

## “THE LORD, THE LIFE-GIVER”: CONFESSING THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE FOURTH CENTURY

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**Abstract:** *The fourth century witnessed a quickening of pneumatological reflection on the ontological status of the Holy Spirit, after a long hiatus—since the second century—in which a subordinationist perspective of the Spirit had been regnant. This essay explores the way in which personal experience and scriptural exegesis led Basil of Caesarea to affirm the fully divine status of the Holy Spirit and opened the way for the Council of Constantinople in 381 to affirm the Spirit’s conglorification with the Father and the Son.*

**Key words:** *Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; Gregory of Nyssa; Basil of Caesarea; Holy Spirit; Eustathius of Sebaste; Pneumatomachi*

“It is sweet to confess this faith, and one never tires of saying it; for the prophet says, ‘Sweet are thy words unto my throat.’ And if the words are sweet, how much sweeter is the holy name, ‘Trinity,’ the fount of all sweetness. This, then, is the enumeration of the Trinity: ‘Father, Son and Holy Spirit.’”

Epiphanius of Salamis<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 379, Gregory of Nyssa (ca. 335–ca. 395), the probable architect of the pneumatological article of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed that was issued less than two years later,<sup>2</sup> was travelling to see his elder sister, Macrina the Younger (ca. 327–379), at their family estate in Cappadocia. A day’s travel from his destination he had a troublesome dream. In the dream, he later wrote, “I seemed to be holding in my hands the relics of martyrs, and there came from them a bright gleam of light, as from a flawless mirror which had been placed face to the sun, so that my eyes were blinded by the brilliance of the gleam.” The dream was repeated two more times before the dawn, and Nyssen was both baffled and deeply troubled

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<sup>1</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Medicine Chest* 74.12.1 (trans. Frank Williams; *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis. Books II and III (Sects 47–80), De Fide*; Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 36; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 487.

<sup>2</sup> For the likelihood of Nyssen’s authorship, see Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 199–201. But see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 23 n. 84.

as to its possible meaning.<sup>3</sup> Filled with foreboding, he reached his sister's home only to find her dying and his fear realized. Nine months earlier their beloved brother Basil of Caesarea (ca. 329–379) had died, and that loss was still a fresh wound. As he sat by the bedside of his dying sister, however, Nyssen was given insight into the meaning of the thrice-repeated dream: “What I had seen before me was truly the remains of a holy martyr, one who had been dead to sin, but illumined by the indwelling grace of the Spirit (τῆ ... ἐνοικούσῃ τοῦ πνεύματος χάριτι κατελάμπετο).”<sup>4</sup>

This remark, which is one of only three explicit references to the Holy Spirit in Nyssen's account of his sister's life,<sup>5</sup> has twofold significance. Ever since the embrace of Christianity by the Roman imperial court of Constantine in the first two decades of the fourth century,<sup>6</sup> the church had faced a dilemma, namely, what does it mean to be a Christian in a world where it was now politically possible and even socially advantageous to profess the Christian faith? In the pre-Constantinian era, the martyrs had been critical in enabling the church to define her identity. The church was that community where love for Jesus Christ was so radically preeminent that men and women were prepared to die for him. The bodies of the martyrs were thus in a sense the boundary markers of Christianity and their deaths regarded as gifts of the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup> The answer to Christianity's fourth-century dilemma came in the renewal movement of monasticism that sought to recapture the radical commitment of the martyrs to Christ. By this remark, then, Gregory of Nyssa was explicitly identifying Spirit-filled monastic figures like Macrina as the direct heirs to the martyrs and thus models for Christian piety.

But Gregory's remark also recalls a key emphasis of his brother's pneumatology that sought to answer the pressing dogmatic question of the 360s and 370s: Who is the Holy Spirit? Basil, in his landmark study, *On the Holy Spirit* (375), had noted that one of the proofs for the Spirit's deity was his transformative impact on the lives of men and women:

The Spirit illuminates those who have been cleansed 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. Just so are the Spirit-bearing souls that are

<sup>3</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of St. Macrina* (trans. Kevin Corrigan), in *The Life of Saint Macrina by Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa* (2001; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 33–34.

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of St. Macrina* (trans. Corrigan), 37, altered. Corrigan has “the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit,” but the Greek has only πνεύματος. For the Greek, see *Vita S. Macrinae* (ed. Virginia Woods Callahan), in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Asctica. Volume VIII, Part I* (ed. Werner Jaeger, Johannes P. Cavaros, and Virginia Woods Callahan; Leiden: Brill, 1952), 391, lines 18–19.

<sup>5</sup> The other two refer to Macrina as having been “inspired by the Holy Spirit (θεοφορουμένη τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι)” and “inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit (ἐμπνευσθεῖσα τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος)” (*Vita S. Macrinae* [ed. Callahan] in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Asctica. Volume VIII, Part I*, 390, lines 5–6; 391, line 1).

<sup>6</sup> See the still excellent study of the Constantinian revolution by Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., *The Passion of Saints Perpetua and Felicitas* 1.

illuminated by the Holy Spirit (αἱ πνευματοφόροι ψυχαὶ ἐλλαμφθεῖσαι παρὰ τοῦ πνεύματος): they are themselves made spiritual, and they send forth grace to others.<sup>8</sup>

Here, Basil speaks from personal experience. In the mid-350s, when he returned to Cappadocia from his studies in Athens, he was “monstrously conceited about his skill in rhetoric,” as Nyssen put it. Macrina, though, spoke to him about the gospel and the spiritual life that only it can produce. Soon converted to both Christ and the monastic life, he now “showed contempt for the admiration of rhetorical ability,” to quote Nyssen again, and began to pursue ardently a life of true virtue.<sup>9</sup> Macrina, a Spirit-bearing soul, had been a means of the Spirit’s grace in Basil’s life. But only if the Spirit was fully divine, *the* Life-giver, could such a transformation be effected.

