trinitarian" a term one could aptly use to describe Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, Dionysius of Rome, or Gregory Thaumaturgus, but to Basil their authority on the Trinitarian matter is beyond question.

over the doctrinal debates of the fourth century was undeniable. To Basil's personal chagrin, Dionysius is authoritative on this matter, and indeed in the long run serves as an apologetic tool. There is also a significant sense of deep theological cohesion in this tradition, less a set of traditions and more one cohesive body of some particular ontological value: such an idea rings true to Congar's great effort in distinguishing the two in his landmark work on the topic. Clearly Basil feels a similar way that there is a monolithic concept of tradition that exists as something separate to – and perhaps greater than – the sum of its constituent parts.[281] When Basil appeals to the fathers, then, he likely has – with the exception of Origen – bishops in mind, those who lived and wrote in service of the church, and who were inheritors of the seats of the apostles with whom Basil unites them by which their access to such a monolithic body of tradition is enabled. With the source and its inherent authority established, one must now turn to consider what authority Basil considers the traditions themselves to have.

"The Same Power"

What intrigues the most, however, is the bold statement Basil makes that Scripture and tradition both "have the same power in respect to true religion."[282] It is indeed this concept of a non-scriptural tradition equal in power to tradition that drew him much criticism from scholars from the renaissance to the latter half of the twentieth century. Erasmus famously rejected the authenticity of the last four chapters – the primary focus of which is tradition – based on a perceived lack of clear-headedness, a

[281] See here Congar, Yves M. *Le Tradition et les Traditions* (Paris: Fayard, 1963). Such concerns are as pervasive in the text as the title might imply. Similarly see Sesbouë, Bernard. *Tradition et Traditions*. Nouvelles Revue Theologique 112 (1990), 570-85. Ferguson (*Paradosis and Traditio,* 29) suggests such attitudes to be "a modern construct" but Basil may well be viewed as the exception, should – as it seems – tradition exists as its own monolithic concept while traditions are rarely purely conceptual/

[282] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

view shared by Cocus, who dismissed it as a "tall tale (*longa fabula*)."[283] No doubts remain on the authenticity of the final chapters of *On the Holy Spirit*, but the tone is certainly jarring and a distinct shift from Basil's usual strong adherence to scripture. Jackson views the lack of scriptural primacy in the treatise equally inharmonious with the rest of Basil's corpus and – in an act of theological damage control that should be disconcertingly familiar to any habitual reader of Schaff's *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* series – attempts to limit the importance of non-scriptural tradition to Basil's wider theological epistemology.

Perhaps the issue here is that Basil is being misunderstood by scripture-centric sensibilities – it would naturally be troubling to many that Basil might in any way question the unique and unequalled place of Scripture in Christianity – it is also a rather unusual point on which to rely in his own time – if any trend can be found in the topography of fourth-century Trinitarian debates, it is that scripture must always be the first port of call for any debate, and is always the most authoritative word on the matter. That Basil appears to call this into question is a departure from the norm to say the least. The issue here is how we are to translate and understand the words "ἅπερ ἀμφότερα τὴν αὐτὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχει πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν," in particular ἰσχύς and εὐσέβεια. Having understood that Scripture and this unwritten tradition are fundamentally different sources, Basil's implying that the two are equally authoritative is a troubling one – and indeed this is in a sense what he is arguing. It is rather interesting that Basil uses two words, ἰσχύς and εὐσέβεια, that are perhaps less indicative than other terms he might have utilised here.

[283] See Johnston, C.F.H *The Book of Basil on the Holy Spirit*, 125-6 for a lengthy discussion on the question of authenticity.

In contrast to the potentially more appropriate – and far more biblical – ἐξουσία, Basil instead uses ἰσχύς, a word more symbolic of brute force and military might. In his own works the noun is usually reserved for the discussion of the might of God, and in the same chapter is used once more to describe the profound power of the non-scriptural words of Eucharistic prayers. In *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66 and 27,67 it is used in such a way as to imply authority *κατ' εὐσεβείαν,* and in his florilegium is used to describe the power of tradition to overwhelm those with heterodox opinions.[284] Basil could not, however, mean military might in this case, and "power" or "strength" themselves can indicate something of what he means, but are themselves inadequate to fully understand Basil's implication here. In this form, then, the meaning is not revealed. One might also be able to render ἰσχύς in certain cases as logical cogency. This seems closer to the meaning Basil is implying, but still does not quite fit. Perhaps an answer might be found in those less considered but here equally useful documents – legal discussions and disputes: Basil was, after all, a forensic practitioner at heart, and in earlier years had aspirations towards the legal profession. To him, we might imagine here that ἰσχύς retains its meaning, but instead refers to *legal* rather than physical or military force. Humfress and Brown have shown us that, outside of an earlier interest by Diocletian in quelling Manichaean sects due to their supposed status as witches, actual prescriptions in the legal framework against those defined as *heretics* only began to really come into force in the wake of the Edict of Thessalonica by which Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire.[285] However, the trials of these heretics in ecclesiastical circles – interestingly enough – were quite judicial in their proceedings: appeals to the – in the words of Dragos

[284] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27,66: "ἅπερ ἀμφότερα τὴν αὐτὴν ἰσχὺν ἔχει πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν"; 27,67: "Εἶτα τοσούτων ὄντων ἀγράφων καὶ τοσαύτην ἐχόντων τὴν ἰσχὺν εἰς τὸ τῆς εὐσεβείας μυστήριον." See also ibid. 29,73: "πλὴν ἀλλὰ πολλαχοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς τῆς συνηθείας τὸ ἰσχυρὸν δυσωπούμενος, τὰς εὐσεβεῖς φωνὰς ἀφῆκε περὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος."; also later "Οὕτως, οἶμαι, τὸ τῆς παραδόσεως ἰσχυρὸν ἐνῆγε πολλάκις τοὺς ἄνδρας καὶ τοῖς οἰκείοις αὐτῶν δόγμασιν ἀντιλέγειν."

[285] See Humfress, Caroline. *Orthodoxy and the Courts in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), 245-55. See also Brown, Peter. *Religion and Society in the Age of St Augustine* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 301–31. See also ibid. *Roman Law, Forensic Argument and the Formation of Christian Orthodoxy (III–VI Centuries)*. In Elm, Sussana, Rebillard, Eric, and Romano, Antonella eds. *Orthodoxie, Christianisme, Histoire* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2000), 125–47.

– "metaphysical assumptions" behind the Antiochene synod's censuring of Paul of Samosata read as legal precedent and were similarly enforced, and later accounts of Arius' deposition at Nicaea are similarly framed – though perhaps a tad more inclined towards a providential thinking.[286] ἰσχύς as 'legal force' is found in letters concerning a property dispute in the fourth-century Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 67 – though as a papyrologist's induction from a lacuna – where it is stated, "all things, it might be said, that resist the ἰσχύς of the law resists but for a short time."[287] The meaning appears to indicate a righteous power inherent to the law – Liddell-Scott translates this particular usage as *validity*, and so long as we understand that to be in a forceful and specifically legal sense, this rendering is quite apt.[288] The problem, however, is that simply relying on a lacuna is insufficient evidence. A similar meaning is expressed in Grenfell Papyrus 2.71, where the recipient is warned that, should any further communication come from them, it should be treated as having no ἰσχύς.[289] Another legal document, as with the *P.Oxy* used above, this papyrus discusses the authorisation of a reading of a will before the Alexandrian chief judge, and ἰσχύς here is plain in the text. More relevant to Basil's own context and outside the realm of obscure papyri, Libanius in his *Progymnasmata* discusses the notion of a law not being "enforced (ἴσχυεν)" during a time when a tyrant reigned and the courts were closed.[290] Similarly, the question of the obedience to the enforcement (ἰσχύω) of the law appears twice in *Progymnasmaton* 8.[291] Such an understanding of the ἰσχύς of the law is also explored in Libanius' *Declamation on*

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[286] Dragoș, Andrei Giulea. *Antioch 268 and Its Legacy in the Fourth-Century Theological Debates*. Harvard Theological Review, 2018, Vol.111(2), pp.192-215

[287] *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 67*. Greek text used in Grenfell, B and Hunt, A, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri I* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1897), 124-7.

[288] Liddell-Scott Online Lexicon, Entries 52847-9. Accessed 3/10/18.

[289] *P. Grenfell* 2.71. In Grenfell B. and Hunt, A, *Greek Papyri: Second Series* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), 110-114,

[290] Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 7.5.4.

[291] Ibid. 8.3.18; 8.6.6.

Socrates, where he imagines the Athenians' concern that Socrates' students might "cast aside the force/validity (ἰσχύς) of the law," and *Declamations* 43 and 44, both primarily excursuses on the law, repeatedly appeal to the importance of its ἰσχύς.[292] Perhaps, then, Basil is using ἰσχύς in a specifically legal sense – to denote the validity of an authority. This is certainly symptomatic of the way Basil operates throughout *On the Holy Spirit* – one is naturally reminded of his substitution of *homotimos* language for *homoousios* language despite the fact they lead to the same Pro-Nicene conception of the Trinity: Basil consistently states his case softly and with the intention of convincing his accuser of his position. Once more, then, in employing ἰσχύς over ἐξουσία Basil is eschewing a theologically or politically loaded word for a less controversial one, appealing to a forensic sensibility and sensitivity over throwing the book, as it were.

From the perspective of philosophical argument, Themistius uses the term in several different spheres that would have held relevance to Basil. In his paraphrase of Aristotle's *De Anima,* he discusses the idea of doctrines of the soul that have a kind of ἰσχύς due to their similarity to the nature of the soul itself, in a sense where *validity* is arguably the most apt translation.[293] An even more similar statement is made in his *Paraphrase of the Physics,* where he asks his audience to inquire whether the limits of categorisation "have the same validity/authority (ἔχει τὴν αὐτὴν ἰσχὺν) to the discussions at hand as they do elsewhere.[294] Here Basil and Themistius' language lines up perfectly: both use this notion of a specific concept having pertinence to and validity in the demonstration of a fact. It is in this case that a clearer argumentative precedent might emerge, in which argumentative validity and authority are conflated: the term appears to hold a particular status concerning authority to Basil in addition to pure

[292] Ibid. *Declamations* 1.38.2; 43.2.49 (twice); 43.2.51; 44.1.4; 44.1.10; 44.1.31; 44.1.80.

[293] Themistius, *On Aristotle on the Soul*, 20,3.

[294] Themistius, *Paraphrase of the Physics,* 5.2.

relevance in matters of orthodoxy. When speaking on the Father and Son's role in creation, he asserts that Father and Son can both be associated to creation by the terms "from whom" and "through whom," and that "both have equal value (καὶ τὴν ἴσην ἔξει ἀξίαν ἑκατέρα)" as descriptive terms – a notion, no doubt, that has its origins in the refutation of Eunomius' scriptural symbol of faith.[295] On the other hand, Origen is described in Basil's florilegium as "constrained by the ἰσχύς of custom," and he later ruminates on the idea that "the ἰσχύς of tradition often leads men to contradict their own doctrines."[296] In addition to the legal aspect of the terminology, then, Basil seems to go a step further and make the rather bold claim that the non-scriptural tradition is so ubiquitous that even those who will not concede the homotimity of the Holy Spirit in principle are still driven to do so in practice. Once more, the apologetic question at the heart of this anthology shines through – the great writers of the church bear witness to the homotimity of the Spirit even when they themselves hold the opposite view. The ἰσχύς of tradition is therefore not purely a question of legal force, but also a theological imperative that at times overrides even the minds of the most resolutely heterodox.

Basil's use of εὐσέβεια is a little less vague, but problems persist with translating it nonetheless. This is not a word with which Basil is unfamiliar, appearing over 400 times in his corpus, but for our purposes, it is probably best to compare this usage in *On the Holy Spirit* with other uses internally, and within the controversy with Eustathius of Sebaste. In *On the Holy Spirit*, most usages might be rendered "piety," or "right religious practice" but "right belief," would be more appropriate. In this case, then, εὐσέβεια seems very much a term to be considered as meaning the same as orthodoxy, but without the political ramifications of its usage. One can see the same approach in *Letter 125,* wherein Basil points out that the Nicene Creed that has just been read out is being opposed "by those fighting true religion

[295] See *On the Holy Spirit*, 5,8.

[296] Ibid. 29,73.

(εὐσέβεια)."[297] The term also appears once in *Epistle* 223, written to defend himself against Eustathius' accusations of Appolinarism. The term is not used in order to discuss a question of orthodoxy, however, but in reference to Eustathius, saying "I prayed that there might be given to me a guide for the instruction of the doctrines of εὐσέβεια."[298] The meaning here, as with the others, is clear: εὐσέβεια is to be understood within this debate as having the implication of right religious belief. In other words, εὐσέβεια should here be understood as meaning the Pro-Nicene perspective on the Trinity.

With these words defined, we can begin to understand exactly what Basil might mean, and the style of argument he is using. The language is legalistic, and the argument put forward is unmistakably forensic in its construction. To any scholar of late antiquity, this is of course unsurprising – many of the most famed church writers in this period were originally affiliated in some way to the courts, including Basil himself.[299] However, the precision of Basil's argument and the faithfulness to a forensic argument – in which reason and rhetoric are utilised equally and in tandem to convince the audience of the truth of one's words – is symbolic of the fact that to Basil this is a question that must be dealt with not by polemic and pure rhetoric but by the courtly practice of using evidence and precedent to plead his case. In this instance, Basil is not a judge but an advocate, there to convince rather than condemn.

Whether there truly is any ecclesiastical precedent for Basil's argument is another matter. Those after him certainly believed so, and his appeal to tradition was recognised by those present at the Council in Trullo to such an extent that his words were discussed in the proceedings as part of his "canons," the

[297] Basil, *Ep. 125*.

[298] Basil, *Ep.* 223

[299] See Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of St. Macrina* 27 for evidence of Basil's early intentions to begin a forensic career.

authority of Basil's words being therefore beyond question.[300] In reality, there are two reasons why tradition was rarely explicitly stated to have the same validity as scripture in discerning doctrinal matters. The first, as we have explored previously, is that to the majority of church writers in this period and beforehand, *paradosis* was not in any sense separate from scripture, but was instead simply the patristic assent to right exegesis.[301] Indeed, in his earlier works, this is for the most part what Basil, too, settles with. Secondly, the term ἄγραφος παραδόσις was extremely rare, being only used thrice by Basil and purely within *On the Holy Spirit*, and beyond that only by two other writers in the fourth-century, Eusebius and John Chrysostom. This is not the picture Basil himself paints, saying quite clearly "no-one would deny this, at least not anyone who has even the tiniest bit of experience in ecclesiastical institutions."[302] Whether Basil is overstating his hand for rhetorical emphasis or genuinely believes this is difficult, and certainly worth exploring.

Eusebius uses the term twice in *Ecclesiastical History* – once in relation to Papias' sources and another time in regard to references to Jewish traditions in the works of Hegesippus.[303] In both of these cases, it is difficult to see whether Eusebius means ἄγραφος as "unwritten/oral" or "non-scriptural," as both fit. In the former, "unwritten" or "oral" seems more likely, as Eusebius is talking about the second-hand status of Papias as a source, not himself being a hearer of the apostles but rather a hearer of their hearers.[304] In the case of the Jewish traditions referenced by Hegesippus, he could either mean non-scriptural sources such as the Mishnah, or oral tradition – the former seems more likely, but either

[300] Given as canons XCI and XCII of Basil at the council in Trullo (Quinisext). See *NPNF* 2.14, 610.

[301] See previous chapter, esp. discussions of Eunomius, Basil and Athanasius' appeals to tradition.

[302] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

[303] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39; 4,22.

[304] Ibid. 3,39.

could be the case. In either regard, it is unlikely these Jewish traditions would have been considered themselves authoritative by Eusebius, far from being equal to Scripture.[305] The term is also used by Eusebius in *Against Marcellus*, and in a manner that is more reminiscent of Basil's:

> These things have been laid out in part to the same Galatians from the sole letter intended for them, and that the saving faith gives the mystical regeneration *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit* (Matt.28:19), and that in addition to the sacred Scriptures the universal church of God from one end of the earth to the other confirms the testimonies from the sacred Scriptures by non-scriptural tradition (ἐξ ἀγράφου παραδόσεως)…[306]

This might at first excite any researcher hoping to find a historical precedent for Basil's idea of non-scriptural tradition. Eusebius – just as Basil – contrasts Scripture and this non-scriptural tradition using the same pairing of the antonyms ἐγγράφος and ἄγραφος, and finds both to be helpful in ascertaining the truth of doctrinal matters. The similarities are striking, but so are the differences: Eusebius does not equate the authority of the two, but simply states they both bear witness to true doctrine. Furthermore, what is meant by non-scriptural tradition is uncertain – this could either mean conclusions drawn from exegesis or might mean from patristic or liturgical authority. What we do see, however, that is useful for our purposes here is that another author prior to Basil speaks of some form of non-scriptural source as having utility in resolving doctrinal disputes: though it might be foolish to directly equate Basil and Eusebius' ideas of what non-scriptural tradition is, it certainly sets a precedent for the doctrinal – and in fact Trinitarian – utility of non-scriptural sources. I would err on the side of caution as regards the question of it having equal authority to scripture, however – unless stated otherwise one must assume non-scriptural tradition here is supplementary rather than of identical merit.

[305] Ibid. 4,22.

[306] Eusebius, *Against Marcellus* 1,36.

Perhaps the most convincing precedent comes from Tertullian who, in his *De Corona,* lays out a lengthy defence of "unwritten" traditions that are fundamental to Christian rite, most notably standing in prayer on Sundays, baptismal "birthday honours" and the signing of the cross on the forehead, stating:

> If, for these and other similar rules you insist upon having positive Scriptural injunction, you will find no such thing. Tradition will be held forth to you as their point of origin, custom their confirmer, and faith their witness. Reason will support tradition, custom and faith, and you will either yourself perceive, or learn from some one who has done so. At the same time, you shall believe that there is some reason for which submission is due.[307]

Evidently, a non-scriptural tradition exists to Tertullian, and it has a power to which the Christian should submit. Just as with Basil, the traditions he mentions are practical, and indeed they both share the idea that the sign of the cross is both ubiquitous to Christian ritual and authoritative in its meaning. However, unlike Basil, Tertullian does not give the reason for why these things are authoritative, and most importantly does not ask whether tradition and Scripture are of equal authority. Where Basil holds they have "the same power," here Tertullian is content to say that it is admissible. This idea of non-scriptural ritual tradition, however, is one shared between Tertullian, Basil and Eusebius. Unlike Eusebius, however, whom Basil knows and quotes from in his anthology, it is improbable Tertullian – due to both Latin origins and heterodox status – was an author of whom Basil was aware. Even so, though no direct connection can be assumed between Basil and Tertullian, we can use the latter as evidence that the idea of non-scriptural tradition was in fact much older and more common than such as Pierre Battifol or R.P.C. Hanson might suggest.[308] Where Tertullian and Eusebius do not openly consider the rank that tradition holds in relation to scripture however, Basil sees it as having the utmost importance. It is in this, if anything, that Basil is innovating the most.

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[307] Tertullian, *De Corona* 3-4

[308] See Hanson, *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit*, 250; Battifol, Pierre. *La Discipline de L'Arcane*, 24-5. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1920.

It is therefore the case that Basil is doing one of two things: either innovating in his idea of tradition to defend himself against accusations of heterodoxy, or invoking an unspoken yet known truth to which at least some of the church adhered. Based on the words of Tertullian and Eusebius, non-scriptural tradition does seem to have some history as a source for the establishment of doctrine, but given the lack of an explicit statement of equality with scripture, the opposite should be assumed. It is, therefore, probably best to consider Basil's idea of tradition as equal in validity to Scripture to be a more forceful form of appeals to non-scriptural tradition that have come before. His claim that "not anyone who has even the tiniest bit of experience in ecclesiastical institutions," is then, a hyperbole rather than an accurate exposition on a known but rarely referenced state of affairs.[309] The answer to whether one can consider Scripture and tradition as having equal legal force in the court of orthodoxy for Basil, however, is far more clear cut. Tradition and Scripture are equally authoritative, and in this case Basil must make his argument from the former, having found Scripture to only imply what tradition explicitly states – a necessity for the efficacy of his argument.

It is worth assessing whether Basil considers tradition, though equal to Scripture, can be employed to refute the argument of another. Basil's appeal to tradition here is to explicitly justify his own doxology, rather than to refute the scriptural one to which Eustathius holds and views to be solely authoritative. However, there exists – as I have previously alluded – a tacit argument beneath the explicit that underpins the style of *On the Holy Spirit*; Basil's refutation of Eustathius' belief that the Spirit is not God. He generally avoids claims that Eustathius' position is a heterodox one, instead implying so through his advocacy of the homotimity of the Spirit; equal honour with God necessitates the Spirit be divine, and so that a thing is *homotimos* naturally entails that it is also *homoousios*. Here, then, tradition is

[309] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

undeniably being employed to refute; that Basil can choose to give glory with the Spirit in his doxology is a tacit proof that the Spirit is divine.

For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that Basil never considers his doxology – unlike Eustathius – to be the only correct way to give glory; a scriptural form exists that uses the preposition "in," and a traditional one exists that uses "with." He only ever states the two to be equal; tradition does not refute Scripture here, and Basil – like any other patristic writer – would never make such a claim. Similarly, for the bishop of Caesarea, Scripture cannot be used to refute the tradition; the two are equipollent for establishing doctrine, and so, considering the divine inspiration of Scripture – which Basil affirms in *On the Holy Spirit*, using 2 Timothy 3:16's "God-breathed (θεόπνευστος)" – and the utmost authority that stems from this, one must consider tradition to have equally come in some manner from God. Having the same infallible source, they would never contradict each other; even if at times their exact wording differs.

Kerygma and *Dogma*

Perhaps, however, it is through the analysis of Basil's other technical terms that we might establish a more compelling level of precedent. Of all these, the most likely contender is the language of *dogma*. It is rather fortunate that this most devilish aspect of Basil's appeal to tradition – the heavy use of difficult jargon – has been examined in detail: his *kerygma/dogma* distinction in *On the Holy Spirit*, on which several articles are focussed and which most monographs concerning the treatise discuss in some depth, is probably the single most explored aspect of *On the Holy Spirit,* and it is certainly the terminology on which many, if not most, scholars have based their understanding of what Basil means

by "tradition."[310] Below is the Greek and an English translation of the section in which the two terms are explicitly contrasted, important words in bold:

> Κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν δὴ τρόπον, καὶ οἱ τὰ περὶ τὰς Ἐκκλησίας ἐξαρχῆς διαθεσμοθετήσαντες ἀπόστολοι καὶ πατέρες, ἐν τῷ κεκρυμμένῳ καὶ ἀφθέγκτῳ τὸ σεμνὸν τοῖς μυστηρίοις ἐφύλασσον. Οὐδὲ γὰρ ὅλως μυστήριον, τὸ εἰς τὴν δημώδη καὶ εἰκαίαν ἀκοὴν ἔκφορον. Οὗτος ὁ λόγος τῆς τῶν ἀγράφων παραδόσεως, ὡς μὴ καταμεληθεῖσαν τῶν **δογμάτων** τὴν γνῶσιν εὐκαταφρόνητον τοῖς πολλοῖς γενέσθαι διὰ συνήθειαν. Ἄλλο γὰρ **δόγμα**, καὶ ἄλλο **κήρυγμα**. Τὸ μὲν γὰρ σιωπᾶται, τὰ δὲ **κηρύγματα** δημοσιεύεται.

> In the same fashion, from the very beginning the apostles and fathers ordained the matters of the church, and guarded in secrecy and silence the purity of the mysteries – since that which is divulged in public and casual spheres is not at all a mystery. This is the purpose of non-scriptural traditions, so that the knowledge of the ***dogmas*** might not become neglected or despised by the many on account of their mundanity. For ***kerygma*** is one thing, ***dogma*** another – one is kept secret, while ***kerygma*** are publically spoken.[311]

Here *kerygma* appears to mean the doctrines of the church that are suitable for public proclamation and hearing – indeed, Hildebrand translates *kerygma* as "proclamation" – whilst *dogma* refers to those doctrines that are more suited to silent transmission, ostensibly in this case due to their nature as "mysteries." This is at least linguistically coherent: mysteries cease to be so if they become common knowledge.

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[310] See Johnston, C.F.H. *The Book of Basil,* 127-8 ff. 1. Dörries, Hermann. *Der Beitrag des Basilius zum Abschluß des Trinitarianischen Dogmas*, 121-8. Drecoll, Volker. *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 254-62. Hanson, R.P.C. *Tradition in the Early Church,* 181. De Mendieta, Emmanuel Amand, *The "Unwritten" and "Secret" Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of Basil of Caesarea,* 39-50; *The Pair Kerygma and Dogma in the Theological Thought of Basil of Caesarea* (JTS Vol.16.1, 129-142). Pruche, Benoit. *Dogma et Kerygma dans le Traité Sur le Saint-Esprit de Saint-Basile de Césarée en Cappadoce* (*Studia Patristica* 9, 257-262); *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Saint-Esprit* (SC17 bis.), 478-9 ff. 4.

[311] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27,66.

Kerygma and *dogma* appear in far more places than just *On the Holy Spirit*, and seem to pop up as terms of importance for Basil throughout his episcopal career. *Kerygma* is found over sixty times throughout his authentic corpus, and is always used to discuss a well-known doctrine of the church, and refers to both scriptural and non-scriptural sources.[312] In his letters, Basil uses *kerygma* both in a general and colloquial sense to discuss church doctrine and even prayers, and also in a particular sense to discuss proclaimed doctrine. Most notable among these for our purposes is his discussion of the Nicene Creed in multiple places as *kerygma,* the most forceful being in his 90th letter to Western bishops in 372:

> For let ever be spoken among us that renowned *kerygma* of the fathers, which destroys the infamous heresy of Arius, and builds up the churches in the sound teaching (διδασκαλία) in which the Son is confessed to be homoousios with the Father and the holy Spirit ranked and worshipped as of equal honour (*homotimos*).[313]

Similar sentiments are expressed in letters to the Canonicae in 370, and are implied in a 372 letter to the Illyrican bishop Valerianus.[314] In such a way, the use of *kerygma* appears quite consistent in relation to doctrinal matters in letters contemporaneous to *On the Holy Spirit* and the treatise itself. Because of the simplicity of the term, and the consistency with which Basil uses it to mean a church doctrine openly proclaimed in an authoritative yet public setting, the exact meaning of *kerygma* as this is universally agreed-upon in the scholarship.

Perhaps more unusual is the notion of *dogma* and its usage in Basil's work. It occurs more than four times as often as its counterpart, *kerygma*, and in such a variety of ways that one particular usage of

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[312] For scriptural sources, see e.g. *Hom. I in Psalm XIV,* 3; *Against Eunomius* 2,15. For non-scriptural sources, see e.g. *Eps.* 90; 52 (these are discussed in great detail below).

[313] Basil, *Ep.* 90.

[314] See Basil, *Eps.* 52; 91.

the term cannot be adequately ascertained. C.F.H Johnston would have it that the Nicene Creed and the homoousion therein contained was to Basil always a *kerygma*, since it was the great proclamation of church doctrine made at the council.[315] However, in his 265th letter, dated to around 377 AD, Basil explicitly names the creed as a *dogma*, and elsewhere he names the *homoousion* itself to be a *dogma*.[316] Furthermore, *dogma* is often used to describe a multiplicity of different concepts – rather than the firm and unchanging way in which Basil utilises the term *kerygma*, his use of *dogma* extends to a number of different concepts, including church doctrine and the teachings of heterodox movements such as that of Valentinus, Marcellus, the Macedonians and even Arius himself.[317] Unlike its counterpart *kerygma*, Basil's approach to *dogma* in his epistolary corpus fails to discriminate between the orthodox and heterodox teachings, both being named as *dogmata.* Even so, this general approach to *dogma* is quite absent from *On the Holy Spirit,* where *dogma* holds a set meaning as that of the teachings of the orthodox church. In this treatise, then, likely as to provide some consistency to the argument, *dogma* is used in a sense that holds an equal rigidity to *kerygma*, and one that is rather unique within the Basilian corpus.

The most famous discussion – and the one which delves deepest into the rather esoteric nature of what Basil' appeal to tradition – of this particular problem in recent memory is due to the sparring match over several books and papers between R.P.C Hanson and Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta in the early 1960s: Basil's movement towards the advocacy of a secret transmission of tradition was unceremoniously attacked by Hanson as what he viewed to be "an attempt to turn Christianity into a

[315] Johnston, C.F.H. *The Book of Basil,* 127.

[316] Basil, *Ep.* 265, 3; 214, 3.

[317] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit ep.*265,3; 214,3; 261, 2; 263, 3 & 5.

mystery-religion or an ecclesiastical freemasonry."[318] In response, Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta argued that this was due to the rigidity with which Hanson wished to translate one of the key technical terms to Basil's argument – the word *δόγμα*.[319] In *Tradition in the Early Church*, Hanson defines *kerygma* as "public teaching" and *dogma* as "secret doctrine."[320] Though correct on the former, Hanson's attempt to translate *dogma* in such a straightforward way is an approach one might aptly call dogmatic. This observation is made by Mendieta, who calls – in a rare act of perfect candour – this equation of *dogma* to secret doctrine "not true, if we read this chapter with accuracy and objectivity."[321] Rather, he argues, "this dogma mainly comprises the liturgical and sacramental prayers and customs, and the implied theological doctrines."[322] Though Hanson is therefore correct to indicate the secrecy of *dogmas*, to restrict the notion to simple doctrine is to ignore the strongly liturgical examples Basil provides his readership. De Mendieta, with this particular focus on the liturgical in mind, goes on to observe that there are similarities with the *disciplina arcani*, the name coined by Jean Daillé for the idea certain Christian theologians of the patristic era had that some Christian sacraments and practises were to be kept hidden from the uninitiated. In other words, however, De Mendieta wants to argue that Basil is drawing upon a pre-existing convention of thinkers to back up his idea of a set of liturgical traditions dating back to the apostles that have a non-scriptural origin. This is far from outside the bounds of reality, and is certainly worth exploring.

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[318] Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church*, 184.

[319] See De Mendieta, Emmanuel Amand. *The "Unwritten" and "Secret" Apostolic Traditions in the Theological Thought of Basil of Caesarea* (Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers 13. London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965). This is a work to which we will frequently return here. De Mendieta's paper is the most exhaustive analysis of Basil's appeal to tradition so far, and also serves to be the best in many ways.

[320] Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church,* 181.

[321] De Mendieta, *Apostolic Traditions,* 39.

[322] Ibid. 40.

The nature of what Basil terms *dogma* and the secrecy it necessitates is of great ecclesiological and theological importance, and is so inviolably tied to his asceticism and commitment to the notion of apostolic and patristic tradition through which it is transmitted, that the effects of the existence of such a hidden but central aspect of church doctrine must themselves exert profound influence upon on his approach to the theological question of the knowledge of God. Though this question is pressing, however, here is not quite the place to discuss it. This will be something to which we return in great depth later, as it requires its own lengthy chapter.

Precedent: The Disciplina Arcani

When De Mendieta evokes the idea of the *disciplina arcani* in his argument, he describes it simply as "the transmission in silence and in secret of the Church liturgical and doctrinal traditions," and further clarifies that this is to prevent the profaning of the mysteries at the hands of a still-paganised society.[323] Though his analysis is certainly coherent with Basil's idea of the secret transmission of doctrines and liturgies, the notion of a *disciplina arcani* is a tricky little problem. The term itself is not a patristic one, and appears to have been coined by Jean Daillé in the seventeenth century.[324] As such, the idea of a *disciplina arcani* was invented not to serve an ecclesiastical or doctrinal need but an after-the-fact taxonomic one. As such, one needs to analyse what exactly is meant by *disciplina arcani* when one looks at patristic sources themselves before such an idea can be effectively stated as the inspiration for Basil's appeal to secrecy.

[323] De Mendieta, *Unwritten and Apostolic Traditions*, 40; 45.

[324] This is the origin given by Guy Stroumsa in *Hidden Wisdom,* 29.

To say there is scholarly disagreement over the origins of what we now term *disciplina arcani* in the early church is to understate. Hanson argues it to be a fourth-century invention designed to counteract growing pagan interest in Christian ritual.[325] Pierre Battifol considered it to be present in the third century, but completely alien to the second century.[326] De Mendieta believed it to have already risen to some prominence at the time of Origen and to be present both in Alexandria and Palestinian Caesarea, but to have appeared "clearly later than Tertullian (+ after 220)."[327] Most recently, Stroumsa proffered an origin in Mishnaic and Talmudic literature – this does not seem debatable, but since Christianity had by that point diverged into its own independent religion such an assertion is not directly helpful for our cause.[328] There is certainly Jewish precedent, and more importantly there was precedent throughout the ancient world in the form of mystery-cults – one need only look at the mysteries of Eleusis, for example, to identify serious parallels.

It is somewhat frustrating that all of these arguments contain a grain of truth – it is certainly the case that the *disciplina arcani* reached the height of popularity and ideological dissemination in the fourth century, and it is equally true that it pre-exists this, and can be found in the work of Origen: though the suggestion that since Origen's mention of the *disciplina* implies that it was a popular idea is a touch overzealous. De Mendieta is however incorrect that Tertullian would have not advocated anything resembling the *disciplina arcani*. In his *Liber Apologeticus,* Tertullian questions accusations of infant murder and cannibalism by pointing out that no participant in a hidden Christian rite would ever

[325] Hanson, *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit*, 250.

[326] Battifol, Pierre. *La Discipline de L'Arcane*, 24-5. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1920.

[327] De Mendieta, *Unwritten and Apostolic Traditions*, 49.

[328] Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom,* 29-31.

profane it, "for the very fact that they are mysteries requires a pledge of silence."[329] There also appears to be evidence from Celsus' *The True Word*, written in c.170 and preserved by Origen in his *Contra Celsum*:

> Christians perform their rites and teach their doctrines in secret. They do this with good reason – to escape the penalty of death that hangs over them.[330]

Celsus then – according to Origen – goes on to say the danger is comparable to the risks Socrates undertook to continue in his philosophical endeavours: even the possibility of death was insufficient to dissuage Christians from their practices.[331] Origen does not challenge that Christian rites and doctrines were transmitted from one to another secretly, but instead reminds the reader the Athenians regretted their decision to sentence Socrates to death immediately after the fact.[332] One can intimate from the fact that Origen does not disagree with Celsus on the secrecy the latter ascribes to Christians because it is inarguable – Christians were secretive. Origen debates, however, that only some doctrines are kept secret, just as with the Pythagoreans, for example – Christian beliefs such as in the virgin birth or the resurrection were well-known by non-Christians, as evidenced by the ridicule with which people like Celsus treated them. He contends that there are secret doctrines in Christianity, but does not describe them, only charging Celsus with ignorance of them.[333] It should be no surprise Origen does not immediately recount these secret doctrines – the *Contra Celsum,* as a work with at least some apologetic intention, was no right place to openly publish Christian *mysteria*. What Origen does tell us, however, is that secret doctrines and practices had their place within his own Christianity. Celsus'

[329] Tertullian, *Apology* 7,6.

[330] See Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1,3.

[331] See ibid. 1,3.

[332] Ibid. 1,3.

