

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN THE  
TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF BASIL OF CAESAREA**

**By**

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**Declaration**

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I, Zachary Allen Fischer, the undersigned declare that this Dissertation entitled **THE DOCTRINE OF THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF BASIL OF CAESAREA** is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. It has never been submitted to any other university for academic credit.

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the importance of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in Basil of Caesarea's Trinitarian writings. In order to judge the importance of the doctrine for Basil, its impact on all of his exegetical and dogmatic writings on the Trinity were surveyed and evaluated. In his writings, Basil repeatedly addresses his belief that the Father and the Son is the one, eternal God. He considered this possible due to the Son's eternal generation from the substance of the Father. Basil considered the eternal generation of the Son to be both a scripturally warranted and philosophically coherent doctrine that explains how the Father and Son are indelibly same in substance and truly distinct persons. This study concludes that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is essential to Basil's Trinitarian theology throughout his life.

## **Keywords**

Father (*patros*), Son (*huios*), begotten or only Son (*monogenēs*), the only [Son] from the Father (*monogenous para patros*), his only Son (*uion autou ton monogenēs*), only Son of God (*tou monogenous uiou tou theou*), image (εἰχὼν), same in substance (*homoousios*), unlike in substance (*heteroousios*), Person (*hypostasis*), Persons (*hypostaseis/hypostases*), cause (*aitia*), source/beginning (*archē*), generation, eternal generation, Basil of Caesarea, Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, John 1.1-2

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## Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
Apol.	<i>Apology</i>
EG	Eternal Generation
e.g.	exempli gratia
Ep.	Epistle (letter)
Epp.	Epistles (letters)
Eun.	<i>Against Eunomius</i>
EW	Extant Works (of Eunomius)
Hom.	Homily
Ibid.	ibidem
i.e	id est
Spir.	<i>On the Holy Spirit</i>

# 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

## 1.1 Introduction

For over 1600 years, Christians have confessed that the one God has revealed himself to be eternally triune, that is, the one God is indelibly and eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Trinity is one doctrine that binds Christians of all confessions together.<sup>1</sup> It represents the distinctive doctrine of the Christian God and embodies “the classic statement of the comprehensive truth of the Christian message. It is a summary doctrine, encompassing the full scope of the biblical revelation” (Sanders 2010:18). That is but one reason why the worldwide Body of Christ cannot afford to marginalize this doctrine. Unfortunately, in my experience as an evangelical Christian both my classroom and church-going experiences provided only paltry explications of the Trinity. When the doctrine of the Trinity was handled, it was often without much depth.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, I desired to strengthen my understanding of God as Father, Son, and Spirit, and this is why I chose a research study on the doctrine of the Trinity as the topic for this Master of Theology in Systematic Theology. I chose to focus on the Father-Son relationship, in particular the Son’s eternal generation from the Father, as that is the topic which the Trinitarian disputes of the fourth century primarily revolved around (Ayles 2004:3). T.F. Torrance (1993:3) makes clear how important the relationship between Father and Son is:

The basic decision taken at Nicea made it clear that the eternal relation between the Father and the Son in the Godhead was regarded in the Church as the supreme truth upon which everything else in the Gospel depends...It is only when we know God the Father in and through his Son who belongs to his own being as God that we may know him in any true and accurate way...Thus the very essence of the Gospel and the whole of the Christian Faith depend on the centrality and primacy of the relation in being and agency between Jesus Christ and God the Father.

My initial interest in the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was piqued by Kevin Giles's book, *The Eternal Generation of the Son. Maintaining Orthodoxy*

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<sup>1</sup> The *filioque* clause represents one important exception.

<sup>2</sup> For a similar estimation, see Marguerite Shuster, 1999, *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, Eds. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O' Collins, Oxford University Press, pp. 357-381 and Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, pp. 7-21.

*in Trinitarian Theology.* As I researched this topic, I came to understand the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son as the “glue” which holds together the foundational Trinitarian claims that the Father and Son are indelibly one in being (*ousia*), but also eternally differentiated as two Persons (*hypostaseis*). It is this doctrine which refutes both the heresy of modalism and ditheism. The doctrine also curtails any subordinationism within the Godhead. Giles (2012:29ff) notes that there is a debate today about the understanding of what 'Father' and 'Son' mean especially as it relates to the doctrine of eternal generation. Some theologians think that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is simply not biblical. Other scholars believe that speaking of an eternal generation of the Son necessarily leads to subordinationism. Still other theologians find the doctrine philosophically untenable. Eschewing the patristic doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son has resulted in a search for a more biblical and more philosophically responsible way to ground the oneness and threeness of God. When the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is ignored the Father/Son terms are often understood to simply imply the “equality” of the Father and Son and any eternal relational between the two is ignored. This has highly important ramifications on the meaning of the Creed of Nicaea (325) and the Nicene Creed (381). The doctrine of eternal generation plays an essential part in understanding these ecumenical creeds. Carson (2012:80) notes the danger of relying on confessional formulas while no longer being able to explain in some detail how they emerged from reflection on what the Bible actually says. This research study hopes to remedy this situation as it concerns the doctrine of eternal generation. By plumbing the depths of the doctrine of eternal generation and grasping its importance, I hope to make the doctrine understandable in my area of influence.

I will examine how the church father Basil of Caesarea understood and taught the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. I chose Basil due to his unquestionable impact during the crucial time period of 360-381 AD. It was during this time that it became official orthodoxy to proclaim the essential Godhead as belonging equally and eternally to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Basil's contributions are vital to this now universal orthodox view. Although Basil is usually noted for his treatise *On the Holy Spirit*, as well as his ascetic/monastic writings, I have chosen to focus on Basil's Trinitarian theology. Basil's Trinitarian theology has been given relatively little attention (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:4). Paul John Fedwick's 1981 symposium in honor of Basil is a notable exception. The symposium brought together several noted scholars who presented papers which

remain of lasting value. Volker Drecoll's 1996 dissertation, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea* and Stephen Hildebrand's 2007 monograph, *The Trinitarian Theology of Basil of Caesarea*, represents two important contemporary exceptions to the dearth on Basilian Trinitarian theology. Leading the way in current Basilian scholarship are scholars Mark DelCogliano, Susan Holman, Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, Stephen Hildebrand, and Lewis Ayres. Their work represents a much needed assessment of Basil's theology. In addition, John Behr also gave Basil's Trinitarian theology a thorough treatment in his important book, *The Nicene Faith*. Up until recently, scholarship on Basil's Trinitarian thought has been wanting due, in part, to the fact that several of Basil's treatises and homilies have long remained untranslated. This has kept many Christians outside of academia unfamiliar with Basil. Luckily, since the turn of the century many of his writings have been translated into English for the very first time. We now stand at a juncture in which we have access to Basil's writings and detailed scholarship on his life and theology. We are now at a place to properly understand Basil's teaching on the eternal generation of the Son. In order to do this one has to delve into his Trinitarian theology. How does he understand the terms 'Father' and 'Son'? How does Basil understand and articulate the oneness and distinction between Father and Son? Is Basil's account of eternal generation simply a doctrine filled with Greek metaphysical and philosophical terms, or does it have biblical / theological justification? These important questions will be addressed in the chapters ahead.

### **1.1.1 Introduction to the Trinitarian Debates of the Fourth Century**

In order to appropriate the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in Basil's Trinitarian writing, a short introduction is in order. A review of the origins of the doctrine of the Trinity from the Apostles to the Apologists to the early Greek and Latin Fathers is unnecessary and would take us far beyond the scope of an introduction. We can restrict ourselves here to an overview of the fourth century Trinitarian debates, though we need to be mindful not to fully neglect history prior and posterior to the fourth century (cf. Behr 2004:35). As I will document in chapter two, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son started with Origen. It was his (modified) doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son which was the focus of the fourth century debates (Ayres 2004:3). It is also the focus of this paper. The debates about the generation of the Son forced Christians to thoroughly think about the origins of the Son from the Father. Scripture mentions a "Father," a "Son," and a "begetting" (e.g. Psalm 2; John 3.16). The debates pressed

churchmen on all sides to answer how the Father and Son stood in relation to each other and what that relation entailed for the Son. Lewis Ayres (2004:4f) says,

“[O]ne link between many participants supposedly on different sides was an insistence that one must speak of the Son’s incomprehensible generation from the Father as a sharing of the Father’s very being. Expressions of this position were initially varied, seemingly contradictory, and often highly metaphorical. For some the position entailed recognizing the coeternity of the Son, for many it did not. Nevertheless, because of this continuity, and over the course of the controversies, an account that was both more precise and which could draw together many who had though themselves opposed gradually emerged.”