### I. AN OVERVIEW OF PATRISTIC PNEUMATOLOGY

Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres have argued that the pneumatological debates of the fourth century, of which the two texts cited above are representative examples, constitute a third stage in the early history of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>10</sup> The first stage is to be found in the first and second centuries, where there is a high pneumatology evident in the NT’s robust reflection on the Spirit and such texts and authors as *The Odes of Solomon* (ca. 100–150) and Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. 130–ca. 200).<sup>11</sup> The second stage is typified by a third-century theologian like Origen (ca. 184–253), for whom the Spirit occupies a subordinate place in the Godhead: “Father, Son, and Spirit, while distinct, are unified in an ontological hierarchy.”<sup>12</sup> On the one hand and in response to the error of modalism, Origen clearly wants to maintain that the Spirit is a distinct entity within the Godhead.<sup>13</sup> As such, the Spirit possesses all of the qualities of divine life substantially and eternally.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Origen’s belief that only the Father is God in the proper sense of the term compels him to place the Spirit in a position

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<sup>8</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 9.23 (trans. Stephen Hildebrand; *St Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit*, Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 54. For the Greek, see Benoît Pruche, ed., *Basile de Césarée: Sur le Saint-Esprit* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1968), 328, lines 18–19.

<sup>9</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of St. Macrina*, 26.

<sup>10</sup> Mark DelCogliano, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, and Lewis Ayres, “General Introduction” to *Athanasius and Didymus: Works on the Spirit* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>11</sup> For Irenaeus’s pneumatology, see Michel René Barnes, “Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” *NV* 7.1 (2009): 67–106, passim; Anthony Briggman, *Irenaeus of Lyons and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, “General Introduction,” 12–13. In the words of Barnes, “By the end of the second century we find that a noticeably subordinationist pneumatology takes hold in both Greek and Latin (that is, in Origen and in Tertullian, respectively) accounts of the Holy Spirit” (“Irenaeus’s Trinitarian Theology,” 106). See also the discussion in Michel René Barnes, “The Beginning and End of Early Christian Pneumatology,” *AugStud* 39.2 (2009): 169–86.

<sup>13</sup> F. H. Kettler, “Origenes,” *RGG*<sup>3</sup> 4:1696; M. F. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 72, 124.

<sup>14</sup> See Origen, *Princ.* 1.6.2; 4.4.1. See also G. L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: William Heinemann, 1936), 136–38; Henri Cranzel, “Geist (Heiliger Geist),” *RAC* 9:536.

subordinate to the Father.<sup>15</sup> Despite its obvious inadequacies, Origen's anti-modalist and subordinationist pneumatology remained extremely influential in the Eastern Roman Empire for the next century, as is shown, for example, by the thought of Theognostus (head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, 247/248–282), Pierius (presbyter under Theonas, bishop of Alexandria, 281/282–300), and Eusebius of Caesarea (ca. 263–339).<sup>16</sup> Eusebius, for example, in a treatise written primarily against the Trinitarian theology of Marcellus of Ancyra (ca. 285–376/377), whom he suspected of being a modalist, argued that Jesus taught:

The Holy Spirit exists as another besides himself, outstanding in honour and glory and privileges, greater and higher than any [other] intellectual and rational being (for which reason he has also been received into the holy and thrice-blessed Trinity). Yet he is surely subordinate to [the Son]. ... [the] Spirit would be neither God nor Son, ... but is one of those things brought into existence through the Son, because "all things were made through him, and without him not one thing was made." [John 1:3]<sup>17</sup>

The third stage in the history of patristic pneumatology saw the clash in the fourth century of this subordinationist pneumatology with an ontology of the Spirit that was more in keeping with the clarity of Nicaea's confession about the deity of the Son. Although Nicaea had but the briefest of statements about the Spirit—"We believe ... in the Holy Spirit"—pro-Nicene advocates came to realize that this third article of the creed had to be expanded to a fuller confession of the Spirit's divinity, to do justice to their conviction that Father, Son, and Spirit share one divine nature and work inseparably in creation and redemption.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Basing his judgment in part on Origen's Trinitarian views, Epiphanius was convinced that "Origen will not stand with us in the day of judgment" (*Ancoratus* 63.1–5 [trans. Young Richard Kim; *St. Epiphanius of Cyprus: Ancoratus*; Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014], 148–49).

<sup>16</sup> See L. B. Radford, *Three Teachers of Alexandria: Theognostus, Pierius and Peter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), 30–43, 51–52; W.-D. Hauschild, "Die Pneumatomachen: Eine Untersuchung zur Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts" (diss., University of Hamburg, 1967), 142–45; Adolf Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläubigen: Der Beitrag des Athanasios von Alexandrien zur Formulierung des trinitarischen Dogmas im vierten Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: St. Benno, 1969), 14–16; Franco Bolgiani, "La théologie de l'Esprit Saint. De la fin du I<sup>er</sup> siècle après Jésus Christ au concile de Constantinople (381)," *Les Quatres Fleuves* 9 (1979): 54–56.

<sup>17</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecl. theol.* 3.5.17–18; 3.6.3 (trans. Kelley McCarthy Spoerl and Markus Vincent; *Eusebius of Caesarea: Against Marcellus and On Ecclesiastical Theology* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017], 311, 314). For Eusebius's thinking about the Trinity, see also Christopher A. Beeley, "Eusebius' *Contra Marcellum*: Anti-Modalist Doctrine and Orthodox Christology," *ZAC* 12 (2009): 433–452. For Marcellus's theology, see Joseph T. Lienhard, *Contra Marcellum: Marcellus of Ancyra and Fourth-Century Theology* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 47–68; Sara Parvis, *Marcellus of Ancyra and the Lost Years of the Arian Controversy 325–345* (OECES; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 30–37.

<sup>18</sup> DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, "General Introduction," 13–15. See also Lewis Ayres, "Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," *AugStud* 39.2 (2009): 187–206.