[333] Ibid. 1,7.

accusations similarly allow us to date these secret doctrines to before Origen, to Celsus' own slightly earlier time. Using Tertullian and Celsus, then, Battifol's assertion that traditions of secrecy and mystery-preservation were an identifiable phenomenon only from the third century onwards becomes difficult to maintain.[334]

Whether an idea that could be termed *disciplina arcani* was widespread geographically in the second and early third centuries is debatable. Tertullian and Origen, though they did not share a language, were geographically close, and Chadwick has suggested an Alexandrian origin for Celsus based on his frequent conflation of Gnostic and non-Gnostic Christianities.[335] This would contextually make sense – Gnostic thought thrived in North Africa, and Egypt appears to have been – demographically speaking – the centre of the Gnostic world. For the same reason, it is no surprise the preservation of mysteries might be held as of higher importance within the Alexandrian church: between the gnostic sects and the broad trend within Hellenistic religions and philosophies to find secrecy a key aspect of some forms of religious practice, the adoption of a similar attitude should be viewed as somewhat inevitable.[336]

However, it seems Irenaeus, despite having significant knowledge of Gnosticism, believed at least doctrine to be open to all those willing to hear it – specifically via the apostolic tradition by which scripture was rightly interpreted. The Didache – likely of Syrian origin – guides its reader through Baptism and the Eucharist freely, giving both the words and practices necessary to give and receive

[334] Battifol, Pierre. *La Discipline de L'Arcane*, 24-5.

[335] See Chadwick, *Contra Celsum*, xxviii-ix.

[336] The influence of Greco-Roman religious and philosophical schools on Basil's own thought will be explored heavily in the next chapter.

such sacraments.[337] The *Didache* does argue that the unbaptised should not receive the Eucharist, however, echoing the sentiment of Matthew 7.6 that one should not give the holy things to the dogs.[338] There also appears to be no real consensus among Basil's own contemporaries or even consistency over what should and should not be kept secret – Athanasius publishes the Nicene Creed openly in *De Decretis*, but attacks the Meletians (those who followed Meletius of Lycopolis) in this passage:[339]

> And they are not ashamed to parade the mysteries in front of catechumens, and worse than that, even before Greeks. However, they ought to adhere to what has been written: "it is good to keep close the secret of a king (Tob . 12.7)," and as the Lord charged us, "nor cast your pearls to swine (Matt. 7.6)." We, then, ought not parade the mysteries before the uninitiated, lest the Greek deride them in their ignorance, and the catechumens, being overly curious, become offended.[340]

Cyril of Jerusalem, in his fifth *Catechetical Oration*, alternatively warns strongly against the imparting of the Jerusalem baptismal creed, and demands utmost secrecy from his audience – a group of late-stage catechumens he names *phōtizomenoi* (those being enlightened):

> If after the class a catechumen asks you "what have the instructors said?" Tell outsiders nothing. For it is a mystery we deliver to you, and the hope of coming eternity. Keep the mystery for the sake of the rewarder. If someone says to you, "what harm is done if I also know about it?" Do not listen. For the sick request wine, but if given at the wrong time, it works madness, and two evils occur: the effect on the sick person is disastrous, and the doctor is demonised. The same with the Catechumen, if hearing from the faithful. And the Catechumen acts feverishly, for he does not know what he has heard, and attacks the doctrine, and ridicules what is said. Also the believer, as a traitor, is condemned.[341]

The language used by both theologians is similar, but Cyril treats the matter with greater detail and – it appears – reverence. Both give similar reasons for the necessity that such doctrines and practices

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[337] See *Didache* 7-10.

[338] *Didache* 9.5.

[339] See Athanasius, *De Decretis*.

[340] Athanasius, *Apology Against the Arians* 11.

[341] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Orations* 5.12.

remain hidden from those either unwilling or not yet able (pagans and catechumens respectively) to understand their value and meaning. Basil strikes much the same tone, though expresses far less reverence for Trinitarian creeds: for him, the Nicene creed – containing much the same claims about God as the Jerusalem creed – is a *kerygma,* openly proclaimed, but his rationale for the concealment of mysteries is the same. To make the mysteries of the Christian faith common would be to profane them and – far worse – open them up to ridicule from the ignorant. Perhaps here, then, is the precedent we are looking for. Our next task must be to compare Basil and Cyril, as both appear to have a similar commitment to the maintenance of the secrecy the doctrinal truths they discuss necessitate.

Though the *disciplina arcani* is a taxonomical concept, it holds within it a significant truth about questions of how transparent the church should be to outsiders. To that end, it is clear why the *disciplina* has been so often considered a predominately fourth-century phenomenon, and why the primary literature appears to corroborate this – the shift of religious demographics in the fourth century and the exploding interest in Christianity meant that a pre-existing predisposition towards secrecy would have to be explored and expanded to ensure that, despite its popularity, the most sacred doctrines and practices of Christianity were profaned. It does seem that Basil's understanding of non-scriptural traditions as requiring the utmost secrecy fits into this wider trend, but his concern in discussing the secrecy is more ancillary than of direct importance: the necessity of their secrecy implies the extent of their power in discerning religious truth. In other words, rather than appealing to their secrecy to ensure they remain secret, he instead does so to demonstrate their value. As Basil sees it, what can be considered more profound and authoritative than something piously guarded by the great men of the church since Christ himself? What reverence for the truths they might contain could be considered sufficient?

Additional Observations

It is unfortunate a division need be made here for the sake of chapter brevity – though it is also quite alluring to end on such a cliff hanger. Basil's reasoning for appealing to non-scriptural tradition is clear: it is a direct response to the accusations levelled against him by Eustathius, and is the most obvious and effective method by which his doxology – and the particular Trinitarian truth which it implies – is vindicated. Within *On the Holy Spirit*, then, the appeal to tradition is necessary in order to validate the argument upon which the entire treatise is founded. In particular, the esoteric non-scriptural tradition that has equal legal force to Scripture within the court of Christian orthodoxy is well-suited to the confirmation of the Spirit's homotimity. Some, as we have seen, view this to be too convenient a suitability – some considering it to even be a subversion of what they assert to be a patristic trend towards scriptural monism. This may be true within a wider historical context, but the popularity of the *disciplina arcani* – insofar as the non-historical taxonomical rubric does identify a historical trend – in Basil's immediate context demonstrates that though it might be an innovation within his own work, there is sufficient precedent for such ideas to be entertained as convincing. However, it is also quite inaccurate to say that Basil's doctrine of non-scriptural tradition is typically representative of the secrecy-trends of fourth-century Christianity – though it likely has not come out of nowhere, his notion of tradition is far deeper and more esoteric than that of most, if not all, of his contemporaries.

The departure from *Against Eunomius* and other pre-episcopal works is at times jarring, but retroactively one can see within this earlier work the seeds of the idea of non-scriptural tradition that Basil so champions in *On the Holy Spirit*: The appeal to baptismal liturgy as doctrinally corrective in the former can be seen as a less argumentatively central allusion to a similar if not synonymous idea that is so fully fleshed-out in the latter. For Basil himself, this appeal to tradition is certainly an innovation, then, but one that can be tracked from his earlier works, and is contextually rather sounds, even if the

object of what he considers deserving of secrecy is a little different. This leaves us with a quite particular task ahead: to delve into the wider context of both Christianity and Late Antiquity in general to ascertain if a precedent can be found for Basil's idea of secret, non-scriptural traditions and what effect that has on why exactly he considers such traditions to be so illuminating when attempting to discern the most central doctrines of the faith.

"The Secret and Mystical Tradition"

Here there also exists a topic that I have largely avoided so far, and for good reason. Every tradition that Basil discusses, even the minutiae of minutiae of liturgical practice from making the sign of the cross to praying to the East, has a hidden meaning behind it that Basil explains to his reader in detail. This is an additional level of esotericity that supersedes even the most radical interpretations of the *disciplina arcani* that modern scholars have made, and one which is central to his defence of the homotimity of the Spirit through the appeal to non-scriptural tradition. However, it is also an argument that is very much of its context. As such, this next chapter will consider how Basil has seized upon historical Christian and non-Christian precedent for his notion of secrecy, and how he developed this into his own, innovative, idea of tradition.

"Secrecy" as a Concept

Before considering the context of Basil's appeal to a "secret and mystical tradition," it is most important to assess what one means by *secrecy* in any given sense. There are four possible reasons for something being concealed:[342]

1) Individual or socially-mandated privacy. Even if not illegal, one might conceal things thought to be either embarrassing or improper to disclose in public. Since

[342] I am deeply thankful to Prof. Mark Edwards for his advice on these distinctions.

the matters discussed by Basil are neither personal nor particularly humiliating, it is unlikely we shall return to this.[343]

2) Legal, medical, priestly or commercial confidentiality – in other words, the obligation to conceal information that would have profound consequences if revealed. The Hippocratic oath and its derivatives compel physicians to not reveal information about their patients; the Fourth Lateran Council required much the same of Catholic Priests, and lawyers are sworn to confidentiality with their clients. Similarly, there are important reasons why certain aspects of business might require confidentiality based on the popularity of a product.
3) Secrecy by accessibility. Certain objects – even if in plain sight – can conceal truth by the need to have a specific kind of requisite knowledge to understand it. If one were to leave a copy of the *Patrologia Graeca* on a table in a café, it is unlikely most people would be able to sit down and read it with much success – unless that café happened to be in close proximity to a classics or theology department. Certain contemporary institutions such as Freemasonry and Scientology are renowned for their alleged withholding of certain truths from those who have not sufficiently progressed in their organizations.
4) Secrecy as a result of illegality. It is often the case people act in secret to preserve their freedom and security, and not necessarily out of one's actions being inherently wrong: those conspiring to overthrow tyrannical governments are just as likely to keep their activities secret as purveyors of narcotics – perhaps even more so. In the memory of Basil's world, the illegality of Christianity led to a veil of secrecy overshadowing their meetings and activities.

In the Late Antique world, and indeed in religious culture past and present, it is number three – often practically employed as *esotericism* – that was most common as part of intellectual and religious culture.[344] The works of and about most of the major philosophical schools of Late Antiquity saw

[343] One is here reminded of Gregory Nazianzen's oration on his sister, Gorgonia, who it seems did some rather shameful things with the oil of chrism. Much of Gregory's oration is committed to justifying this action in particular, likely in order to quell the murmurings in the crowd.

[344] The bibliography on this matter is abundant, but see esp. Duncan, Ann W. *Religion and Secrecy: A Bibliographic Essay*. Journal of the American Academy of Religion 74 (2006). For cultures of secrecy in Late Antique philosophy and religion, see Stroumsa, Guy. *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Mortensen, Eva ed. *Revealing and Concealing in Late Antiquity: Textual and Archaeological Approaches to Secrecy* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2015); Melzer Arthur M. *Philosophy Between the Lines: The Lost History of Esoteric Writing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Stuckrad, Kocku von. *Western Esotericism: a Brief History of Secret Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2017); Schefer, Christina. *Rhetoric as Part of an Initiation Into the Mysteries: A New Interpretation of the Platonic Phaedrus* in Michelini, Ann ed. *Plato as Author: the Rhetoric of Philosophy* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 175-196; Stone, Michael E. *Secret Groups in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Bjørneye, Jonas. *Secrecy and Initiation in the Mithraic Communities of Fourth Century Rome*. in Bull, Christian H ed. *Mystery and Secrecy in the Nag Hammadi Collection and Other Ancient Literature: Ideas and Practices* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 351-74; Kippenberg,

esotericism as something of a given. The Jesus of Matthew's gospel kept to a kind of esotericism, explaining the meanings of his parables in private, in keeping with Jewish and wider Mediterranean educational custom.[345] The centrality of secrecy of this kind to the mystery-cults – by their very name – is self-evident. Sophists were frequently derided for teaching more openly, to the point that the term often served as an invective to describe poor philosophers and charlatans. To view part of one's system of belief as esoteric was no novelty of Christian thought, and it should be no surprise it permeates the way Basil and other Christian theologians understand the nature of doctrine: for an educated Christian, such a reverent attitude towards secret knowledge of one kind or another would have been a central facet of their secular education. Whether or not we can discuss Basil's doctrine of tradition as esoteric – and indeed whether Basil himself was justified in advocating for esotericism – was the major point of disagreement between Hanson and De Mendieta, but both generally ignored the question of ancient context, and the extent to which precedent existed – both Christian and non-Christian – for Basil's argument. It is therefore our current task to identify the different forms of precedent for secrecy before directly identifying which might have had the most profound influence on Basil's thought – a methodology of which the man himself would quite evidently approve.

PARALLELS: BASIL, CYRIL OF JERUSALEM AND THE LANGUAGE OF *MYSTERY*

Cyril of Jerusalem, likely by virtue of the purpose of his major surviving work, is the theologian who delves into the ecclesiastical maintenance of secrecy with the most depth. In his *Catechetical Orations*, Cyril states:

Hans G. & Stroumsa, Guy eds. *Secrecy and Concealment: Studies in the History of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Religions* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).

[345] Matthew 13:10-13.

> Thus the Lord spoke in parables to those who were unable to hear, but to the disciples he explained the parables in private. For the brightness of the glory is for those who have been enlightened, blinding for the faithless. These mysteries, that now the Church explains to you, those transferred from the catechumenate, are not customarily taught to the heathens. For to a heathen we do not explain mysteries concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit, nor to the catechumens do we speak clearly concerning the mysteries. But many things we speak of in a veiled way, in order that the knowing believers may understand, and those who do not know might not be hurt.[346]

The motivation for secrecy in this pericope is quite clear: the necessitation of secrecy holds an explicit purpose within the church – to stem heresy and ensure the right understanding of Christian doctrine and practice is maintained. Indeed, it was most certainly Cyril's primary concern to nip in the bud interpretations of the creed he considered heretical: after imparting it at the close of *Catechetical Oration* 5, roughly two thirds of the following lecture – which expounds the first clause of the creed on the unity of God – consists of Cyril teaching his *photizomenoi* on the history of heresies, how to identify heretics and how to ensure that one never joins their ranks.[347]

Parallels between Basil and Cyril of Jerusalem must be drawn. It is worth repeating a section of *On the Holy Spirit* already seen, where Basil speaks about the natural requirement of mysteries to remain secret:

> In the same fashion, from the very beginning the apostles and fathers ordained the matters of the church, and guarded in secrecy and silence the purity of the mysteries – since that which is divulged in public and casual spheres is not at all a mystery. This is the purpose of non-scriptural traditions, so that the knowledge of the *dogmas* might not become neglected or despised by the many on account of their mundanity. For *kerygma* is one thing, *dogma* another – one is kept secret, while *kerygmata* are publically spoken.[348]

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[346] Cyril, *Catechetical Oration* 6.29.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27,66.

Here one can identify another parallel between Basil and Cyril: though Cyril does not use *dogma* in the same way as Basil, he does make a *kerygma-dogma* distinction. For Cyril, *kerygma* is a term reserved for preaching, whilst *dogma* conversely is used to describe the key tenets of the Christian faith – *Kerygma* is almost universally used in relation to teachings of Christ or the apostles.[349] Most notably, in opposition to Basil's frequent referencing of the Nicene Creed as a *kerygma,* Cyril instead opts to name his creed a *dogma* – though at times he also considers each individual article of the creed a *dogma* in its own right.[350] One might see this as Basil taking a position that is more conversant with contemporary debate: such an argument over the traditional restriction of more profound knowledge from the masses does seem to have been raging at the time Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit*. Basil's contemporary – and possibly one-time master – Themistius was named a sophist by his critics for teaching philosophy in a public space, going so far as to write an oration in his defence, wherein he rejects the traditional argument of philosophical reserve in favour of open proclamation in front of the masses, seeing such an attitude as a result of their failure to employ rhetoric correctly. To Themistius, these men possessed no real love for rhetoric, pretentiously extolling its virtues and then refusing to practice it "as though it were superfluous and futile."[351] Themistius' position was gaining intellectual traction, though not without opposition from those who imagined a more restricted audience for philosophy, in particular

[349] See Cyril, *Catechetical Orations* 10.18; 13.8; 14.21; 17.32.

[350] See Ibid. 5.12. *Catechetical Oration* 4, entitled "on the ten dogmas (*ΠΕΡΙ ΤΩΝ ΔΕΚΑ ΔΟΓΜΑΤΩΝ*)" in both Greek and Syriac manuscript traditions, lists each individual article of the Jerusalem creed as a *dogma*. Unlike most cases of chapter headings or sermon titles, those of the *Catechetical Orations* appear to possess some value, being very early indeed. The manuscript traditions diverged early in the fifth century, but both possess extant references to the title of oration 4.

[351] Themistius, *Oration 26*.328. Here it should be noted that this debate over the usefulness of rhetoric is not novel to the fourth-century: Plato closes the *Phaedrus* by invoking Isocrates as correctly applying rhetoric to philosophy, but Aristotle sees him as a classic sophist. Isocrates himself would of course disagree, having written a treatise against the Sophists.

the neoplatonists, whose retreat from the world was at times borderline anchoretic.[352] Based on his attitude towards the mysteries and his role as a bishop, we should probably place Basil somewhere in the centre of this debate. There are times when Basil is happy to preach to an unselect bunch – indeed his field of employment necessitated it. Resultantly, his sermons regularly took into account the range of backgrounds from which his hearers have come. However, he – and indeed Cyril – both possessed a strong belief in the need for barriers to certain kinds of knowledge, which can only be comprehended by – and are therefore only profitable to – the mentally and spiritually ready. Of course, for Basil and Cyril, this might be a result of their shared Christian context, in contrast to Themistius' intellectual and cultural one: Christianity was as much a religion as it was a philosophy or discipline of learning, reliant upon additional forms of initiation and education beyond the purely intellectual or ethical. Where Themistius sees an intellectual problem, a rhetoric/philosophy distinction that he views to be inadequate, Basil and Cyril would see the people; Christians and non-Christians, those baptised and rightly oriented in education and lifestyle to receive the truth, and those who were not. To both men, the existence of esoteric knowledge was irremovable from Christianity, and therefore even if some things could be made public, many must be concealed to retain their value and their truth.

However, it should be noted – and noted well – that Cyril in no way shares Basil's enthusiasm for the use of non-scriptural sources to support his arguments. Cyril's *Catechetical Orations* are explicitly stated to be an exercise in imparting scriptural truths to his audience of illuminands, only ever quoting from scripture and the creed he imparts to the illuminands at the end of *Catechetical Oration* 5, but which is conspicuously absent from the manuscript tradition. Based on the quotations given, the creed can be reconstructed as such:

[352] See Penella, Robert J. *The Private Orations of Themistius* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 28-31 for an overview of Themistius' imagined audience and critics.

(πιστεύομεν) εἰς ἕνα θεόν,

Πατέρα παντοκράτορα,

ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς,

ὁρατῶν τε πάντων ἀοράτων,

εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ιησοῦν Χριστόν,

τὸν υἱον τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ,

τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρός γεννηθέντα,

θεόν ἀληθίνον, πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰῶνων δι΄ οὐ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο

(ἐκ παρθένου καὶ Πνεύματος ἁγίου)

ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρα,

καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τούς οὐρανούς, καὶ καθίσαντα ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῦ Πατρός,

καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐν δόξῃ κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὐ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος,

εἰς ἕν ἅγιον Πνεῦμα,

τὸν παράκλητον, τὸ λαλῆσαν ἐν τοῖς προφήταις,

καὶ εἰς ἕν βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν,

καὶ εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν,

καὶ εἰς σαρκὸς ἀνάστασιν, καὶ εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον.[353]

This creed – of which various reconstructions exist – contains notable differences from the Nicene Creed that Basil is happy to publish abroad, the lack of the Nicene and controversial *homoousion* being the most evident.[354] It seems to have been more of a tailored creed for the purpose of Baptismal confession within the church of Jerusalem, but the similarities to the Nicene creed are quite clear. It is,

[353] See Cyril, Cat.Or. 9.4; 10.3; 11.21; 12.3 (NB this is only a possible reference – the wording here is ambiguous); 14.24; 15.2.

[354] For the more well-known reconstructions, see Stephenson, Cyril of Jerusalem, 63-4; Gifford, NPNF 7, xlvii; Kelly, Early Christian Creeds, 183-4; Hort, F.J.A. Two Dissertations, 142; Migne, PG33, 533-4; Telfer, William, LCC IV, 124-5; Kinzig, *Faith in Formulae* vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017). The version here reconstructed is my own.

as seen above, viewed by Cyril to be a summation of all Christian *dogmata*, but only those which one can comfortably find in scripture:

> For since not all can study the scriptures, some kept from knowledge by lack of learning, and others by lack of leisure – in order that the soul might not perish from ignorance, we bind together the entire *dogma* of the faith into a few lines…for the articles of faith were not composed as seemed good to men, but the most important points gathered out of all the scriptures make up one complete teaching of the faith.[355]

It is clear, then, that while Basil considers the non-scriptural things to be particularly suited to the name *dogma,* Cyril considers the *dogmata* to which he adheres to be scriptural in their entirety.

Cyril is an individual to whom it is best to often return in this chapter. In many ways, he and Basil were deeply similar. These men were not so different in their inspirations: Cyril would have been a devotee of Origen by virtue of his training in Palestinian Caesarea, and Basil knew Origen's work intimately – to the extent we have traditionally ascribed the anthology known as the *Philocalia of Origen* to him and Gregory Nazianzen. Both had rigorous ascetic beliefs – Basil's ascetical discourses and rules are legendary, and though not so visible in his *Catechetical Orations*, Cyril of Jerusalem's *Homily on the Paralytic*, his only one to survive, showcases the deep commitment to ascetical values that was central to his anthropology. Both were men often uncomfortable with the open profession of Nicene orthodoxy in their youth, but slowly drifted towards it in their periods of theological maturity, and both were pioneers in exploring the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.[356] The pair took the concealment of the mysteries to be a matter of utmost gravity, but their interpretation of how this was to be achieved,

[355] Cyril, *Catechetical Oration* 5.12.

[356] For an exploration of Cyril of Jerusalem's orthodoxy, see Gregg, Robert C., *Cyril of Jerusalem and the Arians*, in Gregg, Robert C. ed. *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985), 85–109. It should also be noted Cyril possessed and fostered a relationship with Constantius II, writing to him on the subject of an astronomical event that took place over Jerusalem in the year 349.

and even what constituted a mystery, differed drastically. As a direct result, to compare the two allows us to see just how varied the concealment-doctrines of the fourth-century church were, and just how idiosyncratic Basil's idea of non-scriptural tradition was.

Within our four divisions of secrecy, this desire to keep the creed hidden to the less advanced initially appears to most strongly reflect a notion of confidentiality, the mysteries being somehow diminished by their dissemination and the church being resultantly corrupted. There are, however, smatterings of something more akin to the notion of accessibility – the confidentiality of these mysteries is in effect not because it would do harm by the revelation *per se*, but rather because they would come to be known independently of the correct conceptual frameworks and requisite knowledge needed to correctly understand their meaning. Considering Basil so frequently distinguishes between the dissemination of practices and the revelation of their *intima*, it would appear pure confidentiality as a form of secrecy is here insufficient. More context is certainly needed.

PRECEDENT: PYTHAGOREANISM

Basil's conception of powerful knowledge hidden behind observant practices may be inspired by the Pythagorean rules for living - the *akousmata,* or *symbola.* Though the *akousmata* Have been found in many different writers, grouped in a number of ways, they essentially, as Cornelius Hölk suggests, constituted a manual on how to live.[357] In later Neopythagorean literature, their forcefulness appears

[357] Hölk, Cornelius. *De Acusmatis Sive Symbolis Pythagoricis* (Kiliae: Ex Officia H. Fiencke, 1894), 6-7. For an additional – and equally enlightening – discussion, see Delatte, Armand. *Études sur la Littérature Pythagoricenne* (Paris: Champion, 1915), 269-312.

to have become greater: Walter Burkert concludes that for Androcydes, the *akousmata* "were regarded as αἰνίγματα, which clothed a lofty wisdom in language unintelligible to the uninitiated."[358] A small amount of literature has been produced on early Christian usage of the *akousmata*, and though some studies have suggested an early date of adoption of an *akousma* or two in the New Testament, the more enigmatic side of the rules are not discussed.[359] Basil was almost certainly aware of the *akousmata* in some form, as evidenced in his address on Greek Literature, in which he references a "Cleinas," disciple of Pythagoras. This individual is most likely Clein*i*as of Tarentum, a contemporary of Plato, a fragment of whose works are recorded in Iamblichus. Basil suggests that Cleinias was "in accidental conformity to our teachings," namely on the command not to swear an oath.[360] Though this action of Cleinias is not by name recorded by any previous writer, Iamblichus appears to be the transmitter (or perhaps originator) of this story.[361] For Iamblichus, this is due to a precept laid down by Pythagoras himself, which made his followers "very scrupulous about oaths": "honour first the immortal Gods, as the law commands, respect an oath by them; and next the noble heroes."[362] That this precept was ostensibly laid down by Pythagoras himself is a strong intimation that Iamblichus considered this rule to be an *akousma*, perhaps of the τί μάλιστα variety. Furthermore, this potential *akousma* is in line with many *akousmata* of which we are aware, which tended to be extensions of more

[358] Burkert, Walter. *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism* (trans. Minar, Edwin L.), 174. Nurnberg, Verlan Hans Carl, 1962.

[359] See Lévy, Isidore. *La Légende de Pythagore de Grèce en Palestine* (Paris: Champion, 1927); Thom, Johan C. *"Don't Walk on the Highways": The Pythagorean Akousmata and Early Christian Literature*. Journal of Biblical Literature Vol. 113, No. 1 (1994), pp. 93-112. Hemmerdinger (*Un Élement Pythagoricien dans le Pater*) has even suggested the Lord's Prayer itself is influenced by Pythagoreanism due to the *epiousietēs* of the bread, an inheritance from Demetrius of Byzantium, potentially via the mediation of Athenaeus.

[360] Basil, *On Greek Literature* 7.

[361] See Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 144.

[362] Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 144 (Clark, 63).

common approaches to ritual piety, with a particular focus on avoiding the taboo.[363] As Basil's awareness of Cleinias' tale is almost certainly based on this passage from Iamblichus, we can assume that Basil would interpret it in exactly the same way.

It is difficult, however, to say that the specific practice of swearing oaths was frowned upon by Christians of the fourth century. Basil's opinion is clear: in addition to his admonition against oaths in *On Greek Literature*, he also commands the monastic community addressed in his treatise *On Ascetical Discipline* "swear not at all," and in one of his ascetical discourses, strongly states "oaths of all kinds should be banished from the monastic community."[364] This condemnation of oaths is not shared by many other prominent Christians, however. Lactantius is somewhat of an outlier by sharing Basil's position in this case, conflating swearing an oath with committing perjury.[365] However, Athanasius, in his *Epistle to the Monks*, encourages the swearing of oaths, hoping to receive oaths from the monks in writing.[366] Similarly, Tertullian finds taking oaths for the safety of the Emperor to be acceptable practice for Christians. However, his approach is more nuanced than Athanasius':

> There is another and a greater necessity that we should pray for the emperors besides the whole state of the empire and Roman interests, because we know that the horrendous shock which impends over the whole world, and the close of this age which threatens terrible sorrows, is delayed by the respite granted for the Roman empire… Furthermore we swear, not by the appetites of the Caesars, but by their safety, which is more distinguished than all appetites... In the emperors we look up to the judgement of God, who places them over the nations. In them we know this to be what God wills, and thus we wish that which he wills to be safe, and we view their safety as a great oath. But demons, that is, appetites, we are accustomed to swear by so that we may

[363] See Burkert, *Lore and Science*, 178-192.

[364] See Basil, *On Greek Literature* 7; Basil, *On Ascetical Discipline* (Wagner, 34); Basil, *An Ascetical Discourse* (Wagner, 215).

[365] Lactantius, *Epitome* 64

[366] Athanasius, *Ep.* LII:3

> drive them out of men, not to swear by them in such a way as to confer on them the honour of divinity.[367]

Tertullian's approach, therefore, is to encourage the taking of oaths insofar as one, as a good Christian is able. In other words, to make an oath for the Emperor's safety can be considered a prayer, but to swear an oath to the line of Emperors itself constitutes idolatry. It is a fair suggestion, then, that Basil's idea of a uniform Christian condemnation of the swearing of oaths is unfounded.

This Pythagorean conception is evidently something Basil shared. Returning to Basil's *On Faith,* we see a very similar approach to the hidden meanings of liturgical practices and beliefs, where private aural doctrines (ἀκουσθέντων) impart wisdom of equal importance and authority to scripture. Though it is perhaps a stretch to suggest that Basil had the *akousmata* in mind when considering these oral doctrines, the similarities between them must be noted. Both are practices considered to be essential to everyday living as a follower of a certain tradition, whether that be the Pythagorean or the Christian.

The main difference between the two, however, is that it is very unlikely the Pythagoreans had rituals or a set liturgy as Christians did. Leonid Zhmud forwards this idea, pointing out that rituals can only be assumed in the case of religious or cultist movements, and as the Pythagoreans do not fit into either, a community ritual aspect to their belief system seems unlikely.[368]

[367] Tertullian, *Apology* 32.

[368] Zhmud, Leonid. *Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans*, 151. Oxford: University Press, 2012.

Zhmud also considers there to be little evidence for a tradition of secrecy in Pythagorean thought.[369] However, he only considers the actions – or barriers to action – followers of Pythagoras were expected to follow, such as vows of secrecy in the early stages of one's devotion, or any activity considered to be an *akousma*. In contrast, the value of the *akousmata* are their hidden meanings. This is made clearer by the (likely Aristotelian) decision to divide them into three essential parts: What is best (τί μάλιστα;), What is… (τί ἔστι(ν);), and what must be practised (τί πρακτέον;)[370] Though these divisions were unlikely to be either authentic or in common Pythagorean usage in Antiquity and Late Antiquity, they are nonetheless an effective way in which to group the numerous aspects of Pythagorean belief and practise that are found in the *akousmata.*[371] Burkert explains this effectively, saying:

> The most just thing is to sacrifice, the wisest is number, the most beautiful, harmony, the strongest, insight, the best (in the sense of most desired), happiness, the truest, that men are wicked, the holiest, a mallow leaf, the most beautiful shapes, circle and sphere.[372]

The implication of this is clear – the *αἰνίγματα* found in the *akousmata* together create the Pythagorean ontology, elucidating through apparently simply rules what is true, what is good and what is right.

Basil's approach to the hidden wisdom behind simple rites and truths is in a very similar vein. When discussing the value of divine gifts in *On the Holy Spirit,* he claims:

> According to the elementary manner of teaching, we were introduced to training for perfection in piety and were instructed in knowledge, first in subjects easy to grasp and

[369] Ibid. 158.

[370] See Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras* 85. Suggestions for an Aristotelian origin can be found in Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 169.

[371] Zhmud considers this tripartite convention to be authentically Pythagorean (*Pythagoras and the Early Pythagoreans,*170). Burkert, on the other hand, considers them to be "artificial and not consistently followed" (Burkert, *Lore and Science,* 173).

[372] Burkert, *Lore and Science,* 171.

> in proportion with our ability. The one who directed us, as if we were eyes kept in the dark, led us up towards the great light of truth, accustoming us to it bit by bit. For by sparing our weakness, in the depths of the wealth of his wisdom and in the unsearchable judgements of his intellect he showed to us a guidance gentle and obliging: he first trained us to see the silhouettes of bodies, and to look at the sun in water, so that we might not be made blind by dashing ourselves on the vision of unmarred light.[373]

Basil follows this eloquent discussion of the ascension towards the knowledge of the divine by stating:

> According to the same logic, the Law, "being a shadow of things to come" (Heb. 10.1), and the foreshadowing of the prophets, an enigma (αίνίγμα) of the truth, are intended to be a school for the eyes of the heart, so that the change from these things to the "wisdom hidden in mystery" will be easy for us.[374]

This discussion clearly frames the intima of tradition as being concealed as a result of accessibility, knowledge being gained by the achievement of some level of perfection. Ordered around the language of αίνίγμα and μυστήριον, this comparison enables us to understand that for Basil, all things scriptural (the law) and non-scriptural (tradition) lead to a knowledge of the divine through the perfection of the inner man. As such, in the same way that the Pythagoreans understood their laws and practises to be wisdom hidden in plain sight, Basil considers the laws and practises of Christianity to be αίνίγματα or μυστηρία of their own, leading to the most important yet most inaccessible aspect of the Christian ontology – the divine reality itself.

PRECEDENT: PLATONISMS

In addition to a Pythagorean influence, Basil also employs the language of Platonic epistemology. In the above passage, there is a strong allusion to Plato's analogy of the cave found in *Republic* book 7. When

[373] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 14,33

[374] Ibid. 14,33.

Plato considers the same idea of having to become accustomed to the rays of the sun before looking up at it directly, he says:

> First of all, he would see the shadows most easily and then the reflections of people and other things in water, and later on the things themselves. Then from this he could more easily contemplate what is in the sky itself at night when he gazes at the light of the stars and the moon, or by day, the sun and the light of the sun.[375]

That Basil also uses the language of shadows and water as an intermediary used to acclimatise oneself to seeing a physical body or the light of the sun cannot be accidental. Indeed, this allusion to Plato's cave analogy is also used in his *On Greek Literature*, where he says "and like those who have become accustomed to seeing the reflection of the sun in water, so we shall then direct our eyes towards the light itself".[376] Considering the purpose of this homily as a discussion of the value of Greek literature, there is no possibility that Basil has used the exact same imagery by accident. Basil's particular usage of this analogy may be because therein the sun is generally considered to be the best example of the Form of the Good, which is arguably the closest thing in Plato's ontology to the way in which the Christian God is described.[377]

More importantly, it is in Plato and the philosophical traditions that draw from him that we might find precedent for the valuation of unwritten doctrine. The author of the *Seventh Letter* – traditionally ascribed to Plato himself – deals with this concept at length:

> There is no writing of mine concerning these things (the most profound aspects of his philosophy), nor ever will there be, for this knowledge cannot be put into words like other disciplines of learning (μαθήματα), but instead – after extended conversation

[375] Plato, *Republic* 7 (516a-b). Trans. Edwin-Jones, Preddy: *Plato* VI (LCL 276), 113. Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.

[376] Basil, *On Greek Literature* 4.

[377] See Ross, David. *Plato's Theory of Ideas*, 40-1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951.

> between teacher and student in united pursuit of the subject – like light springing forth from a fire set ablaze, it is born into the soul and causes itself to increase. And this also I know, for if these matters were to be expanded upon at all in books or lectures, they would be best coming from me.[378]

The author then goes on to state:

> …for this reason every man, when dealing with very serious matters, carefully avoids writing, lest he expose his thoughts to the envy and criticism of men. What I have said, in short, comes down to this: Whenever we see a book, whether the laws of a law-maker or a composition on any other matter, we can be sure that if the author is in fact serious, this book does not contain his best thoughts, for they are situated where he keeps his most beautiful possessions. If he has placed these serious thoughts in writing, it is not the Gods but mortals who have deprived him of his wits.[379]

It is difficult to say whether the *Seventh Letter* is authentic to Plato. W.K.C. Guthrie compiled a list which suggests the "recent" consensus as of 1978 was 36-14 in favour of authenticity, but a fresher (2015) study by Myles Burnyeat and Michael Frede intimates a more even split in the scholarship.[380] Burnyeat and Frede are quite convinced it is pseudepigraphal, with the former even claiming the author is "philosophically incompetent," and therefore utterly untrustworthy.[381] Whether or not Plato himself wrote the letter, it – even by the admission of its fiercest critics – appears in lists of the Platonic canon possibly as early as the Third-century BC in the work of Satyrus the Peripatetic, and is definitively mentioned by Plutarch in the first century CE.[382] The letter may be a pseudepigraph, but to the world

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[378] *Plato's Seventh Letter,* 341c-d.

