

Illumination and the Holy Spirit

New interest in Basil is the product of a desire to carefully differentiate the voices of the Cappadocian Fathers. It is also borne of the desire to locate and value ideas at their inception, to recognize the moment of initial articulation of an idea in Christian dogmatics, whether or not it is the fullest or clearest articulation of that idea. Basil entered the debate about the divinity of the Holy Spirit with fresh eyes and a different perspective than most. His concern was ever with piety, worship, and reverence, practicing theology as a branch of the monastic and ecclesial life. Others surpassed him in concern for clarity, philosophical rigor, and careful argumentation. Still, he entered the debate with his own unique theological grammar as he began to make his contribution.

ILLUMINATION AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

Lewis Ayres emphasizes the importance of Basil's use of the term ἐπίνοια for Basil's theory of language and theological epistemology.¹ Basil chose this term to describe the type of knowledge of God that is possible for the believer. One does not come to knowledge of God's essence, but to knowledge of what God chooses to reveal; one comes to knowledge of God's activity (ἐνέργεια). These activities disclose something of God without submitting God to the powerless position of being an object of human investigation, or suggesting that God's essence is apprehended by human rationality and circumscribed entirely in human language. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz refers to this as "Basil's concern to articulate how humans can have meaningful knowledge of God that is not knowledge of God's essence."² It is not that Christians worship what is entirely unknown, but it is also not accurate for Basil to suggest that the actual nature or

1. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 191–98. Cf. Basil, *Eun.* 1.6–8.

2. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 113.

essence of God is the subject of human comprehension. Ayres writes, “Human knowledge of God does thus not suffer from a constant or ruinous lack, but is actively shaped by God to draw a wounded humanity back towards its creator through a slow reshaping of human thought and imagination.”³ These insights have brought renewed attention to Basil’s theological epistemology and his clear personal development in this area. In reaction to Eunomius’s overconfidence in the logic of human rational capacity, Basil sought to restore humility to theological discourse, and to articulate a type of knowledge of God that is dependent on the faithfulness of God in active divine self-disclosure. What remains is to explore just how this epistemological insight alters our understanding of Basil’s pneumatology. Did this view of the knowledge of God shape Basil’s view of the activity of the Holy Spirit? Would it be feasible to say, in fact, that this epistemological stretching pressed Basil toward more emphasis on the Holy Spirit? Basil staked his arguments on a theory of the knowledge of God that depends on the constant and faithful activity of God in the mind of the believer, making the claim that it is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that this knowledge of God is made possible. Basil began to articulate a theory of the Holy Spirit as the one who illumines the mind for knowledge of God.

In the opening book and chapter of *On First Principles*, Origen quotes Psalm 36:9: “[God] is that light, surely, which lightens the whole understanding of those who are capable of receiving truth, as it is written in the thirty-fifth psalm, *In thy light shall we see light*.”⁴ Origen had also written that the Holy Spirit illumined Paul’s mind as he was inspired to write what he did,⁵ and that the mind of the reader of Scripture is given grace by the Holy Spirit to understand the higher meaning of what is written.⁶

Basil, a devotee of Origen, maintains and expands the metaphor of illumination throughout his theology. In *Against Eunomius*, while contending with Eunomius’s assertion that there is a time prior to the generation of the Son, Basil makes a stirring statement about the source of the knowledge of God:

3. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 196.

4. *On First Principles* 1.1.1 (GCS: 17.6–9; Butterworth: 7). Psalm 35:10, LXX.

5. *On First Principles* 2.5.4.

6. “Then there is the doctrine that the Scriptures were composed through the Spirit of God and that they have not only that meaning which is obvious, but also another which is hidden from the majority of readers. The contents of Scripture are the outward forms of certain mysteries and the images of divine things. On this point the entire Church is unanimous, that while the whole law is spiritual, the inspired meaning is not recognized by all, but only by those who are gifted with the grace of the Holy Spirit in the word of wisdom and knowledge.” *Ibid.*, pref. 8 (GCS: 14.6–13; Butterworth: 5).

So then the mind conceiving of something temporally prior to the Only-Begotten is foolish and crazed, and in reality has understood nothing. *In your light*, it says, *we see light*. This one [Eunomius] is claiming that he has come to grasp “when the light was not yet,” and so is like a delirious man who imagines seeing something that is not actually there. What is prior to the Son cannot be known. What the visible light is to the eye, God the Word is to the mind.⁷

Basil associates illumination with the Son, the Logos. This illumination makes knowledge of spiritual things possible just as perceptible light in this world makes the eye see. It is impossible for sight to precede the light that makes it possible. By the time Basil writes *On the Holy Spirit*, about ten years later, he associates illumination strongly with the Spirit.

If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge. He gives those who love the vision of truth the power that enables them to gain the image in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]. He does not reveal it to them from outside sources, but leads them to knowledge in himself [ἐν ἑαυτῷ]. *No one knows the Father except the Son* [Matt. 11:27], and *No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except in the Holy Spirit* [1 Cor. 12:3]. Notice that it does not say “through” the Spirit, but “in” the Spirit. It also says, *God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth* [John 4:24], and *In Your light do we see light* [Ps. 36:9], through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, *the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world* [John 1:9].⁸

Basil has taken his initial conviction that knowledge of God is the product of illumination by the Logos of God further into the assertion that the Spirit is the beginning of the process of divine self-disclosure. 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.

What Basil means by spiritual illumination will be explored again and again through the pages that follow. Illumination is an experience of the

7. *Eun.* 2.16.10–19 (SC 2:62).