## II. WHY THIS INTEREST IN THE SPIRIT?

But why did this conviction about the Spirit particularly emerge in the third quarter of the fourth century? The texts cited at the beginning of this essay from Nyssen and his older brother supply one possible answer: Their monastic experience of the Spirit led them to realize that if the Holy Spirit were not essentially holy and thus God, he could not sanctify. C. R. B. Shapland, in his English translation of the letters of Athanasius (ca. 299–373) to Serapion, the first of the various treatises written on the subject of the Spirit’s nature in this era, and Hermann Dörries, in a superb monograph on Basil of Caesarea’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit, are among modern scholars who have suggested this as one key reason for the emergence of this significant literature on the Spirit.<sup>19</sup> Adolf-Martin Ritter, on the other hand, is not at all convinced by this line of argument and has argued for two alternate reasons for the origin of this fourth-century preoccupation with the nature of the Spirit.<sup>20</sup> The first is one that has been suggested a number of times in recent scholarship: The issue of the Spirit’s nature and status was only taken up with ardor when his divinity was explicitly denied. In other words, the presence of heretical ideas necessitated a reply.<sup>21</sup> Ritter also regards the discussion about the Spirit’s ontological status as a logical development from that about the Son. A fourth reason, proposed by G. H. Williams, ties this increase of pneumatological reflection to the concern of Nicene and neo-Nicene bishops to defend themselves against imperial pressure to modify the doctrine promulgated at the Council of Nicaea (325). The authority of these bishops as conduits of the Spirit would obviously be enhanced if the Spirit were fully divine.<sup>22</sup> Finally and most provocatively, Franco Bolgiani has maintained that Scripture, especially the use and transmission of the baptismal formula in Matt 28:19, ultimately “constituted the basis for the entire subsequent trinitarian speculation until the First Council of Constantinople (381).”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> See C. R. B. Shapland, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (London: Epworth, 1951), 19 n. 7; Hermann Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto: Der Beitrag des Basilus zum Abschluß des trinitarischen Dogmas* (Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse 3.39; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956), 7, 152–53, 159–61, 182–84. See also Georg Kretschmar, *Studien zur frühchristlichen Trinitätstheologie* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1956), 15; Pia Luislampe, *Spiritus Vivificans: Grundzüge einer Theologie des Heiligen Geistes nach Basilus von Caesarea* (Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie 48; Münster: Aschendorff, 1981), 23–31; Gilles Quispel, “The Holy Spirit According to the Early Church” in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica: Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel* (ed. Johannes van Oort; Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 55; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 745–46.

<sup>20</sup> Adolf-Martin Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel und sein Symbol: Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des II. Ökumenischen Konzils* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 15; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 293–95 n. 1.

<sup>21</sup> See also H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church: A Study of Christian Teaching in the Age of the Fathers* (London: Macmillan, 1912), 6–7, 170–71; Wiles, *Making of Christian Doctrine*, 31–33. This perspective can be found in the writings of patristic authors like Theodore of Mopsuestia; see his *Catechetical Homily 9*.

<sup>22</sup> G. H. Williams, “Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century,” *CH* 20 (1951): 14.

<sup>23</sup> F. Bolgiani, “Holy Spirit,” in *Encyclopedia of Ancient Christianity* (ed. Angelo di Berardino; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 2:268–269.

While all of these reasons undoubtedly played a part in the intensification of the pneumatological focus in the two decades or so immediately before Constantinople, Bolgiani's highlighting of the role of Scripture is particularly noteworthy. Even a casual perusal of the three earliest treatises of this literature—Athanasius's *Letters to Serapion* (358–359),<sup>24</sup> Didymus the Blind's (ca. 313–398) *On the Holy Spirit* (ca. 360–365),<sup>25</sup> and Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* (375)<sup>26</sup>—reveals the utter centrality of Scripture in their argumentation. In the words of Andrew Radde-Gallwitz,

It is often claimed that Greek theologians of the later fourth century were “embarrassed” by a lack of biblical material about the Spirit. This seems unlikely in light of the extensive collections of passages in Athanasius, Didymus, Basil, Gregory [of Nyssa], and the broader anti-Eunomian tradition. The idea that the Spirit's divinity has to be shown, if at all, on non-biblical grounds is such a commonplace in modern theology that it becomes easy to assume that fourth-century Christians were anxious over the absence of an explicit text “proving” the Spirit's divinity. But, for them, the much more pressing task was trying to understand what exactly the richly diverse biblical material on the Spirit was meant to teach the attentive reader.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> On these letters of Athanasius, see especially Shapland, *Letters of Saint Athanasius concerning the Holy Spirit*; Laminski, *Der Heilige Geist als Geist Christi und Geist der Gläubigen*; T. C. Campbell, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Athanasius,” *SJT* 27 (1974): 408–40; Bolgiani, “La théologie de l'Esprit Saint,” 58–62; Michael A. G. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), passim; DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, “General Introduction,” 15–30; Adolf Martin Ritter, “Athanasius as Trinitarian Theologian,” *Studia Patristica* (ed. A. Brent and M. Vinzent; Louvain: Peeters, 2012), 52:107–11. For Athanasius's earlier thought about the Spirit as well as the *Letters to Serapion*, see also the helpful study by Kevin Douglas Hill, *Athanasius and the Holy Spirit: The Development of His Early Pneumatology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> On Didymus's treatise, see especially Mark DelCogliano, “Basil of Caesarea, Didymus the Blind, and the Anti-Pneumatomachian Exegesis of Amos 4:13 and John 1:3,” *JTS* NS 61 (2010): 644–58; DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz, and Ayres, “General Introduction,” 31–47; Lewis Ayres, “The Holy Spirit as the ‘Undiminished Giver’: Didymus the Blind's *De spiritu sancto* and the Development of Nicene Pneumatology,” in *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: The Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2008* (ed. D. Vincent Twomey and Janet E. Rutherford; Dublin: Four Courts, 2010), 57–72.