[379] Ibid. 344 c-d.

[380] See Guthrie, W.K.C., *A History of Greek Philosophy (Vol.5): The Later Plato and the Academy,* 401. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978; Burnyeat, Myles & Frede, Michael, *The Pseudo-Platonic Seventh Letter*, 121-2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. It is notable that neither of these studies show their working, as it were, and Burnyeat-Frede gives no numbers at all.

[381] Burnyeat-Frede, *The Pseudo-Platonic Seventh Letter,* 122.

[382] See Ibid. 16-25.

of Late Antiquity it was the work of Plato's hand and thus authoritative in matters of the discernment of Platonic doctrine.

Plato's suspicion of the written word is also quite present in the *Phaedrus*, a text which Basil knew and to which he alluded: in his *On Greek Literature*, he employ's the *Phaedrus'* analogy of the chariot, warning his audience against "giving full rein to pleasure, to pay no heed to the intellect, just as a charioteer is run away by unmanageable and frenzied horses."[383] The *Phaedrus* is a dialogue that recognises the philosophic value of *praxis* and *askesis* and – though as Anthony Meredith notes it lacks the sense of urgency conveyed in the ascetic works of Basil and Antony of the Desert – exerted significant influence on Late Antique Christian and Pagan conceptions of asceticism.[384] Plato, through the voice of Socrates, expresses a clear distaste for the written word throughout the dialogue, suggesting that reliance on writings weakens the memory, leading students to "trust the external, written letters and not remember themselves," and that the philosopher takes great risk committing his words to writing, since in his eyes the written word is "of (no) use except to remind he who knows the subject about which (the writings) are written," and since after writing something you rescind control of who might be privy to your thoughts and who might not, it is impossible to ensure those reading them are instructed in such a manner that they can rightly understand their meaning.[385] Indeed, at the very end of the dialogue, Socrates turns to Phaedrus and unequivocally states that one

[383] See Basil, *On Greek Literature* 9 – for the original analogy, see Plato, *Phaedrus* 246a-254e.

[384] Meredith, Anthony. *Asceticism – Christian and Greek,* 331. Journal of Theological Studies 8.27 (1976), 313-332.

[385] *Phaedrus* 275b-e. One might here recall Gamble's assertion in *Books and Readers in the Early Church* that this is not an exaggeration of the risks of writing a work in Antiquity: to hand over a text to someone was to rescind control of its dissemination, which Plato compares to the abandonment of one's own children (*Phaedrus* 275d-e).

should seek to imitate any person who thinks "that no written discourse, whether in rhythm or prose, deserves to be treated very seriously."[386]

Other sources also advocate for Plato's support for and profession of what are commonly termed his *unwritten doctrines*, and shed light on what these might be. Aristotle, in his *Physics*, speaks of how the definition of the "participative (μεταληπτικός)" differs between the *Timaeus* and "those things which are called the unwritten doctrines (ἄγραφα δόγματα)."[387] These "unwritten doctrines" mentioned by Aristotle have generally been associated with his exposition of Plato's philosophy in *Metaphysics* 988a where Aristotle states the foundation of Plato's thought as the doctrines of the One and the Indefinite Dyad.[388] This appears to fit with the attitude taken in the seventh letter, in that this is the most profound element of Plato's cosmology: the fundamental mechanics by which the sensible world can participate in the Forms and how the Forms themselves are capable of participating in the One. Though – as Aristotle himself notes – this is not dissimilar from Pythagorean attempts to conceive of the universe in terms of mathematical unity and multiplicity, it is a doctrine that has a façade of simplicity that belies its underlying complexity – a complexity that might easily lead astray those not introduced to it through the proper pedagogic channels.

Indeed, this distaste in the Platonic tradition for the writing down of more profound doctrines seems to have persisted into schools roughly contemporaneous with the first real forays of Christian thinkers into the doctrine of God. Porphyry, in his *Life of Plotinus*, claims that Plotinus, along with his fellow-

[386] Ibid. 277e-278a.

[387] Aristotle, *Physics* 209b.

[388] Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 988a. For a more detailed description of these doctrines, see the attempted reconstruction and expounding thereof by Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy* vol. 5, 426-442.

students Erennius and Origen, made a pact not to reveal the things taught to them by their master, Ammonius.[389] Much is made by Porphyry of the fact that Plotinus is the last to break faith, and that only after ten years of pure teaching of these ideas did he commit them to writing. Even then, Porphyry emphasises, the writings' distribution was "reluctant and secret," and those that received them only did so "after the utmost examination."[390] Even when Plotinus did deign to write, it appears to have been an afterthought: according to Porphyry, he would write his opinions on a matter in one sitting and never read over what he wrote, nor would he even correct the spelling errors he made.[391] Similarly, though Porphyry takes much pride in asserting the fact that Plotinus entrusted him with the editing of his works, such throwaway attitudes towards his writing is indicative that, to him, the letter would always be secondary to the idea, a disposition Porphyry notes as ever-present and immune to change.

As regards Christian knowledge of philosophical tendencies towards the concealment of doctrine, Clement of Alexandria is unsurprisingly our first port of call. In the fifth of his *Stromateis,* Clement has this to say:

> It was not only the Pythagoreans and Plato, then, who concealed many things, but also the Epicureans say that they have things that may not be spoken, and do not allow everyone to browse those writings. The Stoics also say that by the first Zeno things were written which they do not easily permit the students to study without first providing proof that they are legitimately philosophers. And the students of Aristotle say that some of his writings are esoteric, and others are common and exoteric.[392]

[389] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 3.

[390] Ibid. 4.

[391] Ibid. 8.

[392] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 5,9.

In the following section, Clement expresses that the apostles thought no differently, an intimates that similar tactics are – and should be – employed by Christians through "disciple-making (μαθητεία)," or "illumination (φωτισμὸς)."[393] Interestingly, he also shows an awareness of Plato's letters, quoting the assertion that "it is necessary we speak in enigmas, so that if a tablet might happen upon any misfortune on its pages either by sea of by land he who reads it may remain without knowledge."[394] Though Clement of course had a vested interest in considering Christianity akin to philosophical movements, and perhaps demonstrated a tendency to overemphasize these similarities, the prevalence of positive attitudes towards the concealment of doctrine and practice in patristic literature indicates that he is correct in making such a connection. In attempting to legitimize Christianity, Clement is keen to identify such similarities as a shared quality of all those who seek the truth. As historians, we are under no such obligations – the similarity of attitudes on this matter between Christianity and the philosophies prevalent during its formative years is likely, if not certainly, due to the influence of the latter on the former.

With a preference for the unwrittenness of certain doctrines being to the Late Antique individual a verifiable and relatively prevalent notion, therefore, it is notable that its sentiments on the centrality of pedagogy to right understanding of the most profound are echoed by Christian bishops as regards instruction in the faith.[395] One would – of course – be hard-pressed to find an early Christian teacher who expressed a total disregard for the written word in all cases: the reading and interpretation of texts was central to all forms of Christian education, and to the vast majority the truest revelation of God

[393] Ibid. 5,10.

[394] Ibid. 5,10. For original, see Plato, *Second Letter* 312d.

[395] One might say, based on the distinction between Plato and his later Hellenistic interpreters, that *Platonistic* is a more accurate term. This may be true now, but such a distinction was not identifiably part of the Late Antique philosophical vocabulary.

was concealed within the pages of the Scriptures. When it came to education, however, they understood that non-scriptural books were no substitute for hearing a wise person speak. As we have seen, Cyril of Jerusalem's justification for the maintenance of secrecy of the fruits of catechesis at the close of *Catechetical Oration* 5 is remarkably similar to the *Seventh Letter* and the *Phaedrus*: for the avoidance of misapprehension and ridicule that might cheapen doctrines of such central importance.[396] For Cyril, catechesis – which he follows Clement in by also naming "illumination (φωτισμὸς)," and his audience "illuminands (φωτιζόμενοι)" – is the Christian expression of the philosophical disciple-making. Cyril is not alone in this, and as we have previously seen in this chapter such attitudes were, if not universal, commonplace. It is not a stretch, therefore, to say that such a position on concealment of key doctrine was one that had significant precedent before Basil, both in the Christian tradition and the wider context in which this tradition was formed.

There is no doubt that Basil shared such an attitude: as the previous section indicated, doctrines, practices and their meanings were to be hidden out of necessity, for their nature as mysteries necessitated it be so.

Mystery Cults: Linguistic and Practical Similarities

Christianity in antiquity sits on the fence somewhat between being, in the ancient senses, a philosophy and a religion. Just as Pierre Hadot defined ancient philosophies as, above all, ways of living, to a

[396] As would be expected of a Christian author, Cyril returns to this sentiment in *Catechesis* 17.36, appealing to Matthew 7.6's call to not "cast pearls before swine," – to him, the Spirit measures the perfection of the soul of each individual, only imparting its spiritual baptism if one is fit to receive it.

Christian ascetic this would be *a fortiori* true of Christianity – the very appropriation of the philosophical term *askesis* is, of this, evidence enough.[397] From this it is clear Christianity considered itself a movement to which the philosophically-inclined could – and indeed should – gravitate. Though it is correct to conceive of Christianity as more of a philosophy than a religion by ancient standards, it nonetheless had a performative, communitarian dimension that philosophies did not: liturgy has always been central to the Christian experience, and though the establishment of orthodoxy was a more common pastime for Christian writers of Late Antiquity, texts such as the *Didache* and the likely pseudo-Hippolytan *On the Apostolic Tradition* demonstrate that orthopraxy was also a concern. Similarly, the institution of feast days was a matter of profound ecclesiastical interest, with churches taking time to celebrate the *Dies Natalium* of local martyrs, and on a wider scale calendars such as that of 354 had set dates for Easter, Christmas and the commemoration of martyrs and bishops. It is probably right, then, not to consider Christianity as purely a philosophy, but rather a phenomenon that expressed both an emphasis on ways of living and intellectuality typical of philosophy and the performative and calendrical concerns of religion. Thus, we should be loath to ignore the aspect of Hellenistic religion that found itself especially predisposed with concealment: the so-called *mystery cults.*

Before we can continue, it must be noted that the modern notion of religion would, to most denizens of the ancient Mediterranean, be somewhat alien. As Teresa Morgan reminds us, the closest Greek word was *pistis* – "trust" or "faith" in the Gods – which was not demonstrated by everyday piety or conduct but usually through rites of offering: the Christian definition of "a faith" as a set of doctrines would have been quite alien to much of the Graeco-Roman world.[398] Our own understanding of religion

[397] See Hadot, Pierre. *Exercices Spirituels et Philosophie Antique.* Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981.

[398] See Morgan, Teresa. *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), esp. 123-175.

is best understood as a mix of this *pistis* and *eusebeia*, which was more often employed to express practical piety, and in philosophical parlance emphasised right living in accordance with the will of the Gods. This latter term has very early witness in the Christian tradition, and is present with some consistency in the New Testament, usually to describe an active form of piety.[399] This practicality of Christianity as more *eusebeia* than *pistis* is one not overlooked by scholars: A. D. Nock considers ancient philosophy to have a religious dimension, it being "a reverent and living feeling for the glory and unity of the universe growing out of its scientific investigation," and later is clear in his indication that the average pagan evaluating the possibility of conversion may well have considered Christianity to have a philosophic dimension in its rules concerning conduct: in particular, Nock advocated for the idea that modern religion is probably better understood in ancient terms as *philosophia* rather than *pistis*.[400] Hadot built on this extensively, finding modern religion to be more akin to ancient *philosophies* due to their shared primary focus on being ways of living, a perspective that has since become something of a historical consensus.[401] The mystery cults were more concerned with participation in ritual rather than the individual contemplation that mattered most to philosophic devotees.

What can be said of the mystery cults beyond this is maddeningly little – the practices of most cults have, to their subtantial credit, been concealed so effectively that they are now lost to time. If there is one mystery-cult about whose practices we are more certain, however, it would be those of the

[399] The use of *eusebeia* in James 1.27 is likely of note here: it is translated as "religion" in most editions since the KJV, but its sense is specifically practical and concerning the tending to widows and orphans. This could well be seen as an exercise in the fact that nuances are often lost in translation.

[400] Nock, A. D. *Conversion: The Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 166. For his evaluation of what a pagan might think of Christianity, see ibid. 212-253, esp.218-220.

[401] Such is an underlying thesis of Hadot, Pierre. *Exercises Spirituels et Philosophie Antique* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1981). A *Festschrift* to Hadot on this matter has also been compiled: Chase, Michael; Clark, Stephen & McGhee, Michael eds. *Philosophy as a Way of Life, Ancients and Moderns: Essays in Honour of Pierre Hadot* (Oxford: Wiley, 2013).

Eleusinian Cult of Demeter and Persephone. This is likely because of the more pan-Hellenic status of the cult – though originally Athenian, by the mid 6th century BC it attracted pilgrims from throughout Greece. Thousands of adherents to these mysteries existed, and often were the mysteries profaned, but this almost exclusively occurred through allusion to them rather than by explicit recounting. New initiates, *mystai*, were led to the sanctuary with their patron *mystagogos* as those more seasoned, the *epoptai*, stood above them and watched. Sacrifices were made, esoteric rituals performed, and liturgies strictly observed. All of these were to be kept secret from the uninitiated, and this secrecy was heavily respected.

According to a fragment of Aristotle preserved in a work of Dio Chrysostom, the thing that most united the mystery-cults was that initiates were made worthy to participate in the mysteries not through that which was learned (*ta mathēmata*) but through that which was felt (*ta pathēmata*).[402] In the case of the Eleusinian mysteries, Nancy Evans has suggested this might have been through ritual that would symbolise a group meditation on the agony of Demeter as her daughter languished in the underworld.[403] If Walter Burkert's claim that those present would drink from the *kykeon* (a goblet of spiced wine) and together shout *hye!* and *kye!* (Rain! and Conceive!) is correct, perhaps the participants shared in the suffering of Demeter while contemplating with her the process of reseeding the earth and sharing in the fruits of that labour.[404] Visual experience was also of significant importance for attaining this *pathos* – it has been suggested that first-timers were veiled at certain points, such as when an ear of corn might be cut in silence, with only experienced participants being given the rank of

[402] See Aristotle, *Fragment* 15 In Rose, V. *Aristotelis qui Ferebantur Librorum Fragmenta* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1886), 31.

[403] Evans, Nancy. *Diotima and Demeter as Mystagogues in Plato's Symposium*, 21-3. Hypatia 21.2 (2006), 1-27.

[404] Burkert, Walter. *Greek Religion*, 285-90. Oxford: Blackwell, 1985.

epoptēs, a "seer" of the mysteries and able to view all that occurred in the ritual.[405] In such a way, the pathos might have been deepened through a visual aspect that corresponded with the order of the liturgy.

Similar meanings could be suggested about the speculated ritual of other mystery-religions – the ritual of the Mithraean cult appears to have been a feast commemorating Mithras' slaughter of a bull, an icon of which – called the tauroctony – would take centre stage within the Mithraeum, itself being perhaps modelled after the cave in which Mithras killed the bull. Though Porphyry and the weight of more recent scholarship both suggest there to be more imitative acts of the cosmos itself in play, the cave itself being an imitation of the firmament, some concern still exists in the scholarship over the extent to which our evidence of the Mithraic mysteries is Christian fabrication.[406] What we do know to be likely, however, is that both environment and ritual imitated that of Mithras in the actions they commemorated, and pathos with him can thus be viewed as the central motivator for their practices. Christians engaged with Mithraism frequently – and rarely positively – asserting its rites to be perversions of right and upstanding Christian liturgy, but their engagements tend to betray an understanding of the value of liturgy and the power of imitative experience: it is on these grounds that their attacks are strongest, due to the fundamental parallels between their own rites and those of the

[405] For suggestions of veiling see ibid. 287.

[406] The importance of mentioning Mithraism here should be noted: scholarship generally considers them to have been competitors, to the point that Renan (*Marc-Aurele et le Fin du Monde Antique,* 579) stipulated the world would have become Mithraic should Christianity have failed. On the origins of the Tauroctony, see the gloss of David Ulansey in *The Origins of the Mithraic Mysteries: Cosmology and Salvation in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 15-24, which suggests also the Tauroctonic figures were pictographic representations of the firmament. Roger Beck, in *The Religion of the Mithras Cult in the Roman Empire: Mysteries of the Unconquered Sun* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 102-152 provides an even more thorough skim, including diagrams of how this might have mapped onto the *Mithraeum*. Both Christianity and Mithraism had temples of note in the – so recently and lamentably destroyed – settlement of Dura-Europos.

cults.[407] Christians were rather critical of the mystery-cults in general: as Neil McLynn has pointed out, Prudentius' description of the *Taurobolium* of the Magna Mater cult was more slander than authentic profanation.[408] Liturgy, both Christian and non-Christian, was seen in the ancient world as a participative, commemorative and imitative process that nourished the spiritual life of those who partook of it: this would have been as true to an *epoptes* of the Mithraic mysteries as it would have for the most ritualistic of Christian bishops.

It would be troublesome to suggest, however, that Basil would see this pathetic form of learning as only to be kept secret and the mathetic form to be proclaimed publicly. In *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil most closely relates the process of decoding the meaning of non-scriptural traditions to the process of scriptural exegesis, arguing that both use obscurity to conceal the more profound truths they hold.[409] The interpretation of Scripture, for Basil, seems to have been in many ways a more traditional learning-process, relating to the intellect first and foremost. Basil begins his *Homily on the Beginning of Proverbs* – of particular use to us as proverbs are, by definition, simple phrases concealing far more profound truths – by comparing God to a keen hunter and Christians to the hunter's puppies, the scriptures being constructed as a proving-ground for God "to test how one of his puppies runs around in hard to negotiate places."[410] Throughout the rest of the homily, Basil's main focus is *discipline* (παιδεῖα), and the rejection of common subjects of Greek learning in favour of the παιδεῖα of Scripture.[411] In this homily, Basil's outlook on the process of learning to read Scripture is one that generally aligns with

[407] An excellent overview of Christianity's engagement with Mithraism is Saskia Roselaar's *The Cult of Mithras in Early Christian Literature – An Inventory and Interpretation*. Klio vol.96.1 (2014), 183-217.

[408] See McLynn, Neil. *On the Fourth-Century Taurobolium*. Phoenix 50 (1996), 312-330.

[409] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

[410] Basil, *Homily on the Beginning of Proverbs* 1.

[411] See esp. Ibid. 6.

more traditional forms of learning, likely spurred on by the fact that he reads the acquisition of Scriptural discipline as a form of παιδεῖα, the common term for a Hellenistic education. Yet, one could not say that Basil views the profound truths concealed within Scripture as less valuable than those gleaned from more pathetic forms of learning – such as the participation in liturgy – as this would in effect place liturgical tradition over scripture. Seeing as Basil – in *On the Holy Spirit* – is actively defending himself from accusations of abandoning the Scriptures, such an approach would be counter-intuitive. Rather, to him they possess "the same force" as regards the acquisition of right belief.[412] Basil appears to view both as necessary for salvation, and indeed as complementary to each other, both having the same divine origin and both being training-grounds for the Christians to traverse on the way to God. In order to ascertain a fuller picture, Christians must employ the pathetic learning imparted by Christian practice and the mathetic learning imparted by the Scriptural *παιδεῖα* to uncover the secrets hidden in both.

The attitudes of the cults towards rite and ritual are therefore similar to Basil's own. Just as a participant in the Eleusinian mysteries is meant to learn through being subject to experiences rather than through exercise-books and intellectual rigour, the same could in some ways be said of Christian rite for Basil. Baptism, to him is a rite that is heavily founded in feeling. In his *On Baptism*, Basil recounts the baptismal rite thus:

> And thus, being baptised in the name of the Holy Spirit, we were born again. Having been born, also were we baptised in the name of the Son, we put on Christ. Then, having put on the new man according to God's creation, we were baptised in the name of the Father and proclaimed children of God.[413]

[412] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

[413] Basil, *On Baptism* 1,3,1.

In light of this passage, it would be difficult to argue that Basil did not consider baptism a process that involved being subject to significant physical and intellectual change, in which one is born again, literally is clothed in the flesh of the new man, and becomes a child of God. By the writing of *On the Holy Spirit*, this idea is even more strongly cemented. Everett Ferguson, in his book on Baptism in the early church, has suggested that – for Basil – is "an imitation of the death and burial of Christ."[414] Ferguson is certainly correct, as Basil himself uses these very same words. In *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil considers Baptism to, in a number of ways, be "the beginning of a second life." To this end, in order that a second life might be lived "the preceding one must be ended."[415] Every symbol points to the spiritual death and resurrection that occurs in baptism, and baptism itself is identified to be the form of expression (τύπος) by which this is represented.[416] Baptism, then, is to be understood as an ordeal for Basil, by which one is subject to powerful experience through the words spoken, the rites practiced, and the presence of water and Spirit, by which the inner man dies to the world and is resurrected in Christ. This is certainly not an innovation – Romans 6 utilises the same imagery when discussing the transformative power of baptism – but it is an imagining of baptism that reveals much about the way Basil considers the nature of ritual: it is the reflection of key moments in Christian history, reflected on either through imitation or practices driven by metaphor. Furthermore, this particular form of pathetic learning is metaphysically transformative, not being as much a learning process by meditation on the thing one was subjected to as an internal change effected by the power of the Spirit's light and the consent of the individual receiving it.

[414] Ferguson, Everett. *Baptism in the Early Church*, 588. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009.

[415] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 15,35.

[416] Ibid. 15,35.

Similarly, Basil asserts the importance of the practicality and feeling of even the most simple rites, such as standing for prayer:

> Now, obscurity is a form of silence found in scripture, that makes the meanings of the *dogmas* difficult to see for the readers. Due to this we look to the East for prayer, but few of us that know that we seek our ancient fatherland, the paradise which God planted in Eden, which was in the East. We say our prayers standing on the first day of the week, the Sabbath, but not all of us know the reason why. For not only are we resurrected together with Christ and are being made to seek what is above, but in standing for prayer we also remind ourselves of the grace given to us on the day of the resurrection.[417]

The exact meaning of these terms for Basil's notion of non-scriptural tradition will be explored later, but for now the meanings he ascribes to these simple rites are undeniably more about feeling than they are about learning. Instead of coming to intellectually comprehend Eden or the eschaton, these rites are instead about experiencing. One faces Eden in order to experience humanity in its original, sin-free state, and one stands for prayer on the Sabbath as a direct imitation of the rising up that will occur during the resurrection. The allegorical "reading" of this tradition is also rather interesting: Basil has at times been accused of a distaste for allegory – an accusation that is neither fair nor accurate – but which paints him as the least imaginative and most practical of the three "Cappadocian fathers."[418] This interpretation appears to be quite original – canon 20 of the Council of Nicaea discusses standing on the Lord's day but gives no reason – and is a fairly solid refutation of any suggestion that Basil is unimaginative or closed-minded when it comes to allegorical readings.

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[417] Ibid. 27,66.

[418] For a particularly strong example, see Sheldon-Williams, I.P. *The Cappadocians*, 432-3. In Armstrong, A.H. *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 432-456. Recent scholars, most notably Stephen Hildebrand (*Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*) and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz (*Transformation of Divine Simplicity*) have worked hard to challenge claims such as these.

Of course, there is one major issue with substantively linking Christian ritual and the mystery-cults on the fact that their liturgies both prioritise pathetic learning over mathetic learning: ritual is inherently experiential and imitative. Such a division between ritual and wider belief is not overly important to a devotee of any mystery-cult – after participating in them, they leave the sanctuary and live the same life as any other member of the wider society. This is not so for Christianity: as established, to be a Christian was to be more than simply a participant in the occasional ritual – it was a way of living. In this, one can adduce a philosophical slant to Christian attitudes towards ritual: it exists as but one facet of the Christian lifestyle that, when and only when pictured as a whole, moves the Christian forwards on the path to perfection. As such, though a pathetic dimension exists within the Christian religion, this is not where the Christian religion ends. Christian doctrine, ethics and individual contemplation were all more intellectual processes that were no less important than ritual involvement. Christianity's holistic attitude towards living in addition to practice is therefore reflected in what constitutes the "mysteries" for Basil, as not all things named *mysteries* and therefore not all *dogmata* are practices. Indeed, the matter of what a mystery was in Christian terms was a hotly debated point even up to Basil's own time.

THE LANGUAGE OF *MYSTERY*: EARLY CHRISTIAN CONVERSATIONS

Unlike philosophy, Christians generally rejected association with the mystery cults, an accusation levelled at them by their critics: some of whom considered them pale imitators of older mysteries, and others who saw them as similarly superstitious but more depraved in their practices.[419] Tertullian tries to refute claims Christian ritual involved infant sacrifice and cannibalism, and Justin Martyr is keen to

[419] See here Edwards, Mark. *Some Early Christian Immoralities*. Ancient World 23(1992), 71-82.

reject assertions that orgies were a common rite. Clement of Alexandria, however, goes on the offensive and argues that the so-called mysteries were in fact demonic perversions of the true, Christian mysteries. That such connections were made by non-Christians, however, is indicative that they were from the first equally secretive and were considered to have a religious dimension that most mirrored mystery cults rather than the civic dimension of the Hellenic *pistis.*

From the body of works we have, it seems the word *μυστήριον* would, to an educated non-Christian or non-Jewish Hellenist, be closely associated with practical rites. This is observed by Liddell-Scott's lexicon: outside of the Septuagint and the New Testament, in which μυστήριον is documented as meaning a "secret," the majority of usage in antiquity proper was to refer either to the practical mysteries of the cults or to their pertaining ceremonial ornaments.[420] Liddell-Scott is perhaps a tad simplistic here; the *mysteria* of the New Testament are rarely simple secrets but instead freshly revealed truths that were – until that moment – unknowns, though the retention of their secrecy was often a matter of concern. Indeed, where mystery is used to mean "secret," it is in philosophical texts such as Plato's *Theaetetus* or academic works such as the medicinal treatises of Galen.[421] It has been in this primarily practical vein that scholars have tended to particularly associate the term *μυστήριον* with *sacrament*. Though a confusion, this is an understandable one: to the rest of the Hellenised world, the dominant use of the term was to refer to practical dimensions of religious devotion, and contemporary critics of Christianity – as we have seen – generally were most intrigued by the privacy of ritual rather than doctrine. However, I would argue that this distinction is one that most church fathers did not themselves hold, and that those who did in fact consider a mystery to be inherently practical were heavily in the minority.

[420] See Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon,* 1156.

[421] See Ibid. 1156.

This connection of the term *μυστήριον* to the practical was not found in New Testament literature, where the term is consistently used – in particular by Paul – to mean a secret, particularly one of divine origin or focus.[422] Such attitudes are interestingly also found in the Septuagint, where the books of *Sirach*, *Tobit* and *2 Maccabees* all utilise the word *μυστήριον* in this way.[423] Two main reasons for this difference in meaning between the majority of Classical Greek works and the Jewish and Christian scriptures can be entertained: the first is that is that they use *μυστήριον* in the way they do because they are written by individuals who did not participate in Greek religion and were therefore outsiders to a system in which the term *μυστήριον* had a specific and technical meaning. The second is the naturally holistic approach to religion as a way of living that Christianity and Judaism took – an adherent to the mysteries would commit to their obligations at the temple and then go away and lead a life much like any other, just as they and others partook in the civic sacrifices and did much the same. For a Christian, however, religion did not end at practice – hence our previous discussion that it was more a *philosophia* than a *pistis* according to the terminology of the Late Antique world. Orthopraxy was not the only concern, with ortho*doxy* being the overriding matter of the day during the fourth century. It should come as no surprise, then, that the *mysteries*, those most profound objects of contemplation and worship might, to a Christian, be further-reaching than practice alone.

This lack of practical constraint in discerning what was and was not a *μυστήριον* meant that the term had, to some extent, a greater fluidity for Christians than it did for those participate in the civic *pistis*

[422] See e.g. 1 Cor. 2:6-7; 14:2; 2Thess. 2:7.

[423] *Si.* 27:16; *To.* 12:7; *2Macc.* 13:21. See also Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, 1156.

and its optional cults.[424] By the advent of Late Antiquity, what a Christian meant by *mystery* was diverse, sometimes showing a heavy similarity to the mystery cults and at other times being more holistic in approach. This variety is well-demonstrated by the length of the entry for *μυστήριον* in Lampe's lexicon, which rivals that of terms as common as *μοναχός* and *ούρανός* or as controversial as *ούσία* and *πρόσωπον*. Here a number of different meanings for the term are suggested over the course of four full columns, including secret knowledge, secret practices, the hidden things of God, sacraments and the hidden meaning of an act or doctrine.[425] This fluidity in meaning did not, however, extend to a fluidity in solemnity. To early Christian thinkers, the *mysteria* were by their very nature matters to be concealed from those deemed not yet fit to receive them. It is clear from what we saw earlier of Tertullian and Origen's discussions of the *mysteria* that though both considered knowledge of them to be in some manner restricted, the two would disagree on what, within the Christian experience, could be regarded as a mystery. Tertullian uses the term to describe rites and specifically those of initiation, while Origen considers mysteries to be anything worth concealing, whether that be doctrine, practice or even a particularly esoteric exegesis of scripture. If we are to believe Athanasius in *De Decretis*, the Meletians seem to have viewed little of the Christian religion to warrant *μυστήριον*-status, openly discussing or performing what Athanasius considered to be mysteries in front of both Catechumens and "Greeks."[426] Athanasius and Basil both publish the Nicene creed – the contents of which were perceived by Cyril of Jerusalem and Ambrose to be among the most profound mysteries of the faith – openly in letters, with Basil considering it to have the status of *κηρύγμα* rather than *δόγμα*.[427] It could

[424] This is not to say the fluidity of *praxis* was the only reason for such diversity. If we were to use one adjective for the state of Christian doctrine in the fourth century, it would certainly not be "solid." As we have seen in both previous chapters, what we now construe as Trinitarian orthodoxy was – even after Nicaea – one of many attempts to solve the Trinitarian problem.

[425] See Lampe, G.W.H. *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 891-3.

[426] See Athanasius, *Apology Against the Arians* 11.

[427] See Athanasius, *De Decretis;* Basil, *Ep. 125*; Cyril, *Procat.* 12; Ambrose, *Ep. 20*. It should here be noted that the Creed Cyril imparts to his illuminands is *not* the Nicene Creed, but a baptismal one. Where the Nicene creed was generally used as a document of censure, Cyril's creed was conversely one of initiatory confession. Their

also be argued that Eusebius viewed the creed to be a matter of discussion within the church alone – it is absent from his account of Nicaea in his *Life of Constantine*, but is delivered in its entirety to his own church in Caesarea Palestine.[428] Eusebius does appear to have been rather coy about Constantine's theological involvement in the Nicene proclamation of the *homoousion* in the *Life of Constantine* – this is odd indeed considering in his letter to the Caesareans, he is quite happy to tell them the insertion of the *homoousion* into the creed was Constantine's idea. Since it is rather unlike Eusebius to miss such an opportunity to fawn over the emperor – especially in the *Life of Constantine*, which ramps up the obsequiousness to a new level – it is safe to assume that, just as the rest of the creed, it would be improper to share the *homoousion* in a work that would reach beyond the Christian community.

For Basil, the term is incredibly fluid. Within *On the Holy Spirit* alone, the term is used to indicate matters of both practice and doctrine, but no distinction is readily made between the two. Baptism may be a *μυστήριον*, but so is the Trinity and that everything contained within the non-scriptural tradition – practical rites are thus but one of many things that deserve the status of *μυστήριον*, in Basil's eyes. Indeed, it seems that there is only one unifying factor in what constitutes a *mystery*: the fact that it is revealed by God. It is for this reason, therefore, that it is perhaps best to understand the *dogmata* as

contents are, however, incredibly similar; often to the point of complete agreement. This might lead some to differentiate between the two, the creed of Nicaea being public and the creed of Jerusalem private. I would contend, however, that this overlooks both the likely origin of the Nicene Creed and prioritises the importance of channels of dissemination over actual content. As observed by Kelly (*Early Christian Creeds,* 214), the similarity between the baptismal creed Eusebius cites in his letter to his own church and the Nicene Creed is quite remarkable and is sufficient evidence that – contrary to prior *ektheseis* of the faith – the formula of Nicaea was modelled on pre-existing baptismal formulae. Though its purpose radically differed from baptismal creeds, their content rarely did. It is therefore difficult to suggest that theologians would be reluctant to share one and not the other, since they both profess broadly the same doctrine of God: indeed Athanasius shares both the Nicene Creed and the Baptismal Creed of Caesarea in his *De Decretis*, and thus evidently did not feel that the latter should be concealed in a way the former should not. By the same logic, one should imagine Cyril would feel the same concern sharing the Nicene creed with outsiders and catechumens as he would with the local baptismal creed.

[428] See Eusebius, *Letter to his Church*.

exactly that – the mysteries of the church, made so because they contain a kernel of truth about God that is the product of self-revelation.

Wisdom Hidden in Mystery: The Meanings Contained Within Traditions

That the *dogmas* of the church were to be treated with silence is, as we have seen, not a question of debate for Basil. Here it is useful to return to his distinction between *kerygma* and *dogma*:

> In the same fashion, from the very beginning the apostles and fathers ordained the matters of the church, and guarded in secrecy and silence the purity of the mysteries – since that which is divulged in public and casual spheres is not at all a mystery. This is the purpose of non-scriptural traditions, so that the knowledge of the *dogmas* might not become neglected or despised by the many on account of their mundanity. For *kerygma* is one thing, *dogma* another – one is kept secret, while *kerygmata* are publically spoken.[429]

If something is a *dogma*, then, according to Basil's definition, the necessity of its concealment is *de re*. *Dogmata,* just as *mysteria,* are by their very nature to be hidden, lest they be profaned through proclamation and attacked through misunderstanding.

Though, however, liturgies and rituals "are not to be seen by the uninitiated," as Basil states, there is a dipartite kind of concealment going on here. Though the words of the rituals themselves are to be concealed to some extent by their nature as *dogmata*, the meaning hidden within these rituals is even more secret, and requires another level of silence. When speaking of exactly why the meanings behind liturgical practice are hidden from the uninitiated, Basil says this:

[429] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 27,66.

> Now, obscurity is a form of silence found in scripture, that makes the meanings of the *dogmas* difficult to see for the readers. Due to this we look to the East for prayer, but few of us that know that we seek our ancient fatherland, the paradise which God planted in Eden, which was in the East. We say our prayers standing on the first day of the week, the Sabbath, but not all of us know the reason why. For not only are we resurrected together with Christ and are being made to seek what is above, but in standing for prayer we also remind ourselves of the grace given to us on the day of the resurrection.[430]

The first of these hidden meanings is – to say the least – theologically dense. The language is unsurprisingly obscure, but Basil's claim appears to be that by seeking Eden we remind ourselves of our primal state before the fall. The latter is no less complex. By playing on the fact that, in Greek, the term for resurrection and for standing up are from the same verb, *ἀνίστημι*, Basil argues that our rising up out of our seats is to remind us of our rising out of our graves on the day of the resurrection. These are profound theological justifications for the simplest aspects of Christian worship – when Basil argued that the meanings were obscure, he was not lying. The question of the authenticity of such rationales aside, the depth of meaning in such a reading is up there with the most acute of exegetical observations, and would be far beyond what the average Christian might consider when contemplating the meaning of the rituals in which they participate.

Other theologians before Basil discussed the inner meaning of ritual: Origen, in his treatise *On Prayer*, has much to say about the inner meaning of prayerful posture. For him, the lifting up of hands is a means of "directing the mind to God before the eyes," and kneeling at other points in prayer a demonstration of prostration before God, for "it is a symbol of the man who is abject and submissive." [431] Origen, like Basil, also discusses prayer to the East, though suggests it is done

[430] Ibid. 27,66.