8. *Spir.* 18.47.1–16 (SC 17:412). It is significant that Basil interprets John 1:9 as a reference to the Spirit, as will be explored further.

presence of God. It is knowledge of God, as Basil defines it.⁹ As Georges Florovsky interprets Basil, human knowledge of God is based on revelation; it has “been established not by logic but by experience and revelation. A logical structure has only been superimposed on the testimony of revelation in order to give it form.”¹⁰ Basil taught that we know God by the experience of the activities of God, and these are experiences of revelation.¹¹ Rational exposition of this revelation follows behind the knowledge itself. Florovsky appropriately uses *revelation* and *illumination* interchangeably in his discussion of Basil, since in Basil’s mind they were the same thing. Illumination is both the knowledge of God and the capacity that makes that knowledge possible; the one accompanies the other. That is why Psalm 36:9 is such a vivid picture for Basil. In God’s light is where the light of God is seen. This doctrine of divine illumination is shared by Gregory of Nazianzus¹² and suffuses the thought of Gregory of Nyssa¹³ such that for the Cappadocians in general, “the theology of light becomes a mechanism for articulating the intellectual self-giving of the Trinity and the diffusing of divine knowledge through the cosmos.”¹⁴

There is good reason to explore Basil’s influence on Augustine, for whom divine illumination was also a consistent theme. The “light of men” in John 1 is the light by which we see all things, Augustine claimed.¹⁵ In his *Confessions*, he relates how in his study of philosophy he failed to find enlightenment: “I had my back to the light and my face was turned towards the things which it illumined, so that my eyes, by which I saw the things which stood in the light,

9. *Epp.* 234 and 235. See below.

10. Georges Florovsky, *Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (Vaduz, Europa: Bieververtriebsanstalt, 1987), 97.

11. Florovsky recognized that this portrayal of Basil’s experience of revelation left him open to the charge of relativism: “There is no reason to accuse Basil of relativism. He does not deny the objectivity of human cognition, but he places greater stress on the mind’s activeness. For Basil the process of cognition is valuable as a religious experience because in cognition man achieves intellectual communication with God. There are many names which tell man about God and express man’s participation in the various forms of Revelation, which is ‘manifold in its activity, but simple in its essence.’ Basil’s teaching on our knowledge of God expresses his basic concept of man as a dynamic being who is always in the process of becoming.” Therefore, while the experience of revelation is subjective, the objectivity lies in the Revealer, the simple essence that is manifold in activity. *Ibid.*, 90.

12. Cf. *Oration* 31.3, where the Trinity itself is the source and location of the illumination.

13. *Against Eumomius* 1.530–34 (GNO 1:179–181); or 1.36 (NPNF2 5:84–85).

14. A. N. Williams, *The Divine Sense: The Intellect in Patristic Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 109.

15. In *Tractate on John* 3.4, Augustine calls it the light of the minds of all men, which is above all minds and resources them all. Cf. Ronald Nash, *The Light of the Mind: St. Augustine’s Theory of Knowledge* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1969), 107.

were themselves in darkness.”¹⁶ Augustine recounts the moment when he found his soul’s home in the Lord while reading Scripture: “In an instant, as I came to the end of the sentence, it was as though the light of confidence flooded into my heart and all the darkness of doubt was dispelled.”¹⁷ Divine light, for Augustine, is the very presence of God: “Enter God’s presence and find there enlightenment.”¹⁸ One is either in divine light and therefore in the presence of God with knowledge, or in the darkness.

The Bible is replete with images of light and dark, but Basil and Augustine apply this metaphor to epistemological dimensions in deep and abiding ways. They share the conviction that knowledge of God is impossible outside of the divine light. A further similarity is found in their treatment of the Holy Spirit as a location for communion with God. In Augustine, the Holy Spirit is the love instilled in the believer’s heart that draws the believer into loving desire for God.¹⁹ This is not so different from the noetic light of the Spirit we see outlined in Basil in his affinity to Psalm 36:9. Basil’s explorations into the metaphor of light may have influenced more than just the Cappadocian tradition.

Basil did not argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit deductively from propositions claiming to know the essence of God, but rather, as he claimed theology must be practiced, he argued from the activities of the Holy Spirit. God discloses himself through his activities, in Basil’s view, and so it is from the activities that knowledge of God is formed in the human mind and about the activities of God that we can speak. Basil argues that the Holy Spirit is the illuminating power in the human mind, allowing the mind to see by the light of the glory of God.

There are moments of convergence in the history of Christian thought when the ideas of many can, of a sudden, be expressed in simple formula. These moments are genuinely celebrated when the theologian who governs them speaks in such simple clarity of language that the confession can be shared universally, and with such profound depth of meaning that it may be mined for renewed theological expression in every generation. Basil’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit is just this sort of convergence. Basil expressed his doctrine in

16. *Confessions* 4.16.30 (Simonetti 2:44; Pine-Coffin: 88). This is reminiscent of a little-known sermon of Basil: “With a small turning of the eye, we are either facing the sun or facing the shadow of our own body. Thus one who looks upward easily finds illumination, but for one who turns toward the shadow darkening is inevitable.” *Homily That God Is Not the Author of Evil* 8 (PG 31, 348A; Harrison: 76).

17. *Confessions* 8.12.29 (Simonetti 3:102; Pine-Coffin: 178).

18. *Confessions* 8.10.22 (Simonetti 3:92; Pine-Coffin: 173).

19. *On the Trinity* 15.31; Robert Louis Wilken, “*Spiritus sanctus secundum scripturas sanctas*: Exegetical Considerations of Augustine on the Holy Spirit” *Augustinian Studies* 31 (2000): 12–13.

such humility and with such ardent deference to the exegesis of the Scriptures that his doctrine is still celebrated as an axis of ecumenicity and a universal Christian confession: that the Holy Spirit is God, the one who is himself holy and therefore bestows holiness on others.²⁰ The Holy Spirit is the one who drives holiness, making holy what was once unholy, making sacred what was counted unsacred; the Holy Spirit is the transformative power of God.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TO THE FOURTH CENTURY

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit emerged through the first four centuries of Christianity. From the first, he was both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ.²¹ The relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father and the Son was rarely engaged, but it endured nevertheless as a tacit presupposition to the liturgy of baptism and the doxologies of Paul's letters. After Nicea, the applicability of the *homoousion* to the Holy Spirit came into question and the particularities of the Spirit's relationship to the Father and the Son were explored.

Justin Martyr considered the Spirit essential to the knowledge of God and the illumination of the human mind. Justin had pursued various schools of thought before settling on Platonism, which he fully expected to render an intelligible vision of God.²² In the course of a Socratic dialogue with a Jewish elder named Trypho, Justin is questioned about the human capacity for knowledge of God that he had previously assumed was available to all: "And is there then in our minds a power such as this and so great? Will the human intellect ever see God unless it is furnished with the Holy Spirit?"²³ Thereafter, Justin associates the knowledge of God with spiritual illumination.²⁴ In a later

20. See, for example, the proceedings of the ecumenical dialogue between the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, which were held from 1979 to 1992. The representative of WARC, Lukas Vischer, delivered an address on Basil at the First Official Theological Consultation at Leuvenberg in 1988 that built upon the ecumenical appeal of Basil's theology of the Spirit: Lukas Vischer, "The Holy Spirit—Source of Sanctification, Reflections on Basil the Great's Treatise on the Holy Spirit," in *Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches*, vol 2, ed. T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1993), 87–106.