<sup>26</sup> On this treatise by Basil, see especially Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*; J. Verhees, “Die Bedeutung der Transzendenz des Pneuma bei Basilius,” *Ostkirchliche Studien* 25 (1976): 285–302; Bolgiani, “La théologie de l'Esprit Saint,” 63–65; Luislampe, *Spiritus Vivificans*; Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, passim; Hermann Josef Sieben, trans., *Basilius von Cäsarea: De Spiritu Sancto/Über den Heiligen Geist* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993), 7–70; Volker H. Drecol, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea: Sein Weg vom Homöusianer zum Neonizäner* (Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte 66; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 183–269; Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 101–19; Mark J. Larson, “A Re-examination of *De Spiritu Sancto*: Saint Basil's Bold Defence of the Spirit's Deity,” *SBET* 19 (2001): 65–84; Stephen M. Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea: A Synthesis of Greek Thought and Biblical Truth* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007); idem, “Introduction” to his trans., *On the Holy Spirit*, 11–26.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, “Gregory of Nyssa's Pneumatology in Context: The Spirit as Anointing and the History of the Trinitarian Controversies,” *JECs* 19.2 (Summer 2011): 285. But note Ayres, “Innovation and Ressourcement in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 192–93.

In the essay that follows the path that led to the biblical orientation of one of the treatises noted above, namely that of Basil of Caesarea, is examined as well as some key aspects of that orientation and its legacy in the thought of Basil's brother Gregory of Nyssa. The latter is vitally important, since, as Pia Luislampe has rightly noted, “The step from Nicaea, in which the Holy Spirit was mentioned only briefly, to Constantinople, which calls the Holy Spirit *the Lord and Life-giver*, was prepared for in a crucial way by Basil.”<sup>28</sup>

### III. BASIL'S “PEACEFUL DISCUSSIONS” ABOUT THE SPIRIT

The rapid increase in the 360s and 370s of ontological questions about the being of the Spirit is well seen in the Christian community of Tarsus. After the death of Silvanus, the bishop of Tarsus, in 369, certain Pneumatomachi, “fighters against the Spirit,” emerged in the community, ardent advocates for the creaturehood of the Spirit. The rest of the community was polarized into two groups: “zealots,” who wanted to disfellowship anyone who could not unequivocally declare the Spirit to be God and “moderates,” who were uncertain about what to say about the Spirit's being. In an attempt to prevent a schism between these two latter groups, Basil wrote to the former and told them:

The present circumstances hold a great propensity for the destruction of the churches, of which I have been aware for some time now. Edification of the Church and correction of error, sympathy towards the weak and protection of those brethren who are sound are all non-existent. Moreover, there is no remedy available either to heal this sickness which plagues us or to prevent that which threatens. All in all the condition of the Church is like that of an old coat (to use an unambiguous example, even if it appears somewhat trite), which is easily torn by the slightest occasion of use and which cannot be restored to its original condition. Consequently, in such circumstances, there is a need for great zeal and much diligence, so that the churches might receive some benefit. This benefit, in a word, is the unification of those parts which have long been separated.

Now union would occur if we were willing to accommodate ourselves to those who are weaker, where we can do so without harm to souls. Therefore, since many voices have been raised against the Holy Spirit and many tongues have been whetted to blasphemy against him, I ask you, in so far as you can, to reduce the blasphemers to a small number and receive into communion those who do not say that the Holy Spirit is a creature. Thus, the blasphemers may be left alone, and either become ashamed and return to the truth or remain in their sin and become discredited because of their small number. Hence, let us seek nothing more beyond proposing the faith of Nicaea to those brothers who wish to join us. And if they accept that, then let us demand also that they must not call the Holy Spirit a creature and that those who do so should not be received into communion. But I do not think it is appropriate to ask for anything beyond these requirements. For I am convinced that if something more needs to be added for clarification, the Lord, who in all things works for the good of those

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<sup>28</sup> Luislampe, *Spiritus Unificans*, 62.

who love him [cf. Romans 8:28], will grant it through the continued sharing of the same way of life and through peaceful discussions.<sup>29</sup>

Basil concurred with the opinion of the orthodox zealots of Tarsus that zeal is good, but, he stressed, only so long as it is directed towards a worthy goal. Due to the dissension and disregard for other believers which already characterized far too much of the church in the eastern Mediterranean, Basil was convinced that a worthy goal was to avoid further fragmentation, which would be the case if Basil's addressees had their way. Rather, the efforts of the latter should be directed towards the unification of all who were not clearly heretical. But this unification could only come about if those to whom Basil was writing, and others of similar zeal, were willing to accommodate themselves to those whose beliefs were not as settled. Basil then proceeded to indicate how this principle was to be put into practice. Basil's addressees should receive into communion all who confessed the Nicene Creed and who refused to describe the Spirit as a creature. In this way, those who were openly blaspheming the Spirit through their description of him as a creature would be discredited due to their small number.