[431] Origen, *On Prayer* 31.2-3.

"symbolically of the soul looking to the *rising* of *the true light*."[432] It is difficult to know whether Basil had read *On Prayer,* but the message on the inner meaning of posture is quite related, and Basil – though differing in interpretation – employs the same method of 'reading' ritual acts as Origen does: as parsing from an outer expression an inner and profound meaning,. Once more, it seems, Basil remains an Origenist at heart, taking the notion of inner and outer meaning that permeates the thought of Origen, and applying it seamlessly to his own context, where it is not so much the meaning of prayer but rather its value as a source of knowledge that is in question.

This attitude, that all ritual and liturgy has a deep theological reason behind it is not new to Basil – one can see the seeds of this in *Against Eunomius*, through the argument from both confessions of faith and the baptismal liturgy. Similarly, one would be hard-pressed to find a patristic author who would disagree: the words of Matthew 28:19 ("go forth and baptise all nations in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,"), and their establishment in the baptismal rite, were central to the Trinitarian debates of the fourth century – though Basil is rare in discussing the liturgy of baptism itself as being an exegesis of this rather than a separate source. In his *Mystagogic Catecheses*, Cyril of Jerusalem dissects the sacraments his audience have just received, expounding upon even the smallest minutiae of the ceremonies. In his eyes, they were prepared to understand the meaning hidden in the rituals they had just witnessed and in which they had just participated. Basil, however, argues the knowledge above is restricted amongst even the baptised: "We say our prayers standing on the first day of the week, the Sabbath, but not all of us know the reason why."[433]

[432] Ibid. 32.

[433] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

THE EXEGESIS OF NON-SCRIPTURAL TRADITIONS

That this bears some resemblance to particularly analytical exegeses of Scripture, and that Basil compares the obscurity of scripture and non-scriptural *dogmas* beforehand, is of significance. Benoît Pruche makes observation of this, suggesting that Basil here alludes to Jesus' justification for speaking in parables in Luke 8.9-10.[434] This is certainly possible, though Basil himself goes on to mention that Genesis 1's account of the first day, the Psalmist's titling of certain Psalms in reference to the eternal, and the narrative of Pentecost symbolically demonstrate the same vision towards the end times as contemplated when standing during Sunday worship.[435] In contrast to Pruche, based on the Scriptures Basil cites, I would argue that the non-scriptural *dogmas* utilise the same obscurity as Scripture to conceal a more profound meaning, which can be unveiled to those fit to receive it. The onus is therefore on spiritual father to impart such knowledge to Spiritual son, along with the method by which one comes to understand it. Basil himself acknowledges this process as regards his "with"-doxology:

> I myself, if I must speak for myself, guard this word (the doxological use of "with") as something of a paternal inheritance, receiving it from a man who lived his life in the long service (λειτουργία) of God, by whom I was baptised and by whom I was introduced into the ministry of the church.[436]

Probably referencing a previous bishop of Caesarea, Dianius, this can be read both as an attestation of the precedent of his doxology through apostolic succession, but also indicates that this word came as the fruits of instruction between master and student. Basil learned this doxology from the man who taught him how to perform the liturgies of the Church, and one can comfortably assume that such a

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[434] See Pruche, *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, 485.

[435] See *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66. On the Psalms, this may be a reference to Psalms 6 and 11(12) being titled in the Septuagint with "εἰς τὸ τέλος ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀγδόης (concerning the end, over the eighth)." Basil appears therefore to believe both the first day of creation and the day of the eschaton to be Sundays.

[436] Ibid. 29,71.

mentoring relationship would account for the instruction in why the use of such a doxology – which by Basil's own admission is a rare one – was justified.

Such instruction was always at the centre of the relationship between a priest and his faithful – the homily exists as testimony to this. The idea of doctrine being expounded upon in the privacy of Church services to the baptised faithful was central to the early Christian experience from an early stage, and was ubiquitous to fourth-century Christianity. This is especially true of the things hidden in Scripture: the wealth of homilies on scripture we have from this period is more than sufficient evidence of this, and in particular recent work by Morwenna Ludlow and Johann Leemans has explored how different genres of Christian literature were tailored for the level of education and commitment of their audiences.[437] Homilies are often overlooked by historians of doctrine, likely due to the relative simplicity of their content that serves as a stark contrast to the lengthy and learned treatises written between bishops and other members of the intellectual elite. For this reason, we as historians often forget that, if one wishes to see the kind of elucidation of important texts one might find in philosophical schools of late antiquity, we should look no further than the homily. Again, we find Cyril of Jerusalem to be of great help here, being that both his catechetical works and a homily survive. In contrast to the overview provided in his *Catechetical Lectures*, his *Homily on the Paralytic* contains an astounding focus and depth. Allegorical readings of both John 5 – from which the homily receives its title – and Song of

[437] See Leemans, Johann. *General Introduction* in Leemans, Johann, Meyer, Wendy, Allen Pauline & DehandSchutter, Boudewijn eds. *Let us Die that we May Live: Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria, 350-450 AD* (London: Routledge, 2003), 3-47; Ludlow, Morwenna. *Origen as Preacher and Teacher: A Comparison of Exegetical Method in his Homilies and Commentaries*, in Lyons, William John & Sandwell, Isabella eds. *Delivering the Word: Preaching and Exegesis in the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2014). Ludlow's article is of particular use in understanding how Basil might recognise the difference between the homily and the commentary – in his *Homily on the Beginning of Proverbs*, Basil demonstrates a clear knowledge of Origen's commentary and homilies on the *Song of Songs*, and – as noted by Mark DelCogliano (*On Christian Doctrine and Practice,* 53) almost certainly used Origen's discussion of Proverbs in the *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs* 3 as the foundation of the homily here.

Songs permeate the homily, and Cyril reads both in a manner so that his audience might understand that Christ is "the physician of Gnosis," who gives "the saving gnosis" to those who are fit to receive it.[438] To Cyril here, the message of John 5 is to "let the body be led by the soul instead of the soul being carried away by carnal pleasure," so that those still holding on to the ears of the flesh might instead turn inwards and rely on the testimony of the ears of the inner man.[439] Through his homilies, then, Cyril desired to impart to his audience the hidden meanings of the scriptures, reading past the obscurity of Scripture for the sake of his audience, and handing over the tools necessary for them to do the same in their private meditations.

The same is certainly true of Basil. Though we have no catechetical works to consider, Basil consistently imparted to his audience both the method of exegesis and the truths that this unveiled. It is this idea, with some variation, that underpins the way Basil considers the hidden meanings of non-scriptural traditions to be passed from one generation to the next. Georges Florovsky claims that, for Basil, the "élite" to which these meanings were imparted was simply the body of baptised Christians.[440] De Mendieta, on the other hand, considers this élite to be beyond simply the baptised – only those "intellectually able and spiritually purified" were capable of receiving and understanding such truths.[441] On this matter, De Mendieta is unreservedly correct. However, for him, the meanings of non-scriptural traditions are not even for the eyes and ears of most of the baptised. Instead, they are for a different kind of élite in the world – the ascetics. Though such an audience could not have been imagined for most of his sermons – Basil indeed notes in his homilies on the Hexaemeron that his audience would

[438] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Homily on the Paralytic,* 6; 19

[439] Ibid. 18.

[440] Florovsky, *The Function of Tradition in the Early Church,* 195.

[441] De Mendieta, *Apostolic Traditions,* 69-70.

rather be doing other things and he is "detaining" them in the church – a treatise is another matter: Basil could be rather safe in the assumption that it would be only Amphilochius, his suffragan bishops and those they deemed fit to read the work that would ever get their hands on it. In other words, the very process of the *ekdosis* of a work in Late Antiquity led to a rather restricted audience of those who were in the political and economic position to request a copy. Furthermore, as Basil ends the treatise – as has been noted several times already – with a warning to Amphilochius to limit the audience lest he were to "cast pearls before swine," we can imagine that Basil viewed a very small and very select audience for his work. In this, he would therefore be afforded more liberty in expounding upon the enigmas of liturgical practice at which – given a wider readership – he might have otherwise shown reluctance. As such, though it is certainly true that some doctrines were given to the baptised without further restrictions – the existence of the homily as a distinct pedagogical format is testament to this – *On the Holy Spirit* is very much not a homily, differing in tone, content and intended audience. Since his readership for this treatise would have been – in his eyes – a rather elevated bunch, chosen either by him or Amphilochius, doubtless he would have felt greater licence to discuss the mysteries in more open terms.

Indeed, to attain such an ability as to delve into the mysteries and yet comprehend them properly was developed through training. It should be no surprise that Basil is so concerned with the training of the self to be more intellectually and spiritually perfect, the term *askēsis* itself simply means "training," and the denial of the physical for the sake of the spiritual can be considered the maxim at the core of its ideology. Indeed, though ἄσκησις is a term wholly absent from *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil ends the fourteenth chapters of the treatise by extolling the training of the spiritual senses for the contemplation and apprehension of "wisdom hidden in mystery," ending with a comparison of such training to physical training – γύμνασις:

> Surely this, to be ignorant of the great mystery of our salvation, is something of a completely childish mind, something of a child who truly is in need of milk. According to the elementary manner of teaching, we were introduced to training for perfection in piety and were instructed in knowledge, first in subjects easy to grasp andin proportion with our ability. The one who directed us, as if we were eyes kept in the dark, led us up towards the great light of truth, accustoming us to it bit by bit. For by sparing our weakness, in the depths of the wealth of his wisdom and in the unsearchable judgements of his intellect he showed to us a guidance gentle and obliging: he first trained us to see the silhouettes of bodies, and to look at the sun in water, so that we might not be made blind by dashing ourselves on the vision of unmarred light.[442]

> According to the same logic, the law, then, "being a shadow of things to come" and the prefiguration of the prophets, an enigma of the truth, is intended as a training-ground for the eyes of the heart, so that to move from these things to the "wisdom hidden in mystery" might be a simple matter for us.[443]

Clear allusions to Plato's *Republic* VII and the famed cave analogy aside, Basil here observes that the process by which understanding is gained is – by its very nature – gradual. This is even more the case when contemplating the mysteries, which are like looking into the sun itself: unless one has first become accustomed to its light, any attempt to do so would be a futile effort. Just so are ascetics, training themselves to be capable of seeing and contemplating the mysteries in their fullness. De Mendieta makes the claim that this wisdom is the body of non-scriptural tradition, visible and comprehensible by those fit to receive it.[444] However, Basil's view is more holistic. Indeed, Basil describes the method of understanding Scripture in exactly the same language in his *On Greek Literature*:

> The holy Scriptures, which teach us through divine words, lead us into eternal life. But so long as our immaturity forbids our understanding their deep thought, we exercise our spiritual faculties upon impious writings, which are not altogether different, and in which we perceive the truth as it were in the shadows and in mirrors. Thus, we imitate those who perform the exercises of military practice, for they attain skill in gymnastics and dancing, and then in battle reap the reward of their training. We must believe that

[442] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 14,33

[443] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, 14,33.

[444] De Mendieta, *Apostolic Traditions,* 69-70.

> the greatest of all battles lies ahead, in preparation for which we must do and suffer everything to gain strength. Thus, we must be in conversation with poets, historians, orators, indeed with all men who may further the salvation of our soul. Just as dyers prepare the cloth before they apply the dye, whether it is purple or any other colour, so then must we also, if we would preserve unmarred the idea of true virtue, become first initiated in the pagan stories, then at length give special attention to the sacred and divine teachings, even as we first accustom ourselves to the sun's reflection in the water, and then become able to turn our eyes upon the very sun itself.[445]

he spiritual senses are used to find the meanings hidden within the obscurity of Scripture, with pagan literature as an introduction to the application of these senses to literature. The method behind the comprehension of both non-scriptural traditions and Scripture, then, is the same. As one might read Scripture, one might 'read' – as it were – tradition. Indeed, as we can see from the latter text, it would seem Basil views the same to be true of right understanding of pagan literature: seeing with the spiritual eyes will always reveal what is hidden to the eyes of the flesh.

For Basil, it is clear the exegete of these non-scriptural traditions is the ascetic: one who is advanced in their journey towards the perfected spiritual life. *On the Holy Spirit* is a work that exists as a conversation between himself and Eustathius – his ascetical mentor – dedicated and addressed to Amphilochius, his ascetical mentee, and the work is permeated with allusions to the fact that it is they, the ascetics of the church, who are most suited to participate in the divine reality and contemplate its mysteries. The contemplation of the Spirit, through which all the things of God are unveiled, is predicated upon holiness "through purity of heart," a term that – though originally Matthaean – is here unequivocally ascetic in its usage, both contextually and within Basil's own theological thought.[446] For

[445] Basil, *On Greek Literature,* 2

[446] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22.53. Surprisingly little on this has been done, mostly in Luckman, Harriet and Kulzer, Linda eds. *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honor of Juana Raasch, O.S.B* (Collegeville, MI: Liturgical Press, 1999). As this volume evidences both in title and in content, the term has a notable patristic pedigree.

Basil, purity of heart is the primary goal of the ascetic, and therefore the method by which one becomes worthy to receive the things of God. To him – as he himself defines it in his *Short Rules*, purity of heart is:

> Not allowing oneself into rejection of the commandment of God, or defect, or moral indifference (Ὁ μὴ λαμβανόμενος ἐαυτοῦ ἐπὶ ἀθετήσει ἐντολῆς Θεοῦ, ἢ ἐλλείψει, ἢ ἀμελείᾳ).[447]

The process of attaining purity of heart, then, is tripartite: to follow God's command, to erase every spiritual defect and to remain morally vigilant – in other words, it serves as the fruit of ascetical discipline. Elsewhere, Basil is clear that this purity of heart enables a heightened communion with God in his treatise *On Baptism,* the process of the imitation of Christ and the drawing near to God is the hatred of all evil things, the movement away from an evil-minded disposition and "the demonstration of purity of heart (τὸ καθαρὸν τῆς καρδίας ἐνδεικνυμένῳ)."[448] Similarly, Basil's letter 8 – a defence of his ascetical retreat – leads up to the evocation of Matthew's blessing of the pure of heart, saying that it is only through the nourishing of the inner man, achievable solely through "the active life, (τὴν πρακτικὴν ὁδὸν)" that the divine reality can be contemplated.[449] Immediately thereafter, Basil calls – following Solomon – his audience to be as diligent as ants or bees, to work single-mindedly and restlessly towards the purity of heart that leads up to the vision of God.[450]

[447] Basil, *Regulae Brevius* 280.

[448] Basil, *On Baptism* 1.15.

[449] Basil, *Letter* 8.12

[450] Ibid. 8.12.

In *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil is clear that the path to the vision of God is ascetical: in chapter fourteen, he argues that – with Baptism as the beginning of the process – the ascent towards God is one that is achieved piecemeal as part of one's "training" for Godliness, the teaching of the law and of the prophets as "means to train the eyes of the heart, in that from them the movement towards the *wisdom hidden in mystery* will be made straightforward."[451] Though the word *askesis* is never used in the text, this *gymnastic* language would have had the same fundamental meaning for any educated Greek-speaker, and especially any ascetically-inclined Christian. The vision of the mysteries, and of the God they unveil, therefore, is for Basil always predicated upon rigorous spiritual training, the core of ascetic discipline; a path on which all Christians have embarked since baptism, but on which the ascetics are particularly far. Only when one's eyes of the heart are pure can the mysteries hidden in the faith be glimpsed, early days to *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil seems to hold a very special place for *askesis* as the only and fundamental means by which an individual can be deemed worthy of a more perfect vision of God, by which the hidden wisdom of the faith unveils itself before them. This appears to be a point of agreement between Basil and his mentee: Basil closes the treatise by requesting Amphilochius exercise restraint in handing out the work to others "not because it does not deserve to be made known, but so as not to cast pearls before swine."[452] To Basil, their shared devotion to and understanding of the mysteries is enough to convince him that his work and its contents are in safe hands, the mysteries and their meaning being transferred from one member of the ascetic elite to another.

We should not, however, understand Basil to be limiting the title of *ascetic* to the ordained or the monastic: As with Gregory Nazianzen on his own sister Gorgonia – a married lay woman – Basil is rather unrestrictive over who can achieve the requisite purity of heart to rightly contemplate God. As Stephen

[451] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 14,33.

[452] Ibid. 30.79.

Hildebrand notes, Basil's asceticism was not one that ignored the laity, but instead viewed all Christians as pilgrims on the path to perfection.[453] Though living as part of a monastic community might help in the pursuit of divine things, it was certainly not a pre-requisite: in this Basil was very much Cappadocian in his asceticism, sharing his advice for ascetical progress equally with his select monks and the far less select audience that congregated to his church to hear his homilies. The ascetic, to Basil, is an individual that inhabits a particular ethico-epistemological Christian existence: they can come from anywhere and be anyone, only differentiated from their Christian peers by their level of spiritual progression. It is in the results of this progression that mysteries become graspable, and the participation in the Spirit achievable.

PRECEDENT: RESERVE, ACCESSIBILITY AND *EPOPTICS*

The concealment of hidden meaning in this manner is something relatively common in third and fourth-century literature, though most writers solely occupy themselves with the wisdom contained within scripture. Of all these, Origen is the most famous and almost certainly the most influential on Basil, either directly or through intermediaries such as Didymus. Basil's idea of wisdom hidden within mystery is quite reminiscent of *On First Principles* chapter 4, where Origen states:

> One therefore must portray the meanings of the sacred scriptures in a threefold manner upon our own soul, so that the more simple man might be raised up by what we call the flesh of the scriptures, this name being given to the evident interpretation – while the man who is perfect and like those spoken of by the apostle, "we speak wisdom among the perfect, but a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nothing, but we speak God's "wisdom in a mystery," even the mystery that has been kept secret, which God preordained before the world for the sake of our glory (1 Cor. 2.6-7)." This man might be raised up by the Spiritual law, which has a shadow of the good things to come. For just as a man is made up of body,

[453] See Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* (2014), 159-64.

> soul and spirit, so in the same way are the Scriptures, which have been prepared by God to be given for the salvation of humanity.[454]

Basil was certainly aware of this section of *On First Principles,* it being contained within the *Philocalia of Origen* of which we know at least that Basil was a patron, if not himself a compiler.[455] Such an attitude is also expressed in the fragments of his *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, where we see that Origen considered this an established practice of the church:

> Therefore, we reveal the wisdom of God not to the catechumens, nor to the beginners, nor to those who do not yet show signs of sound living. But if someone has trained their senses to distinguish between good and evil and might become able to hear wisdom, then "we speak wisdom among the perfect (1 Cor 2.6)…" Therefore, if we do talk of wisdom and speak it among the perfect, we speak wisdom not of this age; nor do we do so through poetry or through anything of such a discipline.[456]

The similarity of this exegetical method to the way in which the *dogmata* of tradition are both hidden and unveiled is quite astonishing. Before we move on to Basil, however, it is worth noting an issue with the term *reserve*. Scholars have generally considered the concealment of doctrine to be a matter of *reserve*, by which knowledge of certain doctrines was only handed over to those intellectually or spiritually fit to receive and rightly comprehend them. However, this term is manufactured and thoroughly unreflective of the way in which a patristic writer would have understood the matter. As opposed to the term *disciplina arcani*, which has more practical connotations, where the matter of doctrine was viewed to also be necessarily concealed, a different term has traditionally been invoked – *reserve*. Where advocates of the *disciplina arcani* attempt to unite all appeals to the concealment of practice under one umbrella term, advocates of *reserve* do the same to doctrine. Particularly discussed

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[454] Origen, *On First Principles* 4.2.4.

[455] See *Philocalia of Origen* 168. On the matter of Basil's authorship, see See Junod, Éric. Origène: Philocalie 21-27: Sur le Libre Arbitre, 12 (SC226). Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1976; Mclynn, Neil. What was the "Philocalia of Origen?" Meddelanden Från Collegium Patristicum Lundense 19. Lund, 2004, pp.32-43. On this matter I find McLynn's argument that the text is a work of a Caesarean librarian to be the more compelling.

[456] Origen, *Fragments on 1 Corinthians,* 9.

and viewed as historically sustainable by De Mendieta and Hanson, the doctrine of *reserve* was believed to be the idea that certain teachings and meanings of scripture were hidden from the not yet worthy as a way of ensuring they would not misunderstand them or profane them – both use Origen's discussion of such matters in the prologue of *On First Principles* as their main source for such a notion, and both consider this to be much rarer than the ever-present *disciplina arcani*.

However, this distinction is artificial, relying as it does on the *disciplina* being ubiquitous and *reserve* less so. Furthermore, it somewhat conflates *reserve* with the philosophical process which tended to withhold major texts: this may well have been the case for certain philosophical or rhetorical works, but Christians would preach on any book of scripture to an individual of any level of initiation, an approach which – Origen contends – was not shared by the Jews when it came to the *Song of Songs,* which was withheld from all but the worthy.[457] What they would not do, however, was to reveal the hidden senses of these scriptures to just anyone; though the plain text was open to all, its underlying layers were to be unveiled by rigorous reading and intellectual and spiritual discipline. Again – as is so often the case when working with him – Origen as good as anticipates this, and reminds his *simpliciores* at the start of his first homily on the book to become spiritual exegetes themselves if they desire to know the work better.[458] John McGuckin has made similar observations concerning Lactantius' idea of how the *intima* of scripture come to be known, since the scriptures "presuppose an initiation before they become comprehensible."[459] Both these terms – *disciplina arcani* and *reserve* - are in my view attempts to taxonomise a general respect for the mysteries in such a way that there might be a comfortable division between the practical and the non-practical that few – if any – patristic writers

[457] See Origen, *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs,* 4.

[458] Origen, *First Homily on the Song of Songs,* 3.

[459] McGuckin, John A. *Researches into the Divine Institutes of Lactantius* (PhD thesis, Durham), 153-4.

would have recognised; the conflation between reserve and accessibility that so often occurs being a prime example of this lack of distinction in more ancient notions of secrecy or concealment. More realistically, it is fair to say – as Tertullian and Basil so straightforwardly point out – the fact that these ideas were by their nature mysteries was a command to treat them with respect and maintain the silence that they demanded.

Perhaps the scholarly reason for such a mix-up is a tacit but admirable attempt to retain the distinctions between philosophical concealment and cultic concealment that existed in the wider late antique context these Christian thinkers found themselves. This is certainly reflective of the late antique world at large – the philosophers concerned themselves little with ritual, as is evidenced by the more holistic way through which they perceived themselves to do right by the Gods. The opposite is true of the cults – one did not strive to become a *knower* but instead a *seer* of the mysteries. This distinction is especially important when considering the Alexandrian origins of more mystical theological thought: Clement, as John Behr notes, has a notion of an esoteric *gnostic tradition* that is intrinsically tied to Scripture: the latter being the "foundation" and the former the "superstructure," as Clement puts it.[460] This leads naturally to a doctrine of reserve over the hidden meanings of Scripture, as in Behr's words, "In contrast to the Gnostic, simple believers have insufficient understanding to comprehend the Scriptures; not admitted to the secrets of the 'gnostic tradition', they have as little chance of understanding Scripture as an ass has of playing a lyre."[461] Both simple believers and perfect Christians – in Clement's eyes – constantly observe the same edifice, but the Gnostic has a keener perception. Often Christians –

[460] Clement, *Stromateis* 5.4.26.

[461] Behr, John. *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 189-90.

especially of an Alexandrian persuasion – would, however, use vision-language such as *theoria* and *epopteia* out of a form of habit, sight being the Greek sensory metaphor of choice to portray knowledge.

This so-called reserve, in which the wisdom contained in Scripture can only be revealed through one's own internal and acquired wisdom – hence necessitating the concealment of the intimations of Scripture from those unfit to understand – is demonstrated as beyond the catechumenate, a different kind of task entirely from the simple readings elucidated in catechesis:

> The beginning of your words is truth (Ps. 118.160a)." Wherever there is a beginning, I seek the things after the beginning, until I come to the end. And just as with "the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Ps. 110.10a LXX; Prov. 9.10)," if the beginning of wisdom is fear, seeking the things after the beginning which must be better and greater than fear, I find that it is love. As there, so here, if indeed "the beginning of the words" of God is "truth," what might the things that follow this beginning be? And what is the end of this beginning, which is "truth?" Being instructed, we receive the truth, without the wisdom which establishes the certainty of the truth, and without the reason which demonstrates the truth. On account of this "beginning of the words," by which man receives into salvation, it is not "wisdom," the "beginning" is not "reason (logos)," but "truth." The catechumenate is instructed that "there is one God of all (Eph. 4.6)," being taught that Christ was sent "at the end of the ages," to nullify sin through his body (cf. Heb. 9,26). He was begotten paradoxically from a virgin, he suffered, being crucified by men, he rose from the dead on the third day. It is handed over to him being instructed that after departing from here, there is a holy life for the blessed and life in punishment for the sinners. These are true, but not as yet pondered and established with wisdom and reason. Later, if he becomes eager for knowledge (ἐὰν γένηται φιλομαθής), the argument/preparation of reason will also come.[462]

For Origen, as with Clement of Alexandria before him, it was in *epopteia* that theology most comfortably sat.[463] In addition to the *ēthikē* and *physikē* categories into which the corpus of philosophical thought were often lumped, these early Alexandrian theologians focussed on a final, oddly cultic classification:

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[462] Origen, *Fragmenta in Psalmos* 1,3 In Harl, Marguerite. *La Chaîne Palestinienne Sur le Psaume 118* (SC 189 - Paris, Éditions du Cerf, 1972), 438.

[463] Clement's interaction with epoptic language is central to the thesis of Camelot, Pierre. *Foi et Gnose: Introduction à l'étude de la Connaissance Mystique Chez Clément d'Alexandrie* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1945).

the *epoptic*. This was not an innovation in any sense, and had, according to Crouzel, Bréssard and Kirchmeyer had already been part of philosophical discussions since Plutarch and Theo of Smyrna.[464] However, unlike with the Eleusinian *epoptai,* the aim was not to spectate the mysteries, but to contemplate them intellectually. Origen, in his introduction to his *Commentary on the Song of Songs,* says this:

> There are three branches of the discipline by which one generally attains knowledge of things, which the Greeks named *ethics*, *physics* and *epoptics/enoptics/theōrics*; we may call these moral, natural and inspective. Some among the Greeks, of course, would add a fourth, *logic*, which we might describe as rational. Others have said that *logic* does not stand on its own, but is connected and intertwined across the three disciplines that we first mentioned…the discipline called introspective is that by which we surpass that which is seen and to some extent contemplate the divine and heavenly things, regarding them with the mind alone, for they are beyond the remit of bodily sight.[465]

Evidently, then, Origen construes the one who contemplates the most profound things as in some way an *epoptēs*, but one who beholds them with the intellect rather than the physical faculty of sight. God cannot be beheld by anything other than the intellect, being incorporeal, and therefore it is only through the epoptic that a vision of God can be achieved. There is some disagreement in both manuscript tradition and scholarship on the particular word used: *enoptic, epoptic* and *theōric* are all attested to, though as Mark Edwards notes scholarship currently tends to lean towards *enoptic*.[466] We should perhaps read the term as a riff on *epoptic*, which as Edwards also notes is more noticeably Greek, and with *theōria* as a synonym: *theoria* is suggested by Riedwig to be an alternative for *epoptic* in the

[464] See SC375, 128-9 ff.1. See also Kirchmeyer, J. *Origène: Commentair sur le Cantique, Prol.*, in Studia Patristica Vol. X (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1970), 203-5. Also see in Kirchmeyer the point that some translators have rendered "epoptic" as "enoptic."

[465] Origen, *Prologue to the Commentary on the Song of Songs,* 3.1-3.

[466] Edwards, *Origen Against Plato*, 140.

Philonic corpus: indeed, the work of Nightingale would suggest such connections in Plato himself.[467] Tzamalikos claims there to be the same conflation in Origen's work, *epoptics* being used far less and solely to satisfy Greek mystery-sensibilities: he is right to emphasize the mysteries at this moment, but considering this is a more general statement on the nature of epistemology in response to Greek conventions rather than purely a matter of exegetical methodology – though of course this is the framework he is encouraging his audience to develop – it should be no surprise Origen uses this term over *theōria,* which to him and his followers would likely convey additional, Christian, connotations.[468] I leave the judgements on the exact words of the *Prologue* to better Origen scholars than I, since for the purpose of this thesis the exact terminology is only tangentially relevant. Whether Origen's original words were *epoptic, enoptic* or *theōric*, the term to him denotes a metaphysical faculty of sight, by which the divine reality can be subjected to some level of contemplative endeavour by the individual.

Basil takes much the same approach to the idea, and in this case the manuscript tradition is far less diverse: the privilege of never having drawn the ire of Theophilus of Alexandria, perhaps. In the section of *On the Holy Spirit* in which he explains tradition, the contemplation is not the more common visual term *θεωρέω*, used elsewhere in the treatise, but rather this more mystic *ἐποπτεύω*:

> Does it (the baptismal renunciation of Satan) not come from this secret and unspoken (ἀπόρρητος) teaching that our fathers guarded with a reverent and simple silence, since they were taught well that the solemnity of the mysteries must be preserved through silence? Such matters must not be beheld (ἐποπτεύειν) by the uninitiated (τοῖς ἀμυήτοις), and how is it right that this teaching be published in writing? What did great Moses intend when he made it the case that all the things of the temple were not accessible to all? But he made those profaned to stand outside of the sacred quarter, he gave those who were more pure (τοῖς καθαρωτέροις) access to the first courts, and he judged the Levites alone fit to be ministers of God. He assigned sacrifices and burnt offerings and the rest of the holy work to the priests and allowed only one

[467] Riedweg, Cristoph. *Mysterienterminologie bei Platon, Philon und Klemens von Alexandrien* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986), 5-6; 91. See also Nightingale, *Theoria in its Cultural Context*.

[468] Tzamalikos, Panayiotis. *Origen: Philosophy of History and Eschatology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 359-60.

> of them who was chosen to enter the holy of holies, and not even him at any time, but on only one day of the year. He established a set hour of this day for the entry of the priest so that, in wonder by its strangeness and unusual nature he may behold (ἐποπτεύειν) the holy of holies. Moses saw rightly that disdain comfortably belongs to that which is simple and easily understood, while that which is greatly desired is somehow naturally connected to withdrawal and scarcity.[469]

The preference for *epoptic* language here is quite reminiscent of that of Origen in the previous passage: both in bare language and their shared definition of it as pertaining to the more elusive qualities of the divine life. Basil outlines that the respect for the mysteries, which prevents the uninitiated from beholding them – beholding here being ἐποπτεύειν and therefore more introspective than physical seeing – is the exact same reasoning by which Moses was commanded to set up the temple in the manner he did, with only the smallest of number being viewed as fit to look upon the holy of holies. The temple is gone, and the holy of holies no longer exists, but it is the *mysteries* that become these new objects of epoptic contemplation, by which the closest possible communion with God is attained. Furthermore, that Basil uses the most perfect example of the temple and its own practices of reserve, he too points out the inherent importance of keeping some divine truths even from those who are initiates in the faith, with only the "most pure," as he puts it above, attaining this more perfect epoptic vision. This is an asceticism that would not have been alien to Origen: his exegetical method was certainly definable as *askēsis*, as has been noted by Susanna Drake on Origen's use of veils to describe the hidden meanings in the Hebrew Bible, but Basil's notion of asceticism is more explicitly so.[470] Once more, then, Basil is gunning for a structure of the church with the ascetics on top, where only they are able, by virtue of their purity, to receive the dogmata and understand them properly.

[469] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66.

[470] See Drake, Susanna. *Origen's Veils: The Askēsis of Interpretation*. Church History 83.4 (2014), 815-42.

THE *DISCIPLINA*, SCRIPTURE AND *DOGMA*

It seems, therefore, that Basil considers the *dogmata* of which tradition is made up to be not unlike the wisdom hidden in scripture. I would in fact argue that, based on one specific pericope of *On the Holy Spirit*, the hidden things of Scripture and tradition are more alike than they might initially appear. As we saw, there are certainly similarities between the so-called *disciplina arcani* and Basil's idea of the secrecy with which certain aspects of tradition are to be passed down. However, in analysing Basil's use of *dogma* and the *disciplina arcani*, De Mendieta has missed out on a particular issue with equating the two – that *dogma* as a concept refers to far more than just liturgical rites.

It is odd that De Mendieta equates *dogma* and the *disciplina* as he does without considering the fact that other doctrines are considered *dogmata* by Basil within *On the Holy Spirit*, as he himself identifies. Most notable among these is the nature of the Spirit as *homotimos* with the Father and Son – an idea Basil discusses in the earlier half of the treatise:

> In truth it is the faith that is the target of their war, and – shared by all those who oppose and despise sound doctrine, it is their intention to cast down the foundation of faith in Christ by destroying apostolic tradition and to deprive us of it. Due to this, like true debtors they demand demonstrations from the scriptures, and dismiss the non-scriptural testimony of the Fathers as without value … For if the Lord has handed on (παραδέδωκε) as a necessary and saving *dogma* that the Holy Spirit is ranked with the Father, then how does it not appear so to those who in contrast divide and separate him and banish him to a servile nature? If all these things are in fact true, then how is it not the case that they make their blasphemy greater in authority than the precept of the Lord?[471]

This passage is prefaced by Basil's invocation of Matthew 28.19 (go forth and baptize all nations in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit), after which Basil is clear to state that the Scriptures themselves

[471] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 10,25.

attest to the Spirit's homotimity, saying "for he is joined there (Matt. 28.19) to the Father and the Son, and no one is so bold as to say otherwise, then let them not bring charges against if we follow that which has been written."[472] Though later he intimates that tradition attests to the homotimity of the Spirit with more frequency than Scripture, one can still find evidence of Scripture saying the same.[473]

Most notable in this passage for our purposes, however, is that Basil here names a teaching of the Lord, found in Scripture, to be a *dogma*. Evidently, then, *dogmata* are not exclusive to tradition in Basil's view. Though this dispels the claim that all *dogma* are traditions, it does not mean that *dogma* cannot be secret. As we have seen, non-scriptural traditions and their esoteric meanings are necessarily hidden from those not yet fit to receive and comprehend them – for many other church fathers, the same can and should be said of Scripture. This is not without precedent – Cyril of Jerusalem states that the contents of his catechetical lectures are based only on what Scripture reveals, but still requires that these Scripturally-concealed doctrines are not imparted to pagans and catechumens.[474] Basil himself, as the previous section shows, believed that tradition was to be "read" like Scripture to coax out a meaning obfuscated for the sake of maintained its mystery-status. I would therefore suggest here that Basil is making a similar claim of Matthew 28.19 – though on the surface it only orders Christians to baptise believers in a triple invocation, the hidden meaning, when Scripture is read properly, is that the Spirit is co-ranked with the Father and Son. For Basil, then, Scripture contains *dogmata*, in which a more profound truth about the Trinity is hidden from all except those fit to receive it.

[472] Ibid. 10,24.

[473] See Ibid. 29,70.

[474] See Cyril, *Catechetical Lecture* 5,12.