Answers on how to understand the Son’s generation and his relation to the Father were essential for they have direct implications on soteriology and Christology. The focus of this paper, Basil of Caesarea (329-379AD), found himself born into the middle of the Trinitarian controversies of the fourth century. As a Christian and as a bishop, Basil was confronted with the question on how to understand the Son’s ineffable generation from the Father. The following account below will provide a brief sketch<sup>3</sup> of the main events and theological trajectories which influenced the church and Christian theology up until we encounter Basil and his first writings on the Father-Son relationship.

We will start the story around 318 AD with Arius<sup>4</sup> and Alexander in Alexandria, Egypt. Arius was a presbyter and Alexander the bishop of the Alexandrian church. They were in disagreement over the nature of God and more concretely, the Son’s relationship to the Father. Arius believed that the Father alone was God for he alone is simple and immutable (Ayres 2004:54). Additionally, Arius was adamant to defend “the idea of God as the ingenerate first principle, above all limitations and absolutely free” (Widdicombe 1994:138). Arius’s presuppositions of the being of God led him to deny the Son’s eternal generation from the Father (:128) for the Son’s eternal generation would be tantamount to maintaining that there are two ingenerate realities (:141). Arius maintained that there was a time when the Son did not exist. In this respect, the Son is regarded as a creature. This is

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<sup>3</sup> For fuller assessments of the fourth century controversies see Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*; Behr, *The Nicene Faith*; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung der Trinitätslehre des Basilius von Cäsarea*; and Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*.

<sup>4</sup> For possible predecessors to the views/theology of Arius see Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 37-59; Hanson, *The Search*, p.60ff.

accentuated by Arius's claim that the Son comes from the will of the Father (Widdicombe :128). I will explore in the next chapter that to consider the Son to be from the Father's will necessitates that he be considered as a temporal creation of the Father. Finally, because Arius believes that God (the Father) is, above all, ingenerate and unconstrained, he posits that the Father and Son must be of essentially different properties (:143). They could never be described as *homoousios*.

Alexander, following Origen, believed that the Father has always been a Father (Widdicombe 1994:132). Therefore, the names "Father" and "Son" are understood to be eternal correlates. These presuppositions lead Alexander to believe that the Son's generation from the Father is eternal. By way of the eternal generation of the Son, Alexander "demonstrate[d] the Son's inalienable and natural (not adoptive) Sonship" (Hanson 1988:141). It is important to note that Alexander understood the Son as having a mediating role but that this did not make him ontologically subordinate to the Father (Ayers 2004:44). Thus, we have observed that Arius and Alexander's disagreement centered on how to understand the eternal generation of the Son (Behr 2004:63; Young 2010:43). The wide acceptance of Arius's position in Syria and Asia Minor seems to point to Arius's defense of some traditional teaching and not some new heresy (Behr 2004:22). "It seems then that the controversy over Arius was the catalyst that brought two larger traditions of theology into conflict" (:31).

The disagreement between Arius and Alexander took on such large proportions that Emperor Constantine became involved in the situation. Constantine wrote a letter to Alexander and Arius asking them to put their differences aside. This intervention did not lead to a resolution. Therefore, Constantine invoked the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD. His personal influence on the council, other than holding the opening speech and giving his interpretation of the creed, is unknown. No account of the proceedings was made. Thus, not much is known about the happenings at the council. One result of the council was the exile of Arius. Another result was the Creed of Nicaea<sup>5</sup> containing the watchword *homoousios*. It has been documented that the Creed and *homoousios* did not play an especially important role in the conflict for years to come (Ayres 2004: 85, 96; Behr 2004:23).

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<sup>5</sup> On the creed, its formation and meaning see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 85-104; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 152-178; Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 205-230.

The Council of Nicaea was also a further “catalyst for conflict between pre-existing theological trajectories” (Ayres 2004:101).

Hanson (1988:179) rightly calls the period after the Nicene council the “Period of Confusion.” Differences between Eusebian theologies and rival theologies, mainly those developed by Marcellus and Eustathius, became major controversies in the eastern church. The Eusebians were a theologically diverse group with a general affinity to the theological positions of Eusebius of Nicodemia and Eusebius of Caesarea (Ayres 2004:52). The Eusebians broadly supported Arius’s views (:53). They believed the Father and Son to be distinct in substance, subordinated the Son to the Father, and were careful to speak about the generation of the Son so that God’s simplicity and immutability were upheld (:60). As did Arius, this group spoke of the Son as from the will of God. This guarded against materialistic sounding divisions in God. In addition, the Son as coming from the will of the Father stresses the Father as true God (ibid). They were averse to the teaching that the Son is coeternal, coequal, and fully divine based on his eternal generation from the Father. This put them in direct conflict with men such as Marcellus, Eustathius, and Athanasius, now bishop of Alexandria. The Eusebians also renounced the term *homoousios* for they understood the term to be inherently modalist. Instead, they preferred to speak of the two *ousiai* or *hypostases* in God (Behr 2004:73). In contradistinction to Arius, Eusebius of Caesarea stressed the revelatory ability of the Son. Though Father and Son are distinct in substance, the Son mirrors the Father’s incomposite unity (Ayres 2004:59). In 337, Constantine died and his three sons divided the empire among themselves and reversed some of the ecclesiastical decisions of their father. The Eusebians were able to take advantage of the political changes and secure the exile of Athanasius, Marcellus, and Eustathius in 339. Thus, this broad theological position became the norm for years to come.

The period lasting from approximately 340-350 AD was a period of councils and creeds. The most important creed was “The Dedication Creed” penned at the Council of Antioch in 341.<sup>6</sup> Hanson (1988:288), following Schwartz, calls it an “Origenist creed,” although the theology of Asterius and Eusebius of Caesarea is also decipherable (Ayres 2004:120). The creed is anti-Sabellian and anti-Marcellan (anti-modalist) (Ayres 2004:119; Hanson 1988:287). The names of the

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<sup>6</sup> For the full text and explanation of its significance see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 118ff; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 285ff

Three describe their order and glory. At this time almost everyone in the East would have agreed that there is subordination within the Trinity (Hanson 1988:287). Additionally, the Dedication Creed left out some of the most important words and phrases of the Creed of Nicaea such as *homoousios* and “from the substance of the Father.” The Dedication Creed was likely meant to replace the Creed of Nicaea (Hanson 1988:290), and it became the basis for all other creeds for nearly fifteen years (:292). Acceptance and implementation of the Dedication Creed was even important around 360, when it was referenced to by Hilary of Poitiers (Ayres 2004:121).

The council of Sirmium in 351 set the trend for a series of councils in which co-Emperor Constantius “attempted to get...some sort of theological statement accepted throughout the west” (Ayres :135). Constantius seems to have desired a basic theological formulation that would bring as many parties as possible into agreement. The creed from Sirmium subordinated the Son to the Father and expressed wariness over the term *ousia* (Behr 2004:84). These two trends carried on for the next decade.

In 353, Constantius gained complete control of the empire. He became more involved in ecclesiastical concerns to ensure unity (Behr 2004:84). “The policies Constantius now pursued in the west were, in part, responsible for the emergence of a clearer theological conflict and—by the end of the decade—for pulling together many of those who together shaped what would come to be recognized as ‘Nicene’ orthodoxy during the early 380’s” (Ayres 2004:133).

In 357, a council in Sirmium produced another important creed which was referred to by its opponents as: “The Blasphemy of Sirmium”. The creed attacked the Creed of Nicaea and was openly Arian in that it was “drastic, consistent, and determined [in its] subordination of the Son to the Father, in its insistence on the unique status of the Father, in its explicit rejection of the concept of substance...and in its careful account of how the Son did the suffering, by means of his body” (Hanson 1988:346). This creed was a manifesto that enabled everybody to see where they stood (:347). The creed resulted in the emergence of the Homoian theology. This group was united in resisting any theology that saw a commonality of essence between Father and Son (Ayres 2004:138). Furthermore, Homoians rejected all *ousia* language, and spoke about the Father and Son as simply “like” (Drecolll 1996:8). They also subordinated the Son to the Father (Ayres 2004:150). Other than these general guidelines, the writings of this group do not

present any particular dogmatic positions (Drecolll 1996:9). The Homoian position is described as one of compromise (ibid). Ayres (:139) points out that “with the emergence of Homoian theology the stage is set for the emergence of the groups who were to develop the solution to the controversies as a whole.”