The irenicism of the closing sentence in this letter, with its reference to "peaceful discussions," continued for three or four years to be Basil's approach to discussions about the Spirit's divinity. But Basil was not to escape conflict. It came through his mentor in the monastic life and an old friend, Eustathius of Sebaste (ca. 300—ca. 377), who came under suspicion due to the theological ambiguity of his pneumatological position.<sup>30</sup> Eustathius had been the leading figure in the monastic movement in Asia Minor at the time of Basil's conversion and Basil was deeply indebted to him. Although they held much in common with regard to the ascetic life, there were large differences between the two men when it came to Trinitarian doctrine. Eustathius was largely unconcerned about questions of dogma such as the nature and status of Spirit, and it was undoubtedly because he was not a theologian that no written works of his have been transmitted. As Wolf-Dieter Hauschild has described the keynote of his pneumatology, "The Holy Spirit was ... a charismatic reality primarily to be experienced."<sup>31</sup> Eustathius appears to have been quite happy to affirm the Nicene Creed as it stood, but he had a deep aversion to expanding it to include a dogmatic assertion with regard to the Spirit. He was, for lack of a better term, committed to a binitarianism that was hostile to any conglorification of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. His refusal to take a clear position as to the Spirit's deity is captured by two remarks. The first was a reputed utterance that he

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<sup>29</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Letter* 113 (trans. Michael A. G. Haykin). For the Greek text, see Yves Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres* (Paris: Société d'Édition Les Belles Lettres, 1961), 2:16–17. See also Michael A. G. Haykin, "And Who Is the Spirit? Basil of Caesarea's Letters to the Church at Tarsus," *VC* 41.4 (1987): 377–85.

<sup>30</sup> On Eustathius and his pneumatology, see especially Wolf-Dieter Hauschild, "Eustathios von Sebaste," *TRE* 10:548–49, and Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 27 n. 86. On Eustathius's career, see also Jean Gribomont, "Eustathe de Sébaste," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 4.2 (1961): 1708–12; C. A. Frazee, "Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Eustathios of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea," *CHR* 66 (1980): 16–33; Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 73–76, 239–45.

<sup>31</sup> Hauschild, "Eustathios von Sebaste," 548–49.



made at a synod in 364 when the question of the Spirit’s ontological status was raised: “I neither choose to name the Holy Spirit God nor dare to call him a creature.”<sup>32</sup> And nearly ten years later, Basil cited Eustathius as affirming that “the Spirit is neither a slave, nor a master, but free.”<sup>33</sup>

Basil, though, retained his friendship with Eustathius, clearly with the hope of bringing his old friend around to a position of full orthodoxy. But Basil’s irenicism made his own orthodoxy suspect to some. In late 372 and early 373, Theodotus of Nicopolis (d. 375), a leading bishop in northern Asia Minor and an orthodox zealot, began to bring pressure on Basil to clarify his own position on the Spirit and also his relationship with Eustathius. Meletius of Antioch (d. 381), another leading supporter of the Nicene Creed, shared Theodotus’s view. Basil, by associating with a suspected heretic, was himself dogmatically suspect! Basil found himself in an unenviable position. On the one hand, he was beginning to be criticized by Eustathius’s followers for doctrinal convictions regarding the Spirit that were increasingly unacceptable to many of Eustathius’s Pneumatomachian partisans. On the other hand, his close ties to Eustathius were making him dogmatically suspect to a number of his episcopal colleagues and some of his monastic friends.<sup>34</sup>

Basil thus arranged a meeting with Eustathius in June of 373. In a two-day colloquy, Basil and Eustathius appeared to have come to an agreement on pneumatological issues. In order to satisfy Theodotus, Meletius and the other bishops, Basil convinced Eustathius to sign a statement that has been transmitted as *Letter 125* in the Basilian corpus. The key part of this text runs thus:

[We] must anathematize all who call the Holy Spirit a creature, and all who so think; all who do not confess that he is holy by nature, as the Father is holy by nature and the Son is holy by nature, and refuse him his place in the blessed divine nature. Our not separating him from Father and Son is a proof of our right mind. For we are bound to be baptized in the terms we have received and to profess belief in the terms in which we are baptized, and as we have professed belief in, so to give glory to Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus we must hold aloof from the communion of all who call him creature, as from open blasphemers. One point must be regarded as settled; the remark is necessary because of our slanderers. We do not speak of the Holy Spirit as unbegotten, for we recognise one Unbegotten and one Origin of all things, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor do we speak of the Holy Spirit as begotten, for by the tradition of the faith we have been taught one Only-begotten. We have been taught that the Spirit of truth proceeds from the Father, and we confess him to be of God without creation.<sup>35</sup>

Basil’s emphasis in this text is placed on the natural holiness of the Spirit. Since the Spirit is holy without qualification, he cannot be a creature and must be

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<sup>32</sup> Socrates, *Church History* 2.45. See also Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Catechetical Homily* 9.14 for a general description of this agnosticism regarding the Holy Spirit.

<sup>33</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 20.51; 87, altered.

<sup>34</sup> Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 31–36.

<sup>35</sup> Basil, *Letter* 125.3. For the Greek text, see Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres*, 2:33–34.

indivisibly one with the divine nature. The confession of this unity was both the criterion of orthodoxy and the basis upon which communion could be terminated with those who affirmed that the Spirit was a creature. As to the details of the Spirit's origin, the phrase "without creation" was considered sufficient. As well as supplying an effective defence against the Pneumatomachian assertion that the Spirit must be a creature because he is neither unbegotten nor begotten, it provides a non-speculative statement on the mode of the Spirit's existence. This pneumatological position thus defined the precise limits beyond which Basil was not prepared to venture, even for a friend such as Eustathius.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the baptismal formula of Matt 28:19 has clearly played a key role in shaping Basil's thinking: To be baptized into "the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" implies faith in the three persons of the Godhead and also determines doxological ultimacy—the Father along with the Son and the Holy Spirit are to receive equal honor and worship.

At the meeting at which this document was drawn up and initially agreed to by both Basil and Eustathius, another meeting was planned later that year at which time this document would be formally ratified in the presence of Theodotus and Meletius. But Eustathius never came to that meeting. Instead, he renounced his signature on the statement and, at a series of Pneumatomachian synods, denounced what he described as the doctrinal innovations of Basil. And for the next two years he openly slandered Basil as a modalist and consequently a heretic. Basil was so stunned by this turn of events and what amounted to the betrayal by a close friend that he kept silence until the winter of 374–375. Eventually, when he was convinced that some reply to Eustathius and his Pneumatomachian party had to be made, he responded with a series of letters and his *magnum opus*, *On the Holy Spirit*.