Once more, we have returned to the question of Baptism. In *Against Eunomius*, Basil tacitly posits that baptism, despite being a rite rather than a Scripture, is still authoritative on matters of doctrine due to its scriptural origins. Basil once more expresses this attitude in his discussion of tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*, invoking Matthew 28.19 and then saying "as we baptise, so we ought to believe."[475] However, between these two texts, a shift has taken place in Basil's worldview, and traditions are now authoritative even when they are not directly derived from scriptural exegesis. Baptism therefore now sits at a nexus point for Basil between scriptural and non-scriptural traditions, with the baptismal liturgy being formed from both. The institution of baptism and doing so in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are undeniably scriptural, but equally Basil considers the blessing of the water and oil of chrism, the chrismation itself, the triple immersion and the renunciation of Satan to be undeniably non-scriptural.[476] In such a way, if one is to consider the liturgy sacrosanct and not subject to change – as Basil's accusers clearly believe based on their opposition to his doxology – then one must also tacitly assume the authority of non-scriptural tradition, by which Basil is vindicated and multiple forms of doxology can and must be attested to.

In most cases of the discernment of doctrine, the *dogmata* one can come to know via the exegesis of scripture might be sufficient. In the case of the homotimity of the Spirit, however, Basil generally concedes that one must delve into the non-scriptural to form a convincing argument. At his most defensive, Basil asks if his opponents "will not grant us one phrase that comes to us from the fathers," implying that only a small concession be made on their part. More commonly, he readily concedes that

[475] *On the Holy Spirit*, 27,66.

[476] For Basil's acknowledgement of these latter baptismal rites as non-scriptural, see *On the Holy Spirit* 27,66. N.B. Though Basil never seizes upon this notion to strengthen his point, it is nonetheless interesting to consider as a motivation for why one might believe scriptural and non-scriptural traditions to be equipollent – the liturgy is made up of things that are inspired from the scriptures and inspired from other sources, but no church father would consider only certain parts of it necessary and others subject to discretion.

the vast majority of witness to the Spirit's equality with Father and Son comes from non-scriptural sources.

Thus, we finally can properly define *dogma* as a profound doctrine concealed within a scriptural or non-scriptural source. This makes Mendieta's idea of what constitutes a *dogma* doubtful. Though naming anything as *disciplina arcani* is – due to the fact the term only truly exists as a post-hoc taxonomy – difficult, in the case of Basil's notion of *dogma*, to do so would be negligent. Though we might be able to apply the overarching idea of the *disciplina* to non-scriptural traditions and the mysteries they convey, *dogma* has here been shown to also exist within the realm of the scriptural. The implications this has for Basil's idea of how the knowledge of God is ascertained from the Christian experience is clear – not through scripture alone, but by anything that can be considered either a *kerygma* or a *dogma* of the church. In the case of the homotimity of the Spirit, since no kerygma makes such a claim, and scripture is on the whole utterly silent. Basil remains quite unabashed by this, and asserts that:

> To those who say that giving glory "with" the Spirit is unattested and non-scriptural, we say this: if nothing else is non-scriptural, then this should not be received either. However, if most of our mysteries are non-scripturally authorized, then we will receive this one along with many others. It is, then, to me apostolic to stand firm in non-scriptural traditions.[477]

Not only is Basil making the bold claim that Scripture is not the main source of doctrine or praxis, but he is arguing that non-scriptural traditions make up the rest. Though he immediately goes on to assert their apostolicity, such a claim would not be without contention. It is likely Basil was familiar enough with the liturgy to make this claim with some assurance: Not only was Basil a bishop and therefore frequent celebrant of liturgies, but his historical reputation as an author – or at least reformer – of liturgy speaks for itself. Regardless, it is clear that Basil is attempting to advocate for a rather more

[477] Ibid. 29,71.

holistic view than his pneumatomachian peers, in which the scriptures alone are not the source of orthodoxy and orthopraxy.

Reading tradition is not, therefore, a form of scriptural exegesis as some have suggested. Rather, scripture and non-scriptural tradition are to Basil two different books, equally authoritative and similarly obfuscatory. Not all liturgy and practice is to be found in scripture, nor it is less authoritative in Basil's eyes. Rather than tradition being the result of scriptural exegesis, as it is in *Against Eunomius*, non-scriptural traditions are in essence the same as scriptural ones: established through the right exegesis of authoritative sources. That they are considered equal for the discernment in doctrine, however, can lead us to only one conclusion about the author of non-scriptural tradition: it must be the same as that of Scripture, the Holy Spirit.

Non-Scriptural Tradition as Given by the Spirit

That Basil considered Scripture to be given by the Spirit is not a matter of debate. In his opening to a homily on the first Psalm, and in *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil alludes to 2 Timothy 3:16's description of Scripture as *θεόπνευστος* (God-breathed). In the former, Basil immediately follows with the claim that the Spirit "composed (συγγραφεῖν)" the scriptures itself, and in the latter, he asserts scripture to have been "composed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (διὰ τῆς ἐπιπνοίας τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος συγγραφεῖσαν).[478] The Spirit is, then, present at the time that scriptures are authored, inspiring their content at the very least and being their direct author at most. Timothy McConnell suggests that, for

[478] *Homily on Psalms* 1,1; *On the Holy Spirit* 21,52.

Basil, this extends to all worship too: "if worship is to happen at all as it has been laid out in the Christian scriptures, Basil claims it can only happen as a product and participation (sic) in the illumination of the Holy Spirit."[479] McConnell does not explore the notion of non-scriptural tradition, yet through this discussion of worship he has nonetheless managed to succinctly present an account of its providence – only the Spirit can dictate how to perform that which the Spirit instituted. This is, in the end, what the body of non-scriptural tradition comes to: they are the aids given by the Spirit by which divine truth can be rightly contemplated and understood.

Basil would certainly concur that it is the Holy Spirit that reveals non-scriptural tradition. It is the Spirit, he claims, who is "particularly suited to the revelation of mysteries," and the *intima* of non-scriptural traditions are quite definitively considered by Basil to be mysteries.[480] Considering the strong relationship – or, as I would argue, total synonymity – between the terms *δόγμα* and *μυστήριον*, if the Spirit is suited to revealing the latter, it stands to reason the same is true of the former. On this note, it is probably useful to return to McConnell's assertion that worship is given by the Spirit in order for it to be fully in line with biblical teaching: though the sentiment is in some sense true, Basil's more holistic approach mean that basing worship in scripture alone is troublesome. As Basil is quick to point out, non-scriptural tradition relies in no way on scripture, being instead, separate but equipollent. Indeed, if we recognise the Spirit as the author of both scripture and tradition, there is no need to harmonise one with the other: since the Spirit reveals only that which is divine truth and who, due to Basil's Pro-Nicene theology, operates inseparably with the other source of revelation, the Son, their harmony is implied and in fact necessitated by the very fact that both are *theopneustos*.

[479] McConnell, Timothy P. *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 68. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

[480] Ibid. 16,38

Besides McConnell, that Basil views the Spirit to be the source of all divine knowledge revealed to the churches – other than, assumedly, that which was revealed by Christ himself – is often overlooked. However, it shows the distinct asceticism that underpins his entire idea of tradition: that the Spirit reveals the hidden wisdom of the church found in both in scripture and tradition to those, as Basil puts it, "who trample earthly things and become superior to them" and are thus "attested to be worthy of the gift of the Holy Spirit."[481] Furthermore, it is this notion that underpins *On the Holy Spirit*'s claim that the Spirit is *homotimos*. Again, in Basil's own words:

> How can one think about he who cannot be contained by the world and is contemplated only by those who are holy through purity of heart? What sort of honours are to be put together with him (ἢ τὰς ποταπὰς τιμὰς συμμέτρους ὑπάρχειν αὐτῷ)?[482]

It is, therefore, clear. Basil founds the Spirit's homotimity, the direct intention of the entire treatise, on the fact that it is the same Spirit that reveals to the perfect the divine mysteries, since only God could reveal such things.

The Question of Multiple Traditions

Considering the supposed divine origin of non-scriptural tradition, one particular issue emerges: that in defending his doxology – the most alluded-to of all the traditions mentioned in *On the Holy Spirit* – Basil

[481] ibid. 22,53.

[482] Ibid. 22,53.

advocates for both *in* and *with* to be doctrinally useful and authoritative, and therefore a multiplicity of different traditions to be simultaneously accurate.

Basil rarely underplays the importance of intention, a trend which pervades his understanding of religious language from his first work to his last. In *Letter* 9, Basil believes *homoios kat' ousian* and *homoousios* to be both perfectly serviceable ways to refer to the relationship between Father and Son, even if he prefers the latter. However, he clearly notes that *homoios* is only usable so long as it is qualified by a term that makes it functionally synonymous with the *homoousion*.[483] Similarly, in *Against Eunomius*, faced with Eunomius' creed he does not reject it – nor can he considering its scriptural sources – but instead asserts that the creed is admissible only so long as the meaning behind it is harmonious with his own position.[484] Eunomius and Aetius are therefore not guilty of heterodoxy because of their creed, but because they either read it incorrectly or – as Basil more forcefully suggests – hide their perversion of the faith behind ambiguous turns of phrase.[485] It would be foolish to overlook the importance of Basil's nuance here.

It is now, perhaps, worth returning to the idea of the *ἰσχύς* of tradition as an imperative: As Eunomius appeals to a tradition that he wrongly interprets or deliberately perverts, Eustathius' rejection of *with* in favour of *in* alone within the doxology must therefore be viewed as a similar misinterpretation of meaning: where Eustathius sees a difference, Basil and the tradition fundamentally disagree. To understand this better, it is probably worth viewing the body of authoritative objects of divine

[483] See Basil, *Ep.* 9. The same argument, though opposite in preference given, is made in *Ep.* 361.

[484] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 1,4. See also Eunomius, *Apology* 5 for the creed in question. (See Vaggione, 38 for supposed Scriptural sources).

[485] Ibid. 1,4.

knowledge in Basil's thought as how we might understand the law. There is scripture, which in modern legal analogy might best be understood as statutory law: written, codified and monolithic. Then there is the tradition, which conversely is to be thought of as common law: an establishment of multiple – sometimes superficially conflicting – precedents that can be picked and chosen from depending on relevance to the case at hand, but which nonetheless unify as a body of law. Basil's argument therefore contends that even if – as he readily concedes – there is a multiplicity of different traditions that one might find authoritative, the underlying meaning of these different traditions never contradict.

Here one might find Basil to be in a process of development in his thought: in *Against Eunomius*, the tradition is quite clear and unified, being proven through its scriptural foundation and wieldable as a hammer against the heterodox that claim to possess its force. Here in *On the Holy Spirit*, though it possesses superior force to its earlier incarnation, it also exists as a far less monolithic entity, the major details often being through implication rather than outward meaning. It also serves as a less effective litmus test of orthodoxy due to this nuance – perhaps whilst scripture is written on litmus, one might understand tradition as more a universal indicator. One might also consider it a touch duplicitous – when attacking Eunomius, tradition is inflexible and unitary, but when under attack by Eustathius it becomes flexible and the different forms of expression of one single truth manifold. Identifying which of these is more likely the case is of utmost importance: it would – after all – be poor historical and theological practice to read a cop-out as if it were some profound and wide-reaching doctrine instead of an isolated thought pulled out of his mitre, as it were.

To read such an argument as a cop-out, however, would be wrong for two reasons. First, and most importantly, the fourth-century Christian church was one that was remarkably variant when it came to expressions of practice. The work of J.N.D. Kelly has in particular highlighted the multiplicity of creeds present in the fourth-century churches, and this has been continued by J. Stevenson and most recently

by Wolfram Kinzig: Everett Ferguson and Maxwell Johnson – continuing the work of Edward Whitaker – have done much the same for the baptismal liturgy.[486] For a man of Basil's era, the idea of a single and codified liturgy would have been quite alien – he was certainly not innovating in advocating for a multiplicity of liturgical terms, as the liturgical world he existed in was already rather nebulous. One must therefore view Basil's apparent acceptance of a multiplicity of different usages as a direct result of his development on the matter of what constituted a *tradition* proper: to include liturgy amongst the contents of authoritative tradition would – as a direct extension of his context – necessitate that more than one usage – so long as it had historical precedent – commands authority. Basil may be discerning in when he advocates for unity and when he prefers flexibility, but both his liturgical reality and the implications of this multiplicity appear to indicate that this was more than an easy way out of an argument for Basil: it was instead a deeply-held belief that was consistent with his principles. Chief among these – as we shall see – is that it fits quite well within his wider theological epistemology.

Knowledge of God Through the Ascetic Lens

While others were happy to construe the capacity of an individual to receive concealed teaching as a matter of intellectual ability founded on preparation, commitment and talent, this is not quite so with Basil. As an ascetic and a Christian, his intuition is to view the capacity to know God as the God-given fruits of rigorous and all-consuming asceticism.

[486] See Kelly, J.N.D. *Early Christian Creeds* (London: Longmans, 1950); Stevenson, J. *Creeds, Councils and Controversies*: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church 337-461 (London: SPCK, 1989); Kinzig, Wolfram. *Faith in Formulae* (vol. 1) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Ferguson, Everett. *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009); Johnson, Maxwell. *Documents of the Baptismal Liturgy* (London: SPCK, 2003).

This is not to say that Basil considered the attainment of the vision of God to be an unintellectual affair: Indeed, the experience of God which Basil conceives cannot be anything but intellectual. This can be demonstrated in two ways. First, in an ancient philosophical mentality, the language of vision and intellectual apprehension were entirely intertwined, and sight was generally considered to result in a direct and unsullied conveyance of an object that the other senses did not match.[487]

This took a particular form in early Christian asceticism: a human being was made up of the external man, made of flesh, and the internal man, made of spirit: a direct result of the distinction made between the fleshly (*σαρκικὸς*) and spiritual (*πνευματικὸς*), an attitude that pervaded Greek patristic literature from as early as the Apostolic Fathers.[488] according to Origen in his *Dialogue with Heraclides,* the inner man can be said to have the same senses as the outer man, and it is through these senses that the divine is better perceived. Of sight, Origen states:

> The outer man has eyes, and the internal man is said to have eyes… From keeping the commandments of the Lord we do not become more clear-sighted according to the body, but from keeping the divine commandments according to the Holy Spirit do we become clear-sighted. The eyes of the internal man see better than us. "Reveal my eyes, and I will contemplate the wonders of you law (Psalm 118:18)." Not that his eyes were veiled, but our eyes are the intellect. To reveal is of Jesus alone, so that we might be able to see that which has been written and conceive of the hidden things that have been spoken."[489]

For Origen, when one speaks of perceiving God in a visual sense, it is not the eyes of the body but the eyes of the spirit that are doing the seeing. Therefore, whenever one deigns to "see" God, and whenever scripture commands one to do so, the "seeing" is a metaphor for a kind of perception of the

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[487] On this matter see in particular Chidester, David. *Word and Light: Seeing, Hearing, and Religious Discourse,* 2-6. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992. Carol Harrison, in *The Art of Listening in the Early Church*, 29-30. Oxford: University Press, 2014.

[488] See Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians* 8; *Smyrnaeans* 12-13. See also *Epistle to Diognetus* 5-7.

[489] Origen, *Dialogue with Heraclides,* 16-17.

soul. It would be surprising if Basil were not familiar with this short treatise – Basil was a devotee of Origen, and as I have argued in the previous chapter, Origen's reputation as a censor of heretics was, along with Malchion, what gave him authority despite not holding the rank of bishop: to therefore make the assumption that such a document was known in a fourth-century context – where bishops were liberally engaged in censoring each other on the Trinity – is, I believe, reasonable. Indeed, this text in particular would be an obvious place for Basil to go when himself censoring a bishop on Trinitarian matters and professing ascetic sentiments.

Even if Basil were not aware of this text or at least the ideas it presented – and I would contend this to be very unlikely indeed – he evokes the same idea in discussing how one might see God. In the ninth chapter of *On the Holy Spirit,* Basil explains that the Spirit illumines the souls of those "fit to receive him," who participate in it "to the extent that their nature allows, not to the extent that his power allows."[490] The Spirit is here described as "an intellectual light (φῶς νοὴτον) for every rational power's discovery of the truth."[491] The language with which the Spirit is described is, for want of a better word, photic. To see the life of the Spirit in the church as that of a revelatory power to those capable to receive him is elitist, and places ascetics at the heart of the church: without the Spirit illumining them on account of their perfection, the church would be without doctrine and without practice. The ascetic is therefore an imitator of the apostles at Pentecost, purified enough to receive the light of the Spirit by which they came to know all things.[492] What this means for the so-called *fathers* of the non-scriptural

[490] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9,22-3.

[491] Ibid. 9,22.

[492] N.B. here that the Pentecost narrative is not directly quoted by Basil in *On the Holy Spirit*, but that by no means removes it from the equation. Basil was well-versed in scripture, and if there is one event in which the Holy Spirit is involved in the transformation of an individual, it would be at Pentecost. Though this connection is not made explicitly, I would caution doubt that any fourth-century Christian who knew their scripture would not immediately here think of the descent of the Spirit upon the apostles.

tradition is quite intriguing: are they therefore confirmed by their witness to the traditions given by the Spirit to be capable ascetics? If it were not for the presence of Dionysius of Alexandria in Basil's little florilegium, I would be inclined to agree. Dionysius' presence makes this unlikely, as Basil would be reluctant to say a man he so strongly believed to be heterodox would be speaking from a position of personal pneumatic illumination. Perhaps, then, the answer lies in apostolic succession: the heterodox might attest to these traditions as Basil does: a paternal inheritance that they themselves are not quite pure enough to understand. Some along the way will themselves be purified and illumined by the Spirit, but a heritage that traces itself back to those that were similarly purified and illumined is sufficient. Perhaps specious to us, to any bishop who valued apostolic succession, this connection would have been of the utmost importance.

It is difficult to overstate how quickly asceticism appears to have exploded onto the scene of late antique Christianity – by the end of the fourth century it was a conviction held by so many of the most influential and prolific writers of the era. The anchoritic life was romanticised in Athanasius' *Life of Anthony*, and cenobia could be found throughout the Mediterranean world. It has been suggested by some, most notably Reitzenstein, that the ascetic revolution came out of a new need – after the advent of the edict of Milan and the legalisation of Christianity – to justify the strongly anti-material ethos that had been fostered in the churches.[493] There may be some credibility to this, as the days of the ascetics begin when those of the martyrs were thought to have ended – roughly a decade before the Diocletianic persecution. However, *askesis* as a notion had never been missing from the Christian church, and was in Hellenised late antiquity central to any movement that professed a certain way of living in a manner ethical and/or contemplative: indeed, the name *cenobion* itself was first applied to

[493] See Reitzenstein, Richard. *Historia Monachorum und Historia Lausiaca : Eine Studie zur Geschichte des Mönchtums und der frühchristlichen Begriffe Gnostiker und Pneumatiker*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1916.

the Pythagorean community at Krōton in modern-day Calabria. Just as with cosmology, Christian asceticism can be seen is an inevitable takeaway from the philosophical circles in which it found itself to move in its formative years. Thus asceticism, I would argue, is the inevitable result of a natural progression of a naturally anti-material and contemplative movement into a *philosophia* in its own right.

If anyone was aware of the connection, it was Basil. In his address *On Greek Literature*, Basil extolls the virtues of becoming learned in the great Hellenic works. The myths and other pieces of more culturally significant literature are viewed to be more practice for reading the scriptures than intrinsically valuable. Alluding to Plato's famous *Cave Analogy* in *Republic* VII, Basil considers pagan literature to be the reflection in the water one must first become accustomed to before looking upon the undiluted splendour of Scripture itself.[494] In contrast, however, philosophy is deemed to be more substantive in its utility – Basil here echoes the words of the Delphic oracle: *γνῶθι σεαυτόν* (know thyself), intimating that it is through their self-knowledge that philosophers were virtuous and thus valuable to the truth-seeking Christian. Accordingly, the lives of philosophers are compared to the teachings of Jesus and Paul, found to be in agreement with them, and therefore of significant worth to anyone attempting to deepen their understanding of Christian doctrine. It is no accident that at the heart of Basil's discussion is the Delphic maxim of knowing oneself – or as Socrates puts it in Plato's *Apology*, that "the unexamined life is not worth living (ὸ δὲ ἀνεξέταστος βίος οὐ βιωτὸς ἀνθρώπῳ)," – is central to the Christian experience, and even more to the Christian ascetical one. It is only in introspection and internal transformation, usually expressed either through the language of the theoretic or epoptic, both being as we have seen visual metaphors, that God can be attained. For Basil, this process is effectively described in *On the Holy Spirit*, where he states:

> When, through illuminating power, we fix our eyes upon the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up towards the even more good and beautiful spectacle

[494] See Basil, *On Greek Literature,* 4.

> (θέαμα) of the archetype, somehow the same Spirit of knowledge is present inseparably, supplying those who love to see the truth the power to see the image in him (*τὴν* ***ἐποπτικὴν*** *τῆς εἰκόνος δύναμιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ παρεχόμενον τοῖς τῆς ἀληθείας* ***φιλοθεάμοσιν***). He does not make the manifestation from outside, but instead in himself leads up into knowledge.[495]

Here is perhaps an even more interesting link between Basil, Origen and other patristic writers on the contemplative process by which God is apprehended: it is a noetic light, just as Basil says, that is apprehended by those with a faculty of internal sight sufficiently purified to receive it. By the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, one who has undergone radical internal transformation through *askesis* can know God as the apostles did on Pentecost – through a blinding noetic light spouted forth by none other than the same God they seek.

It is, then, into the mire of theological epistemology that we must next turn. Non-scriptural tradition – like all other things that contain even the smallest kernel of divine truth – is given by the Holy Spirit to the church and those within it sufficiently purified to receive it. Their truth is therefore utterly vindicated for Basil in this – and indeed should be for any Christian, hence it taking centre stage in a work that is meant for the eyes of a pneumatomach. However, we now come to the question of where non-scriptural traditions fit within the wider topography of divine revelation, and how Basil unifies them in such a way that a cohesive theological epistemology can emerge out of such diverse sources.

[495] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18,47. Emphasis mine.

CONCLUDING NOTES

In the previous chapter, we established that non-scriptural tradition was equipollent with Scripture, was usable in the discernment of orthodox belief and practice, and that it was to be kept fully and fiercely secret. Here, we have considered the classical context for such a notion, and found it be common within Christianity and the world around it, particularly in philosophical schools and the more esoteric aspects of ancient religion, between which Christianity straddled. Furthermore, how non-scriptural traditions are to be interpreted and their hidden meaning contemplated has been shown to be none other than the same method of instruction and exegesis by which Scripture is rightly understood. Such a notion is notably similar to the doctrine of *reserve* that permeates the teaching of Origen, Basil's object of devotion and the most influential of Greek fathers. However, rather than through the training of the intellect, Basil instead believes that it is in the communion with the Holy Spirit itself that the conceptual framework by which all the contents of scripture and non-scriptural tradition can be viewed and rightly contemplated. Hence why only an ascetic, to Basil, is capable of such feats – before one can receive the Spirit, one must first achieve purity of heart and sharpen the spiritual senses in abrogation of the fleshly.

One question therefore lies ahead, and it is no easy one: what does the existence of non-scriptural tradition mean for Basil's theological epistemology?

Tradition, Illumination and the Reconstruction of Basil's Theological Epistemology

Illumination: Christian Precedent

Illumination as a term in early Christian thought is both well-documented in the primary literature and well-studied in the secondary. Often, the term is used as a synonym for baptism, either as a discussion of the rite as a whole or as a description of the gifts perceived to result from it. There is also, however, significant precedent for Basil's more holistic model of Illumination, which extends beyond the baptismal and sacramental into a wider description of Christian engagement with the divine as a whole. Φωτισμός – the preferred term for Basil and the more common term in Patristic literature as a whole – is found to mean "illumination" in a spiritual and noetic sense within Christian literature from the New Testament onwards. Liddell-Scott, Bauer and Lampe all concur on this definition, with Lampe taking a more nuanced perspective, identifying baptism as the most common example of a wider notion of intellectual and spiritual illumination by divine powers.[496] Lampe is certainly right in this regard: Illumination as a term is most commonly related in pre-Nicene and Nicene patristic literature to baptism or as an analogue for it, a process that is first noticeable in the work of Justin Martyr and, more interestingly, is attested to in the *Sibylline Oracles*.[497] Baptism and illumination are never equated in Melito's *Peri Pascha* – indeed, in his translation, Alasdair Stewart cautions against such interpretations – however in a small fragment on Baptism we have from him, baptism is described almost purely in the

[496] See primarily Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* 1510, ss.2-3. See also Liddell-Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon,* 1969 & Bauer, 1074.

[497] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61; *Sibylline Oracles* 8.247; 271.

form of light; the kindling of a fire, the strike of lightning or the sun itself.[498]This usage was of ubiquitous usage by the third century, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Methodius all viewing the conflation of *baptismos* and *photismos* as rather self-evident.[499] Baptism and Illumination's terminological conflations are well attested-to in existing literature, but for our purposes here there is the common theme that this illumination is – at its core – a noetic one, by which the entire intellect and soul of the believer is transformed through the descent and indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

The usage of light to signify epiphanic knowledge, however, is quite present in both Hebrew and Greek scriptures: for example, the imbuing of knowledge through light is a common theme in the Psalms, a fact of which Basil is aware: in his description of the ascent from Spirit to Son to Father, he quotes Psalm 36:9's (LXX 35:10) assertion that "in your light, we see light."[500] As Kevin Montgomery has documented, Jewish writers in the last few centuries before the common era had already begun to take up the Greek *phōtizō* and *phōtismos* to describe this light-based unveiling of God that their scriptures so frequently employed.[501] Montgomery understates, however, the fact that such an attitude was certainly in full swing by the translation of the Septuagint, and the later deuterocanonical literature is rather brazen in its usage. *Baruch* 1.12 makes the claim that "the Lord will give us strength and illumine our eyes," and in *Sirach* 45.17 Aaron is said to have been chosen from all humanity "to illumine Israel with his law." The earliest Christian literature follows rather organically from this Jewish trend: John 1:9 intimates as

[498] Stewart, Alasdair. *Melito of Sardis: On Pascha* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 55. See also Melito, *Fragment on Baptism* (Stewart, 73-5).

[499] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 61; Clement of Alexandria, *Protrepticus* 10; Origen, *Commentary on John* 20.10; Methodius, *Against Porphyry* 1.5. Baptism as illumination is discussed piecemeal in Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* 311-12; 473-5; 560-1; 578-9, and in detail in the third chapter of Montgomery, Kevin R. *Photismos and Related Terms Regarding Baptism in Early Christian Literature* (unpublished MA thesis: Texas Tech, 2005)

[500] See *On the Holy Spirit*, 18,47.

[501] Montgomery, *Photismos and Related Terms* 8-9.

such, stating famously of the *Logos* that "The true light, which illumines all mankind, was coming into the world," a fact that Craig Koester considers characteristically Jewish: religious authorities of all kinds were often named *lights* or *lamps* due to their role in illuminating the laity.[502] One could rather say this Jewish interest in light-metaphor for took off quite quickly in Christian literature: both the Johannine Community – the authors of the Gospel and Letters of John – and Paul took this Jewish penchant for illumination-language and pushed it into overdrive in their own works. Later Christian writers were of a similar mind. The author of *On the Apostolic Tradition* – historically ascribed to Hippolytus – recounts as much in his documentation of an evening prayer, which states "We give thanks to you, Lord, through your son Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom you illuminate us, revealing to us the incorruptible light," an idea he also alludes to in discussing the ninth-hour prayer, encouraging his readers to imitate "the souls of the righteous that do not lie, who glorify God who remembered his saints and sent forth his Word to illuminate them."[503] *Illumination* as a term relating to pedagogy also saw its fair share of use: Clement of Alexandria considers it an apt term for Christian instruction, Epiphanius makes similar claims considering instruction in the Gospel and the candidates for baptism in Jerusalem were the *phōtizomenoi*, those being illumined.[504]

What we should notice here, in addition to the ubiquity of illumination-language, is the almost universal assumption that the true source of illumination is the divine Word, rather than the Holy Spirit. One would imagine this to be common, since all these writers in the earliest centuries of Christianity's development see the Logos – as its name as a philosophical inheritance might indeed suggest – as the divine power that imbues knowledge to humanity through illumination: here it might also be worth

[502] Koester, Craig. *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 129-30.

[503] See (possibly ps.) Hippolytus, *On the Apostolic Tradition*, 25; 41.

[504] See Clement, *Stromateis* 5.10; Epiphanius*, Panarion* 76,9; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 1.

observing that there was rarely a division of powers between Son and Spirit in earlier literature, the particular problems of Trinitarian interrelation of powers being more of a fourth-century issue than one of the second or third. This is something overlooked by the relevant lexica: Liddell-Scott chooses to focus on the more classical instances, and though Lampe does distinguish between illumination-language of the Son and Spirit, he nonetheless tends to focus on the same – broadly fourth-century – writers.[505] It should be unsurprising that the major change appears to have occurred in Alexandria, though perhaps earlier than one might imagine: Pro-Nicene pneumatology as a genre does seem to have its origins in Alexandria through the work of Athanasius and Didymus, and one should probably see this to be as much a result of the pneumatology of their Alexandrian forebears as it was a matter of their Post-Nicene context and (broadly) Pro-Nicene leanings. Though both Clement of Alexandria and Origen more often associated the illuminative power of God with the Son, they also gave significant time to the portrayal of the Spirit as illuminator, Clement focussing especially within the process of baptism, and Origen in his consideration of the spiritual sense of Scripture.[506] A similar attitude is – predictably – also visible in the tradition of Palestinian Caesarea: both Eusebius – the bishop – and Cyril of Jerusalem – who appears to have trained here – similarly express the sentiment that the Spirit is an illuminating power.[507] Even in the fourth-century, the Son remained the more common person to which illumination was attributed. The Son was, after all, often seen as the intellectual power of the Trinity on account of its status as *logos*. One might also imagine that Jesus' status as a Rabbi was of some relevance in this regard: the incarnate *logos* was, first and foremost, a teacher – and one who often chose to speak in obfuscatory language only expounded upon in private. Furthermore, intellectual apprehension of higher realities through an emanation from divinity was a matter of

[505] See Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 1508-9.

[506] See Origen, *On First Principles* 4.7-8; *Contra Celsum* 4.95. See also Clement, *Instructor* 1.6-7.

[507] See Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel* 1.10. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Oration* 16.3; 17.36.

significant philosophical inquiry, and one which was perhaps most notably developed during Christianity's early years.

ILLUMINATION: WIDER CONTEXTUAL PRECEDENT

It is no secret that Basil was quite well-read on philosophy, and was no stranger to employing the ideas expressed by philosophical writers for either polemical or theological purposes: indeed, much ink has been spilled on this matter in secondary literature, both on his engagement with philosophic literature and in the specific case of the Illumination-theology of *On the Holy Spirit*, which has often been conflated with the philosophy of Plotinus.[508] That such an interest in the possible philosophical sources

[508] See DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea versus Eunomius of Cyzicus on the Nature of Time: A Patristic Reception of the Critique of Plato*. Vigiliae Christianae, November 2014, Vol.68(5), pp.498-532; *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names : Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010). Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew. *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: University Press, 2009). Gregg, Robert C. *Consolation Philosophy : Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the two Gregories* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975). Radde-Gallwitz, Andrew & Ayres, Lewis. *Basil of Caesarea*, in Gerson, Lloyd Ed. *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity,* pp.459-470 (Cambridge: University Press, 2010). Robertson, David G. *Stoic and Aristotelian Notions of Substance in Basil of Caesarea*. Vigiliae Christianae, 1998, Vol.52(4), pp.393-417. Rist, John. *Basil's Neoplatonism*, in Fedwick, Paul Jonathan Ed. *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, humanist, ascetic ; a sixteen-hundredth anniversary symposium* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1981), 137-220. See also Pruche, *Sur Le Saint-Esprit* 322-331 and Sesboüé, *Contre Eunome* (vol. 1), 87-9. I would, however, reiterate my caution in chapter 2 (p.99) that seeing this as a separately document because of its more philosophical slant is both a worrisome precedent to set and not sufficiently generous to the analytical method applied throughout the

of Basil's most substantial outline on the process of divine illumination is rather intriguing. It might to many also appear suspicious: to paraphrase A. H. Armstrong, philosophers who are not historians might balk at the mention of the 'divine' in a discipline so rational as philosophy, and theologians who are not historians might search for a specific kind of divinity that is utterly alien to most ancient philosophers.[509] It is therefore the duty of those who are – in the modern divisions at least – more historians than theologians or philosophers to recall that a conception of "the divine" was near-ubiquitous in antiquity and late antiquity. This ubiquity having been stated, divine illumination is nonetheless a concept that is often troublesome to identify in earlier philosophical traditions due to the simultaneous plurality of meanings that "the divine" possessed at that time, and the secondary literature on its history in the philosophical tradition – though slowly emerging – being currently rather scarce. Aristotle, in *De Anima* III.5, compares the active intellect to light: as light actualises colour, so the active intellect actualises knowledge, forming it into some identical to its *eidos* – its object.[510] Though not made explicit in *De Anima*, in the *Metaphysics* Aristotle associates the active intellect with the divine:

> Thus, it is actuality rather than potentiality that is held to be the divine possession of natural thought, and its active contemplation (θεωρία) is the most pleasant and best. If, therefore, the happiness which God always enjoys is so great as that which we sometimes enjoy, it is wondrous, and if greater, even more wondrous. Regardless, it is the case. Furthermore, life belongs to God, for the actuality of intellect is life, and God is that actuality, and the essential actuality of God is the best and eternal life.[511]

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treatise as a whole: textualities in Late Antiquity often coalesced even where there was minimal engagement, and Christianity engaged with philosophy far from infrequently, often creating a hodge-podge of Plato and others that would make even Ammonius proud.[508] To this end, I find Pruche to be – though commendable in his zeal – a touch overzealous in identifying Plotinian parallels in the passage: as C.F.H. Johnston rightly noted in his own translation, such parallels are more "echoes, as would be natural to St. Basil."

[509] See Armstrong, *Plotinian and Christian Studies* XVIII (London, Variorum, 1979), 187.

[510] See Aristotle, *De Anima* III, 5.

[511] Ibid. *Metaphysics* XII, 8-9.

It is difficult to suggest whether Aristotle is being literal that the active intellect is truly divine – indeed this has been a topic of much debate. In *On the Generation of Animals,* however, it would appear he spells it out rather forcefully, observing that "the *nous* alone enters in as an additional factor from the outside, and that it is solely divine, since this kind of activity has nothing in common with physical activity."[512] The actual intellect is in some way identifiably related to the divine, an asomatic power of activity emanated into human beings by which knowledge is acquired in the most complete sense, and where subject and object of thought are indistinguishable in content.[513] What is certain, however, is that the actual God in Aristotle's philosophical thought can be – in direct contrast to the God of Abraham and perhaps even to Plato's own *demiurge* – at least described as aloof and at most unaware of the universe it created.[514] Therefore it is only its reflection in man, namely the intellect, that we can grasp at the mind of a God whose disposition to us is at best ignorance and at worst *apatheia*.

One might initially imagine the Sun in Plato's *Republic* VII to be the illuminating power, but this is a troublesome assertion to make – Plato strongly emphasises the active power of perception in casting one's head up in contemplation of the Forms, and the sun is thus more considered an object perceived than one which is taking an active role in the process of knowledge-acquisition. In Plato, one might find the seeds of an illumination-philosophy, as it were, in his conception of the soul and the way it acquires knowledge "in itself," as he states in the *Theaetetus*.[515] According to an intriguing but controversial

[512] Ibid. *On the Generation of Animals,* 736b.

[513] See ibid. XII.7.8. Some good discussions of Aristotle's conception of the actual intellect can be found in (fill in here)

[514] This notion underlies much of the claims made of God in *Metaphysics Λ*, but is best seen in the description of the Aristotelian God's self-intellection in 1074b.