21. "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." Romans 8:9.

22. *Dialogue with Trypho* 2–3.

23. *Dialogue with Trypho* 4.1 (Marcovich: 76). Henry Barclay Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 34.

24. "[Trypho speaking] . . . knowing that daily some [of you] are becoming disciples in the name of Christ, and quitting the path of error; who are also receiving gifts, each as he is worthy, illumined [φωτισόμενοι] through the name of this Christ. For one receives the spirit of understanding, another of

work, Justin describes Christian baptism. After initiates are convinced of the truth of the teachings,

they then receive washing in water in the name of God the Father and Master of all, and of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit . . . and this washing is called illumination [φωτισμός], as those who learn these things are illumined [φωτιζομένων] in the mind. And he who is illuminated is washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold all the things about Jesus.²⁵

Justin and the Apologists at times make indiscriminate references to the preincarnate Logos and the Holy Spirit, but in general, they codify two doctrines for pneumatology: first, that the prophets spoke by the Holy Spirit, and second, that the Spirit illumines the believer at baptism.²⁶

Irenaeus of Lyons insisted that the Spirit's inspiration of the prophets was a central facet of the tradition of faith handed down in the Christian church.²⁷ In the act of creation, Irenaeus associates the Spirit with the Wisdom of God who was present and active in the cosmogony.²⁸ The Word and the Spirit worked equally as God's instruments in the creation of the world. In the creation of the first man, Irenaeus compares the Word and Spirit to two hands of God working out the same purpose: "Now the human being is a mixed organization of soul and flesh, who was formed after the likeness of God and molded by his hands, that is, by the Son and Holy Spirit, to whom also he said, *let us make the human being* [Gen. 1:26]."²⁹ Irenaeus also explored the relationship of the Father, Son, and Spirit under the metaphor of divine unction, using the formula, "The Father anointed, the Son was anointed, the Spirit was the unction."³⁰ So for

counsel, another of strength, another of healing, another of foreknowledge, another of teaching, and another of the fear of God." *Dialogue with Trypho* 39.2 (Marcovich: 134–35).

25. 1 *Apol.* 61.9–12, 34–39 (Marcovich: 118–19; Barnard: 66–67).

26. Swete, *Spirit*, 86–87.

27. *Against Heresies* 1.10.1.

28. "That the Word was always with the Father has been shown at length; that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was with him before all creation is taught by Solomon [cf. Prov. 3:19, 8:22]. . . . There is, therefore, one God, who made and constructed all things by his Word and Wisdom [Εἷς οὖν ὁ Θεός, ὁ Λόγῳ καὶ Σοφίᾳ ποιήσας καὶ ἀρμόσας τὰ πάντα]." *Against Heresies* 4.20.3–4 (SC 4:632–35; Swete, *Spirit*, 87).

29. "Ἄνθρωπος γὰρ κρᾶσις ψυχῆς καὶ σαρκὸς τῆς καθ' ὁμοίωσιν Θεοῦ μεμορφωμένης καὶ διὰ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ πεπλασμένης, τουτέστιν Υἱοῦ καὶ Πνεύματος, οἷς καὶ εἶπε· Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον." *Against Heresies* 4.pref.4.62–65 (SC 4:391). Cf. 4.20.1.

Irenaeus, the single word “Christ” implies the activity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this representation of the Son and the Spirit, as well as in the image of the two hands of God, Irenaeus presented a divine coequality between the Son and the Spirit with cooperation of activity among the three Persons of the Trinity. In the redemption and recapitulation of the fallen creation, Irenaeus emphasized the power of the incarnation, the *salus carnis* located in Jesus Christ,³¹ but did not exclude the Spirit. His illustration of the Son and the Spirit as the hands of God left room to view them as subsidiary demiurgic instruments, and some who followed Irenaeus would take him to mean just that. In the analogy of the unction, Irenaeus accomplished a remarkable Trinitarian model that proved ahead of his times.³²

In the third century, Origen made the greatest impact on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Out of concern to retain the philosophical principle of the first cause, Origen declares the Son and Spirit logically posterior to the Father and suggested that the Spirit came to be out of the Father through the Son: “We therefore, as the more pious and truer course, admit that all things came to be through the Logos and that the Holy Spirit is the most honored and the first in order of all that was made (γεγεννημένων) by the Father through Christ.”³³ In this way, Origen preserves the belief that the Father alone was unbegotten (ἀγέννητον), and protects the first principle by illustrating a view of the Son and the Spirit whereby the Son alone is begotten and the Spirit owes its existence to the Son.³⁴ This assertion must be counterbalanced by other places where Origen

30. “Καὶ ἔχρισε μὲν ὁ Πατήρ, ἐχρίσθη δὲ ὁ Υἱὸς ἐν τῷ Πνεύματι, ὃ ἐστὶν ἡ χριστις.” *Against Heresies* 3.18.3 (SC 3:351).

31. Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. M. Westerhoff, ed. A. Louth (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 57–60.

32. This metaphor is recapitulated in Basil, *Spir.* 12.28.

33. *Commentary on John* 2.10.75 (SC 120:254–56). Origen is less certain in *On First Principles*: “In regard to [the Holy Spirit] it is not yet clearly known whether he is to be thought of as created or uncreated [γενητός ἢ ἀγέντος], or as being himself also a Son of God or not.” *First Principles* 1.pref.4 (GCS: 11n3–5; Butterworth: 3–4). Origen clearly did not mean this logical priority to suggest the type of temporal priority later represented by Arius and Eunomius. See *On First Principles* 4.4.1.