Out of the Homoian alliance, developed a group which posited a “Heteroousian” theology. This group was led by Aetius and Eunomius. Heteroousian theology claimed that the Father and Son are unlike in essence (*heteroousia*). They saw the Son as subordinated to the Father in essence and will. Additionally, as Arius had done, they spoke of the Son as “something created.” I will deal extensively with Heteroousian theology in chapter three.

Another group that developed in response to the Homoians is the Homoiousians. This group is often referred to as “Semi-Arians.”<sup>7</sup> This moniker has been dropped in recent scholarship for it is a misrepresentation of the theological position of several loosely associated churchmen. The main figure of this group was Basil of Ancyra. This group saw itself as a middle party between Marcellus, who was often seen as a modalist, and the Heteroousians (Drecolll 1996:6). This group believed that the generation of the Son made him “like according to essence.” They stressed the personal existence of the Son (contra Marcellus), held that ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ do not reveal the essences (contra Heteroousians), but they taught that essence language is still necessary (contra Homoians). For this party, generation of the Son means that the Son shares in the existence of the Father (Ayres 2004:152) and is similar in substance (*homoiousios*) to the Father. They preferred “similar in substance” to “same in substance” (*homoousios*) in order to preserve the distinction between Father and Son (Behr 2004:89). Therefore, they saw their position as safeguarded against modalism. Their basic tenets would allow the Son to be esteemed as equal with the Father, though it is not certain if everyone in this party held such a view (cf. Drecolll 1996:6f).

At the council of Sirmium in 358, Constantius, persuaded by Basil of Ancyra, condemned the Homoian party (Hanson 1988:357). This led to a brief ascendancy of Basil of Ancyra and the Homoiousian party. Constantius likely did this as he viewed the Homoiousian position as capable of reconciling the varying theological groups (:362). They drafted the “Dated Creed” which is so named because it is clearly dated to May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 359. The creed spoke of the Son as like the Father

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<sup>7</sup> Hanson (1988:348ff) provides a brief overview of Homoiousian theology.

“according to the Scriptures.” Hanson (1988:364) calls it a “careful compromise which would be acceptable both to the Homoian...centre party...and the Homoiousians.” The creed would likely have been rejected by any Heteroousians as it did not radically subordinate the Son to the Father. The creed also made no reference to *homoousios* and even forbade substance (*ousia*) language. Thus, this creed also distanced itself from the group headed by Athanasius.

In 359, two councils met simultaneously, one at Seleucia and the other at Ariminum. The western council at Ariminum, after an extended time and imperial pressure from Constantius, accepted the Dated Creed. The eastern council was divided between the Homoian party, led by Acacius and Eudoxius, and the majority of participants who stood by Basil of Ancyra. In the end, the Homoians, with the help of Emperor Constantius, out-maneuvered the Homoiousian party by getting them to agree to a modified version of the Dated Creed (Ayres 2004:164; DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:31). In the modified version, the Son is very broadly understood to be “like [the Father] as the holy Scriptures teach” (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:31). This creed left out an important phrase that the Father and Son are “like in all respects,” which could include the divine *ousia*. Thus, this creed excluded a possible Homoiousian interpretation. Now the Homoian position received the backing of Constantius (*ibid*).

In 360, a council convened by Constantius and presided by Acacius managed to get Basil of Ancyra, among other Homoiousians, deposed. Furthermore, it adopted a Homoian creed in which all *ousia* language was rejected. Basil of Caesarea attended this council either with his bishop, Dianius of Caesarea, or his mentor, Eustathius of Sebasteia (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:31). Basil, who likely moved about in circles sympathetic to Homoiousian theology, was able to leave quietly. At this time, Basil had no major position in a church and was no target of the Homoians. It was also at this council that Eunomius likely delivered his speech that would be issued as his *Apology* (*ibid*). This will be discussed more in chapter three. Ayres (2004:165) says, “[T]his creed remained the imperially sanctioned statement of orthodoxy for almost two decades (especially clearly in the east).” The creed met wide resistance but, positively, it led to clear thinking about the issues that divided each party (*ibid*).

In November of 361, Constantius died. Julian, known as the Apostate, became emperor. He oppressed the church and tried to revive pagan practices. It was under Julian that the Heteroousian movement thrived (DelCogliano/Radde-

Gallwitz 2011:33). Julian's reign did not last long for he died in June of 363. After a short reign by Jovian, Valentinian and his brother Valens became joint emperors.

Despite Emperor Valens attempts in the east to support the Homoian position, the 360's saw an increasing number of theologians willing to adopt Nicaea as the creedal standard (Ayres 2004:167). Important to this development was Athanasius's use of the Creed of Nicaea as common grounds to those addressed in his *Antiochene Tome*. Athanasius accepts that not all "who teach that there are three *hypostases* imply three hierarchically ranked beings, of which only one is true God" (:174). Moreover, Athanasius accepts those who speak of only one *hypostasis* as long as it is meant "to indicate that the divine is one reality distinct from the created order and not indicating a belief that the Son and Spirit are not truly existent realities (ibid). It is not important whether three *hypostases* or one *hypostasis* is used. What is important is that unity and division among Father, Son, and Spirit is accepted. It is in this Tome that "[f]or the time we have considered a text that offers the logic of unity at one 'level' and distinction at another as the context within which to understand the Son's generation" (:175). The "logic of unity at one level and distinction at another" will become a crucial thought in the debates of the 360's and 370's. Unity and distinction in the Godhead will provide an invaluable argument to Pro-Nicenes, like Basil, to claim that the Father and Son are both indelibly one in substance (*ousia*) and differentiated in person (*hypostasis*).

This brings us to Basil of Caesarea. He is often portrayed in two ways. One, Basil is said to have received a uniform (orthodox) position stemming from the Council of Nicaea and mediated through Athanasius after "converting" to the Nicene Faith from the Homoiousian camp. Two, following Adolf von Harnack, Basil is portrayed as rejecting Athanasius's position and remained trenchantly within the Homoiousian camp (DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz 2011:64f). These positions are no longer tenable as DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (:63ff) and Ayres (2004:188ff) have expertly argued. Basil is, as Ayres (2004:189) says, "[A] thinker in constant development." No doubt Basil openly favors Homoiousian language by speaking of the Father and Son as "like in substance" in his letter to Apollinarius, penned around 360 AD. But this is due to his inability to properly understand the meaning of *homoousios* as it pertains to the substance of the Father and Son. He certainly is not hostile to the term *homoousios*. As Basil develops in his understanding, it becomes clear to him by the late 360's to early 370's that support of the Creed of Nicaea and *homoousios* is imperative. After accepting *homoousios*

as the best term available, he does not disallow *homoiousios* if it is paired with “invariably”. In opposition to Eusebians, Heteroousians, or Homoians, Basil always stressed the indelible oneness of Father and Son and, thus, the ontological equality of both. This was of prime importance and not individual terms. Basil was indeed instrumental in clarifying the meanings of *homoousios*, *ousia*, *hypostasis* and *prosopon*, in order to refer to what was plural or unified in God. His usage and application of these terms remained flexible throughout his life. The intended meaning of a term was of much more importance than the term itself. Basil’s main concern was that both plurality and oneness in God was expressed in order to avoid modalism, tritheism, or subordinationism. This is what Basil understood the Creed of Nicaea to teach about the Father and Son. His theology was refined as he drew upon and modified Origen, Athanasius, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the Homoiousian tradition (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:60ff). His philosophical influences in this endeavor are broad and notably hard to pin down due to his eclectic use and heavy modifications (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:67ff). Central to Basil’s understanding and explication of the Creed of Nicaea and any individual term is the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. His understanding and exposition of the doctrine will be the focus starting in chapter two.

The account above should suffice to show Basil’s place in the Trinitarian disputes of the fourth century. Each successive chapter will give more historical background in which each individual treatise, letter, and homily was written. The account above also gave an overview of the different theological traditions and trajectories which were competition with one another as Basil rose to prominence. Basil’s engagement with the various theological traditions will be addressed more thoroughly in the following chapters.

## **1.2 Rationale for the Research Study**

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith. Central to the doctrine of the Trinity is the eternal generation of the Son. Both the Old and New Testament speak of a “Father” and a “Son.” What is more interesting though is that both testaments speak of a Father-Son relationship in terms of God begetting, or having begot, a Son (e.g. Psalm 2.7; John 3.14, 16). How are we Christians to understand this? From as early as Justin Martyr, Christians have spoken of the generation of the Son. How we conceive of the Son’s generation from the Father reveals whether we hold to modalism, tritheism,

or orthodox Christianity. The topic of eternal generation is fundamental to our ontological and economical Trinitarian understanding. Furthermore, the Person of Jesus Christ, who he is and what he did, is also tied up into our understanding of his “sonship.” Our Christology and Soteriology cannot help but be refined when we but superficially probe into the outworking on how to understand the Father/Son language in scripture.