[515] Plato, *Theaetetus* 185e.

observation by Francis Cornford, in the *Theaetetus* knowledge through sense-perception is disregarded as knowledge in any meaningful sense, true knowledge coming only from the soul's (which is synonymous with the intellect here) consideration of the *κοινά*, that is the Forms themselves, and the apprehension of knowledge of them is "as gradual recovery of clear vision, possible only by training in dialectic."[516] Cornford's argument is drawn straight from Plato's statement (through the words of *Theaetetus*) that "it is clear to me that the soul in itself is its own instrument for mulling over the common terms that concern all things (*ἀλλ' αὐτὴ δι' αὐτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ τὰ κοινά μοι φαίνεται περὶ πάντων ἐπισκοπεῖν*.)"[517] Cornford is perhaps overzealous, but there is more than a grain of truth to his observations concerning this passage: true knowledge for Plato is achieved by the Soul's internal conceptualisation of universals, by which it draws ever nearer to the Forms it beholds; as John M. Cooper beautifully puts it, "the mind's independent activity, when it produces knowledge, consists in acquaintance with the Forms."[518] This is made even clearer in the seventh letter which – as we have previously discussed – may not have been Plato's but was in the fourth century considered canonically Platonic. In the letter, the acquisition of knowledge is quite openly described as an epiphanic event, a sudden "light that is kindled by a leaping spark, afterwards nourishing itself."[519] The author is very coy about whether this epiphany is fully internal or not, but in the uncontested *Symposium*, the knowledge of beautiful things is considered "revealed to" the individual contemplating beautiful things which implies a sudden incandescence of knowledge that is somewhat reliant on external forces.[520]

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[516] See Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (London: Lund Humphries, 1946), 102-9.

[517] Plato, *Theaetetus* 185d-e.

[518] Cooper, John M. *Plato on Sense Perception and Knowledge*, 358. In Fine, Gail. *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Oxford, University Press, 1999), 355-376.

[519] Plato, *Seventh Letter* 341c-d.

[520] See Plato, *Symposium* 210e.

Though we can thus identify that the acquisition of knowledge in its true sense is – for Plato – the soul drawing itself nearer to the Forms through mulling over their status as *κοινά*, the *Theaetetus* does not provide a reason for why the soul is capable of such a feat. Indeed, it appears to rule out the idea that the soul relies on prior sense-perception when considering these *κοινά*, because notions such as "existence" and "truth" are not perceptible objects but concepts only attainable through the soul's internal reflection on these things as *κοινά*.[521] Since these concepts are not, therefore, the product of perception, they must be drawn from some other source. It is useful here to return to Cornford's assertion that knowledge is "a gradual recovery of clear vision," *recovery* being the operative word.[522] For Plato, knowledge of the Forms is not acquired, but recovered as the soul reacquaints itself with the ultimate reality it once knew, but has since forgotten. In the chariot-metaphor of the *Phaedrus*, the soul longs to ascend back into the dwelling-place of the gods, and to interact with the world of the Forms:

> The divine intelligence, since it is nurtured on intellect and unmarred knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul capable of receiving whatever befits it, rejoices in seeing reality for a period of time and by gazing upon truth is nourished and made joyful until the revolution brings it again to the same place. In the revolution it contemplates absolute justice, temperance and knowledge: not a kind of knowledge that has a beginning and varies as it is associated with one or another of the things we call realities, but whatever dwells in the real, eternal absolute.[523]

Here the soul, unburdened by a body, appears to take a more passive role, receiving knowledge rather than coming to it, and beholding the Forms only so much as "befits it." Though still a far cry from the doctrines of illumination found in the Christianities – and a few choice Platonisms – of Late Antiquity, Plato here appears to consider the notion that the soul's perception of the Forms is more participatory, with only those who have become philosophers being fit to participate in and receive the knowledge of the reality of the Forms. We do, however, come up against the same fundamental problem in

[521] See Cornford, *Plato's Theory of Knowledge,* 108.

[522] Ibid. 104.

[523] Plato, *Phaedrus* 247d-e.

associating this impartation of knowledge as *divine illumination* – at least in a sense that would be familiar to Basil – that we do with Aristotle. The world of the Forms is, if at all sapient, generally unconcerned with human affairs, and it is only through the prior interaction of the soul with it that it is at all detectable by humanity. It is purely by the soul's dysphoria with embodiment, curable solely by contemplating and recollecting the world to which it truly belongs, that intellectual participation in the ultimate reality is possible. The soul in Plato, therefore, exists as an illuminating power by virtue of the heavenly citizenship to which it desires to return; embodiment being a temporary but painful diaspora for it.

For most of the late antique philosophies to which we generally affix the taxonomies of *middle* or *neo-Platonism*, the pure intellect – sometimes typified as *psyche* rather than *nous* as it is in Plato – remains the primary illuminating power due to its status as being either an image or part of the divine reality which it contemplates in the purest form of its meditations. Philo, and Plotinus are not quite exceptions to this rule, but certainly take this idea and run in new directions. Almost certainly due to their conceptions of the divine reality – Philo as a Jew and Plotinus as the inheritor of later Platonisms – in which at least aspects of the divine take a more active role in the intellections of those attempting to behold it, the idea that conceptualisation and knowledge of divine things are in some way imparted to man from above is incredibly appealing. In his *De Opificio Mundi,* Philo is clear from the beginning that there exists a light "perceptible by the intellect alone," – a phrase which appears several times in the treatise – and places this within the divine realm as the image of the divine intellect, which is itself the image of God.[524] For Philo, the light of the sun, the moon and the stars is a pale image of the true light, its very quality as sensible being the salient proof of its imperfection and inferiority to the "unmingled

[524] Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 8,30.

and pure" light that is the "image of divine reason."[525] Later in the work, this notion of intellect and its illumination by its divine counterpart through light is fleshed out properly:

> In the position that the great ruler occupies in the whole world, the intellect of man occupies in man a position that answers it precisely. For it is invisible, though it sees everything itself; and it has an essence which is imperceptible, though it can perceive the essences of all other things, and making for itself by art and science all sorts of roads leading in many directions, and all great roads at that, it traverses land and sea, investigating everything which is contained in each nature. And again on raised wings, thus contemplating the air and all the passions to which it is subject, it is carried upwards to the higher firmament, and to the revolutions of the heavenly bodies. And also being itself involved in the revolutions of the planets and fixed stars according to the perfect laws of music, and being led on by love, the guide of wisdom, it proceeds onwards still, having looked beyond all essence intelligible by the physical senses, it comes to aspire to the things perceptible only by the intellect: and perceiving in that the same patterns and ideas of those things intelligible by the external senses which it saw here full of transcendent beauty, it becomes thrown into a kind of sober intoxication like those inspired in a Korybantic frenzy, filled with another desire, and a more excellent longing, by which it is borne onwards to the very height of the things perceptible to the intellect, until it seems to be approaching the great King himself. And while eagerly longing to behold him, pure and unmingled beams of divine light are poured over it like a torrent in order to dazzle the eyes of its intellect by their brilliance. But, as not every image that resembles its archetypal pattern, in many cases unlike it, Moses has shown this by adding to the words "after the image," to the expression, "in his likeness," proving thus that it intended an accurate impression, possessing a clear resemblance in form.[526]

Philo's Judaism is on full display here, and his notion of the divine reality is therefore far more interested in letting the world know of its existence and almighty nature. Though the ultimate realities in Plato and Aristotle appear to at times aid those attempting to perceive them, they are still distant and unfeeling, Plato's Forms having a passive role in the universe's creation and a relation with the world best described as detached. Aristotle's God takes a more active role in the forming of the universe, but is far more disposed to self-intellection than it is to intervention. Philo's God, on the other hand, drenches the intellect desiring to behold it with light which – though eventually blinding to the human

[525] Ibid. 8,30.

[526] Ibid. 23,69-71.

mind – is given quite enthusiastically, so that even if God itself remains beyond human intellection, its status as the creator in which all things have their likeness becomes evident.

Philosophers outside of the Abrahamic frame of reference also appear have warmed to the notion of divine emanation over time. As a direct result of Plotinus' simple but fruitful interpretation of all things being at least in part intellect and soul, the *nous* and *world-soul* in Plotinus' triad of primary hypostases are apprehensible by human beings through our own intellects and souls by virtue of the fact that the human soul is "of the same kind:"

> Our soul is of the same kind, and when you examine it without the additional layers, taking it in its purified state, you will find that it has the identical value which Soul was found to possess, more valuable than anything which is corporeal.[527]

Plotinus goes on to state that it is only in the contemplation of the hypostatic Soul by our own soul, and the following contemplation of the hypostatic Intellect by our own intellect, that the divine reality becomes graspable, and as the beholder's soul and intellect come to more closely resemble their cosmic and universal hypostases, the vision of the divine becomes as complete as it can possibly be before intellect and soul are once more united with their hypostatic counterparts. A. H. Armstrong notes this well, finding that this process – which one should note parallels quite surprisingly with early Christian notions of *theosis* through *theoria* – results in our being attracted to the self-intellecting One (which he names 'Good') through its image in hypostatic nous – and therefore by extension the Soul, which is a part of Nous – since "Intellect only attracts us by the light playing upon it from the Good, without which it is altogether uninteresting."[528] Though, therefore, our *nous* is only the image of the image of the One, it nonetheless illuminates us – even if not actively, being more concerned with its

[527] See Ennead 5,1,2.

[528] Armstrong, *The Apprehension of Divinity in Plotinus*, 195.

aforementioned self-intellection – through the cosmic *Nous* it generated. Though devoid of the more direct intervention that the pneumatology of the New Testament and early Christian thought envisions, the Plotinian idea of the divine – seemingly a suffusion of Platonistic and Aristotelian expressions of such – nonetheless finds room for a far less active, but equally noetic, philosophy of divine illumination.

Plotinus' thought is the most receptive to the notion that light is the mode of imparting and receiving employed by the divine reality. In Plotinus – though it is a rather ubiquitous trait of ancient science – it is through light that every aspect of the process of intellection of an object is enabled. Kevin Corrigan has identified these as fourfold through the analysis of *Ennead* 5,5,7 and 6,6,9:

> Intellect's seeing appears as a dynamic continuum of four interlacing moments: (1) pure self-identity in the One's light (is it self or other?); (2) closely related self-dependent light by which intellect sees; (3) the light in objects that intellect sees; and (4) the illuminated objects themselves that intellect can see more or less.[529]

For Plotinus, at the core of every operation of perception is the light that enables the intellect to make sense of that which it observes. Corrigan identifies this as a natural extension of Plotinus' main disagreement with Aristotle; that the act of intellection itself is no less important than *praxis*.[530] I would suggest this to be a little more pertinent to Plotinus' own context: the thrust of his philosophy – in the closing words of the *Enneads* – as "the flight of the alone to the alone" was not exactly reflective of the world around him, seemingly on an inexorable march towards the intellectual and academic dominance of sophism over philosophy: just as one must examine Plato's political thought in the context of the aftermath of the Periclean reforms to Athenian democracy, one must similarly see Plotinus as surrounded by the academic dominance of the second sophistic. Thus, light and divine power came to

[529] Corrigan, Kevin. *The Sources and Structures of Power and Activity in Plotinus*, 27. In Marmodoro, A. & Viltanioti, I-F. *Divine Powers in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17-37.

[530] See Ibid. 27-30.

be conflated in both the dominant strains of Christian and philosophical thought. One must however still identify the differences between Plotinus' thought and Christian thought on the matter: Plotinus saw light as intrinsic to the human being by virtue of their intellect and soul having kinship with the universal intellect and soul. Christians, however, saw light as extrinsic to the human being, only coming to dwell in the mind by momentary inspiration – as with the prophets – or by the descent of the Spirit at baptism.

Basil was evidently aware of these works, and it is quite clear he is using their language in constructing his own – explicitly Christian – approach to the question of the origins of knowledge. One therefore comes to two possibilities: that Basil is pillaging the Greeks, as it were, or he is part of a cosmological context in which these notions about knowledge were commonplace if not universal: knowing Basil's literacy on the manner and his opinion of Greek literature as being practice for the acquisition of appropriate terminological and ideological keys with which to unlock the sources of Christian knowledge, I would advocate that though Basil certainly alludes to non-Christian writers with some frequency, this is a distant second to the context for two main reasons: first, that Christianity – as we have already seen in the prior section – had been conversant with Greek philosophy *ab initio*, and second that Basil himself was raised and educated in an environment in which the allusion to and engagement with these texts was part and parcel of the intellectual life. In this case, the main difference Basil has with non-Christian writers is his conception of what the divine reality is, and in this case that makes a lot of difference: the Christian predisposition with grace and a deity rather more personally involved with the human race serves as an interesting contrast with Greek conceptions, where the divine reality is at best indifferent and at worse unaware. With this important distinction made and the context recognised, one can move safely into Basil's arguments themselves.

THE SPIRIT AS ILLUMINATOR: DEVELOPMENTS FROM *AGAINST EUNOMIUS* TO *ON THE HOLY SPIRIT*

The illuminating power of the Holy Spirit and its status as "intellectual light (*φῶς νοητὸν*)" is at the centre of *On the Holy Spirit's* argument for an understanding of the Spirit as *homotimos* – of equal honour – to Father and Son. Suggestions have, however, been made that the Spirit was not always the source of illumination for Basil. McConnell, through analysing a passage of *Against Eunomius* and one of *On the Holy Spirit*, suggests that it is only in his later years that Basil contends that "the Spirit is the beginning of the process of divine self-disclosure," going on to say "it is only in the Spirit that one can expect to say and – as Basil interprets here – to know that Jesus is Lord, and so it is only through the Spirit that one can be illumined."[531] Considering the logocentric notions of illumination expressed by the writers in the previous section, this is a trend among earlier thinkers, and it is certainly true that *Against Eunomius* focuses on the illuminative power of the Son, and Basil plainly says that "what visible light is to the eye, God the Word is to the intellect," which is consonant with the *φῶς νοητὸν*-terminology applied to the Spirit in Basil's *On the Holy Spirit*.[532] I would suggest, however, that it is incautious to imply from this that the Spirit as its own illuminative power was a true development in Basil's theological thought. *Against Eunomius* is a work that is primarily concerned with defending the divinity of the Son and to repudiate Eunomius' claim that unbegottenness is an inherent and irremovable quality of the divine *ousia.* The Holy Spirit is very much an afterthought to this matter, it being a secondary concern to Eunomius himself and thus any theologian directly concerned with quashing such assertions: The Spirit is the main focus of but one of thirty chapters of the extant apology and of a rather minute chapter of *Against Eunomius*, and the detail into which both writers delve is minimal. Since the Son and its relationship to the Father is the question *du jour* for Basil in his conflict

[531] McConnell, *Illumination* 11.

[532] Basil, *Against Eunomius* 2,16.

with Eunomius, it would thus only stand to reason that the Son's illuminative power be prioritized. *On the Holy Spirit* – as the name well suggests – is primarily concerned with the third person of the Trinity, and therefore spends much of its time extolling the gifts of the Spirit, the highest of which – due to its deifying power – is illumination.

Contextually, it is also difficult to assert that the illuminative power of the Spirit is – in Basil's corpus – a later development rather than a later matter of concern. Though Philo appears to lack a satisfying rendering of a third creative power, in Plotinus' *Ennead II*, the "soul of the universe," or *world-soul* is viewed as the initial enlightening power and third in order, continually illuminating the world whilst simultaneously receiving illumination from the hypostasis of the *Nous* that generates it.[533] The archetypal One itself – which following Mark Edwards it is best to consider the Plotinian rendition of the role of the divine *ousia* in pro-Nicene Trinitarian thought as opposed to the archetypal Father – is more predisposed with its Aristotelian self-intellection than revealing itself to the world and so remains more strictly inaccessible.[534] Similarly – and once more is a debt to Edwards due – the consistent creation of Platonistic "noetic" triads from the *Chaldean Oracles'* being-life-intellect (ousia-zoē-nous) to Iamblichus' identical triad and Porphyry's permutation of it as being-power-intellect (ousia-dynamis-nous) is demonstrative that the third in order – which is always here intellect – of other cosmological triads in contemporary philosophical thought were considered particularly fecund when it came to matters of the apprehension and knowledge of the divine.[535] As we have seen, though it is more common in earlier theology – likely due to the question of the Son preceding that of the Spirit in matters

[533] See Plotinus, *Ennead* 2,9,2-3. For Plotinus' expression of the relationship between his three primary hypostases, see *Ennead* 5,1.

[534] See Edwards, Mark. *Aristotle and Early Christian Thought*, 78.

[535] See ibid. 82.

of theological conflict – to associate illumination with the Son, patristic writers as early as Ignatius of Antioch allude to the necessity of the Spirit in attaining knowledge of God and Christ. Ignatius names the Spirit a "rope (σχοινίον)" by which one is "drawn up high" towards the divine reality.[536] Closer to Basil's own time, Athanasius is keen to note in his *Letters to Serapion* – the most explicitly pneumatological of his works – that we are not enlightened *by* the Spirit, but *in* the Spirit, going on to clarify, "when we are enlightened in the Spirit, it is Christ that enlightens us in him."[537]

Didymus the Blind, a man whom Basil seems to have held in esteem, appears to follow Origen in this respect – as is his wont. In his own *On the Holy Spirit* – a text certainly known to Basil at the time of his authoring of *Against Eunomius*, Didymus is rather unambiguous in his association of the Spirit with enabling the believer to "see" the Son and Father:

> And so, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son by showing him and manifesting him to the pure in heart who are worth of understanding him, seeing him, and knowing the splendour of his substance and "the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)." The image himself glorifies the Father in turn, by showing himself to pure minds, thereby introducing him to those who do not know him: "he who sees me sees the Father (John 14:9)." Additionally, the Father glorifies his only-begotten by revealing the Son to those who have merited to attain to the summit of knowledge, showing his magnificence and power. Furthermore, the Son himself glorifies the Holy Spirit by bestowing him on those who have prepared themselves to be worthy of his gift and by distributing to them the sublimity of his glorification and magnitude.[538]

Here it is worth comparing Didymus' model of Trinitarian revelation to Basil's in his pneumatological treatise:

> When through its (the Spirit's) illuminating power we fix our eyes upon the beauty of "the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15)," and through the image are led up to the more beautiful vision of the archetype, his Spirit of knowledge is somehow present

[536] Ignatius, *Ephesians* 9,1.

[537] Athanasius, *To Serapion* 1.19.4: "τῷ δὲ πνεύματι φωτιζομένων ἡμῶν ὁ Χριστός ἐστιν ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ φωτίζων·"

[538] Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, 168-9 (DelCogliano, 194-5).

> without separation. It supplies to those who love to behold the truth the power to see the image in itself. It does not make the manifestation from the outside, but in himself leads towards knowledge. For, since "no-one knows the Father other than the Son (Matt. 11:27)," thus "no-one is able to say Jesus is Lord other than in the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 12:3)." He has not spoken through the Spirit but in the Spirit…and so, it shows in itself the glory of the only-begotten and provides to true worshippers the knowledge of God in himself. The way, then, to the knowledge of God is from the one Spirit, through the one Son, to the one Father. And in an opposite manner, the goodness and holiness by nature and the royal dignity reach out from the Father, through the only-begotten to the Spirit. In this way the persons are confessed and the pious *dogma* of the monarchy does not fall away.[539]

Aside from the ascent-descent imagery Basil prefers and the more perichoretic image employed by Didymus, the similarities between these two models are striking: the Spirit is the first point of contact between believer and God, with all persons facilitating the ascent of the believer from Spirit to Son to Father. Considering, therefore, the wider contextual and philosophical precedent and the more immediate influence of Didymus' *De Spiritu Sancto* upon *Against Eunomius*, the similarities with Didymus' doctrine Basil expresses in his own *On the Holy Spirit* – in addition to Basil's tendency to not broach a controversial topic unless absolutely relevant and necessary – I would consider it troublesome to suggest from a lack of treatment of the subject in *Against Eunomius* that Basil did not believe the Spirit to be an illuminating power in his earlier years as a theologian.

It is, however, certainly true that the Spirit as illuminator is something only fleshed out in later works – but this is more out of necessity and relevance than anything else. In this Basil's shift in focus in his theology of illumination from Son to Spirit can be viewed somewhat as a reflection of early Christianity's own trajectory over the course of the fourth century – as the question of the Son's illuminating power lacks the same argumentative relevance it did in earlier debates, the Spirit's status came to to forefront. For the earlier thinkers that unequivocally found the source of divine illumination to be first and

[539] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18,47.

foremost in the Son, the matter is fairly clear-cut. The same, however, appears to not have been true of the Pro-Nicenes – one might argue this is a natural result of a more fleshed-out model of the Trinity in which the notion of the divine *ousia* takes centre-stage and, as Ayres and others have argued, the activity of each person must be inseparable from the others. With a Pro-Nicene perspective, one must imagine that the process of divine illumination is one participated in by every person of the Trinity. Within this framework, the Spirit as first point of access is rather natural; it dwells within human beings from the moment of Baptism and – due to the popularity of Spiritual exegesis in the wake of Origen and his influence – aids Christians seeking perfection in reading and understanding the scriptures in such a way that even their most profound meanings can be uncovered.

When considering the kind of ascent into the other divine persons that Basil envisages the Spirit's light to enable, it is of paramount importance to establish what he considered the exact relationship of the Spirit with Father and Son to be: if the Spirit is not God *kat' ousian*, then it acts as an intermediary between human beings and the true divinity, and if the Spirit is *homoousios* with Father and Son, then the ascent into the other divine persons is one from the Spirit into – albeit less initially visible - equals. Indeed, if there is one matter that has been reopened by the reinvigoration of Basilian studies in the 21st century, it is the question of Basil's private and personal commitment to Nicene doctrine even when he deemed it politically inexpedient to express these thoughts openly. While some, such as Johannes Zachhuber, are keen to emphasise Basil's place in a wider Cappadocian theology and as a wholesale advocate of the *homoousion* in a sense which would be harmonious with the general notion of 'Nicene Orthodoxy,' Lewis Ayres is keen to present Basil as a devotee of Pro-Nicene theology, but adds that his use of the *homoousion* is a qualified one in which it is best used to describe a "genetic" sameness of essence, which he typifies as Basil's tendency "to reinterpret earlier language rather than

immediately reject it."[540] Though this genetic interpretation of *homoousios* is certainly present in Basil's corpus, especially in his letter 52 to the *Canonicae*, the much earlier letter 9 expresses a private commitment to the *homoousion* that is far less qualified. Basil here attacks the Trinitarian thought of Dionysius of Alexandria on the Son:[541]

> But if I may speak my own point of view, I accept the term "similar according to essence" provided the qualifier "invariably" is added, on the grounds that it comes to the same thing as *homoousios*, according to, let it be understood, the sound understanding of *homoousios*. It was thinking exactly this that the fathers at Nicaea consistently added the *homoousion* when they addressed the Only-begotten as "light from light," and "true God from true God" and so on and so forth. Now, no-one can possibly conceive of any difference of light as regards to light, truth as regards truth, or of the essence of the Only-begotten to that of the Father.[542]

Basil then goes on to further reject the term "likeness (*homoios*)" on its own by ostensibly echoing Philo's concerns about the utility of the term in *De Opificio Mundi*, and that Dionysius' implications that the Spirit is a creature "by no means befit the Spirit, casting him out from the divinity we worship, and listing him somewhere below with the created and servile class of things."[543] The supposed private nature of this letter, when coupled with its contents, show two things. First, as we have seen in chapter 1, Basil was a far more enthusiastic advocate of Nicaea in private than he was in public. The second is that even as early as 362 – the *terminus ad quem* of *Ep* 9 – Basil was keen to both express the

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[540] The "Cappadocian" nature of Basil's Trinitarian theology and his unqualified acceptance of *homoousios* can be seen in both Zachhuber's *Basil and the Three Hypostases Tradition* (Zeitschrift Fur Antikes Christentum-Journal Of Ancient Christianity, 2001, Vol.5(1), pp.65-85) and *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 57-60. Ayres both responds to Zachhuber and expresses his perception of a "genetic" *homoousion* in Basil's corpus in *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Oxford: University Press, 2004), 205-6.

[541] Fedwick (*A Chronology of Basil* 7;17) dates *Letter* 9 to 360-2 and *Letter 52* to 376. Deferrari (LCL 190, 93; 327) dates the former to 361 and the latter to 370. I generally find *52* to be characteristic of Basil in the early stages of his episcopate – the parallels to *Letter 90* and his aggressive respect in both for Nicaea and its creed to me come across as the writings of a man newly promoted reasserting his orthodoxy, not as someone as assured in his episcopacy as the later Basil so often is.

[542] Basil, *Ep.* 9.

[543] Ibid. For the echo of Philo, see *De Opificio Mundi* 23,71.

homoousion in a way that was far more holistic than the genetic expression Ayres associates with him, and that the Spirit too is part of the divinity as worshipped by man; about as close as one can get to *homotimos* without using the term itself.[544] Though Zachhuber's disposition towards the tradition notion of a unified "Cappadocian" expression of the Trinity is at times – though understandable – a touch too clear-cut, his suggestions on Basil's preference for the *homoousion* and Trinitarian consistency are accurate and visible from an early stage in Basil's private epistolary corpus, even if he shows reticence expressing these thoughts to a wider audience.

In a recent translation of *Against Eunomius*, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz and Mark DelCogliano seem fairly assured of Basil's Trinitarian orthodoxy, naming him in rather certain terms one of the "architects of the Trinitarian doctrine that eastern and western churches to this day profess as 'orthodox.'" [545] Simultaneously, however, they also reject assertions that *Against Eunomius* can be viewed as a debate over the great terms of the period, and to do so would be to "mistake the rhetoric of *Against Eunomius*," a sentiment with which it is difficult to argue – the treatise eschews a "clash of creeds" narrative and instead focuses on rejecting Eunomius' specific interpretations of his creed as partly misguided and partly malicious.[546] To wit, the treatise is far more concerned with identifying the *ἰδιώματα* of Father and Son and the less hypostatically distinguishable *ἐνέργειαι* of God as Trinity distinct from the permanently inaccessible *οὐσία*.[547] I would chance to suggest that the dubiousness of Basil's orthodoxy is generally proffered due to the tendency amongst scholars both historical and modern to tacitly

[544] I have dealt with this in some detail in the footnotes of chapter 1 – It is my belief that the development-narrative often ascribed to Basil's Trinitarian thought seems to at times be born out of an understandable but unwary reluctance to see him as a schemer or politician than pure historical analysis: even Basil's friends at the time considered him to have a penchant for duplicity, should the church benefit from it.

[545] Radde-Gallwitz and DelCogliano, *Against Eunomius*, 5.

[546] Ibid, 47.

[547] Ayres (*Nicaea and its Legacy* 198-204) expresses Basil's meaning of these terms eloquently and in great detail, should one have any further enquiries.

equate Nicene orthodoxy with Athanasius' particular defence of it. Though it is certainly true that Athanasius is the most vocal in his support of the *homoousion*, he defends it with such unwavering aggression that he often made enemies of those with whom he should have compromised: traditionally the phrase *Athanasius contra mundum* – Athanasius against the world – has been spoken admiringly, but it must be remembered this was as much self-inflicted as it was the result of non-Nicene efforts to unseat him. Though eventually praised for his principled stance, it earned him few friends at the time. Basil, despite his political machinations serving as a detriment to some friendships, took a stance that was less principled but profoundly benefitted the Pro-Nicene cause in the 370s, preferring to work towards the vindication of Nicene doctrine in public through compromise rather than conflict. When Athanasius' methods are taken as a gold standard, subtlety can often be mistaken for heterodoxy – a problem I would argue is often the cause of the doubts around Basil's commitment to Nicaea despite effective epistolary evidence to the contrary.

Here it is prudent to return to and conclude with McConnell's assertion that Basil's consideration of the Spirit as an illuminating power was a later invention. The lack of a clear emergence of a Pro-Nicene view of the Spirit – it apparently being present from the earliest stages of Basil's career as a theological writer, even if only at times in private and with significant risk mitigation attached – makes this difficult to maintain, even if he only turned his attention to the Spirit after the Son had been sufficiently vindicated by the Pro-Nicene revolution of the 360's. In short, Basil's turn to the Spirit and his conception of its illuminative powers should not be considered a change of heart but simply a change of focus that reflected that of the debate with his mentor, Eustathius. The Son remains an illuminator of mankind, but it is now the Spirit that stands accused of createdness. Basil therefore refers Eustathius to the fact that the communion with the Spirit through its light is the beginning of the process of ascent into the divine life: though third in order, it is first in apprehension and thus equal in rank.

FROM *EPINOIA* TO *THEORIA/EPOPTEIA*: A TERMINOLOGICAL SHIFT FROM *AGAINST EUNOMIUS* TO *ON THE HOLY SPIRIT*.

The work of Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz has been instrumental in developing Basil's theological epistemological framework. For them, the *ousia* of God is – for Basil – beyond the confines knowledge, as are all *ousiai,* even those of the atoms from which the material world is built. In *Against Eunomius* and elsewhere, where Basil ruminates on the *ousiai* of things – and in particular the divine *ousia* – he is keen to stress that true knowledge of these things themselves is truly unattainable. This is because Basil well understands that the knowledge one can have of things is multifaceted. Radde-Gallwitz recognises the major distinctions Basil makes as these:

(1) 'knowing that' versus 'knowing what',
(2) 'knowing how' versus 'knowing what',
(3) absolute versus relative terms,
(4) common versus particular, which is usually described in terms of essence/substance (οὐσία) or substrate (ὑποκείμενον) versus properties (ἰδιώματα, ἰδιότητες), and
(5) positive versus negative terms.[548]

It is with these first two distinctions that we must primarily concern ourselves. Whilst "knowing that" is indicative of the understanding that God exists – a fact sufficiently evidenced by scripture and a knowledge partially shared by Basil and Eunomian thinkers - "knowing what" refers to the essences themselves, and is in all things – but particularly in regards to God – fundamentally unknowable, in contrast to the assertions of Eunomius and Aëtius before him. Indeed (as also analysed by Radde-Gallwitz), later in *letter* 235, Basil states it thus:

> For in sciences one must first take it on faith that the letter spoken is alpha, and later, having learned the characters and pronunciations, grasp also the exact apprehension of the force of the letter. But in faith in God the notion that God is precedes, and we

[548] Radde-Gallewitz, Andrew. *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), 122.

> gather this notion together from his works (ἐκ τῶν δημιουργημάτων συνάγομεν). For it is by perceiving his wisdom, power, goodness, and all his invisible qualities from the creation of the world, that we come to a recognition of Him…And faith follows this knowledge, and worship follows such faith.[549]

Knowledge is a precedent to faith, therefore, and knowledge of God is attained by examining his perceptible words. However, Basil is keen to qualify the above statement by pointing out he here refers only to knowledge "commensurate with human comprehension," and most importantly goes on to contrast this knowledge with "the contemplation of the very *ousia* of God," attacking – though not by name – the Eunomians for equating all knowledge of God with this elevated knowledge of the *ousia* itself.[550] This difference is explained by Basil effectively in the same letter:

> But our position is that we confess that we know that which is knowable of God, and yet that to know anything which evades our grasp (κατάληπσις) is not possible. So, for example, if you were to ask me what sand is, and I were to answer that I did, you would clearly be misrepresentative if you were to immediately continue and demand its number, because your first question was about the external appearance of sand, but the second, a dishonest one, was turned backwards to be about its number. This sophism is like that of someone who says "do you know Timothy? Then if you do know Timothy, you also know his nature (φύσις). But you have confessed that you know Timothy; therefore give us a description of Timothy's nature." But, I both know Timothy and do not know him, yet not in the same way and in the same vein. For my not knowing him is not on the same level as my knowing him, but according to one manner I know him, and according to another I am ignorant of him. For in such a way and in this manner I both know and am ignorant of even myself. For I know myself – who I am – but I do not know myself, insofar as I am ignorant of my essence (ούσία).[551]

This passage is difficult to read, but should not be mistaken as a long walk for a short drink: Basil is making an important and comprehensive distinction between knowing one's properties via observation and knowing the very thing that constitutes one's nature: *ousia*. Furthermore, by using such a mundane example, Basil tacitly reminds us that since there exists such a limit on the knowability of a human

[549] Basil, *Ep.* 235.

[550] Ibid.

[551] See Basil, *Ep.* 235.

being, this must be understood of the divine essence *a fortiori*. This difference is similarly expressed in *Against Eunomius*: Whilst Eunomius wants to suggest God's *ousia* is as *agennētos*, Basil suggests that though this exists as a quality of God in some regard, to suggest we can know this of God's essence is absurd: again utilising the *katalēpsis*-language we see above, he argues that if the Eunomians are incapable of describing the *ousia* of the earth itself, then the *ousia* of God is beyond them *a fortiori*.

At first this might appear to be an irreconcilable difference with Basil's thought in *On the Holy Spirit*. In that treatise, contemplation of the Spirit – in the Spirit – is a process that appears to impart knowledge of the things of God. The Basil of *Against Eunomius* would have evidently found this a troublesome assertion: God being knowable in any complete sense is perceived by him as Eunomius' greatest and most perilous error. Indeed, if the dating of the above epistle is anything to go by it would appear to postdate *On the Holy Spirit* by roughly six months, meaning that Basil would still heartily repudiate any possibility of knowing the *ousia* of God.[552] Furthermore, we cannot imagine this is a case of Basil playing both sides, as it were – the letter is written to Amphilochius, the man to whom *On the Holy Spirit* is devoted. Basil therefore has not changed his mind. The *Ousia* of God – and indeed the *ousiai* of all things, even one's own – is beyond knowledge or comprehension.

Radde-Gallwitz and DelCogliano have both made much of Basil's use of *epinoia* as the terminology Basil employs when rejecting the possibility of the knowledge of the essences. Both translate the term as "conceptualisation," similarly to Lampe and E.C.E. Owen, who consider it in the corpuses of Basil and

[552] DeFerrari (vol. 3, 377ff.2) gives a date of January 376, a date corroborated by Fedwick.

Gregory of Nyssa to denote the internal "reflection on a concept already formed."[553] DelCogliano gives focus to its status within a wider epistemic framework, it being a derived notion (ἔννοια), though he notes well that Basil's terminology is never quite clear-cut – sometimes using ἔννοια or νόημα in the same manner that he might *epinoia* – but that the meaning remains consistent.[554] DelCogliano further makes note that *epinoiai* are certain kinds of *noēmata* which are themselves a form of *ennoiai* – one might imagine then that where Basil displays a notion of inconsistency, it is because he is utilising more general terminology and where using *epinoia* he is being more specific in its derivation.[555] Radde-Gallwitz instead seems to share with Lampe a more practical approach to the language, focussing on the process of conceptualisation that Basil envisions to be the process by which human beings develop an idea of God through name-making – Basil's contention here of course being that even *agennētos*, the name Eunomius wishes to give the Father without qualification, is a concept developed *κατ' ἐπίνοιαν* through reflecting on the divine life: we know therefore that the Father is *agennētos* not through knowledge of the *ousia* but through the application of *epinoia* to the names and qualities that appear *prima facie* on initial observation. While we can learn of many qualities of God, Basil affirms that we can know the many things through *epinoia* 'that' God is, but 'what' God is remains necessarily inaccessible.

One might initially be shocked, then, at the familiarity with God with which Basil flirts in the pages of *On the Holy Spirit*. In the treatise, the unbridgeable epistemic distance expressed between man and God in *Against Eunomius* and other works is potentially blurred by two conceptions: *theōsis* and *theōria*.