#### IV. BASIL'S BIBLICAL EXEGESIS

The Pneumatomachi were maintaining that it was proper only to give glory to the Father *through* the Son *in* the Holy Spirit. A specific question had come to Basil from a close friend whom he had mentored, Amphilochius of Iconium (ca. 340–395), asking whether or not it was also proper in corporate worship to glorify the Father *with* the Son *together with* the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> The aversion of the Pneumatomachi to the conglorification of the Spirit with the Father and the Son thus became the occasion Basil needed to make a detailed reply to the views of Eustathius and the Pneumatomachi.

The core of Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* was essentially a detailed exposition of much of the biblical testimony about the Spirit's person.<sup>38</sup> As Philip Rousseau has noted with regard to Basil's theology: it was primarily shaped by a deep "attachment to the text of Scripture," which "provided the framework for understanding and moral achievement, based on a careful, straightforward interpretation and the

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<sup>36</sup> Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 37–38.

<sup>37</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 1.1, 3.

<sup>38</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 10–28.

safeguarding of theological tradition.”<sup>39</sup> A number of key biblical texts informed Basil’s argument in *On the Holy Spirit*. First place in Basil’s thinking and experience was to be given to the baptismal formula of Matthew 28, which ranks the Spirit together with the Father and the Son, and thus necessarily determines the form of the church’s confession of faith and doxology.<sup>40</sup> Basil argued that the mention of Father, Son, and Spirit in this formula clearly testifies to “some communion or union” between the three. As he stated: “The Lord has handed on as a necessary and saving dogma that the Holy Spirit is ranked with the Father.”<sup>41</sup> Then, from a variety of biblical texts that speak of the Spirit’s activities Basil showed how the Spirit “is indivisible and inseparable from the Father and the Son” since he does what only God can do.<sup>42</sup> The Spirit sanctifies the angels, for example, and enables them to remain steadfast in their allegiance to God, something he could not do unless he were divine. The holiness of the angels is not inherent, but results from their communion with One who is innately holy, namely the Spirit.

How could the angels say, “Glory to God in the highest, unless they have been empowered by the Spirit? For “no one is able to say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except in the Holy Spirit, and no one who speaks in the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed.’” ... How could the Seraphim say, “Holy, holy, holy,” unless they were taught by the Spirit how many times it is pious to proclaim this doxology? Do, then, all God’s angels praise him and all his powers praise him? It is through the co-working of the Spirit.<sup>43</sup>

Basil also pointed to the titles given by Scripture to the Spirit to argue for his deity. For instance, the ascription of the term “Lord” to the Spirit in 2 Cor 3:16–18 was indisputable proof of the excellence of the Spirit’s glory.<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that Basil did not explicitly call the Spirit “God” nor did he speak of the Spirit as “one in being” (*homoousios*) with the Father and the Son. While his argument clearly indicates his belief in the full deity of the Spirit, his refusal to use the term *homoousios* seems to indicate an ongoing concern about the modalistic danger of this term. Nicene Trinitarian orthodoxy had to be affirmed over against Arian subordinationism but without any hint of modalism.<sup>45</sup> Reflecting further on the text from 2 Corinthians, Basil noted that the passage also speaks about the life-transforming work of the Spirit, a work that only God can do: “As those things that are near brilliant colors are themselves colored because of the rays of light that flow around them, so he who clearly fixes his eyes on the Spirit is somehow transformed by the Spirit’s

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<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, 347.

<sup>40</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, “The ‘Spiritual Sense’ of Scripture. The Exegetical Basis for St. Basil’s Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic* (ed. P. J. Fedwick; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 348–49.

<sup>41</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 10.24, 25; 55–56.

<sup>42</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.37–38; 69–73.

<sup>43</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38; 72; 73.

<sup>44</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 21.52.

<sup>45</sup> Michel René Barnes, “The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon,” in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community* (ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones; London: Routledge, 1998), 62.

glory into something brighter as his heart is illuminated by the truth of the Spirit, as if by a light.”<sup>46</sup>

Then, the Spirit is the One who gives saving knowledge of God, but only God can reveal God. In Basil’s words:

When, by means of the illuminating power, we fix our eyes on the beauty of the invisible image and through that image are led up to the supremely beautiful spectacle of the Archetype, the Spirit of knowledge is inseparably present there. To those who love the vision of the truth the Spirit supplies in himself the power to behold the image. He does not give the revelation from without, but in himself leads to the knowledge [of the image]. For just as “no one knows the Father except the Son” [Matt 11:27], so “no one can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit” [1 Cor 12:3]. For it does not say “through the Spirit” but “in the Spirit.” . . . And, as it is written, “in your light we shall see light” [Ps 36:9], that is, in the illumination of the Spirit [we shall see] “the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world” [John 1:9]. Thus, in himself he makes known the glory of the Only-Begotten, and in himself provides the knowledge of God to the true worshippers. Therefore, the way of the knowledge of God is from the one Spirit through the one Son to the one Father.<sup>47</sup>

Here Basil is building on such passages as Heb 1:3 and Col 1:15 in which the Son is described as the image of the Father, whom Basil calls the “Archetype.” During the course of the Arian controversy, it had become a commonplace to argue that the Son’s being the image of the Father meant that there was a community of nature between the Son and the Father. But knowledge of the image and by extension its archetype is impossible without the Spirit who reveals the Son—Basil cites 1 Cor 12:3 to prove his point here. Moreover, this knowledge is given by the Spirit “in himself.” Knowledge of God does not come through an intermediary like an angel, but is given by God by or in himself, namely in the Spirit, who must therefore be divine. This text then tells us why the Spirit is inextricably joined to the Father and the Son. His epistemic revelation of the Father and the Son speaks of an ontological union.<sup>48</sup> As Basil noted in one of his letters: “Therefore we never divorce the Paraclete from his unity with the Father and the Son; for our mind, when it is lit by the Spirit, looks up to the Son and in him as in an image beholds the Father.”<sup>49</sup>

Now, if the Spirit is God, how does his relationship to the Father differ from that of the Son to the Father? This was a vital question for fourth-century Greek theologians, since they ever feared the specter of modalism that denied the hypostatic differences between the persons within the Godhead. Basil turned to such

<sup>46</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 21.52; 90.