As mentioned briefly in the Introduction, I think the “average” evangelical Christian suffers from his or her lack of Trinitarian understanding. After listening to how the Christian faith is taught and articulated at the popular level in both North American and central European evangelical churches, my opinion is that many Christians suffer from their lack of Trinitarian understanding by exhibiting a modalist view of God (cf. Letham 2007:238). They clearly believe in the One God scripture puts forth. Regrettably, there is often no reflection on how the Son or the Holy Spirit has a *rightful claim* to deity. As Keith E. Johnson (2011:162) states:

Much evangelical Trinitarianism can be reduced to three points (1) there is one God; (2) God exists in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and (3) each of the divine persons is God... Evangelicals simply assert these points without explaining how Scripture holds these three realities together (i.e., eternal relations).

The current Evangelical mainstream teaching that God is a co-equal, co-eternal, one-substance Trinity, and that Jesus Christ is God was borne from the ancient doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Alas, most Evangelicals have no idea how to appropriate this doctrine in theology or the Christian life. In chapter two, I will explore the beginnings of the doctrine up until our subject at hand, Basil of Caesarea. We will see that there was widespread belief in one God and a subordinate Son even when Basil’s earliest writings appear in circa 360 AD. As early as Alexander of Alexandria, the Son was being raised to co-equal status with the Father due to his eternal generation from the Father’s substance. Carson (2012:80) notes that the eternal generation became the norm and standard to refrain from multiple gods, in order to differentiate Christian theology from other religions.

### **1.3 Research Problem**

The research problem revolves around gauging the importance of the doctrine of the eternal generation for Basil’s understanding of the Father-Son language in

scripture and his Trinitarian theology as a whole. Several sub-problems must necessarily be addressed:

- How does Basil understand the terms 'Father' and 'Son'?
- How did Basil of Caesarea come to understand the Father/Son language as an eternal generation from scripture?
- How does the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son fit in to all of his Trinitarian theology, especially, his articulation of the oneness and threeness of God?
- How did Basil of Caesarea understand, illustrate, and teach about the eternal generation? What aspects of the doctrine could be traced back to Origen? Did Basil make any novel modifications of the doctrine?
- Is Basil of Caesarea's account of eternal generation simply a doctrine filled with Greek metaphysical and philosophical terms, or does it have biblical and theological justification?
- Is the tendency in contemporary theology to view the Father/Son language as merely gesturing toward their "equality" and not addressing the nature of their eternal relation a wise move?

Although scripture and Greek *paideia* are necessary to understand Basil's Trinitarian theology (Hildebrand 2007:9ff), I will give preeminent space to the role of scripture as it is used by Basil to form, explain, and defend the doctrine of the eternal generation. Basil's philosophical and cultural influences will be addressed but to a lesser extent than the role of scripture.

It is the thesis, or intention, of the research to illustrate whether or not the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is the essential doctrine for Basil of Caesarea's explication of the Father-Son language in scripture and indispensable to his Trinitarian theology as a whole.

The result of this research should be a prolonged and deepened reflection of what it means to speak of the eternal generation of the Son especially as it is articulated by Basil of Caesarea. This in turn should lead to a biblically sound conceptualization of the Father-Son relationship in which there is a unity of substance and difference of Persons.

#### **1.4 Aims of Research**

The aims of this research study circulate around the following research aims which are generated by the research problems and questions above:

**Aim 1:** To gauge the importance of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from a historical, philosophical, and theological perspective by giving an overview of the development of the doctrine from its beginnings with Origen to Basil of Caesarea.

**Aim 2:** To illustrate how the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is connected to Basil of Caesarea's explanation of the Father/Son language in scripture.

**Aim 3:** To be able to articulate how Basil understood and taught the eternal generation of the Son.

**Aim 4:** To respond to the important contemporary evangelical question if Basil's attestation to the eternal generation of the Son does indeed have scriptural warrant.

## **1.5 Research Design/Methodology**

In this research study, I have made use of the qualitative research design to conduct this research project. I have used a literature study by way of a document analysis mainly focused on Basil of Caesarea's exegetical and dogmatic works which specifically express his views of the Father-Son relationship and/or Trinity. This method will allow me to observe and understand how Basil of Caesarea understood and interpreted both the Father/Son language and the Father-Son relationship<sup>8</sup> as it relates to the doctrine of eternal generation. A synopsis of how the methods were used is now discussed.

### **1.5.1 Literature Study**

A literature study will be conducted to enhance insight into the field of study and the findings of other researchers on the topic. It will enable me to pinpoint the subject of research, namely an investigation into "the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in the Trinitarian theology of Basil of Caesarea."

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<sup>8</sup> In this paper, I will differentiate between the Father/Son language in scripture and the Father-Son relationship. I define the *Father/Son language in scripture* as "The human words God used to express the differentiation and oneness of the first two Persons of the Godhead. This relationship and these words (Father / Son) are grounded on the authority of Jesus, who used this language." I define the *Father-Son relationship* as "The aspect of the eternalness of their relation or, if I may, expressing the eternal generation of the Son. That of course was also made known by revelation, although less direct and less often than the Father/Son language." I would further understand that the Father/Son language in scripture is revelation that makes possible and grounds our human apprehension of the Father-Son relationship.

An intensive review of literature related to the topic will be conducted. Primary and secondary sources include books, professional journals in Systematic Theology, Church Fathers' documents, and Church history will be thoroughly studied and engaged around the topic of the study. The dialogue Search at the University Library will be conducted, using the following descriptors: Father (*patros*), Son (*huios*), begotten or only Son (*monogenēs*), the only [Son] from the Father (*monogenous para patros*), his only Son (*uion autou ton monogenē*), only Son of God (*tou monogenous uiou tou theou*), generation, eternal generation.

### **1.5.2 Document Analysis**

Letters and documents from several church fathers and councils will be analyzed to find out the key issues in relation to the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son. I will give primary attention to Basil's corpus and his use of Scripture and, in passing, note philosophical influences upon him. Basil, as with many church fathers, is often characterized as simply importing Greek philosophy into biblical theology. As I have read Basil, I am surprised at the amount of biblical quotations and uses of Scripture, he employs and how Scripture imbues his writings. There is surely quite a difference in his hermeneutical and exegetical assumptions which will tend to puzzle the modern reader. These could account for the difference with the modern readers' understanding of certain texts than with an over-simplified charge of importing Greek philosophy or employing "sub-par" exegetical methods.

### **1.6 Demarcation**

I will focus on Basil of Caesarea and his understanding of the Father/Son language in scripture as found in his exegetical and dogmatic works on the Father and Son and the Trinity. I will generally leave aside his comments on the Person and deity of the Holy Spirit, though the Spirit's relationship to the Father and Son is inextricably bound up with this doctrine. Attention will necessarily be given to his Trinitarian theology as I discuss the impact of the doctrine of the eternal generation on it.

### **1.7 Overview of Content**

Chapter one includes a general introduction to the Trinitarian disputes of the fourth century and the topic of the eternal generation of the Son in regards to Basil of Caesarea. This chapter also includes my research problem, dissertation statement, and aims of research. The demarcation of my investigation, important

literature, a short word discussing methodology, and the relevancy for today is also discussed.

Chapter two will give an introduction to the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son providing a brief overview of the development of the doctrine from Justin Martyr to Origen and from Origen to Basil. This chapter will show how talk of the Son's generation developed into the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. Origen's philosophical and theological conception of the doctrine stands in focus. Secondly, I will trace the doctrine's development by Alexander of Alexandria and Athanasius through Basil. Basil's doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son will be discussed primarily focusing on his appropriation of the doctrine from his predecessors as well as his noting his own novel modifications.

Chapter three is on the eternal generation of the Son in Basil's *Against Eunomius*. This chapter receives the most attention in this dissertation for in it Basil addresses the eternal generation in more detail than anywhere else in his corpus. Basil's treatise, likely written between 364/365, is a polemical rebuttal of Eunomius and his Heterousian theology which denied the Son's likeness to the Father. Central to Basil's argument is that the Son's generation from the Father reveals him to be like the Father in substance as well as in possession of full and complete deity. This letter reveals Basil's understanding of the Son's eternal generation from the Father which, for the most part, remains unchanged until his death in 379/80.