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[553] See Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon,* 528. See also Owen, E.C.E. *Epinoeo, Epinoia: And Allied Words, I.* Journal of Theological Studies vol.35 (1934), 368-376.

[554] DelCogliano, Mark. *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Controversy*, 153-4. Leiden: Brill, 2010.

[555] Ibid. 153-4.

Epinoia, though divinely given in some regard, is still very much a meditation on the properties (ἰδιώματα) of God within the boundaries of the human intellect, aided by the Scriptures and the right understanding of them. *Theōria,* a term for particularly profound contemplation of powerful philosophic and Christian lineage is very much conceived of as being attainable only through divine gift:[556]

> For lamps are not used in the presence of the Sun, and the law ends and the prophets are silenced when the truth comes to light. But the one who is able to look into the depths of the sense of the law, and passing through the obscurity or the latter as if through a veil, begins knowing the ineffable: such a person turns from the latter to the Spirit and imitates Moses, who in speaking with God took off the veil. And so the obscurity of the teachings of the law is an analogue to the veil on Moses' face while spiritual contemplation (τὴν πνευματικὴν θεωρίαν) is to the turning towards the Lord. Therefore, he who strips away the letter in his exegesis of the law turns towards the Lord – the Lord now said to mean the Spirit – and becomes like Moses, whose face was glorified by God's revelation. For as those that are near vivid colours are themselves made colourful because of the beams of light that flow around them, so is the one who clearly fixes his eyes on the Spirit is somehow transformed by the glory of the Spirit into something more radiant as his heart is illumined by the Spirit – as if by a light.[557]

Lewis Ayres suggests in response to this passage that, to Basil, there is "the need for a special θεωρία to grasp the nature of the Spirit."[558] This is broadly true, but I would rather contend that – for the purpose of this treatise – Basil is using *theōria* to mean a special kind of God-given contemplative framework. *Theōria* here is very similar in its meaning to *epinoia*: it is a kind of method of conceptualisation, but one that relies on participation in the Spirit through its light. Moreover, *epinoia* is not overly considered a state in which the individual is themselves transformed by the event. One

[556] The most exhaustive work on early constructions of *theōria* as a philosophic term can be found in Nightingale, Andrea Wilson. *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy: Theoria in Its Cultural Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); See also Goldhill, Simon & Osborne, Robin eds. *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4-6; and for a more Aristotelian impression: Adkins, W. D. H. *Theoria Versus Praxis in the Nicomachean Ethics and the Republic*, Classical Philology 73 (1978): 297–313.

[557] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 21,52.

[558] Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 219.

might imagine this to be the case in a broad sense: the core tenet of ancient epistemology is that in contemplating an object one comes to resemble it as knowledge deepens, generally typified as 'like knowing like.' However, Basil's description of the transformative power of *theōria* appears to enkindle a more vivid change, where one becomes "more radiant" through the experience. This radiance through *theōria* appears to be only achievable by those who have attained a "purity of heart," since their purified nature is capable of interacting more wholly with the Spirit's light than someone of a more carnal nature.[559] Basil's use of *theōria* in this sense might have been rather objectionable: its origins are certainly exegetical, found in both the Antiochene and Alexandrine "schools" into which we so often divide patristic exegetical methodologies.[560] Here, Basil once more pushes a term far beyond its traditionally Scriptural remit to advance a more holistic understanding of the sources of divine knowledge. One might then consider *theōria* to be a more perfected form of *epinoia*, wherein the subject is not simply conceptualising their ideas of the object they behold but is also actively illumined by this object and purified in such a way that a more profound participation in it is enabled: to return to *On the Holy Spirit* chapter 9, "those that participate in (the Spirit) enjoy it to the extent that their nature allows, not to the extent that his power allows."[561] As one tends towards absolute perfection, then, one is able to participate further and thus be additionally transformed – which itself must be a reference to some form of purification due to the source of the transformation. Resultantly, Basil appears to contend, your theoretic instincts are sharpened and the vision of God becomes gradually more complete, and greater knowledge naturally follows.

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[559] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22,53. Such is also Ayres' contention: See *Nicaea and its legacy* 219.

[560] Young has done perhaps the best job of identifying differences between Alexandrine and Antiochene frameworks of *theōrētikē anagnōsis* in both *The Rhetorical Schools and their Influence on Patristic Exegesis*, 190-3 and *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* 161-185.

[561] Ibid. 9,22.

This newer, radically more ascetic, approach to the theological question of divine knowledge reframes the relationship between the subject and object of knowing in Basil's theological epistemology. However, this is not to say that the same fundamental restriction applies: the *ousia* of God remains inaccessible at any time, in any place, and by any means whatsoever. Basil does not repeat the epistemological red lines he stated against Eunomius in *On the Holy Spirit,* but this should not be taken as an indication that his perspective changed; indeed, as seen above with *Letter 235* – contemporaneous with *On the Holy Spirit* and addressed to the treatise's dedicatee – Basil defends the unknowability of God's *ousia* with as much gusto as ever. The absence of this notion from *On the Holy Spirit* is explicable for one simple reason: Eustathius of Sebaste, to whom Basil was in a way responding, was himself staunchly anti-Eunomian. Indeed, Eustathius at this time can be assumed to have accepted at least that the Father and Son were similar according to nature and at most that they were *homoousios*, to the point that Basil is safe in observing – apparently without fear of disagreement – that the divine essence is "seen as like and equal, or rather the same (*αὐτός*) in the Father as in the Son."[562] No such assertion is made about the Spirit, who is only compared by honour and other attributes which it expresses in similar weight to the Father and the Son. This also means that Basil avoids postulating about matters of essence, since that remains beyond knowledge or understanding. Instead, as he claims in *Against Eunomius*, only the attributes of God are accessible, not the essence, and become clearer through conceptualisation of that which has revealed.

T*heōria* is, therefore, not so different from *epinoia,* perhaps best thought of as an accelerated and reciprocal form of the latter. Both are fundamentally modes of contemplation, but whilst *epinoia* appears more purely intellectual in its process, *theoria* is described in a manner that is more experiential

[562] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 8,21. It is interesting Basil skirts around the *homoousion*, and might perhaps indicate a reluctance on Eustathius' part to use the term despite a general affirmation of the Son's equality to the Father. Basil is vocally pro-Nicene by this point, so this does seem a possibility.

and participatory. Whilst both are given by God, *theōria* is facilitated by divine power in a more active sense, it being the gift of a certain kind of intellection only enabled through participation in God. Indeed, whilst the epinoetic contemplator conceptualises more on their own in light of that which has been revealed, the theoretic contemplator does so through communion with the Holy Spirit, and accordingly becomes a spiritual exegete of all things revealed. Here, then, perhaps we see the strongest distinction between the epinoetic and the theoretic – the theoretic is, in many ways, Basil's answer to the notion of the spiritual exegete found in the works of Origen, a man to whom Basil was quite consciously indebted.

Origen's conception of the spiritual exegete is one that has received significant treatment, and entirely underpins his theological epistemology. The spiritual sense of scripture and the method of reading it, as well as its origin in the Holy Spirit itself, are all documented in *On First Principles* 4.2. In the following extract, Origen establishes the need for a spiritual sense, accessible only to an exegete being illumined by the Holy Spirit:

> These mysteries which were made known and revealed to them by the Spirit, the prophets portrayed figuratively through the narration of what seemed to be human deeds and the handing-on of certain legal ordinances and precepts. The aim was that not everyone who wished should have these mysteries laid before their feet to trample, but that they should be for the one who has devoted himself to studies of this kind with the greatest purity and sobriety and through nights of keeping watch, by which he might be able to trace out the deeply hidden meaning of the Spirit of God, concealed under the language of an ordinary narrative that points in a differing direction, and so he might become a sharer of the knowledge of the Spirit and a receiver of his divine counsel.[563]

In a slightly earlier and more methodological section, Origen also observes that the three meanings of scripture, which Elizabeth Lauro states as either "literal, moral and spiritual" or the more authentically

[563] Origen, *On First Principles* 4,2,7 (Butterworth, 282-3).

Origenian "somatic, psychic and pneumatic."[564] These senses all impart knowledge, but each sense requires a different approach and the higher senses are generally considered by Origen to be more taxing, the literal sense being the dullest and the spiritual being the most difficult to grasp, relying on the perfection of the reader from virtuous living and the impartation of right insight from the Spirit itself. All, however, are of value and only the most able of spiritual exegetes may rightly apply these schemes in such a way that an image of the characteristics of God comes to take form in the mind with ever-increasing clarity.

The epistemic progress enabled by an effective exegetical process is described best in *On First Principles* book 2, where Origen observes how the ascent towards knowledge continues in the next life:

> And so the rational being, growing at each successive stage, not as it grew when in this life in the flesh or body and in the soul, but increasing in mind and intelligence, advances as a mind already perfect to perfect knowledge, no longer hindered by its former fleshly senses, but developing in intellectual power, ever approaching the pure and gazing "face to face," if I might so say, on the causes of things…I think that the mind, when it comes to perfection, still feeds on the appropriate and suitable food in a measure which can neither admit of wanting nor of superfluity. But in all respects this good must be understood to be the contemplation and understanding of God, and its measures those that are appropriate and suitable to this nature which has been made and created. These measures will rightly be observed in all those who are beginning to see God – that is to understand him through purity of heart.[565]

At first sight, there is no notion of illumination present within this extract. However, when one considers the Pauline literature to which Origen is likely alluding, namely that of 2 Corinthians 3:18 and 1 Corinthians 13:12, God's role in transforming the individual's mind so that it might more accurately

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[564] See Dively Lauro, Elizabeth A. *Reconsidering Origen's Two Higher Senses of Scriptural Meaning: Identifying the Psychic and Pneumatic Senses*, 306 in Wiles and Yarnold ed. *Studia Patristica XXXIV* (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 306-17. See also Blossom, Stephaniw. *Mind, Text and Commentary: Noetic Exegesis in Origen of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind and Evagrius Ponticus* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2010), 198-218; Martens, Peter. *Origen and Scripture* (Oxford: University Press, 2014), 89-106; Edwards, Mark. *Origen Against Plato* (London: Ashgate, 2002), 133-144.

[565] Origen, *On First Principles* 2,11,7 (Butterworth, 153-4).

perceive the divine reality becomes a central assumptions of Origen's narrative herein. The parallels of Basil's description of the reading of tradition in the same manner as scripture in *On the Holy Spirit* to the exegetical schemes of Origen should be clear: mankind can only come to know and comprehend the *dogmata* obscured within tradition by casting off its carnality and becoming spiritual. Only then, Basil contends, can the individual become worthy of the insight, the *theōria* that the Spirit imparts to all those fit to receive it through illumination, and by which the epistemic ascent into the divine persons might be properly realised. This is also the main point of departure from Origen that Basil makes on this matter, as shown in chapter 3: while Origen observes the epistemic process from scripture, Basil moves beyond this into a place where non-scriptural tradition is read and understood through the same techniques one might apply to Scripture, since both are from the same source and illuminated with the same light, containing knowledge that can only be arrived at gradually and as the reward of a life virtuously lived.

Non-Scriptural Tradition as the Product of Illumination

R.P.C. Hanson, in his two treatments of Basil's doctrine of tradition, does not discuss the role of the Spirit's illumination in humanity's receiving of tradition as in a mystery. This is understandable, as Hanson's primary concern appears to be to portray Basil's view as a minority – perhaps even idiosyncratic – one that lacks both historicity and contemporary witness.[566] Other scholars of his time take note of the notion – De Mendieta ends his paper on Basil's doctrine of tradition with this:

[566] See Hanson, *Tradition in the Early Church* 181-6; *Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit*. It should be by this point quite evident I thoroughly disagree with Hanson – it is probably best not to linger on it further.

> Moreover, this doctrinal tradition is the congenital milieu, in which Christian thinkers, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, may develop this "unwritten" tradition into a higher and more integrated theology.[567]

De Mendieta, however, rather than seeing tradition itself as illumination, prefers to view illumination to be present in the development of tradition as a theological method, and elsewhere suggests that this tradition is more secret than it is mystical.[568] Florovsky is more open to a mystical origin, but sees the mystery more as a mode of transmission than the status of the knowledge therein contained, likely a result of his conflating *mystery* with *sacrament*, as was the wont of many 20th century churchmen. Hence, to Florovsky, the spiritual élite to whom Basil referred was not a select group of ascetics or bishops, but simply the church as a whole.[569] More recently, most treatments of Basil's doctrine of tradition touch upon the Spirit's involvement with tradition, but stop short of identifying the Spirit as both the source of the traditions themselves and the means of comprehending them. Ayres suggests Basil is referring to the Spirit using tradition to disclose its own nature.[570] Hildebrand, on the other hand, is probably the most intent on finding tradition independently valuable whilst tying it inextricably to scripture:[571]

> Thus, tradition is, as it were, a pair of glasses, apostolic glasses, that the reader wears when trying to discern the teaching that the Lord wishes to communicate in the Bible. Basil saw that when he read the Scriptures while "wearing" the liturgical tradition, he saw more clearly what they were teaching about the Spirit from both a theological and economic point of view.[572]

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[567] De Mendieta, *Apostolic Traditions*, 70.

[568] Ibid, 70; *The Pair Kerygma and Dogma in the Theological Thought of Basil of Caesarea,* 136.

[569] See Florovsky, Georges. *The Function of Tradition in the Ancient Church,* 192-6. The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 9 (1963), 181-200

[570] Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy,* 219.

[571] See Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* 96.

[572] Ibid. 96.

Hildebrand herein considers the *πνευματικὴ θεωρία* expressed in *On the Holy Spirit* to be the Spirit's way of using tradition to make the meaning of scripture more apparent. Hildebrand is undoubtedly correct that non-scriptural tradition helps reveal the truth in Scripture, but as discussed in the previous section, this is because both – in Basil's view – require the same kind of purification and spiritual exegesis to read, and neither would thus contradict the other, having the same source in the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Basil is keen to separate them to the extent of naming the non-scriptural tradition explicitly "non-scriptural (ἄγραφος)," and his preferred doxology, in which the Spirit is glorified *with* Father and Son rather than *in* them, is something Scripture does not make patent, but the tradition gleefully divulges.

Indeed, this tendency to see Basil as less of a mystic and more of an exegete has – in my view – served to place an obfuscatory cloud over something that is quite clear in the text. As reserved as Basil is when it comes to using such controversial language as *homoousios* when talking about the Spirit in *On the Holy Spirit*, he finds himself listing every possible one of its gifts, constantly returning to its particular suitedness to revealing mysteries to mankind and its status as illuminator and revealer of knowledge. The entire treatise is written with the purpose of uplifting the Spirit and vindicating its homotimity with Father and Son, and Basil finds there to be two reasons to do so. The first is the non-scriptural tradition that the Spirit itself has revealed to humanity, and the second is that the profundity of the things it reveals about God when illuminating a purified soul could not possibly be given by a being of the created order. The latter is most clear in the rhetorical question with which Basil ends the 22nd chapter of the treatise:

> For those who trample earthly things are proven worthy of the gift of the Holy Spirit. How must one think about the one who cannot be contained by the world and is only

> contemplated by those who are holy through purity of heart? What kind of honours are to be put together with him?[573]

It is helpful that Basil is under no illusions concerning his intended audience: they are every bit as ascetic as he is, and would struggle to disagree that spiritual perfection is the path to divine knowledge – to deny this would, after all, be to render the very intention of *askesis* void. If Basil can prove to his audience, therefore, that it is the Spirit that illumines the minds of the perfect and enables them to attain a vision of God, then it must by extension deserve the homotimity Basil ascribes to it in his doxology.

It is of the utmost necessity for Basil's argument, then, that the Spirit is portrayed as an illuminative power to the perfected Christian. Furthermore, due to the specifically apologetic nature of *On the Holy Spirit*, it is for his purposes most argumentatively suitable: instead of focusing on the place of the Spirit within the Trinity and its relationship to Father and Son *κατ' ούσίαν*, as it were, Basil instead approaches the topic from a human perspective based on the interaction of believers with the Spirit through worship and contemplation. This is, at its core, the value of the term *homotimos* for Basil: it enables him to observe the tradition and to identify the trend of treating the Spirit as equal in dignity without making any perceptibly untoward suggestions concerning the implications this has concerning its status as God. As shown by his anthology drawn from pre-Nicene writers of both vindicated and dubious orthodoxy, Basil is keen to argue that even those wrong about the Spirit are participate in a tradition that views the Spirit as *homotimos* and in some way expressibly divine. In response to Origen's assertion that "the sacred powers are capabilities of the only-begotten and of the Holy Spirit of divinity (τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος θεότητος)," Basil is explicit in this, stating, "thus, I think, the force of tradition often causes

[573] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22,53.

men to contradict their own teachings."[574] Origen, just like Dionysius of Alexandria after him, was a man whom Basil considered problematic when it came to the soundness of his beliefs on the Spirit, but their participation in the same tradition, in which even he appreciates the importance of co-worshipping the Spirit with Father and Son, demonstrates that the tradition remains constant where men might fluctuate. This need to provide evidence of continuity, after all, would be particularly important to a bishop of the 370's: the earliest years of their theological careers lay in the wake of attempt after attempt to settle on the terminology that most accurately described the relationship between the Trinitarian persons, and men of the church such as Eustathius were known to put their name to subsequent creeds that could at times be utterly inharmonious with one another. Therein lies the motivation for tradition as unchanging and sacrosanct – though men's minds may vacillate, God's does not and so nor does the tradition imparted to humanity by him.

It is for this reason that non-scriptural tradition must be perceived as having its origins in the Spirit, and the understanding of the *dogmata* contained therein as a product of its light. For Basil, tradition is evidently more than custom – it is, as Vladimir Lossky rightly observed, "the life of the Holy Spirit in the church," which, as previously discussed, enables it to possess the equipollence with Scripture thatw Basil ascribes to it.[575] Indeed, the necessity of an unchanging tradition can be seen in his advocacy for following the baptismal rite unchanged:

> From what are we Christians? Through faith, all the world might say. In what manner are we saved? Evidently we are regenerated through the grace of baptism. How else? So, knowing that this salvation is effected through the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, should we discard the "standard of teaching (Rom. 6:17) which we have received? … For if baptism is the start of life for me, and that day of regeneration is the first of my days, then it is clear that the words spoken in the grace of adopted sonship are most dignified of all. Am I to be turned away by their arguments of plausibility and

[574] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29,73.

[575] Lossky, Vladimir. *In the Image and Likeness of God,* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), 152.

> to give up the tradition that leads me towards the light and that has graced me with the knowledge of God, by which I have been received as a child of God, me, who until then was an enemy on account of my sin?[576]

The light to which Basil refers cannot be anything but the "intellectual light (φῶς νοητὸν)" assigned to the Spirit in the previous chapter, through which the divine mysteries and secrets become patent. The return to baptism here is also Basil at his most consistent and insightful – baptism was, is and remains the first illumination through a tradition, it being the first day of an entire lifetime of ascetical practice and contemplation by which a believer comes to know the Trinitarian God they confess at this moment of rebirth.

The language of light pervades both the treatise and even some of the traditions to which Basil appeals. Before moving on, it is worth touching upon how this is reflected in his trump card amongst authoritative non-scriptural traditions – and perhaps the only one so far unmentioned – the lamplighting prayer he attributes to the martyr Athenogenes "as a sort of departing gift as he rushed towards perfection through fire," the *Phōs Hilaron* (Joyous Light). Basil reproduces the following section for his audience, contextualising it as central to the liturgical process of lighting the evening lamps:

> We glorify the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God.
>
> αἰνοῦμεν Πατέρα καὶ Υἱὸν καὶ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα θεοῦ.[577]

One would be loath to ignore that the Athenogenes to whom Basil refers – as a result of martyrological fame and simple geography – is likely the bishop of Sebaste who was burned with ten followers during the persecution of Diocletian. Once more, we can see the argument of the treatise targeting Eustathius,

[576] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 10,26.

[577] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29,73.

the current bishop of the seat Athenogenes once held: the appeal to a martyr's witness is no fickle thing, especially to one of the Cappadocian fathers who exemplified the belief that, as Vasiliki Limberis states, "contemporary concerns of regional honor, local sanctity, and apostolic prestige coalesce around their concept of martyr piety."[578] It is not lightly, then, that Basil reminds his imagine interlocutor that the final act of one of his illustrious predecessors was to co-glorify Father and Son in a hymn that could be considered at the forefront of the martyrological inheritance of the Sebasteian church. Basil rather relishes in this, even if he only dwells upon the hymn for a moment: he introduces it as "an ancient witness against someone who accuses us of innovation," a rebuttal to Eustathius from his own church and martyr-cult.[579] Aside from its apologetic purpose, the nature of the hymn is also startlingly appropriate, it being a prayer of thanksgiving to the Father, Son and Spirit for the evening lamplight. In communal worship, then, Basil contends the Spirit is – as always – known to be *homotimos* through light. Furthermore, since all worship is derived from the Spirit, the homotimity that exists as the *dogma* hidden within the *phōs hilaron* is a spiritual gift, known to those fit to receive the insight as *theōria* that the Spirit bestows upon the perfect.

As is characteristic of the treatise, Basil's assertion that the Spirit unveils non-scriptural traditions to the church and aids the believer in comprehending them is evident as a whole, but delivered piecemeal. It is therefore helpful to outline the many assertions Basil makes throughout the treatise on non-scriptural tradition and the Spirit's illuminative powers:

1. The *homotimia* of the Spirit is revealed through the non-scriptural tradition of the Fathers.[580] The non-scriptural tradition is visible in two major ways:

[578] Limberis, Vasiliki. *Architects of Piety: The Cappadocian Fathers and the Cult of the Martyrs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32.

[579] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29,73.

[580] *On the Holy Spirit* 7,16; 9,22-3; 10,25-6; 15,35; 27,65-8; 29,71-5.

   (a) The body of Christian ritual practice, and
   (b) Its witness in the writings of authoritative Christian writers.
2. Non-scriptural traditions are delivered to the church as mysteries, and are equipollent to Scripture in ascertaining orthodox belief.[581]
3. Non-scriptural traditions conceal a profound and meaningful *dogma* beneath their – often more practical – exterior that reveal truths about the divine reality.[582]
   (a) This elucidates a further distinction between *Kerygma* and *Dogma*:
      (i) *Kerygmas* as open proclamations of Christian doctrine that can be openly preached without misconstruation.
      (ii) *Dogmas* as profound truths that are private and obscure by necessity – the *mysteries* of the church that, when rightly contemplated, unveil the divine reality.
4. Right understanding of these *dogmas* by sufficiently perfected Christians is achieved through the *theōria* gained through ascetical perfection.[583]
   (a) One should understand *Theōria* as a specific epistemological term, distinct from *epinoia*:
      (i) *Epinoia* describes the basic process of conceptualisation of a datum or data in the intellect;
      (ii) *Theōria* acts as a distinct form of contemplative process engaged in through communion with the divine reality.
5. Ascetical perfection is achieved through participation in the Holy Spirit in a permanent process of ever-increasing perfection that tends towards theōsis.[584]
   (a) Two caveats exist to this:
      (i) Participation in the Spirit is limited by the extent to which one's nature is divinised, and
      (ii) The human being makes active efforts to contemplate the revealed knowledge.
6. This participation in the Spirit enables the knowledge of *mysteries* through illumination, by which a more perfect vision of God's attributes is attained.[585]
7. Illumination is a constant process beginning from Baptism by which, as the individual tends towards total perfection, more of God is gradually revealed.[586]
   (a) For Basil, this process is *askesis*: the physical and intellectual rigor *askesis* requires is the means by which one's nature is capable of perfection and the method by which *theōria* is correctly applied.

[581] Ibid. 27,66-8.

[582] Ibid. 27,66-8.

[583] Ibid. 9,22-3; 21,52; 22,53; 27,66-8; 30,79.

[584] Ibid. 1,2; 9,22-3; 16,38; 18,47; 21,52; 22,53; 26,63; 30,79.

[585] Ibid. 9,22-3; 18,47; 22,53; 27,66-7; 30,79.

[586] Ibid. 9,22-3; 10,26; 15,35-6; 18,47; 22,53; 27,66; 30,79.

This is the assumption that underlies the thesis of *On the Holy Spirit*: The Spirit is witnessed to be *homotimos* by the tradition it reveals to mankind, and it is through gradually increasing participation in the Spirit – facilitated by gradually increasing perfection of the self – that the knowledge concealed within the tradition is unveiled to the believer. Once more, then, it must be remembered that *On the Holy Spirit* is a text written by an ascetic bishop, in imagined dialogue with an ascetic bishop, and is dedicated to yet another ascetic bishop. The recognition of the necessity of individual spiritual perfection through askesis is directly linked to the life of the church in practice, doctrine and the liturgies of which all three men were frequent officiators. We are ideologically a long way from the anti-establishment asceticism so swiftly censured at Gangra, as Basil's holistic view in which the entire life of the church – of which bishops are the overseers, as the name *ἐπίσκοπος* would suggest – calls one to ascetical perfection. Consequently, in a state of ascetical perfection, the believer is illuminated by the Spirit and the footprint of God concealed in every aspect of the church's life is unveiled. Finally, as the believer ascends from light into light – and indeed into light once more – in the contemplation of the Trinity, in the Trinity, the final goal of askesis is attained as *theōsis* is achieved. Such a suffusion of asceticism into every fibre of the Christian life was a goal shared by the ascetical thinkers of the latter quarter of the fourth century, and Basil's argument from non-scriptural tradition grounds this in the epistemic framework by which the believer comes to know God.

Scripture, Tradition and Nature: The Three Books

Indeed, non-scriptural tradition is itself but one facet of the Christian experience, and therefore only a part of how the believer might come to know God – since God is perceptible also in Scripture and in nature, they too are a fundamental part of this theological epistemological framework. That Scripture revealed God was beyond doubt: no Christian contemporary of Basil would disagree with this assertion, and so its part in this epistemic framework is quite self-evident. The same is not true for nature, and so

this must be explored in greater depth. Timothy McConnell, in his work *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, devotes a chapter to Basil's discussion of the Spirit's role in creation and the formation of Basil's natural theology. Herein he suggests Basil follows Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods,* in which Cicero argues that by virtue of the beauty and ordered nature of creation the existence of an intelligent supreme being is self-evident – an observation which is undoubtedly correct and has profound connotations for how we might understand Basil's theological epistemology.[587] McConnell examines two pericopes to this effect, in which I will follow. The first is from Basil's *Letter 235* to Amphilochius, and has in part been quoted previously:

> But in faith in God the notion that God is precedes, and we gather this notion together from his works (ἐκ τῶν δημιουργημάτων συνάγομεν). For it is by perceiving his wisdom, power, goodness, and all his invisible qualities from the creation of the world, that we come to a recognition of Him. So also do we accept him as our Lord, for since God is the creator of the entire world, and we are a part of the world, God is our creator, and faith follows this knowledge, and worship follows such faith.[588]

The second is from the *Hexaemeron*, Basil's celebrated series of homilies on the Genesis creation narrative:

> For all that has been done wisely and skilfully, and from the beauty of the things visible let us construct an idea of he who is more than beautiful; and from the greatness of these perceptible and circumscribed bodies let us conceive of he who is infinite, immense and who surpasses all understanding in the fullness of his power. For although we ignore the nature (τὴν φύσιν) of created things, so wondrous are all objects which on all fronts attract our notice that the keenest mind cannot attain the knowledge of the lowest of the things of the world.[589]

[587] See McConnell, Timothy P. *Illumination in Basil of Caesarea's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, 72-143. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014.

[588] Basil, *Ep.* 235.

[589] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1,11.

McConnell argues that Basil "draws lessons of moral and spiritual perfection from the natural order" in the *Hexaemeron*, revealed with the aid of scriptural exegesis and the light of the Spirit.[590] McConnell is correct, and Basil says as much. In the *Hexaemeron,* he states that "the world is a work of art set before all people for contemplation (είς θεωρίαν), so that through it the wisdom of he who created it can be known," an observation that demonstrates two things to which the above sections allude.[591] The first is that, as a work of God – and a work of art at that – nature can be observed and its operation contemplated in such a way that the knowledge of God can be attained from it. Secondly, that though God is in his fullest unknowable, the knowledge of aspects of God's character and the supremacy of his wisdom are attainable through θεωρία.

It would, however, be problematic to identify this particular notion as *natural theology* in the modern sense. As Jaroslav Pelikan teaches us, ancient writers – and especially Christian ones – were inclined to believe that, for the acquisition of objective knowledge, "a study that concentrated exclusively on the world external to the self was insufficient."[592] Indeed, on Gregory Nazianzen – with whom Basil shared not only an education but also a strong ascetical and apophatic conviction – Christopher Beeley has noted that modern scholarship's tendency to criticise Gregory's lack of distinction between natural and revealed knowledge of God is misplaced, and with good reason; such a dichotomy assumes that human beings can come to knowledge of God on their own.[593] Basil was as clear in rejecting this notion as Gregory: in attacking Eunomius, his main point of contention is that the attributes of God can only be known because divine revelation enables it, and even then the *ousia* of God remains inaccessible.

[590] McConnell, *Illumination* 127.

[591] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1,7.

[592] Pelikan, Jaroslav. *Christianity and Classical Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 59.

[593] Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* 112-13.

Instead, Basil made it clear that knowing God from nature was only possible because the creation of the natural world was a revelatory act, albeit a very specific kind that required decoding via other sources. He says as much in opening his *Homilies on the Hexaemeron*, where he rails against philosophers whose every model of the natural world "has been overturned by its successor," and reminding his audience their failures were "because they did not know how to say *in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth*."[594] To Basil, then, any attempt to glean knowledge of God from nature will only ever be fruitful if it is based in the scriptural understanding of how God created the universe, and such an assumption underlies any statement concerning how nature can act as a tool to contemplate God: as with all other avenues, the right mode of contemplation is required, and in this case it begins with the unshakable belief that God is the author of all creation and is thus – in his own words – "a *gymnasion* where (reasonable souls) learn to know God."[595] Only by being a *reasonable soul*, having already accepted God as creator in the exact way the scriptures describe, can the image of the divine attributes visible in nature be accessed, contemplated and understood.

This ostensible Christian monopoly on natural theology is visible as early as *Letter* 8, where Basil considers the contemplation of nature (φύσικη θεωρία) to be revelatory concerning the nature of God:

> In natural contemplation (φύσικη θεωρία), a reflection on the Holy Trinity is also involved, since from the beauty of things created, we can by analogy behold (θεωρεῖται) the creator.[596]

[594] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.2.

[595] Ibid. 1.6.

[596] Basil, *Ep.* 8.

Similarly, Basil's writings on Isaiah – of historically troublesome provenance but recently convincingly argued as authentic by Nikolai Lipatov – make similar claims, and the right contemplation of nature is consistently viewed as imparting knowledge of the things God is:[597]

> As long as one is an observer of beauty, which shines in visible reality, he is called a 'natural philosopher' or 'student of nature;' but when one goes beyond these realities, and is present before God Himself, after having known in what manner all things are beautiful, and then from such [created] beauty rising up to Beauty Itself and the truly Desirable One, the vision of Whom is limited only to pure souls, who progress towards the realities above the natural, these persons – called by some metaphysicians – can become contemplatives. So when – it is said – I present myself to you and I approach the contemplation of you with my intellect, then I will acquire that contemplative capacity by means of an illumination that comes from knowing.[598]

Speaking to God directly here, Basil observes that to be illumined during and through contemplation is to put oneself before God directly, and to receive for one's efforts further capacity for contemplation by which God can be better understood: it is a continual process, fraught with difficulties and a never-ending rite of purification, but one that leads to God itself, and is thus worth all the intellectual effort one can muster. Near the close of *On Isaiah*, Basil suggests – as he does with Tradition in *On the Holy Spirit* – that one can read nature and the visible things in a similar way to scripture, "by which we can rise up towards the knowledge of God and be ourselves perfected."[599] The path is the same, as are the tools, by which one ascends from the things contemplated to the highest object of knowledge: in contemplation, illumined by the Spirit, God becomes ever more visible to anyone fit to receive the light that unveils him.

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[597] See Lipatov, Nikolai: *The Problem of Authorship of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah Attributed to St. Basil the Great* in Livingstone, Elizabeth A. ed. *Studia Patristica XXVII* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 42-8. Lipatov compares this text and the undeniably authentic *Hexaemeron* and finds them to demonstrate a harmony in style and method that implies "both works come from one pen (p.48)." I am in strong agreement with this assessment.

[598] Basil, *On Isaiah* 162.

[599] Ibid. 212.

For Basil, the theoretic contemplation of scripture, nature and tradition, as we have seen, cannot be attained unless it is given by the Spirit through a rigorous process of askesis. The same is and must be true of the theoretic contemplation of nature. He is more than clear about this in *On the Holy Spirit*:

> The carnal man, whose mind is not trained for contemplation, allowing it to be completely buried in the mind of the flesh, as if in filth, is not able to look up at the spiritual light of truth. And so the world, that is, a life enslaved to the passions of the flesh, does not receive the Holy Spirit's grace, as an infirm eye does not receive the light of a sunbeam. Even so, the Lord bore witness to his own purity of life through his teaching and gave to his disciples the ability to see (ἐποπτικός) and contemplate (θεωρητική) the Spirit.[600]

The "spiritual light of truth" of which Basil speaks is the Spirit, who is God. The theoretic and epoptic method, according to this passage, is one which is stated by Basil to be impossible to perform unless one is being guided by the Spirit towards the majesty of God. In an earlier passage, Basil places this within the wider ascension to God that *theoria*, when performed in communion with the Holy Spirit, enables:

> Thus, anyone that hears "Spirit" cannot impress upon their mind a circumscribed nature, or one subject to changes and alterations, or something at all similar to creation. Instead, he must advance towards the highest heights in his thoughts and conceive of a necessary, intellectual substance that is infinite in power, unlimited in greatness, immeasurable by time or ages, and generous with the goods that it has. Everything the requires holiness turns towards him. All that live virtuously desire of him, as they are watered by his inspiration and assisted towards their proper and natural end. He perfects others, but himself lacks nothing. He lives, but not because he has been restored to life, instead, he is the source of life. He is established in himself and present in all places. He is the source of holiness, an intellectual light for every rational power's discovery of the truth, supplying clarity, so to say, through himself. He fills all things with power, but only those who are worthy participate in him. He is not participated in all at once but shares his energy in proportion to faith. He is simple in essence, but complex in powers. He is present as a whole to each and wholly present everywhere. He is portioned out impassibly and participated in as a whole. He is like a sunbeam whose grace is present to the one who enjoys him as if he were present to that one alone, and even still he illuminates land and sea and is mixed with air. Thus, indeed, the Spirit is present to each individual who is fit to receive him, as if he were present to him alone, and yet still he sends out grace that is complete and sufficient

[600] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22,53.