34. Origen uses Justin’s terminology of the Son being a “second God.” *Against Celsus* 5.39, 6.61; cf. 7.57. Nevertheless, it is somewhat anachronistic to call Origen a subordinationist, as Mark Edwards argues, noting “that the majority of Christian writers in the first three centuries taught a subordinationism more extreme than that of Origen.” Mark Edwards, *Origen against Plato* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), 70. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, held the Spirit in third place “after the second essence,” the Son who is the Creator (*Preparation for the Gospel* 7.15.6) and argued that the Spirit is not to be called “God”: “But the Spirit the Paraclete is neither God nor Son, since he has not received his origin from the Father in the same way as the Son has, and is one of the things which have come into existence

implies an ultimate unity to the divine Trinity, as in the following: “Nothing in the Trinity can be called greater or less, for there is but one fount of deity, who upholds the universe by his word and reason, and sanctifies *by the spirit of his mouth* all that is worthy of sanctification, as it is written in the Psalm, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all their power by the spirit of his mouth* [Ps. 33:6].”³⁵ Also from Origen comes the insight that the Persons of the Trinity are eternally related to one another, as is particularly clear with the interrelativity of the Father and the Son, and his doctrine of eternal generation that derives out of it.³⁶ Furthermore, it must be noted that Origen appears to declaim the terms “creature” or “product” for the Holy Spirit, and makes it clear that the Spirit knows God eternally and without mediation (i.e., as a person might know himself).³⁷ Nonetheless, those who wished to claim that the Spirit was a part of the created order could draw support from the writings of Origen by quoting selectively and misunderstanding his view of the Trinity, so arguments about Origen’s view of the Spirit filled the patristic era.

Origen limited the scope of the work of the Holy Spirit. He believed that while the Father and the Son both work in the world at large, the Holy Spirit is provided for the sanctification of Christians only: “The working of the power of God the Father and God the Son is spread indiscriminately over all created beings, but a share in the Holy Spirit is possessed, we find, by the saints alone.”³⁸ In a twist of irony, Origen was concerned that his readers would think he was promoting the Spirit to a position over and above the Father and the Son; it was less seemly to him that a divine hypostasis would interact with the world at large than limit its intercourse to the saints. By Basil’s time the Spirit’s limited scope had become an argument for its lower nature, supplementing the view that the Holy Spirit is no more than the greatest among a class of ministering spirits sent to the community of faith to serve the will of the Son.

through the Son.” *Ecclesiastical Theology* 6.164. Cf. R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 740.

35. *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 60.1–5; Butterworth: 37). That Origen claimed equal honor was due to all three can also be found. Origen, *Comm. John* 13.25. All quotations from *On First Principles* that pertain to the Trinity and are not found in the Greek (*Philocalia*), must be taken with a grain of salt since Rufinus openly notes that he altered Origen’s Trinitarian passages to fit his view of orthodoxy as he translated it into Latin. *Preface of Rufinus* 3 (Butterworth: lxiii).

36. Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 63–92.

37. *On First Principles* 1.3.4.

38. *On First Principles* 1.3.7 (GCS: 59.4–6; Butterworth, 36–37).

At the beginning of the fourth century, open theological speculation and exegesis gave way to the bitter polemics of the Arian disputes. Confession and catechism in general terms turned into careful, technical argumentation. Arius had been concerned to oppose the modalist theology of his fellow Libyan, Sabellius.³⁹ He was also cautious against suggesting any partition or diminution of the essence of God by emanation into subsidiary divinities. With these concerns in place, he settled on the idea that the second and third divine Persons, although present in the baptismal formula and adored and worshiped together according to Scripture, were in fact different in essence. According to Athanasius, Arius stated explicitly in his writings that “the essences of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are separate in nature, alien, and diverse, and incapable of participating in each other; and, to quote his own words, ‘they are altogether and infinitely dissimilar [ἀνόμοιοι] in essence as well as in glory.’”⁴⁰

The center of the debate surrounding the Council at Nicea was the *homoousion* between the Son and the Father. The Spirit received only slight attention. It was not until the years between 340 and 360 AD that the Spirit became a doctrinal issue in the creeds and confessions of the post-Nicene disputes. One characteristic creed is the second creed of the Dedication Council of Antioch in 341. This creed was claimed, with some merit,⁴¹ to be derived from the confession of Lucian of Antioch, the last great martyr of Christianity under official persecution before the Edict of Milan. Consider the third article:

And in the Holy Spirit, given to believers for encouragement (*paraklesin*) and sanctification and perfection, just as our Lord Jesus Christ ordered his disciples: “Go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” [Matt. 28:19]—that is, of a Father who is truly Father, a Son who truly is Son, a Holy Spirit who truly is Holy Spirit. These names are not assigned casually or idly, but designate quite precisely the particular subsistence (*hypostasis*), the rank and the glory of each of those named, so as to make them three in respect of subsistence, but one in concord.⁴²

39. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmanns, 2002), 174.

40. *Oration against Arians* 1.6 (PG 26, 24B; Swete: 165).

41. Williams, *Arius*, 163–64.

42. The creed survives under Athanasius's record in *On the Synods* 23. The critical Greek edition is found in Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 2.1:249. It is translated by Rowan Williams, *Arius*, 269–70.

The antimodalist tenor is clear in the repetition of “truly” before each Person and the defense of the difference of names. What is also important is the limitation of the scope of work for the Spirit. Note that the Spirit is given not to the world or to all nations but to the “believers for encouragement and sanctification and perfection.” This emphasis on sanctification is an innovation to the standard content of creeds and confessions of the early fourth century (or prior). Rowan Williams claims it represents

an unusual expansion of the creedal affirmation about the Spirit, and likely therefore to be original to Lucian’s circle; the mention of *paraklesis* anchors it in the thought of the fourth gospel, and the stress on the Spirit’s work of sanctification (rather than the more usual references to the inspiration of the prophets and others) is unique to this text.⁴³

The creed fails to exclude the possibility that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ranked in order with regard to essence, or that the Spirit was created by the Father or the Son. Basil would face these claims in the more ardent arguments of Eunomius twenty years later. Many creeds in the period between 340 and 360 held similar emphases, also including anathemas against any who held that there were three gods.⁴⁴

The history of the deployment of the Second Dedication Creed of Antioch is worth rehearsing to set the stage for Basil’s contribution. As noted, when the creed was employed at Antioch in 341, the claim was made that it derived from the confession of Lucian the Martyr.⁴⁵ The only known disciple of Lucian was Arius.⁴⁶ Scholars disagree on the motives behind this creed, but I take it to be a *ressourcement* of the teachings of an honored figure deployed to curtail the efforts of the Pro-Nicenes, to limit the *homoousion*, and to refrain from totally excluding the Arian theologies.⁴⁷ Constantius was present at the council, and there can be little doubt that it was seen as an opportunity for reconciliation

43. *Ibid.*, 269n11.