Chapter four focuses on analyzing Basil's understanding of the Son's eternal generation from the Father in his *On the Holy Spirit*. This letter was written between 373 and 375 by Basil in order to answer questions put to him by his friend and fellow bishop, Amphilochius of Iconium (*Spir.*:27). Basil's letter to Amphilochius revolves around his doxology in which he "render[s] the glory due to God in both ways, namely, to the Father, with the Son together with the Holy Spirit, and to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit" (*Spir.*:29). Basil's doxology was the crux of a dispute (cf. Behr 2004:305, Drecoll 1996:337, Kelly 1960:342) which caused his opponents to accuse him of introducing "foreign and contradictory words" (*Spir.*:30) and confessing three gods (Hildebrand 2011:23). In this letter, Basil stays true to his views on the generation of the Son as expressed in *Against Eunomius*. Basil advances on the generation of the Son by connection the spiritation of the Spirit with it.

Chapter five is an examination of Basil's doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in his dogmatic letters. Basil's dogmatic letters, or epistles, include 9, 52, 125,

214, 233-236, 361, and 362. Of primary importance is Basil's distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis* which he regarded as synonyms in *Against Eunomius*. This distinction allowed him to speak of the Fatherhood of the Father and the Sonship of the Son as the hypostatical difference between the two. The distinguished *hypostasis* of Father and Son is due to the Father eternally begetting the Son.

In Chapter six, I analyze Basil's understanding of the eternal generation of the Son as contained in his dogmatic homilies. These homilies include: Homily 15-Homily on Faith (*Fide*), Homily 16-Homily on the Beginning of the Gospel of John (*Verb*), Homily 24-Homily against Sabellians, Anomoians, Pneumatichians (*Sab*), Homily 27-Homily on the Holy Birth of Christ (*Chr*), and Homily 29-Homily on Not Three Gods (*Trin*). These homilies are sometimes referred to as dogmatic homilies (Hildebrand 2007:194n9) or moral homilies (DelCogliano 2012:21). Next to *Against Eunomius*, Basil's homilies are the most important part of Basil's corpus when studying his doctrine of the eternal generation. Basil understands the eternal generation of the Son as the middle road between the extremes of modalism and tritheism. The doctrine of eternal generation explains how it is that God is truly one in substance and indelibly distinct as Father and Son (and Spirit).

Chapter seven summarizes the findings, gives an overview of the conclusions, examines contributions of the research paper, and gives some impulses for further research. In doing so, the research questions are answered and the aims of the research will be shown to have been met. The thesis of the dissertation, which seeks to answer whether or not the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is vital to Basil's understanding of the Father-Son language in scripture and his Trinitarian theology, will be answered.

## 2. CHAPTER 2: A BRIEF HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE SON'S ETERNAL GENERATION FROM ORIGEN TO BASIL

### 2.1 The Birth of a Doctrine

The language of begetting to describe the Son's or Logos's relation to the Father has a long and well-documented history. This history stretches all the way back to Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165).<sup>9</sup> Justin spoke of the begetting of the Son and used generative language when he spoke of the Son's relation to the Father.<sup>10</sup> The tradition of begetting language also appears in the writings of Irenaeus (130-200).<sup>11</sup> However, it is Origen (185-254) who most scholars cite as the first to speak about, and systematically teach, an 'eternal generation of the Son'.<sup>12</sup> In this

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9 The history of using "begetting language" to describe the way in which the Son is from the Father could possibly be traced back to the Apostle John. This view, however, depends on the interpretation one gives to the term *monogenēs* (only-begotten or unique/only) and the verses in which this word appears (John 1.14, 18; 3.16, 18; 1 John 4.9) For an overview of the interpretation of *monogenēs* see Kevin Giles, 2012, *The Eternal Generation of the Son*, IVP Academic, pp. 64-71.

10 Giles, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 93-95; Jackson Jay Lashier. 2011. The Trinitarian Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons. *Dissertations* (2009 -). Paper 109, especially pp. 121-28; J.N.D Kelly, 1978 (2nd Edition), *Early Christian Doctrine*, HarperOne, pp. 96-98; Beckwith, Clarence Augustine. *The new Schaff-Herzog encyclopedia of religious knowledge: Embracing Biblical, historical, doctrinal, and practical theology and Biblical, theological, and ecclesiastical biography from the earliest times to the present day, Volume I-XII*. 1908-1914 (S. M. Jackson, Ed.) Vol. 3 pp. 51–52. New York; London: Funk & Wagnalls. Logos Bible Software. Whether or not Justin held to an eternal generation of the Son is debatable. See Edmund J. Fortmann, 1982 (1999 Reprint), *The Triune God. A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p. 45f, 50.

11 Robert Letham (2004:383) says, "Since Irenaeus, the church has held that the Father begat the Son in eternity." See also *ibid*, p. 102. For more on Irenaeus' views on the generation of the Son see Jackson Jay Lashier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Irenaeus of Lyons*, pp. 157-174. Lashier (2011:162) maintains, "The affirmation of the eternity of the Logos/Son in connection with his generation from the Father suggests that Irenaeus understood it to be an eternal generation in the manner explicitly formulated by Origen and which, subsequently, would become the basis for the early pro-Nicene arguments. Indeed, some past scholars have claimed as much. Nevertheless, while the logic would suggest such an understanding, Irenaeus never makes eternal generation explicit as do later writers." Fortman (1982:103f) is an example of a scholar who maintains that Irenaeus did not explicitly speak of the Son's generation.

12 Ronald E. Heine, 2013, *Classical Christian Doctrine. Introducing the Essentials of the Ancient Faith*. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, pp. 57-66; Giles, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 99-102; Stephen Holmes, 2012, *The Quest for the Trinity, The Doctrine of God in Scripture, History, and Modernity*. InterVarsity Press,

opening chapter, I will give a brief overview of several of the doctrine's most well-known early exponents. I will begin with Origen and end with Basil.<sup>13</sup> What we discover is that for Origen, and the later Nicene Fathers, the doctrine of eternal generation lies at the heart of their understanding of the Father-Son relation as recorded in scripture.

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Downers Grove, Illinois, pp. 74-80; Adolf Ritter, 2012, *Alte Kirche*. Band 1. *Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte in Quellen*. 10. Auflage. Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft mbH, Neukirchen-Vluyn, pp. 90-91; Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, 2009, *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford University Press Inc., New York, p. 80; *Anatolios, Khaled*. 2007. *Discourse on the Trinity*. In *Cambridge History of Christianity*, edited by Augustine Casiday and Frederick W. Norris, vol 2:429-459. Cambridge University Press., see p. 432f; Ayres 2004. *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth Century Trinitarian Theology*. Oxford University Press, pp. 20-30; G.W. Bromiley, 2001, Eternal Generation in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, Walter A. Elwell, editor. 2 Edition, p. 393f; Peter Widdicombe, 1994, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius*, Clarendon Press Oxford chps. 1-5 passim; Hans Lietzmann, 1949, *A History of the Early Church, Containing Volume III: From Constantine to Julian and Volume IV: The Era of the Church Fathers*. Bertram Lee Woolf (trans.), 1963 second impression of this edition. London Lutterworth Press, p. 110f. Thus, Origen, though not the originator, seems to be the first theologian to have systematically thought through and taught certain novel concepts as vital to the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. See the comments of Lashier (2011:121n55). The novel concepts stemming from Origen became essential for later fourth century theologians who promulgated the doctrine of divine genesis. The core of Origen's novel teaching on EG is: the Father is eternally Father, the Son is eternally Son, and thus the Son's existence from the essence of the Father is necessary and eternal resulting in the Son as a distinct *hypostasis* but not having a different *ousia* than the Father. (On the last point see Widdicombe 1994:86). Origen's declaration of the necessity and eternalness of the Son is explicit but in Justin Martyr and Irenaeus those affirmations remain an interpretation as Lashier (2011:161) remarks. I am in agreement with Giles, Lashier, and Letham that earlier Christian teachers, such as Justin Martyr or Irenaeus, are to be recognized as the predecessors of Origen on which he possibly built his understanding of the eternal begetting of the Son.

13 For a deeper look into the historical developments of the doctrine, I would recommend three books in particular: *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Widdicombe), *Nicaea and its Legacy* (Ayres), and *The Eternal Generation of the Son* (Giles).

## 2.2 Origen

In this section on Origen, I will discuss several important theological and philosophical underpinnings of his doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son.