<sup>47</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18.47. For the Greek text, see C. F. H. Johnston, *The Book of Saint Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, on the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1892), 94–95. See also Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 26.64 for similar argumentation.

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 187, 190–91.

<sup>49</sup> Basil, *Letter* 226.3, trans. Michael A.G. Haykin. For the Greek text, see Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres*, 3:27. See also Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 197–98.

Scripture texts as John 15:26, 1 Cor 2:12, and Ps 33:6 to argue that the Spirit “comes forth from God, not begotten like the Son, but as the breath of his mouth.”<sup>50</sup> Basil quickly qualified this image. The terms “breath” and “mouth” must be understood in a manner befitting to God. The comparison of the Spirit with breath does not mean that he is the same as human breath, which quickly dissipates upon exhalation, for the Spirit is a living being with the power to sanctify others. This image well reflects the nature of our knowledge about God. On the one hand, it indicates the intimate relationship of the Father and the Spirit, so the Spirit has to be glorified with the Father and the Son. On the other hand, the image reminds us that the Spirit’s mode of existence is ineffable, even as the being of the Godhead is beyond human comprehension.<sup>51</sup>

Basil died at the beginning of 379 and never saw the triumph of his theological position, which took place two years later through the work of his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>52</sup>

## V. THE COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (381) AND ITS CREED

With the death of the Emperor Valens (328–378), patron and protector of the Arians, in the disastrous rout at Hadrianople in Thrace in 378, the purple passed to a Spaniard, Theodosius I (347–395), who, in his theological convictions, was committed to Nicene Trinitarianism. Determined to establish the church on the bedrock of the Nicene Creed, Theodosius traveled to Constantinople, entering the city on November 24, 380, whereupon he called a council to meet in Constantinople the following May.

Theodosius pressed the theologians at the council to see if they could persuade the Pneumatomachi to abandon their deficient view of the Spirit. In the words of the historian Socrates, Theodosius and “the bishops who shared the same faith spared no efforts” to bring the Pneumatomachi “into unity with them.”<sup>53</sup> However, the gulf that lay between the orthodox and the Pneumatomachi, thirty-six bishops under the leadership of Eleusius of Cyzicus—Eustathius appears to have been dead—was so wide, that it could not have been bridged without one side sacrificing all that they held dear. Thus, the Pneumatomachi, after rejecting the proposed union, left the council. After their departure, the council approved a confessional statement that was probably crafted in the discussions with the Pneuma-

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<sup>50</sup> Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 18.46. For the Greek text, see Johnston, *On the Holy Spirit*, 93. See also *On the Holy Spirit* 16.38.

<sup>51</sup> Haykin, *Spirit of God*, 143–47; Ayres, “Innovation and *Ressourcement* in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,” 200–201.

<sup>52</sup> See the superb essay in this regard by Reinhart Staats, “Die Basilianische Verherrlichung des Heiligen Geistes auf dem Konzil zu Konstantinopel 381: Ein Beitrag zum Ursprung der Formel ‘Kerygma und Dogma,’” *KD* 25 (1979): 232–53. For differences between the pneumatology of Basil and that of his brother, see Christopher A. Beeley, “The Holy Spirit in the Cappadocians: Past and Present,” *Modern Theology* 26.1 (January 2010): 92–119. Beeley rightly argues that Basil’s pneumatology is anti-modalist, though he is doubtful that it “ends up all that far from the Pneumatomachians” (p. 91), a view with which this author would disagree.

<sup>53</sup> Socrates, *Church History* 5.10.

tomachi. Moreover, it is quite probable that one of the leading figures behind the composition of this creedal statement was Basil's younger brother, Nyssen. Gregory had drunk deeply from the well of both Scripture and his brother's doctrine of the Spirit. Like his brother, he was overwhelmingly convinced that the Spirit is a full member of the Godhead. Yet, also like his brother, he was hesitant to employ the term "God" with regard to the Spirit.<sup>54</sup>

Without a doubt, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed is one of the most significant texts from the early church. The third article, which deals with the Spirit, runs thus: "We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father; with the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified; he has spoken through the Prophets." The biblical grounding of this article is patent upon inspection. The use of the term "Lord" for the Spirit, as in 2 Cor 3:16–18, for example, had been a key part of Basil's argument for the deity of the Spirit. Then, to call the Spirit "the Life-giver" is to ascribe to him a work that only God can do. This term reflects both the pneumatology of Gen 1:2 and the insistence made by a number of patristic authors on the Holy Spirit's work in creation, as well as the Spirit's role in giving new life in Christ as found in a passage like John 3:3–8.<sup>55</sup> The clause "who proceeds from the Father" is taken from John 15:26. One significant change, though, has been made: in place of the preposition "from the side of" (*παρά*) in John 15:26 there is the preposition "from within" (*ἐκ*), a change based on 1 Cor 2:12. This clause serves to differentiate the person of the Spirit from the person of the Son. Whereas the Son is begotten of the Father, the Spirit proceeds from the Father. It is also noteworthy that the verb "proceeds" is in the present tense, which is "tantamount to saying that like the Father he [i.e. the Spirit] had no beginning."<sup>56</sup>

The all-important clause, as J. N. D. Kelly puts it, is the affirmation that the Holy Spirit "with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified."<sup>57</sup> If the Spirit's conglorification and co-adoration with the Father and the Son is affirmed, it must be because he is fully God. As it stands, it would have been impossible for the Pneumatomachi to have subscribed to this statement.<sup>58</sup> One of Basil's closest friends, Gregory of Nazianzus (ca. 330–ca. 389/390), was the president of the council at this point and he was critical of the creedal statement because it did not say explicitly that the Spirit is God or declare the *homoousion* of the Spirit.<sup>59</sup> Why the omission of such terms? Adolf-Martin Ritter has argued plausibly that it was this