44. For example, anathema four of *The Macrostich* (343/344).

45. Sozomen, *Church History* 3.5.9.

46. “In the whole range of Greek Patristic literature, only one person actually describes himself as a disciple of Lucian, and that person is Arius.” Hanson, *Search*, 15. The reference is found in Arius’s letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia, in which Arius describes Eusebius as “truly a fellow Lucianist,” “συλλουκιανιστὰ ἀληθῶς.” (Opitz, *Athanasius Werke* 3.1: *Urkunde* 1.5).

47. On the Arian controversy and the position of this creed, see: John Behr, *Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *The Nicene Faith* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 77–104; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 118–21; Hanson, *Search*, 284–91.

between the parties so divided after Nicaea—an attempt at raising a large tent for imperial Christianity that could include divergent views. Although a strict adherent to Arian theology would bluster at some of the terminology, it does not exclude Arian belief.⁴⁸ Many groups made appeal to this creed in the course of the Trinitarian controversy. Originally deployed by its Homoian adherents such as Akakius, who stood in the tradition of Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea, it was taken up again by the Homoiousion advocates surrounding Basil of Ancyra in 358 and a few councils that followed.⁴⁹ Hilary of Poitiers found nothing offensive in the creed, demonstrating its ability to appease the Pro-Nicene movement in some form.⁵⁰ Eustathius of Sebaste affirmed this creed when he appealed for his own orthodoxy in the early 360s before Liberius in Rome, even as he was moving toward full-fledged Pneumatomachianism.⁵¹ The widespread appeal and resonant authority of this creed make it the only possible historical alternative to Nicaea; but a creed like this one, which could be confessed by Pro- and Anti-Nicenes alike (and everything in between) only pressed upon Basil and the other Cappadocians the necessity for more definition.

Athanasius of Alexandria engaged with opponents who were happy to defend the full divinity of the Son, but set themselves in opposition to the Spirit, “saying that [the Spirit] is not only a creature [κτίσμα], but actually one of the ministering spirits [λειτουργικῶν πνευματῶν], and differs from the angels only in degree.”⁵² In 359, he wrote a letter to a bishop named Serapion who had met with Christian leaders assenting to the divinity of the Son but refusing the divinity of the Spirit. Their exegesis of Amos 4:13 was based on a mistranslation of the Hebrew.⁵³ Originally a passage about the power of God over creation, and totally benign to Trinitarian controversy, the Septuagint unfortunately rendered it “a Trinitarian formula which included a created Holy Spirit.”⁵⁴ Those who saw the Spirit as a subsidiary divinity leaned on this verse, among others, as evidence that the Spirit was something different from God. Athanasius

48. Williams, *Arius*, 163–64; Hanson, *Search*, 287–88.

49. Hanson, *Search*, 350–51.

50. Hilary, *On the Synods* 29–32.

51. Hanson, *Search*, 763–64.

52. *Letters to Serapion on the Spirit* 1.1 (PG 26, 532A; Shapland: 59–60).

53. Hanson, *Search*, 749. “Διότι ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ στερεῶν βροντὴν καὶ κτιζῶν πνεῦμα καὶ ἀπαγγέλλων εἰς ἀνθρώπους τὸν χριστὸν αὐτοῦ.” Amos 4:13, LXX.

54. Hanson, *Search*, 750. The other primary proof-text for Athanasius's opponents was 1 Tim 5:21, “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality.” Attempting a Trinitarian reading, they associated the Holy Spirit with the elect angels.

did not take recourse to the original Hebrew, but accused his opponents on exegetical grounds all the same by claiming that they used tropes to derive a desired meaning from the Septuagint in the face its plain sense. He called his opponents “Tropici [τροπικοί].”⁵⁵ In the course of his argument with these Tropici, whom he also coined Pneumatomachians, Athanasius establishes three important points. First, it is nonsense to suggest that the Spirit is created and added on to the dyad of the Father and the Son; if the Son is not created, then neither is the Spirit, for they share in a common nature. The Spirit resides on the Creator side of the Creator-creature divide; he does not receive from God, but renders benefits to those who receive from God. Second, Jesus’ command to baptize with the Trinitarian formula leaves no question as to the status of the Holy Spirit as God. Third, there is a difference between the procession of the Spirit and the mission of the Spirit; the Spirit’s work after the ascension of Jesus is not the origin of the Spirit’s existence, but a particular mission, just as the incarnation was not the origin of the existence of the Son, but a particular mission of the Son. Athanasius concluded that the Trinity, if it be a fact in the divine life, must be an eternal fact; and it cannot be an eternal fact if the Spirit is a creature, because this would mean adding a later Person to the eternal Trinity. This logic could not stand, and so he concluded: “As the Trinity ever was, such it is now; and as it is now, such it ever was.”⁵⁶

The doctrine of the Holy Spirit was still, after Athanasius, open to a number of questions, even for those who respected his opinion. How is the Spirit related to the Father and the Son with regard to essence? How did the Spirit come into existence? Is the Spirit a minister of the will of the Father and the Son, a ministering spirit, or is the Spirit’s work equal to and equated with the work of the Father and the Son? Does the Spirit suffer limitations of scope in its work, or is the Spirit omnipresent and omnipotent? Is sanctification, or perfection, a part of the act of creation? These were all inherited questions when Basil of Caesarea entered into his opening debates with Eunomius.

BASIL AND EUNOMIUS ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Eunomius was appointed bishop of Cyzicus shortly after the council at Constantinople in 360 as the chief voice of the Anti-Nicene position.⁵⁷ Holding

55. *Letters to Serapion* 1:17 (PG 26, 572B).

56. “Ὡς γὰρ ἦν, οὕτως ἐστὶ καὶ νῦν· καὶ ὡς νῦν ἐστὶν, οὕτως αἰεὶ ἦν.” *Letters to Serapion* 3.7 (PG 26, 636C; Swete: 218).