Origen introduces his concept of the eternal generation of the Son in *De Principiis* I. 2. 2 (Widdicombe 1994:67).<sup>14</sup> Widdicombe (:2) adds, “Origen believed that the affirmation that God is Father lay at the heart of the Christian faith.” For Origen to speak of God as eternally 'Father' implied an eternal Son: “[T]he words Father and Son are the given terms of Christian tradition, that Father and Son are correlatives, and that the generation of the Son is eternal” (ibid). Origen's doctrine of eternal generation represents “a definitive rejection of the two fold stage theory of the pre-existent Logos” which is a Christology commonly attributed to the Apologists (Fortman 1982: 55).

Several aspects of Origen's doctrine of God were intimately intertwined with the doctrine of divine generation. “The generation of the Son must be timeless...for Origen the concept of eternity is integral to the logic of incorporeality and immutability”<sup>15</sup> (Widdicombe 1994:67). It was difficult for Origen, as for the Nicene fathers who followed him, to speak of a generative divine act in ways that do not imply temporality (:68). Despite the difficulties in speaking about God in non-temporal terms, “For Origen what is said of God must be eternally true” (:69). Thus, for him, since “Fatherhood is part of God's eternal nature” (ibid.) the Son, and his generation must be eternal (:70).<sup>16</sup> According to Widdicombe (:90), Origen pictures the eternal generation as “a dynamic relationship, characterized by continuous activity...the Son...is generated not momentarily but continuously...[For Origen, Proverbs 8.25] confirms that the generation of the Son is eternal and continuous. Corresponding to the Father's unceasing generation of the Son, the Son unceasingly turns towards the Father.” Stephen Holmes (2012:76) says, “Origen's images of the generation of the Son are dynamic, rather than static: this

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14 Widdicombe (1994:67n12) gives references to other writings of Origen where he discusses eternal generation.

15 Also of importance is the doctrine of divine simplicity. For the doctrine of divine simplicity in Origen see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 59-66.

16 JND Kelly (1978:100f) says, “Up until around the time of Origen prevailed the teaching that the generation of the Son wasn't necessary and “dated the generation of the Logos, and so His eligibility for the title 'Son', not from His origination within the being of the Godhead, but from His emission...for the purposes of creation, revelation, and redemption...their object was not so much to subordinate Him as to safeguard the monotheism which they considered indispensable.”

is something that is always happening<sup>17</sup> (if such language has any purchase on eternity).”

Louis Berkhof, in his *Systematic Theology*, is one twentieth century theologian who follows Origen in seeing the generation of the Son as continuous. He writes:

“If the generation of the Son is a necessary act of the Father, so that it is impossible to conceive of Him as not generating, it naturally shares in the eternity of the Father. This does not mean, however, that it is an act that was completed in the far distant past, but rather that it is a timeless act, the act of an eternal present, an act always continuing and yet ever completed. Its eternity follows not only from the eternity of God, but also from the divine immutability and from the true deity of the Son. In addition to this it can be inferred from all those passages of Scripture which teach either the pre-existence of the Son or His equality with the Father[.]”(Louis Berkhof quoted by D.A. Carson 2012:81f)

Kurt Dietrich Schmidt (1963:102) comments that Origen's reason for conceiving of the eternal generation as a timeless ongoing act is due to:

“Eine Zeugung oder Emanation des Logos in der Zeit wäre aber nun Anfang, also Veränderlichkeit. Origenes läßt die Schwierigkeit so, daß er in der Hervorbringung des Logos, des Sohnes, einen *ewigen* Prozeß sieht, ohne Anfang und Ende. Die philosophische Prämisse der Unveränderlichkeit Gottes erfordert also die ewige Gottgleichheit (Homousie) des Logos.”

Schmidt reasons that Origen teaches that the eternal ongoing generation to be a necessity due to Origen's doctrine of God's immutability. A beginning to the process of eternal generation is the later “Arian” position. “Arians” held that the Son had a beginning in time, is a creature, and does not possess full and complete deity in his essence. Due to the premise: A cessation implies a beginning,<sup>18</sup> an

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17 Letham (2004:103) sums up this aspect of EG in Origen as “It follows that the generation of the Son is continuous; the Father communicates his divinity to the Son at every moment.” As I will point out later, Basil does not follow Origen in understanding the eternal generation as the “Father communicating his divinity to the Son.” Later theologians who espouse eternal generation do not (all) follow Origen at this point either. To say the Father communicates divinity to the Son can imply that the Son is *made* divine instead of inherently possessing it himself in accordance with his nature.

18 *Eunomius, The Extant Works*, Vaggione (trans.) 1987, Oxford University Press, p. 63 note b. Eunomius is zealous to combat a doctrine of the generation of the Son that is without beginning and without end (ibid:63f) as that would make him eternal as the Unbegotten Father is. For more on the continual or perpetual

imagined end of the Son's eternal generation from the Father is rejected for it would run counter to the doctrine of divine immutability, it would negate the Son's true deity, as well as his oneness in substance (*homoousios*) with the Father.

A third distinctive element in Origen's doctrine of eternal generation is that the Son's generation was brought about by an act of the Father's will. The Nicene fathers, especially Athanasius and Basil, rejected this element in Origen's understanding of the eternal generation of the Son. For them to say that the Son was generated by the will of the Father is to imply he is a creature. Therefore, Athanasius and Basil considered the generation of the Son to be a necessary act of God<sup>19</sup> and not an act of His will. The Father is understood by Athanasius to be generative by nature (Widdicombe 1994:184ff). Thus, the generation of the Son can be thought of as natural, eternal, and necessary. If the eternal generation is from the will of God, as those who are often labeled "Arians"<sup>20</sup> claimed, it was taught that this necessarily implies that the Son is no longer fully and completely divine exactly as the Father is, because the Father "willed" him into existence.<sup>21</sup>

Berkhof, speaking about the necessity of eternal generation, says

"Origen, one of the very first to speak of the generation of the Son, regarded it as an act dependent on the Father's will and therefore free...But it was clearly seen by Athanasius and others that a generation dependent on the optional will of the Father would make the existence of the Son contingent and thus rob Him of His deity. Then the Son would not be equal to and homoousios with the

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generation of the Son see Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1910). *Vol. 3: History of the Christian church* (654–663). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, Logos Bible Software, p. 658f.

19 That the eternal generation as necessary does not impinge on God's freedom or sovereignty, see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, p. 184ff.

20 Arius is said to have taught the Son is from the Father's will which allowed Arius to subjugate the Son to the Father ontologically (cf. Widdicombe 1994:128, 144). Eunomius also taught the Son to be from the will of the Father. See *Eunomius, The Extant Works*, Vaggione (trans.), p. 63ff.

21 The argument is expressed in different terms when we come to Eunomius and Basil. For Eunomius "[T]he essence of God itself is both non-productive and unrelated to the willed activity of God: what he does is not related to or derived from, what he is." (Behr: 2004:80). Because Eunomius holds that the essence of God is "unrelated to the willed activity," it follows "The Son is the product of the will of God and is, therefore, as temporal as the activity that brought him into being: before being begotten or created he was not" (ibid). Basil does not juxtapose the essence and activities of God which Eunomius does, but Basil "does [develop] a distinction between the incomprehensible being and the comprehensible activity of God" (Meredith 1995:23). Furthermore, Basil places the eternal generation within the ineffable and undefinable essence of God, which as Behr (2004:288) says, "transcends the sum of all its activities" though his essence is not other than his activities.

Father, for the Father exists necessarily, and cannot be conceived of as non-existent. The generation of the Son must be regarded as a necessary and perfectly natural act of God. This does not mean that it is not related to the Father's will in any sense of the word. It is an act of the Father's necessary will, which merely means that His concomitant will takes perfect delight in it.”<sup>22</sup>  
(Louis Berkhof quoted by D.A. Carson 2012:81)

### **2.3 Alexander of Alexandria**

Origen undoubtedly left an indelible mark on the Alexandrian theological tradition. The next important figure that needs to be mentioned in this tradition is Bishop Alexander of Alexandria (d. 328). Widdicombe (1994:2) says “At points, the arguments and, indeed, the actual phrases that Alexander uses resemble those of Origen, suggesting the possibility that he drew directly on Origen's writings.” Like Origen, Alexander emphasizes the eternity of the Father and the Son. He speaks explicitly “of the eternity of the divine fatherhood and the co-eternity of the Father and Son.” (:129f).