> for everyone. **The things that participate in him enjoy him to the extent that their nature allows, not to the extent that his power allows.**[601]

This pericope is long, but before we move on it is also useful to look again at the kind of gifts Basil contends the Spirit to impart through its "intellectual light" that the following two sections show:

> When, through illuminating power, we fix our eyes upon the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up towards the even more good and beautiful spectacle (θέαμα) of the archetype, somehow the same Spirit of knowledge is present inseparably, supplying those who love to see the truth the power to see the image in him (*τὴν* ***ἐποπτικὴν*** *τῆς εἰκόνος δύναμιν ἐν ἑαυτῷ παρεχόμενον τοῖς τῆς ἀληθείας* ***φιλοθεάμοσιν***). He does not make the manifestation from outside, but instead in himself leads up into knowledge.[602]

> Just like the sun, he will use the eye that has been made clean to show you in himself the image of the invisible, and in the blessed vision of the image you will see the unspeakable beauty of the archetype. Through this comes to ascent of hearts, the guidance of the weak, and the perfection of those making progress. The Spirit illuminates those who have been made clean from every stain and makes them spiritual by means of communion with himself. When a ray of light falls upon clear and translucent bodies, they are themselves filled with light and gleam with a light from themselves. Thus are the spirit-bearing souls that are illumined by the Holy Spirit: they are themselves made spiritual, and they send forth grace to others. From this comes foreknowledge of the future, the understanding of mysteries, the apprehension of secrets, the distributions of graces, heavenly citizenship, the chorus with angels, unending joy, remaining in God, kinship with God, and the highest object of desire, becoming God.[603]

All these extracts are clear about the operation of the Spirit in attaining knowledge of the things of God, and in the last section, through beholding the divine in the light of the Holy Spirit, one's experience of God moves from illuminative to unitive. In this way, the Spirit goes beyond disclosing its own homotimity to mankind, acting as the source of all right understanding of the things revealed in all creation, scripture and tradition: as one is purified and tends towards *theōsis*, this contemplation in the

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[601] Ibid. 9,22 – emphasis mine.

[602] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18,47. Emphasis mine.

[603] Ibid. 9,23.

Spirit's light becomes consistently more fruitful, revealing more and more of the things that God is as the believer is transformed through light first into a spiritual being, and then into an image of the image itself.

It would be troublesome to suggest that nature is equipollent with scripture and non-scriptural tradition for Basil – in fact the opposite appears true. The use of natural contemplation alone is more akin to how Basil views philosophy without Christianity: useful to an extent but, if without sources that can be considered *θεόπνευστος* – God-breathed – it is rudderless and possibly even damaging. This can be best seen in Basil's homily on Greek Literature: philosophy and other non-Christian literature contains "the silhouette of virtue," though it lacks precisely that which enables Christians to reach greater heights of perfection: the Scriptures.[604] Basil is rather unconcerned with how the philosophers of antiquity came to sometimes proclaim beliefs harmonious with those of the gospel. Instead, philosophy and all other Hellenistic pursuits are only useful to the Christian when read through the lens of divinely inspired works. To return to Basil's *On Isaiah*, the philosopher of the hellenistic world is a "natural philosopher," to whom the divine reality remains almost entirely inaccessible; only by becoming a theoretic can one come to know God in any meaningful sense, and this cannot be done unless one is aware of and has come to understand the doctrines contained within the aids which the Spirit imparts to mankind, namely Scripture and non-scriptural tradition.

This fits well with Basil's understanding of Greek literature as an exercise in 'baby's first exegesis,' as it were. To return to *On Greek Literature*:

> Thus, we must be in conversation with poets, historians, orators, indeed with all men who may further the salvation of our soul. Just as dyers prepare the cloth before they

[604] Basil, *To the Youth,* 10.

> apply the dye, whether it is purple or any other colour, so then must we also, if we would preserve unmarred the idea of true virtue, become first initiated in the pagan stories, then at length give special attention to the sacred and divine teachings, even as we first accustom ourselves to the sun's reflection in the water, and then become able to turn our eyes upon the very sun itself.[605]

As explored in the previous chapter, initiation into the Hellenistic cultural works and learning to read into them is practice for reading sources of more perfect truth. When read with Basil's contrasting of the natural philosopher to the theoretic in *On Isaiah*, the similarities are quite evident:

> As long as one is an observer of beauty, which shines in visible reality, he is called a 'natural philosopher' or 'student of nature;' but when one goes beyond these realities, and is present before God Himself, after having known in what manner all things are beautiful, and then from such [created] beauty rising up to Beauty Itself and the truly Desirable One, the vision of Whom is limited only to pure souls, who progress towards the realities above the natural, these persons – called by some metaphysicians – can become contemplatives.[606]

Both texts seem to echo the difference expressed by Plato in the *Theaetetus* and the *Republic* and Aristotle in *Metaphysics λ* between knowledge attained from the senses and the truer knowledge that only comes as the product of the purer thought that occurs only in the intellect, but with a distinctly Christian slant: Instead of the pure intellection envisioned by other philosophical movements, Basil instead considers the ascent to God to be achieved through contemplation in purity – only by the grace of the Spirit and its light, by which the ascetic can employ "the eye that has been cleansed" to look up towards God and slowly ascend in knowledge through the Trinity to the archetype itself.[607] Furthermore, this contemplation is not performed wholly in the mind by a soul yearning to return to the divinity from which it originates but instead by the purified soul, gazing upon the products of divine

[605] Basil, *To the Youth*, 2.

[606] Basil, *On Isaiah* 162.

[607] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18,47.

self-disclosure – that is to say the entirety of the Christian experience – revealed to and in the world, illuminated by the light of the Trinity.

Ascetic Anthropology and the Ascent to God

So far the focus of this chapter has been primarily on the kind of contemplation by which human beings come to know God and the specific kinds of knowledge of God the human being can achieve. The ascent to God is one attained only through the illumination of Spirit and Son and the participation this engenders. Knowledge of the Father is seen to come from participation in the Son and not through direct participation in him, with Matthew 11:27 ("no-one knows the Father, except in the Son") being used as proof of this state of affairs.[608] The Trinitarian persons and their attributes are knowable, but the *ousia* of God that underpins them is not. The extent to which God can be known by an individual, Basil consistently reminds us, is predicated upon the extent to which they have been perfected – "the things that participate in him enjoy him to the extent that their nature allows, not that their power allows."[609] This notion of perfection has come up frequently so far, and as such an exploration of Basil's anthropological ideas has to be made in order to fully understand his theological epistemology: without understanding how exactly man is deficient, it is quite impossible to comprehend how man achieves the perfection on which knowledge of God is reliant.

[608] Ibid. *On the Holy Spirit* 18,47.

[609] Ibid. *On the Holy Spirit* 9,22.

The nature of Basil's anthropology is a matter of overwhelming scholarly interest, as indeed should be the case: the man was a deeply committed ascetic, and this ideology permeates every facet of his works.[610] Asceticism of any kind relies on a significant number of assumptions about the inherent nature of humanity, and this is true *a fortiori* when it comes to any Christian permutation – Basil is no exception. Much ink has been spilled on the subject, so it is perhaps best to quickly summarise Basil's ascetical anthropology and point out specifically why it is of such centrality to the epistemological questions he touches upon in his works. The anthropological connotations of Basil's ascetic worldview have perhaps been best compiled in recent years by Stephen Hildebrand, who distinguishes between the two major ways in which Basil talks about man as a being: as a reader of scripture and as a being embodied.[611] The idea of man as reader that emerges from Hildebrand's treatment of Basil is remarkably – though not surprisingly – Origenian in nature: to plunder a metaphor from Rowan Williams, Basil's idea of exegesis moves in an Origenian key.[612] One comes to the same dead end here as one does in epistemology, however – perfection achieved through a contemplative process is evoked and asserted, but not necessarily discussed in such a way that the underlying anthropological assumptions become evident. Instead, for that, one must look at Basil's theology of the body.

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[610] See Fedwick, P. ed. *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981). Frazee, Charles A. *Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Eustathios of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea*. Catholic Historical Review, Jan 1, 1980, Vol.66(1), 16-34. Ferguson, Everett. *Baptism in the Early Church,* 582-592 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009). Hildebrand, Stephen. *Basil of Caesarea* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 17-36. Rousseau, Philip. *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 61-92.Gribomont, Jean. *Histoire du Texte des Ascétiques de St. Basile* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1953). Wagner, Monica. *Basil of Caesarea: Ascetical Works* (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), v-xii.

[611] See Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, 17-36.

[612] Williams uses this idea to express the influence of Athanasius on Basil's baptismal theology in *Baptism and the Arian Controversy* in Barnes and Williams ed. *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth-Century Trinitarian Conflicts* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 149-180.

Hildebrand rightly observes that Basil is the inheritor of philosophical and theological traditions that "struggled to appreciate the body."[613] Indeed, though Peter Brown asserts that it was only in Late Antiquity that man truly turned inwards and severed themselves from the material, one can see the philosophical assertion of this far earlier in fourth-century BC Athens.[614] The change towards the inward-turning was not a result of an emergent anti-materialist philosophy but instead the blossoming of a religious world that transcended the historically-prevalent civic *pistis* to become a way of living: religions such as Christianity were in praxis hard to distinguish from the philosophic life that had once been the pursuit of the few, and generally the rich. The *Phaedo, Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* all express the soul's distaste with its embodiment, and the *Theaetetus*, as mentioned earlier, asserts that the knowledge gained from the bodily senses is almost incomparable in its profundity to knowledge acquired through the pure intellection of the soul within itself. Aristotle's softening of the radical dualism of Plato, despite his profound influence in so many other areas of later philosophers, did precious little to assuage the philosophies of late antiquity taking a negative view of the body, and though later Stoics and Platonists reasserted the divine nature of intellect and soul, the body itself remained unpalatably mundane – at least in comparison. The fallenness of man from an idyllic state into a painful and sinful one is made quite clear in the early stages of the Genesis cosmogony, and the influence of Hellenistic ideas over Christian conceptions may well have helped to transform this anti-body sentiment into a more explicitly dualistic narrative: the emergent "two-ways" tradition in the Apostolic Fathers is often summarised as the conflict between flesh and Spirit, and it is a narrative that Origen takes up most notably in his *Dialogue with Heraclides*, where the senses of the inner man are greater and more naturally attuned to heavenly perception than those of the body. The more educational asceticism envisioned by Origen was continued in its own way through the efforts of both

[613] Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea* 22.

[614] See also Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society in Late Antiquity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

Alexandrian and Palestinian writers, establishing a culture of academic asceticism that quickly became synonymous with the ecclesiastical spirit of the times.

By Basil's *floruit*, a particularly radical commitment to asceticism as an ideology had begun to dominate the episcopacy – and therefore the pastoral and legislative life of the church – in a way that would have been unexpected in the earlier half of the fourth century, and was likely even surprising to the bishops of the era themselves: the younger Basil, it seemed, was destined to an anchoritic existence – or at the very least a cenobitic one – and Gregory Nazianzen and John Chrysostom both recall frequent periods in their youth when they tried to flee from the priestly vocation envisioned for them by their families.[615] Gregory appears to have only come to the priesthood almost as an inheritance from his father, and even as late as 375 would flee into solitude for years at a time. For the rising theological stars of the late fourth century, *askesis* was not a fringe movement or radical vocation but instead the way of living to which all Christians were called, and this is densely reflected in the doctrines that they promulgated.

Such an approach is no less salient in Basil: in *On the Holy Spirit*, a mind predisposed with fleshly passions exists "as if in filth," and in total bondage to them.[616] His letters paint much the same picture. In one to his protégé Amphilochius, he suggests that a mind unaided by the Spirit is incapable of perceiving the external world in such a way that idolatry does not inevitably follow, and in another letter to him suggests that bodily suffering should be viewed as a means to the salvific end.[617] Indeed, such powerful language is far beyond many of his contemporaries, and takes the late antique view of the body to radical conclusions that are in many ways a product of the perfect storm of antimaterialisms

[615] See Gregory Nazianzen, *Funeral Oration on Basil*; John Chrysostom, *On the Priesthood*.

[616] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22,53.

[617] See Basil, *Letter* 233; 236.

of which Basil finds himself an inheritor. To fulfil bodily desires is to therefore open oneself up to the most heinous of sins, and to abrogate them through *askesis* is to lead oneself towards the ultimate prize: salvation. Perfection, for Basil, was nothing short of coming to resemble God, and it was through this movement towards likeness that enabled the knowledge of God attained through the right contemplation of every facet of the Christian way of living. Disregarding for a short while – for we shall return to it at the very end – that the most likely implication of the Spirit's *homotimia* is that it is also *homoooousios* with Father and Son, it would seem that Basil's asceticism and pneumatology are at their strongest point in *On the Holy Spirit*: herein, the concept of knowledge of God's attributes is predicate on ascetical discipline of body and mind, and it is the Spirit of God that is is the perfecting and illuminating power leading one up into the vision of God, this communion being the path to which all Christian doctrine, practice and disposition leads. One would have to search far to find greater praise of either asceticism or the Spirit than in Basil's imagined words to his former mentor.

KNOWLEDGE THROUGH LIKENESS: RECONSTRUCTING BASIL'S THEOLOGICAL EPISTEMOLOGY

This knowledge of divine things through likeness is no innovation on Basil's part: indeed, Christian or not, that one came to knowledge of a thing through resemblance of it something of a ubiquitous assumption and one that lay at the very heart of the epistemological models of antiquity. It appears to have existed at least as far back as Empedocles, who served as a touchstone for Plato in the *Parmenides* and Aristotle in *De Anima*.[618] This had achieved ubiquity in Late Antiquity, Christian or otherwise. The higher power of the soul's self-intellection in Iamblichus allows some perception of the divine to take place, but divination itself is unattainable - the inherent incapacity for human beings to imitate the

[618] See Kamtekar, Rachana. *Knowing by Likeness in Empedocles*. Phronesis, 2009, Vol.54(3), pp.215-238.

transcendental unity of the mind of the deity precludes them from the same kind of knowledge it possesses.[619] We find similar expressions in Numenius and Plotinus, whom Mark Edwards rightly notes were driven by the primary assumption that the eschewal of the bodily and material was the only way to acquaint oneself was by "the flight from the alone to the alone," a maxim present in both authors' works.[620] The same maxim appears to have been at the core of the anchoritic tendencies of so many Christians in the ascetic revolution: Athanasius portrays St. Anthony of the Desert as a man "altogether guided by reason" by virtue of his years in solitude.[621] Indeed, the constant conflict with demons attempting to break this solitude Athanasius narrates is a clear Christological parallel that was itself a practical imitation of God from which intellectual imitation follows. The attempt to harmonise this penchant for an anchoritic life with that of the episcopacy is certainly something that only becomes clearer in the later years of the fourth century, and it is in this dual calling that Basil views the institution of the church and the body of all its practices and scriptures as the perfect placement for the truly committed ascetic – living in the world, ministering to the world, but always grasping beyond it to the only real source of knowledge: God itself.

This is not to say that his theological epistemology is unoriginal – it is a fascinating development of Christian theological concepts and philosophical insight, directly resultant from his dual contexts as a man of late antiquity and of the Christian church: to him God is knowable by likeness, achieved through a life virtuously lived. Despite apparent movements to the contrary, Basil maintains the position that

[619] See Iamblichus, *On the Mysteries* 2,11. For an effective summary of Iamblichus' theological epistemology, see Hermoso, Maria Jesus. *Saber y razón en el neoplatonismo hacia una nueva comprensión de la filosofía de Jámblico*, 30-32. Anales del seminario de historia de la filosofía, Vol. 29, Vol. 1, 2012, 27-44.

[620] Edwards, *Numenius of Apamea* 119 in Gerson, Lloyd ed. *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: University Press, 2010), 115-125. See also Numenius, *Fragments* 2.7-12; Plotinus, *Ennead* 6.9.12.

[621] Athanasius, *Life of Anthony* 14.

the *ousia* of God is unknowable at all times and by any means. This does not, however, mean that the apprehension of God leads to an absence of knowledge – the attributes of God remain knowable and are known through the individual's coming to resemble them. This fits into the final goal of the theoretic process and communion with the Spirit – theosis. It is quite clear Basil does not mean this in an essential sense, but in participating in all the activities of God, we ourselves become divinized by grace, enabled through asceticism. The difference between the epinoetic and theoretic processes, therefore, is – as already observed – that the latter has a participatory dynamic that the former lacks: *Theōria* is perfectly directed *epinoia*, in which through ascetical discipline and the ever-deepening participation in the Spirit that is its fruit, man comes to know God's attributes as theirs being to resemble God's, likeness leading to knowledge and knowledge to likeness in a gradual but permanent ascent towards divination. Both are, undeniably, a product of the impartation of divine grace: for Basil, all knowledge of God and all processes by which it is achieved are, by virtue of their content or fruit only made visible to humanity because God will it – as a good apophatic, he would unlikely have it any other way. But *theoria* is the contemplative process available only to the ascetics, being more active, intense and participatory in the divine than mere *epinoia*: it is the term Basil uses to describe the human intellect's permanent and increasing acquaintance with the divine reality, uniquely aided by the Spirit's light.

It is perhaps ironic that Basil's most significant epistemological contribution to theology in *On the Holy Spirit* is also one he asserts to have been held by the church *ab initio*. His advocacy for non-scriptural tradition as being equally *theopneustos* with scripture would have been difficult to disagree with for his contemporaries, but it is nonetheless an assertion rarely vocalised for its radicality, especially in the fourth century frame of theological reference. If orthodoxy is a court, and Scripture the statutory law, then the non-scriptural tradition is the common law, settled on through apostolic precedent and incontrovertible in its content. Basil's core assertion – that the statutory and common law of the faith are equipollent – is vindicated by his turn to the Spirit, the divine person *homotimos* with Father and

Son, perceivable only to those "who are holy through purity of heart."[622] It is a position that is irreducibly of the world of Late Antique Christianity in its assumptions, as a harmony of both the underlying assumption that the intellect comes to resemble the *eidos* of its intellection as it moves towards knowledge, and the Christianisation of this framework to be more naturally reciprocal to better accommodate their idea of an interceding God. It is also an argument tailored to satisfy the sensibilities of Eustathius and of Amphilochius – men just like him, utterly committed to the synthesis of ascetical outlook and episcopal duty; a man Basil longs in futility to bring back from the brink of the Macedonian abyss and one he hope to aid in staying the orthodox course. An imagined olive branch extended from one ascetic bishop to another, Basil's appeal to non-scriptural tradition is a reminder of the holistic approach an ascetic must take when ascertaining the value of all the different forms of revelation, of the incomprehensibility of the divine life and of the means by which it is beheld. To Basil, unveiling this to anyone other than an individual advanced in the ascetical frame of reference would be – as indeed he ends *On the Holy Spirit* – to cast pearls before swine.[623]

In many ways, therefore, the appeal to non-scriptural tradition in *On the Holy Spirit* is as fascinating for its connotations as it is for its content – the life of the Spirit in every act, text and even thought of the church is visible and apprehensible, having been placed there so that man might become in some qualitative sense God. This is inherent to understanding the fact that, to him, the Spirit's self-revelation of the divine attributes – and the consequent self-disclosure of its own rank within the Godhead that this ensures – pervades every aspect of the Christian life and is in fact the telos of the Christian existence: theosis through askesis. Tradition, just as Scripture, is read through the application of *theoria* in communion with the Spirit in a noetic process of ever-increasing attributive likeness to God. Basil

[622] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 22,53.

[623] Ibid. 30,79.

therefore envisions the Christian to be on a permanent path towards the knowledge of God by striving for likeness to him; a process begun at baptism, from which a thirst for further knowledge and similitude is effectuated by nothing short of a transformation in nature. *Kat' ousian* – as it were – man can never become God, being incapable of knowing or participating in the divine *ousia,* but can nonetheless, through the *mimesis* of God's attributes, gain knowledge of the things *that* God is. To him, obscured beneath the surface of every facet of the Christian experience is a profound truth perceptible only to those perfected through *askesis*. Basil therefore applies an innovative and holistic ascetical and pneumatological approach to a dominant school of epistemological thought in his Late Antique context: the process of becoming like God is also the process of coming to know God, as likeness to an object of perception naturally engenders knowledge of it.

This is the very thrust of the text of Basil's letter 233, addressed to the same Amphilochius as *On the Holy Spirit*, which is here reproduced in its entirety:

> I know that I have myself heard of this, and I am aware of the health of humanity. What will I say? The intellect is a wondrous thing, and in which we possess that which is "after the image" of the Creator. And the operation of the intellect is wondrous, in that in its perpetual movement it frequently forms ideas about non-existent things as though they existed, and is frequently carried off straight to the truth. But in it there are two faculties, according to those of us who believe in God. One the evil, that of the demons which draws us to their own turning-away, and another the divine and the good, which brings us to the likeness of God. When, then, the mind remains alone and without help, it contemplates small things, equivalent to itself. When it gives way to those who deceive it, it nullifies its correct judgment, and is concerns itself with grotesque desires. Then, it considers wood to be no longer wood, but a god; then it looks on gold no longer as money, but as an object of worship. If, alternatively, it gives assent to its more divine part, and accepts the gifts of the Spirit, then, so far as its nature allows, it becomes able to perceive the divine. There are, as it were, three conditions of life, and three operations of the intellect. Our ways may be evil, and the movements of our intellect evil; such as adulteries, thefts, idolatries, slanders, strife, passion, incitement, vanity, and everything that the apostle Paul counts among the works of the flesh. Or the soul's operation is, as it were, in an average, and has nothing concerning it either worthy of damnation or worth of praise, as the perception of such mechanical skills as we commonly speak of as apathetic, and, of their own character, being inclined neither towards virtue nor towards vice. For what vice is there in the craft of the helmsman or the doctor? Neither are these operations virtues in themselves, but are inclined in one direction or the other according to the will of those who employ them. But the mind

> which is filled with the Godhead of the Spirit is at once capable of viewing great objects; it contemplated the divine beauty, though only so far as grace imparts and its nature can receive.[624]

The final words of this letter mirror the most important epistemological statement of *On the Holy Spirit*, in which participation in the Spirit is gradually increased through the perfecting process that asceticism enables.[625] The church is only an aid to the abrogation of the bodily insofar as it is participated in rightly. Just as baptism in water alone – without the presence of the Holy Spirit – is little more than a bath, so is man without the Spirit's light little more than a slave to the flesh, no matter how philosophically they might live: and living philosophically may well be viewed as the summary of ascetical discipline.[626] At this point Lossky's observation that Basil views tradition as "the life of the Spirit in the church" becomes simple in clarity but infinite in importance: only through divine light can God be perceived, and only in the Spirit can even the most celebrated men of the church come to resemble, and thus know, the divine reality to which they aspire.

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[624] Basil, *Letter 233.*

[625] See Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9,22.

[626] For an interesting note on the philosophic/Greek origins of Christian askesis, see Rousseau, Philip. *Antony as a Teacher in the Greek Life.* In Hägg, T & Rousseau, P. eds. *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 89-109.

CONCLUSION

THE SPIRIT VINDICATED

For historians of all different focuses, the matter of most interest and pertinence when considering the later and mature iteration of Basil's doctrine of tradition is its relationship to the Trinitarian controversy of its age. It is also a matter I hope I have sufficiently dealt with in this thesis: both as a matter of construction and as part of Basil's ontology, the epistemological questions raised by tradition and the status of the Holy Spirit are indivisible from each other. The Spirit, for Basil, sits at the heart of every facet of revelation that discloses something meaningful about God, including its own status as *homotimos* with the Father and Son. Non-scriptural tradition is but one facet of this wider view of revelation that Basil's work so strongly implies he held, and bears the hallmark of an ascetic applying their holistic worldview to the question of from where our knowledge of God is gleaned. Tradition and Scripture reveal the Spirit's homotimity with Father and Son, both in content and by virtue of their delivery: were the Spirit not of equal honour with the other two persons of the Trinity, Tradition and Scripture would be rather less reliable as sources of knowledge.

It is rather surprising, then, that Basil's defence of tradition is seen as ancillary to the argument as a whole, more a matter of which sources are authoritative than what makes them so. Yet for Basil this is the very reason non-scriptural tradition is allowed such prominence in a work devoted to ascertaining the *homotimia* of the Spirit: the content of tradition tells us of the Spirit's *homotimia,* and the source

of tradition in the Spirit tells us the same *a fortiori*. Basil's theology of tradition, then, is as much a statement on the nature of the Spirit as it is a statement concerning the nature of tradition itself. Hidden beneath this traditional argument for the Spirit's equality in honour is a rather more forceful implication: that the Spirit is *homoousios* with Father and Son. Basil rarely misses a grammatical or philological trick – a fact we should find unsurprising considering his educational background – and this is eminently present in his Trinitarian works. Just as Basil uses "invariably alike" in place of *homoousios* when publically weighing in on the status of the Son, so too does the *homotimia* of the Spirit convey the same underlying meaning.

This synonymity of the terms *homotimos* and *homoousios* is the only possible way to resolve the issue that lies at the heart of Basil's line of thought. If Basil sees the Father and Son as God, then it would be rather inconsistent – and rather theologically unwise in a time of such Trinitarian conflict – to suggest that there was a power in heaven that, though not consubstantial, required equal honour in worship. It is then rather confusing that the assent to the Spirit's *homotimia* by Basil rather than its *homoousietēs* is often considered by scholars to be representative of Basil's own lack of certainty on the matter. However, I would contend that, within a Trinitarian model with only one God but multiple persons, to profess the *homotimia* of the Spirit is to tacitly declare it *homoousios* and therefore as God in the truest sense. Either, then, Basil is being tactful and asserting the *homousietēs* of the Spirit by a less controversial but nonetheless synonymous term, or Basil is doing so accidentally, claiming a difference that is philosophically inconsistent with the rest of his Trinitarian theology. Considering the growing respect for Basil's intellectual acuity and capability elsewhere for defending Nicene doctrine through choosing functionally identical but less disputatious terminology, I am inclined to believe the former to be the case. In his theological maturity, then, Basil was seemingly as sure of the Spirit's consubstantiality as Gregory Nazianzen states in his *Panegyric* of him, even if Gregory did take issue with Basil's reticence to say so in public circles.

An Ascetical Theology of Light

On the subject of asceticism, Basil is undoubtedly most famous for his efforts to develop a monastic way of living. Yet, Basil also held to an ascetical ideal that focussed on the individual's direct relationship with God, perceiving it as a path on which all Christians were on, to varying degrees of progress. From the very moment of baptism, every Christian is called to be an ascetic, and to purify their hearts as much as they are able: to Basil, this is the only way a human being could come to behold God, receiving noetic light from the divine persons proportional to their level of perfection. Basil uses several metaphors in his career to express his devotion to this idea: sometimes in the language of light, candles and other objects of religious and spiritual significance. Elsewhere, Basil finds the tried and tested analogy of the Sun from Plato's *Republic* the most fitting. In Basil's *On the Holy Spirit*, the vision of God is most prominently discussed in Mosaic terms: as an ascent to the peak of Sinai. It would be disingenuous to suggest this is idiosyncratically Basilian, or even Cappadocian: Moses' ascent is probably the most fitting scriptural analogy for coming to "see" God. Instead, his exegesis of this passage shows his primary concern in approaching the question of theological epistemology, and elucidates the peculiarities of his theological thought on a matter with which he has the deepest intellectual and spiritual investment. For Basil, the Mosaic analogy is expressed thus:

> On the other hand, he who has been given power to delve into the depth of the meaning of the Law and, having passed through the obscurity of the letter, as if through a veil to come towards unspeakable things, is like Moses taking off the veil when he spoke to God: also himself turning from letter to spirit. So, as the veil on Moses' face is analogous to the obscurity of the teaching of the Law, spiritual contemplation (τὴν πνευματικὴν θεωρίαν) is with the turning towards the Lord. Therefore, he who, when reading the Law, takes the letter away and turns towards the Lord (and the Lord now is called "the Spirit") also becomes like Moses, the face of whom was glorified by the epiphany of God. For just as objects that lie near vivid colours are themselves tinged

> by the brightness that is thrown about, in such a way is the one who gazes firmly upon the Spirit, from the glory of the same Spirit, is somehow transformed into greater radiance, his heart being illumined – as it were – by some kind of light streaming forth from the Spirit's truth.[627]

The simplicity of Basil's analogy does not obscure its profundity: the exegete – whether that be of Scripture, nature or tradition – follows in their hearts the same ascent that Moses underwent, moving from a basic literal understanding of the divine reality to a purer vision of it, enabled by the illuminative power of God. Basil here is clear to note that where Moses' illumination was effected by "the Lord," in the human heart this is more rightly identified as the action of the Holy Spirit. This Mosaic analogy essentially captures the thrust of the theological epistemology Basil constructs in *On the Holy Spirit*: knowledge of God being attained through the combined action of the Spirit's illumination and the contemplative's *theōria*. Only through divine light piercing one's very heart is any substantive vision of God thus achievable.

For Basil, every Christian is called to be like Moses in this respect, to be guided up by the Spirit into the vision of Son and Father, ever-tending towards the infinity of perfection in the process. Furthermore, this means that his theological method is informed by a particularly holistic approach: the entirety of the Christian way of living leads towards the vision of God. Basil appears to rationalise this by making the claim that all facets of the Christian way of living are therefore god-given, whether they be scriptures, liturgies, or even something as simple and externally mundane as signing oneself with the cross. The Spirit sits at the core of this, enlightening the church with all its practices and doctrines in the same way it illumines each Christian seeking the vision of God. In observing the way Basil constructs his theology of tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*, then, we uncover the simple but important fact that he is

[627] Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 21,52.

first and foremost a theologian of light, as it is only when a human being is bathed in divine light that God unveils itself to them.

Basil of Caesarea As Responsive Writer

I began this thesis by following Rowan Williams, epigrammatically citing MacIntyre's observation that "traditions, when vital, embody continuities in conflict." As with any philosophical or scientific endeavour, works of theology are never purely generative: they serve as a response to an existing convention, an original attempt by an author to engage in the conversations of their age. This is particularly visible in fourth-century Christian literature, where the vast majority of treatises, letters and even homilies were written to address the Trinitarian conflict that sat at the forefront of ecclesiastical politics for nearly the entire century. In Basil's two major battles against Eunomius and against Eustathius of Sebaste, appealing to tradition is the most convenient response: tradition sits at the core of Eunomius' *Apology*, a theologically ambiguous creed serving as his prolegomenon to the main text. On the other hand, tradition in *On the Holy Spirit* serves as a retort to Eustathius' staunch biblicism, a non-scriptural source of instruction that nonetheless is equipollent to it.

Indeed, Basil tailors his theology of tradition to the situation he is in. In *Against Eunomius* it is quite rigid, responding to Eunomius' claim that the tradition vindicates anomoianism with an equally firm position that it unequivocally condemns it. Retrospectively – specifically to the audience of *On Faith* – it becomes a matter of recourse, only to be used where scripture is silent. Such an attitude is clearly taken to repel any criticism of his method in *Against Eunomius*. In *On the Holy Spirit*, a similarly defensive position is taken, but one where tradition can at times be multiple choice, matching the authority of even scriptural sayings due to a shared origin and fully unified meaning. The more sceptical

historian might suggest, therefore, that tradition is Basil's trump card: an entity of fluid scope and authority, taking the form of whatever would refute the claims of his opponents. R.P.C Hanson certainly possessed this suspicion in part: to him, the idea of tradition in *Against Eunomius* was essentially representative of the fourth-century consensus, but that of *On the Holy Spirit* was an overreach that was simply unnecessary. De Mendieta, on the other hand, demonstrated too much of a desire to explain it away as an analogue for the *disciplina arcani*, which in turn led to the idiosyncrasies of Basil's argument being somewhat ignored.

I would hope that the content of this thesis demonstrates that scholars such as Hanson and De Mendieta misplace their focus when analysing Basil's later and more vivid appeal to tradition in *On the Holy Spirit*. Though Basil certainly took occasional liberties for the sake of his self-advancement – the tone of *Against Eunomius* comes to mind here - throughout his career, he more frequently avoided bold claims for nuanced ones when it came to Christian doctrine, seeking a mitigated alternative to his own private convictions if politically expedient – even in the aforementioned *Against Eunomius*, he advocates for the position of his allies rather than his own, personal, homoousianism. However, one must not make the mistake of thinking that Basil considered his own safety paramount: instead, the political resolution Basil sought was not the preservation of his own reputation, but the survival of the church. When understanding Basil in such a way, the theology of tradition in *On the Holy Spirit* is likely to be the most honest portrayal of his own beliefs, its equal authority to Scripture and variety of different traditions to embrace making it the perfect method by which to make an eirenic effort to keep the church together. Basil's theology of tradition therefore takes varying forms, each of which is tailored to the situation at hand. This thesis has – I hope – demonstrated that Basil is fundamentally a responsive writer, the specifc theological perspective he advocates for changing slightly with his audience.

Final Observations

Basil of Caesarea has been the subject of a real surge in scholarly interest over the last two decades, a fact that – I believe – can be put down to two consistent traits in his theological thought. The first is that Basil – as a theologian and a philosopher – is every bit as sharp as the other two Cappadocians, but has so frequently fallen by the wayside on account of his more modest corpus and historically suspect orthodoxy. It is no surprise, then, that Basil's star has begun to shine a touch brighter again in the wake of the modern scholarly trend of interest in what it means to be a "Pro-Nicene" theologian and the newly invigorating study of the minutiae of Patristic philosophical argumentation. The second – and in my view the far more important – is that he is an enjoyable read. In contrast to figures such as Augustine and Origen, who wrote in such significant depth on so many topics, it is quite clear that Basil approached the task of writing with something of a visible reluctance. Much of this may be a result of his later, more contemplative disposition – a far cry from the arrogation that often takes over the argumentative thrust of *Against Eunomius* – but the more pertinent fact is that his treatises read as if they were cobbled together in something of a hurry: a fact seemingly corroborated by their odd histories of composition, too often running parallel to important synods and pressing epistolary questions for coincidence to be a sufficient explanation. That this is the case is – of course – impressive. Even among the most notable theologians of the Patristic period, skilled in every art designed to aid in eloquence, spontaneity was a rare talent. It appears to have been a talent Basil possessed in spades, and one upon which he frequently relied.

By this point some will likely be convinced that I possess a rather negative disposition towards Basil. In this thesis, I have accused him of duplicity, selectivity and brazen political manoeuvring: with this conclusion, it appears I have added disorganisation to that list. Though I believe that Basil was all these things and probably more, nothing could be further from the truth regarding my disposition towards

him. Basil of Caesarea's flaws – and just as with any other church father, he had many – help us see him for who he was: a complex, introspective and deeply emotional human being. He may have been more argumentatively fierce in his earlier years, but the older Basil was rarely averse to compromise, even if this seldom did lead him into being well-thought-of by his contemporaries; this is particularly true of his relationship with Eustathius. When he set his eyes on helping Eustathius, the Pro-Nicenes ended their association with him. Conversely, when he made attempts to reclaim his spiritual father's Pro-Nicene status, Eustathius assented to signing the Nicene creed and then promptly accused him of Sabellianism. It says rather a lot of Basil's disposition that his response to this incredibly complex moral and political quandary was to strike a conciliatory tone. Basil ends *On the Holy Spirit* with exactly this sentiment: that the enmity between bishops and the tactics that this encouraged were fundamentally a detriment to the church. It is true Basil was at times duplicitous, selective and overtly political, but in his later years this was always directed towards an end which he saw as infinitely more valuable than his own reputation: the survival of the church, the cessation of conflict and the universality of Christian love for one another. Behind a rather stony façade of pragmatism, Basil was rather more an idealist, motivated by teleology. Behind a similar façade of haste, a robustly consistent theological epistemology subsists, motivated first and foremost by a holistic asceticism, where God – economically through the action of the Holy Spirit – discloses itself through every facet of the Christian way of living, participated in by contemplation of the *ainigmata* of all it has revealed.

It is for this reason that his arguments concerning tradition – a concept that seems to flutter in and out of his works, yet retains such centrality to his notion of the Christian reality – have necessitated the focus of an entire thesis. Basil's haste by no means makes his thought any less brilliant or systematic, but instead simply makes it harder to recover as a whole. When, however, his work is decoded, one of the most theologically and philosophically trenchant minds of Late Antiquity shines forth, and – just as

with tradition itself – we can view the *ainigmata* of his statements in such a way that his brilliance is unveiled.

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