57. His episcopacy was brief and controversial due as much to his inaugural sermon against the perpetual virginity of Mary as to his Anti-Nicene theology. Hanson, *Search*, 611–17; Richard Paul

to a subordinationist theology, Eunomius professed that the Logos was a lesser divine than the Unbegotten God himself. Eunomius confessed the supreme God to be

the one and only true God, unbegotten [ἀγέννητον], without beginning, incomparable, superior to all cause, himself the cause of the existence of all existing things, but not accomplishing the creation of those things by an association with any other . . . being, in accordance with his preeminence, incomparable in essence, power, and authority, he begot and created before all things as Only-Begotten God our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made, the image and seal of his own power and action. This Only-Begotten God is not to be compared either with the one who begot him or with the Holy Spirit who was made through him, for he is less than the one in being a “thing made” [ποίημα], and greater than the other in being a maker [ποιητής].⁵⁸

According to his logic, there could be only one supreme being, and the Son and the Spirit could not be God in the same way that God is God, although he was comfortable referring to Jesus Christ as “Only-Begotten God.” His doctrine of the Holy Spirit is an extension of his doctrine of the Son.⁵⁹ If the Son is different in kind from the Father, of a different essence and a lesser form of divinity, why should anyone be ashamed to say that the Spirit holds the third place?⁶⁰

Since differences between Basil and Eunomius range the topics of this project, I will not attempt to summarize the entire debate here, but a word about the differing methodologies of the two men does set the tone for the remainder of their theological contest. We will benefit in this section from a brief assessment of Eunomius’s doctrine of the Spirit. As will be clear, Basil turned his attention to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in response to the arguments of Eunomius, and to his claim that the character of the essence of God is available to human rational capacity.

Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 229–231.

58. *Apology* 26 (Vaggione: 68–71).

59. Eunomian theology is outlined by the following: Michel Barnes, “The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Causal Language” in *Arianism after Arius*, ed. M. Barnes and D. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 217–36, and Michel Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), chapter 5; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, chapter 5; Behr, *Nicene*, 267–82; Ayres, *Nicaea*, 144–49.

60. *Apology* 25.

Heresiologists' efforts to pin Eunomius down as a philosopher in bishop's clothing no longer have any purchase in the annals of history. Eunomius and Basil were surely "equally concerned to offer a reasoned faith as a way of salvation."⁶¹ Although the great majority of his surviving writings concern Christology, Eunomius did not deny the existence of the Holy Spirit or the importance of its activity. In his theology, the Spirit acts as an instructor for holiness. His opening confessional statement in *The Apology* says of the Spirit: "And in one holy Spirit, the Counselor, in whom is given to each of the saints an apportionment of every grace according to measure for the common good."⁶² The Spirit distributes a measure of holiness, a gift of grace, to each of the saints for the sake of the community. Based on John 4:24,⁶³ Eunomius argues that it is nonsense for God who is worshiped and the Spirit *in* whom he is worshiped to be one and the same.⁶⁴ The Spirit is not worshiped as God, but rather,

is honored in third place as the first and greatest work of all, the only such "thing made" [ποίημα] of the Only-Begotten, lacking indeed godhead [θεότητα] and the power of creation, but filled with the power of sanctification and instruction [ἀγιαστικῆς δὲ καὶ διδασκαλικῆς].⁶⁵

The Spirit is a creation of God and serves the will of God accomplishing certain ends in the history of salvation, but lacking in Godhead and creative power.

Eunomius is faithful to his mentor Aetius in claiming that names refer to the essences of things.⁶⁶ Eunomius claimed that names and essences are

61. Maurice Wiles, "Eunomius: Hair-Splitting Dialectician or Defender of the Accessibility of Salvation?" in *The Making of Orthodoxy*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169. Eunomius's final *Confession* of 383 includes the claim that even thoughts and concepts (νοημάτων) will be subject to the final judgment and may be cause for eternal damnation stressing "the crucial importance of correct knowledge or doctrine for the Christian's future salvation." Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 521–22. Cf. Eunomius, *Confession of Faith* 5 (Vaggione: 158).

62. *Apology* 5.5–7 (Vaggione: 38). The term παράκλητος is from John. The remainder of the sentence is a conflation of 1 Corinthians 12:7, Romans 12:3, and perhaps Ephesians 4:7. The word Eunomius selects to describe the measure of grace given to a saint by the Spirit is διανομή, which is not a New Testament word.

63. "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

64. *Apology* 25.13–16 (Vaggione: 66–68).

65. *Apology* 25.23–26 (Vaggione: 68–69).

66. Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 266–277.

related, and if the names are different then the essences are different as well.⁶⁷ Reason seems to be on Eunomius's side when he insists that words must be tied to the essence of their referents. For him, if one confesses that God is without generation, this must refer to the essence of God or else it is a meaningless statement. Either language means something or Christian doctrine means nothing at all.⁶⁸ In the case of God, however, many theologians tend to be more reserved about the purchase language can hold in apprehending the essence. Eunomius made an assertion that would resound through history as the height of theological arrogance:

God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather whatever we ourselves know about it is exactly what he knows, and, conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without variation in us.⁶⁹

It is the claim to know the essence of God that Basil found most egregiously in error, and it is in reaction to just this claim that Basil forges his arguments for the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

At the beginning of his theological career, Basil was reluctantly willing to engage the debates over the essence of God. In a letter, before *Against Eunomius*, Basil wrote,

As for me, if I may speak of my own opinion, I accept the terminology “like according to essence [ὅμοιον κατ’ οὐσίαν]” only if it has the qualification “without variation [ἀπαρράλλάκτως]” appended to it so that it bears the same meaning as “of the same substance [ὁμοουσίῳ]”—according to the sound conception of the term “of the same substance [ὁμοουσίου].” Those at Nicaea thought just the same, professing the Only-Begotten to be “light from light” and “true God from true God” and the like, and thereby setting up the term “same substance” as a necessary conclusion.⁷⁰

67. *Apology* 18.13–14 (Vaggione: 56).

68. Wiles, “Eunomius,” 164.

69. Socrates, *Church History* 4.7.13–14. Behr, *Nicene*, 271. Some doubt continues to surround this statement by virtue of its hearsay quotation, but it is consistent with the general theological perspective of Aetius and Eunomius. Wiles, “Eunomius,” 161; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 253, and *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 167–70.