Origen's argument of correlating the names Father and Son is taken over by Alexander. Alexander “stretches the argument...to include both the conception of the Son as the 'brightness' of the Father...and that of the Son as 'image' (εἰχὼν), which is unprecedented.” (Widdicombe 1994:133; cf. Drecoll 2011:93). Alexander also “takes the...eternal correlativity a step farther: if the Father is unknowable, so also the manner of origin and the hypostasis of the Son is beyond grasp of created minds; the Father alone knows the divine mystery of the Son's generation” (Widdicombe:134; cf. Lietzmann 1949:110f). The eternal generation of the Son is a divine mystery known only by the Father. This becomes an axiom in Basil's teaching on the eternal generation. Lietzmann (1949:111) mentions that Alexander modifies Origen's teaching on eternal generation in that “it omitted to subordinate the Son in the way which the great teacher had himself made perfectly clear. As a

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<sup>22</sup> Similarly: “The necessity thus asserted of the eternal generation does not, however, impair its freedom, but is intended only to deny its being arbitrary and accidental, and to secure its foundation in the essence of God himself. God, to be Father, must from eternity beget the Son, and so reproduce himself; yet he does this in obedience not to a foreign law, but to his own law and the impulse of his will. Athanasius, it is true, asserts on the one hand that God begets the Son not of his will, but by his nature, yet on the other hand he does not admit that God begets the Son without will, or of force or unconscious necessity. The generation, therefore, rightly understood, is an act at once of essence and of will. Augustine calls the Son “will of will.” In God freedom and necessity coincide.” Schaff, P., & Schaff, D. S. (1910). *Vol. 3: History of the Christian church (654–663)*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 660.

consequence, the indispensable safeguards of the system were set aside, and it now amounted to a complete ditheism. The Logos was now presented side by side with the Father as a second and entirely similar God.” All the Nicene fathers followed Alexander on this matter. Though Alexander attempted to banish the subordination of the Son, he held to a more Origen-like understanding that the Son is from the will of the Father (cf. Ayres 2004:46; Widdicombe 1994:134). Additionally, Alexander, like Origen, believed the Son “was generated by the Father and 'is always being generated'” (Fortman 1982:65).

Though more could be added, this brief account above will have to suffice to show that the doctrine of eternal generation passed from Origen to Alexander and that Alexander made some important and lasting modifications to the doctrine.<sup>23</sup>

## 2.4 Athanasius

The next Alexandrian theologian to fully endorse the doctrine of eternal generation was Alexander's successor, Athanasius (296-373).

Widdicombe (1994:159) says, “The word Father in Athanasius' theology is...the word that indicates that the divine being exists first as the relation of Father and Son...Discussions about God as Father arise mainly in relation to his arguments for the eternal generation of the Son and the Son's divinity.” Volker Drecoll (2011:100) says that for Athanasius “Seine Zeugung ist also nicht als eine zeitliche Hervorbringung zu verstehen, auch nicht als Aufteilung des göttlichen Wesens oder als permanente Emanation, sondern als direkte Weitergabe des göttlichen Wesens ohne zeitlichen oder räumlichen Abstand.” As Giles (2012:106) points out, Athanasius teaches that in the generation of the Son nothing external to God is produced<sup>24</sup> for it is something that takes place within the eternal life of God. Thus, we see that Athanasius believed the Father to be generative by nature (cf. Widdicombe 1994:184ff; Fortman 1982:73). This premise requires the generation

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23 For more on Alexander and eternal generation see Mark DelCogliano, 2010, *Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, Brill, pp. 115-18; Anatolios, *Discourse on the Trinity*, p. 433; Ayres, *Nicaea*, p. 16; Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, ch 7; Johannes Quasten, 1983 (Reprint). *Patrology. Volume III. The Golden Age of Greek Patristic Literature. From the Council of Nicaea to the Council of Chalcedon*. Christian Classics, Allen, Texas, pp. 18-19; Lietzmann, *A History of the Church*, vol. 3, p. 110f. For those in between Origen and Alexander who also taught the doctrine of eternal generation see Widdicombe, *Fatherhood*, ch. 6.

24 For more on Athanasius' explication of eternal generation see also, Giles, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 104-118 and Mark Weedman, 2007, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers*, Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae, pp. 147ff, 192-194; Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, chps. 9 and 10; Fortman, *The Triune God*, p. 73f

of the Son to be understood as an eternal and necessary act of God. In contrast to Origen, as well as the “Arians,” Athanasius does not teach that the Son proceeded from the Father's will.<sup>25</sup> Athanasius does not appear to have addressed the topic of the eternal generation as a continuous and active act.

## 2.5 Eternal Generation in the Creed of Nicaea (325)

Lastly, I mention the Creed of Nicaea of 325. I do this mainly to show that the doctrine of eternal generation was not confined to the school or bishops of Alexandria.<sup>26</sup> Due to his systematic and exegetical brilliance (while not denying certain teachings of his have been rightfully rejected), Origen's teachings, including the eternal generation of the Son, had been disseminated throughout the Eastern Church.<sup>27</sup> The doctrine of the eternal generation was *the* theological crux which united or divided the different theologians and theological camps throughout the fourth century. Due to its importance, it was enshrined in the Nicene Creed.<sup>28</sup>

Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ the creed reads,

“We believe...in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *begotten* from the Father, *only-begotten*, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, *begotten* not made, of one substance with the Father”<sup>29</sup> (Emphasis ZF).

On this passage, Giles (2012:119) says,

“Like bookends this clause speaks of the 'begetting' of the Son at both its beginning and end, making it plain how important this matter was for the bishops at Nicaea. This begetting is defined as 'from the being of the Father'

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25 For an example see *Against the Arians*, Discourse III, chapter xxx. Archibald Robertson (trans.), 1891. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 2 Series. Volume 4. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters.*

26 As is well known, the council of Nicaea was mostly comprised of eastern bishops, but the eastern bishops themselves represented several different theological streams. For an example of the doctrine's influence on a “western” theologian see Hilary of Poitiers understanding, use, and defense of eternal generation in Weedman, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hilary of Poitiers*, chps. 3, 6, and 8.

27 Though the doctrine of eternal generation was not confined to Alexandria Weedman notes “The doctrines of 'name' and 'birth' that Hilary appropriates in *De Trinitate* 7 belong to a tradition of Trinitarian thought that existed exclusively in the East.” (2007:144).

28 For justification of this claim see my chapter on *Against Eunomius*.

29 Translation taken from J. N. D Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, p. 215.

and not a creative act (the Son is 'not made'). The word 'eternal' is not used, as it is in the 381 edition, but it is implied.”

Giles's quote above reveals that the Son's begetting is not explicitly spoken of as “eternal” in the Creed of Nicaea composed in 325 AD. But as Lewis Ayres (2004:3) notes, the controversies in the fourth century focused primarily on debates about how to understand the generation of the Word, or Son, from the Father. The Creed of Nicaea of 325 states that the Son is uniquely begotten from the eternal being of the Father so that he is regarded as “true God from true God,” “not created,” and “of one substance” (*homoousios*) with the Father. Additionally, the anathemas of the Creed of Nicaea rejected the claims that “there was [a time] when He was not” and “before being born He was not”. Taken together, these statements clearly imply that the bishops who composed and signed the Creed of Nicaea in 325 believed that the Son is eternal (cf. Kelly 1972:239f). Therefore, I would argue that the creed of 381 makes explicit<sup>30</sup> what was implied in the creed of 325.

## 2.6 Basil of Caesarea

I turn now to Basil of Caesarea (330-379). It is not clear how, or through whom, he became acquainted with the doctrine of the Son's eternal generation.<sup>31</sup> In the following chapters on Basil, I make clear how central this doctrine was for him by engaging with the primary sources. David G. Robertson (2008:25) says “[T]alk of the generation of the Son, or at least the passionless generation of the Son...is a cornerstone of Basil's trinitarian thought, frequently upheld in his theological works.” In *Against Eunomius*, Basil follows Origen and the Alexandrian theological tradition in arguing that the Father is eternally Father. This premise necessitates

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30 The Nicene Creed (381) says that the Son is begotten from the Father “before all ages” (πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων). “Before all ages” is another way to say that the Son is eternal. Basil argues repeatedly that to understand the Son as “before the ages” implies that he is eternal (e.g. *Eun., Spir., homily* 16).