<sup>54</sup> On Nyssen's pneumatology, see Werner Jaeger, *Gregor von Nyssa's Lehre vom Heiligen Geist* (ed. Hermann Dörries; Leiden: Brill, 1966); Martien Parmentier, "Saint Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrine of the Holy Spirit," *Ekklesiastikos Pharos* 58 (1976): 41–100, 387–444; 59 (1977): 323–429; 60 (1978): 697–730; Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa's Doctrinal Works*, esp. 31–75, 112–28. See also the helpful overview by Cornelis P. Venema, "Gregory of Nyssa on the Trinity," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 8.1 (1992): 72–94.

<sup>55</sup> Ayres, "Innovation and Ressourcement in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology," 194–97.

<sup>56</sup> Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 142–43.

<sup>57</sup> J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; London: Longmans & Green, 1960), 342.

<sup>58</sup> Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel*, 301.

<sup>59</sup> John A. McGuckin, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 367–68.

creed that was employed to seek reconciliation with the Pneumatomachi.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, behind the reserved language was a very clear stance on the deity of the Spirit.<sup>61</sup>

The final clause, “who spoke through the prophets,” is based on verses such as 2 Pet 1:20–21 and Eph 3:5. While it may thus have primary reference to the OT prophets, it is important to note that Basil could describe the inspiration of the whole Bible as prophetic. Undoubtedly, both he and his brother considered the prophetism of the Scriptures a proof of the divinity of the Spirit who inspired them.<sup>62</sup>

## VI. CODA

Among the letters of Basil, there is one, *Letter 38*—sometimes entitled *On the difference between ousia and hypostasis*—which contemporary scholarship has determined to have been written in fact by Gregory of Nyssa to his and Basil’s youngest brother, Peter of Sebaste.<sup>63</sup> In the first part of the letter, Nyssen notes the confusion caused by talking about a single οὐσία and a single ὑπόστασις within the Godhead. Οὐσία must be used to refer to what the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share in common, while ὑπόστασις has to designate what is unique to each of the Three. Illustrative of this unity-within-diversity, according to Gregory, was the rainbow:

You have before now, in springtime, beheld the brilliance of the bow in the clouds—I mean the bow which is commonly called the “rainbow.” ... Now, the brightness [of the rainbow] is both continuous with itself and divided. It has many diverse colours; and yet the various bright tints of its dye are imperceptibly intermingled, hiding from our eyes the point of contact of the different colours with each other. As a result, between the blue and the flame-colour, or the flame-colour and the purple, or the purple and the amber, the space which both mingles and separates the two colours cannot be discerned. For when the rays of all the colours are seen they are seen to be distinct, and yet at the same time ... it is impossible to find out how far the red or the green colour of the

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<sup>60</sup> Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel*, passim. For a critique of Ritter’s position, see Volker H. Drecoll, “Wie nizzänisch ist das Nicaeno-Constantinopolitanum? Zur Diskussion der Herkunft von NC durch Staats, Abramowski, Hauschild, und Ritter,” *ZKG* 107.1 (1996): 1–18.

<sup>61</sup> John Behr, *The Nicene Faith. Part Two: One of the Holy Trinity* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 378–79.

<sup>62</sup> A. de Halleux, “La profession de l’Esprit Saint dans le symbole de Constantinople,” *RTL* 10 (1979): 30–31; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, 109–14.

<sup>63</sup> See Anders Cavallin, “Studien zu den Briefen des Hl. Basilius” (Ph.D. thesis, University of Lund, 1944), 78–81; Reinhard Hübner, “Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38 des Basilius. Zum unterschiedlichen Verständnis der οὐσία bei den kappadozischen Brüdern,” in *Epektasis: Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou* (ed. Jacques Fontaine and Charles Kannengiesser; Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 463–90; Johannes Zachhuber, “Nochmals: Der ‘38. Brief’ des Basilius von Caesarea als Werk des Gregor von Nyssa,” *ZAC* 7.1 (2003): 73–90; Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Doctrinal Works*, 115–21. Also see the commentary on this letter by Behr, *Nicene Faith. Part Two*, 415–27 and Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 220–27.

radiance extends, and at what point it begins to be no longer perceived as it is when it is distinct.

Just as in this example we both clearly distinguish the different colours and yet cannot detect by observation the separation of one from the other, so, please consider that it is also possible to draw [similar] inferences with regard to the divine doctrines. In particular, one can both conclude that the specific characteristics of [each of] the Persons [of the Godhead], like any one of the brilliant colours which appear in the rainbow, reflect their brightness in each of the [other] Persons we believe to be in the Holy Trinity, but that no difference can be observed in the ... nature of the one as compared with the others.<sup>64</sup>

Where one color of this chromatic phenomenon begins and another ends cannot be determined, but together they share in the brilliance of the single rainbow. For Nyssen, this creaturely example helps to confirm the church's ontological confession of the shared *οὐσία* of the Three *ὑποστάσεις*, in which the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, must be confessed as "the Lord, the Life-giver."

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<sup>64</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Letter* 38.5. For the Greek text, see Courtonne, ed., *Saint Basile: Lettres*, 1:87–89. Courtonne wrongly attributes the letter to Basil (see his footnotes in *Saint Basile: Lettres*, 1:81–92). In this regard, see also the criticism of Emmanuel Amand De Mendieta, "Comptes rendus: Yves Courtonne, *Saint Basile, Lettres*. Tome I," *L'Antiquité Classique* 27 (1958): 477. It is noteworthy that Nyssen's ordering of the colors is not that of contemporary optics.