70. *Ep.* 9.3.1–7 (Courtonne 1:39).

Basil was leaning clearly toward *homoousion* at this stage (c. 361), thinking that it is less likely to cause confusion than any other term, but his association with it was not hard and fast. In a letter to Apollinarius, Basil wrote,

So then if anyone should speak of the essence of the Father as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten, then he should speak also of the essence of the Only-Begotten as a noetic light, eternal and unbegotten. It seems to me that the phrase *invariably similar* [ἀπαράλλάκτως ὁμοίου] fits better for such a meaning than *consubstantial* [ὁμοουσίου].⁷¹

It is this letter, and this very turn of phrase, that provides the basis for claiming that Basil was openly associated with the *homoiousion* group for a season. Basil seems to have been entering the field, assessing the claims of various groups affiliating themselves around terminologies of divine essence, and searching for his own affiliation.

A critical shift came when Basil read the *Apology* of Eunomius and decided to deconstruct it line by line, after the fashion of Origen's *Against Celsus*.⁷² He begins the treatise with an attack on the impiety of Eunomius for claiming to know the essence of God. When he offers his rejoinder to Eunomius, he abandons this effort. The essence of God is not knowable, so why is it being debated?

Therefore, putting aside this meddlesome curiosity about the essence [οὐσία] since it is unattainable, we ought to attend to the simple advice of the apostle when he says: *One must first believe that God exists and that he rewards those who seek him* [Heb. 11:6]. For it is not the investigation of *what* he is but rather the confession *that* he is that provides salvation for us.⁷³

The debate over essence is a meddlesome curiosity over knowledge that is unattainable. It comes to Basil's mind in this early season that the schismatic divisions of the church, which he found embarrassingly outstripped any divisions between schools of thought in hard sciences or philosophy, may very well be the divine consequence for the impiety of claiming to know God's

71. *Ep.* 361.27–31 (Courtonne 3:221).

72. Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea: A Guide to His Life and Doctrine* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), 66.

73. *Eun.* 1.14.40–48 (SC 1:222–24).

essence.⁷⁴ The effrontery of Eunomius is unmatched in Basil's view. He seems to claim to know more of God than the authors of Scripture claim. Basil saw Eunomius's presentation as naïve realism and arrogant overreaching of human capacities. The grammar of theology used by Eunomius resounded with a diabolical arrogance to Basil.⁷⁵ To claim such intimate knowledge of the essence of God, in Basil's opinion, was for Eunomius to put himself above Isaiah, David, and Paul.⁷⁶ To claim such intimate knowledge of the essence was consonant with claiming to know the name of God; knowledge that was beyond even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.⁷⁷

From this point onward, Basil does not wish to associate with claims to know the character of the essence of God. He makes two definitive shifts. First, he seeks to regain an air of reverence in theological discourse, recognizing that knowledge of God is an ever-dependent posture, contingent upon God's divine self-disclosure. Second, he stretches the hand of communion to all who confess Nicea and refrain from calling the Spirit a creation (κτίσμα), suggesting that in this confession the minimum of Christian doctrine is met. In both of these moves, there is a clear turn toward the importance of the Holy Spirit for continuing Trinitarian discourse.

Basil's epistemological turn against Eunomius is explored by Ayres and Radde-Gallwitz.⁷⁸ It finds its clearest expression in a series of letters to Amphilochius roughly contemporaneous with the treatise *On the Holy Spirit*.⁷⁹ Basil makes the claim that knowledge of God is "epinoetic."⁸⁰ We know God by virtue of revealed activities and our perception of them. He writes, "The primary function of our mind is to know one God, but to know him so far as the infinitely great can be known by the very small."⁸¹ Basil could then

74. *On the Judgment of God 2* (PG 31, 653C–656C).

75. *Eun.* 1.3.54–60; cf. 2.34. At *Eun.* 2.19.58–60, Basil takes umbrage at the phrase "we allot him [αὐτῷ νέμομεν] as much superiority as the maker necessarily has over the things he himself has made" (*Apol.* 15.10–11; Vaggione: 52), as though Eunomius had the authority to "allot" power or authority to the Only-Begotten.

76. *Eun.* 1.12.11–29.

77. *Eun.* 1.13.25–44.

78. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 122–54. See also Philip Rousseau's discussion of language and reality in the Eunomian debate: Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 108–16.

79. *Epp.* 231–236, written c. 374–375.

80. On Basil's use of ἐπινοία and the importance of the term throughout the Eunomian controversy see: Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Vaggione, *Eunomius*, 241–46; Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 375–77; and Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 143–54.

81. *Ep.* 233.2.4–7 (Courtonne 3:40).

“confess that I know what is knowable of God, and that I know what it is that is beyond my comprehension.”⁸² Still seemingly influenced by his opinion of the claims of Eunomius, a decade later Basil charged Amphilochius to examine the truth “not with mischievous exactness but with reverence.”⁸³ The believer stands in a receptive posture before knowledge of God. This is not a foundation for claiming to know God’s essence, a blasphemous claim in Basil’s view,⁸⁴ but standing in divine light and perceiving what God reveals through his activities. Divine disclosure through the activities is not so much information as invitation, Basil argued. The one who has confessed that God exists may begin to grow in faith and begin a life of worship:

But in our belief about God, first comes the idea that God is. This we gather from his works. For, as we perceive his wisdom, his goodness, and all his invisible things from the creation of the world, so we know him. So, too, we accept him as our Lord. For since God is the Creator of the whole world, and we are a part of the world, God is our Creator. This knowledge is followed by faith, and this faith by worship.⁸⁵

In Basil’s view, the theologian must abandon any posture in relation to God other than worship. There is no objective third position from which the theologian may observe the relationship between God and human. The human being can only speak of God from within that relationship. God is Creator, and the theologian is part of creation.

The Spirit is needed here. In Basil’s view of theological epistemology, the knower is separated from what is known. Basil recognizes an epistemological gap, a distance between what is known of God and what can be said of God in human language. The following passage is famous for its reference to the lack of clarity Nicea rendered for the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but it actually says something else:

For the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit was laid down cursorily [at Nicea], not being considered worthy of being completely worked out because of the fact that no one had yet stirred up this question,

82. *Ep.* 235.2.13–15 (Courtonne 3:45).

83. *Ep.* 233.2.1–2 (Courtonne 3:40); cf. *Eun.* 1.14.

84. “Εἰ τὴν οὐσίαν λέγεις εἰδέναι, αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐπίστασαι,” “If you say that you know [God’s] essence, you are not acquainted with him.” *Ep.* 234.2.2–3 (Courtonne 3:43).

85. *Ep.* 235.1.9–17 (Courtonne 3:44).

but the understanding concerning him [i.e., the Spirit] was held unassailable in the minds of the faithful.⁸⁶

Basil does not say that the fathers at Nicea had no understanding of the place of the Holy Spirit, but that they were not yet pressed into expressing it in words.⁸⁷ They knew it in unspoken ways in the unassailable dimension of their souls. Only when pressed by circumstances would they attempt to breach the gap between what is known and what is said. Basil builds a theological epistemology that leaves room for a tacit knowledge of God, knowledge of God that is not yet expressed in words. Basil considers knowledge of God to be much greater than simply what can be expressed about God. The careful and rational expression of this knowledge comes later, and, it seems, is only necessary because of the challenges of heresy.

Basil writes that the human mind is by nature dynamic. It is always in motion and never at rest. At any given time the mind either pursues vice, pursues neutral technical knowledge, or pursues divine knowledge:

But if it inclines toward the more divine part, and receives the graces of the Spirit, then it becomes capable of apprehending divine things, so far as the measure of its nature allows. . . . The mind that is intermixed with the Godhead of the Spirit is at once capable of viewing great objects; it beholds the divine beauty, though only so far as grace imparts and its nature receives.⁸⁸

Basil reiterates the power of the Spirit to increase the spiritual senses of the Christian and make knowledge of God possible. The power of the Spirit to illumine is effective in the believer only up to the natural limitations of the human mind, but without the activity of the Spirit no knowledge of God would be possible.

86. *Ep.* 125.3.3–7 (Courtonne 2:33).

87. Note that this is different from Gregory of Nazianzus's later account. In *Oration* 31.26–27, Gregory claims that the knowledge of the Holy Spirit was too much for Christians to bear, and so God lovingly bestowed it upon the church in a gradual disclosure after the Father and the Son had been so disclosed. Basil claims, in contrast, that the fathers at Nicea knew the divinity of the Holy Spirit but did not have the words to explain it, or the need to defend the doctrine from heresy.

88. *Ep.* 233.1.16–19, 32–36 (Courtonne 3:39–40). Cf. “With a small turning of the eye, we are either facing the sun or facing the shadow of our own body. Thus one who looks upward easily finds illumination, but for one who turns toward the shadow darkening is inevitable.” *Homily That God Is Not the Author of Evil* 8 (PG 31, 348A; Harrison: 76).

The second piece of evidence for Basil's turn to the Spirit is his departure from the contemporary Trinitarian dispute. Basil abandons the efforts of others at bringing one political group to victory by virtue of a theory of the divine essence. His view on this point is recorded in his well-known *Epistle* 125, in which he demands a confession of the Nicene Creed and a declaration that the Holy Spirit is not a creature (κτίσμα) for participation in the community of faith.⁸⁹ In a shorter letter to some unknown presbyters in Tarsus, the reason behind Basil's turn to the Spirit is perhaps made clearer. Basil writes with concern that the church is so tried by its present controversies that it is like an antique garment being pulled at all sides; the slightest tug might reduce it to shreds. In light of this state, Basil suggests that only the Nicene Creed and a confession that the Spirit is not a creation be required.

Let us then seek nothing more, but merely propose the faith of Nicea to those brothers wishing to join us; and if they agree to this, let us also require of them that the Spirit not be called a creature [κτίσμα], and that those saying this do not retain fellowship with them. Beyond this I do not think anything further is required of them from us. I am convinced that in our prolonged association together over time and shared experience free of strife, even if some fuller understanding is needed to clarify things, the Lord who *works all things for good for those who love him* [Rom. 8:28] will give it.⁹⁰

Yes, Basil surmised that a confession of the noncreaturely status of the Spirit is necessary for a full confession of Christian faith, above and beyond fidelity to Nicea. The other side of the coin, however, is that Basil is not as interested in outright victory of a particular party as he is in the unity of the church and the possibility that in hanging together the Lord would fill out this knowledge for the church over time.

The following chapters explore Basil's notion that the Spirit is necessary to the work of bringing the believer into knowledge of the revelation of God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son; therefore the Spirit is necessary for salvation. The reader is referred to the work of Lewis Ayres and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz for the latest explorations of the nuances, possible sources, and innovative capacities of Basil's theological epistemology.⁹¹ Here the question is

89. This "epistle" is actually a formulary of agreement between the Pro-Nicenes, represented by Basil, and Eustathius of Sebaste. Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilii zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1956), 35–43.

90. *Ep.* 113.32–41 (Courtonne 2:17). Written c. 372.

raised, how did Basil's program of knowledge of God play into his claims about the divinity of the Holy Spirit? In what way was Basil's proposition that the Spirit is divine a result of his convictions about human knowing? Basil saw in Eunomius a marked impiety of method based on what amounted to a sort of naïve epistemological realism. Basil was offended by a theological approach that attempted to measure the relationship between God and God's creation as if from the outside. If God illumines, we stand in divine light. If God is Creator, we are creatures. If God is Revealer, we are recipients only of what has been revealed. In Eunomius, we know God's essence and activities and compare the two.⁹² In Basil, we know only God's activity, not God's essence; therefore the Son is like the Father in essence so far as we know. It is into this gap that Basil builds a doctrine of the Holy Spirit who illumines. For Basil, Christian certainty is not logic but faith, and faith comes by the Spirit of God.

91. Ayres, *Nicaea*, 191–98; Radde-Gallwitz, *Simplicity*, 122–54.

92. Jesus Christ is unlike the Father according to essence, but like the Father according to activity: "It is not with respect to essence but with respect to the action (which is what the will is) that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father." Eunomius, *Apology* 24.2–4 (Vaggione: 64). Kopecek, *Neo-Arianism*, 339.