31 Hanson (1988:679) says, “The Cappadocians...certainly learnt from Athanasius. They learnt the necessity of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son.” Currently the influence of Athanasius on Basil is being reconsidered and needs to be proven and not assumed (DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz 2011: 63f). DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (:61ff) also note the influence of Origen (acknowledged by all Basilian scholars), Eusebius of Caesarea and the Homoiousians, Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea. If Hanson has overstated his case, there are still several viable options through which medium and person Basil came into contact with the doctrine of eternal generation. Hübner, for example, argues in particular for the influence of Apollinarius (as well as Athanasius) on Basil. See Reinhard M. Hübner, 1993, *Basilios von Caesarea und das Homoousios*, pp. 70-91. Possibly Basil even was familiar with some of Irenaeus's writings (*Spir.* 29, 72) and appropriated some teachings of the doctrine which he found therein.

that the Son also be eternal. Basil, as did Origen before him, differentiated *ousia* from *hypostasis* as well as the Son's *hypostasis* from the Father's. Fortman (1982:79) comments that "Origen had distinguished *ousia* and *hypostasis* and had said that there were three *hypostases* in the Godhead (Jo. 2.10.75)." The Cappadocians accepted Origen's distinction and his terms, but they differed radically from him by claiming that the Son and the Holy Spirit are as fully divine as the Father. Basil also parts from Origen<sup>32</sup> and follows Alexander and Athanasius in arguing the Son's generation to be from the *ousia* of the Father. This means that Basil understands the generation of the Son to be a necessary and eternal act within the life of God. Basil does not understand the Son as "from the Father" to imply that the Son is in any way less than the Father. For Basil, derivation does not imply or demand the subordination of the Son or any diminution in being and power. Basil also does not teach the generation of the Son to be from the Father's will as Origen had done. For Basil, as Athanasius, the eternal generation is necessary to God for he is eternally triune. God's eternal triunity presupposes the generation of the Son to be an eternal, necessary act of God who is generative by nature.

Alexander's teaching of the Son as the Father's 'image' (εἰχὼν) and his insistence on the ineffableness of the Son's generation<sup>33</sup> are essential to Basil's conception of the Son's eternal generation. Basil never addresses the Son's begetting as a continual, active process that will have no end.

Below I will mention briefly the importance of eternal generation on other doctrines for Basil by citing select passages in his *Against Eunomius*. Thus, we will see not only the historical aspect of Basil's appropriation of the doctrine, but also his modification and novel refinements of the doctrine of eternal generation.

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32 Origen made several important contributions to a fully triune understanding of God, but on some matters later theologians judged some of his conclusions to be inadequate, even heretical. (cf. Ayres 2004:23ff). It is also well known that Origen argued that God was eternally triune but he differentiated the Father, the Son and the Spirit in a hierarchical way. Following the premises of Platonic philosophy, he concluded that the derivation of the Son and Spirit must make them less divine than the Father. For Origen, derivation entailed diminution in being and power. Hanson (1988: 64) says that for Origen the subordination of the Son was "within a graded Godhead so that the distinct persons share the one nature. This is widely different from Arius' scheme." On the contrasts and parallels between Origen and Arius's teaching see Hanson, *The Search*, 61-74 and Ayres, *Nicaea*, 20-30.

33 Basil's well documented distinction between the essence and energies of God also provide support to Alexander's argument for the ineffableness of the divine generation which Basil, when pressed, takes refuge in. This will be considered in the chapter on *Against Eunomius*.

In *Against Eunomius* 2.22 Basil says, “On the one hand, he must lay aside as ineffable and incomprehensible the manner in which God has begotten. On the other hand, he must be mentally conveyed from the designation 'begetting' to likeness in substance.”<sup>34</sup> In regards to *Against Eunomius* 2.22, Volker Drecoll (1996:83) says that for Basil “Die Zeugung soll nicht hinsichtlich der Art und Weise, wie der Vater zeugt, untersucht werden, sondern als Hinweis auf die κατ’ οὐσίαν ὁμοιοότης verstanden werden.” A couple sections later Basil says,

“According to customary usage here below, the designation 'to beget' signifies two things: the passion of the begetter and the affinity to the one begotten. This being the case, when the Father says to the Only-Begotten: From the womb before daybreak I have begotten you [Ps 109.3]...which of these two do we say is communicated by means of this word? That begetters are subject to passion? Or that there is an affinity of nature between begetter and the one begotten? For my part, I claim the latter.” (*Against Eunomius* 2.24, DelCogliano & Radde-Gallwitz trans. p.167)<sup>35</sup>

In *Against Eunomius*, Basil employs the doctrine of eternal generation to teach that the Father and Son are alike in substance, one in being. In addition, the doctrine is the basis of the distinction between Father and Son. Basil will sharpen the former claim in his later writings by maintaining that the Father and Son are *homoousios*.

On *Eun.* 2.16 Drecoll (1996:88) writes that when Basil speaks of the Son's γένεσις he has in mind, not like Eunomius, a time of non-existence but “die immerwährende Abhängigkeit und Zusammengehörigkeit des Sohnes mit dem Vater, die sich mit der Zeugungsvorstellung beschrieben läßt.” While Behr (2004:309) describes the Son's begetting in Basil as “[referring] not so much to a discrete divine act as to the particular relationship in which the Son stands to the Father, one of derivation and identity of being.” Thus, the eternal generation for Basil, according to Drecoll and Behr, results in oneness of being as well as a “derivation” of the Son from the Father. I emphasize again that for Basil derivation

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34 This quote is taken from *The Fathers of the Church. St. Basil of Caesarea. Against Eunomius*. Translated & Introduction by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz. 2011. The Catholic University of America Press, p. 164. All quotes are from this version unless otherwise noted.

35 On this passage DelCogliano (2010:161) says “[T]he divine begetting communicates only the notion that the Father has affinity with the Son.”

in no way implies a diminution in divine being or power.<sup>36</sup> G. L. Prestige (1940:91f) says that it was Subordinationists and pagan Greeks who “erred in representing derivation as equivalent to derogation...In truth, the process has to be imagined not as the transmission of disintegrating stuff away from a fixed point, but as the timeless and unceasing passage of a personal being through a circular course which ends where it began and begins again where it ended.”

This leads to a discussion of Basil's employment of two well-known patristic terms: *monarchia* and *taxis*. Concerning the first term, Prestige (1940:80) says, “[M]onarchy, in patristic language, [is] roughly equivalent to 'monotheism'...It is a perfectly good orthodox term, which the Fathers use as freely as the heretics to express their sense of the sole ultimate authority of one God”. This understanding of monarchy entails “The truth...that God is one, not because one divine Person is more important than the others, whether as being their source or on any other ground...but because all three Persons are distinct expressions of a single divine reality”(ibid).<sup>37</sup> Basil's emphasis in oneness in being and power of the Father and Son does not deny order (*taxis*), a fixed pattern in divine life and action. Meredith (1995:105f) says “[Basil] admits in Book 3 of *Against Eunomius* that there is an order within the deity, with the Father as the source of being, the Son and Spirit as deriving their existence from the Father. But though admitting the place of *taxis* or order with the Trinity, Basil refuses to follow Eunomius in inferring from this order a lessening of essential being and Godhead. Though the Son comes from the Father he is not therefore any less than the Father.” Thus Basil, in contrast to Origen, teaches that the one triune God exercises the divine rule (*monarchia*); the Father is the *mia arche* of the Son. To be “from” the Father in no way implies subordination of the Son. In the Godhead, there is an order which cannot be reversed – the Son is “from” the Father. The divine genesis, for Basil, is ever taking place within the *monarchia* and *taxis* of the one and only Triune God, vanquishing any trace of subordinationism within the Godhead.<sup>38</sup>

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36 Basil discusses these points in *Against Eunomius*.

37 Similarly Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, pp. 233, 249, 254f, 258. Anthony Meredith (1995:13) says, “The Cappadocians insisted...on the equality of all three members of the Trinity. In other words, the fact that the Father was the source of the Son did not mean that he was superior to the Son as God.” See also ibid, p. 119.

38 This is probably best seen in *On the Holy Spirit* 18.44-47, though *taxis* is not explicitly mentioned.

Stephen Hildebrand (2007:190) posits that the “scriptural center of Basil's view of the Father and Son” is located in John 14.9 “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.”<sup>39</sup> Hildebrand states that for Basil John 14.9 “expresses what it means for the Son to be divinely begotten” and that divine generation means for Basil that “the Son perfectly makes known the Father” (ibid).

Basil's importance as a Trinitarian theologian is seen in that he is able to affirm monotheism by making the one triune God the one ruler over all (*monarchia*), while clearly distinguishing the Father and the Son. The Father is the begetter of the Son and the Son is begotten of the Father; this ensures their oneness in being and power. Central to this conviction belongs the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. The Son is begotten of the Father and thus is one in being and power with the Father, yet as the begotten Son he is other than the Father. Basil the Great is able to preserve monotheism, exclude modalism, avoid tritheism, and reject subordinationism while simultaneously affirming that God is eternally triune. He does this by professing and teaching the full and complete eternal deity of the Son and Spirit through the eternal generation and eternal spiration from the essence of the Father.

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<sup>39</sup> The quote is taken from the English Standard Version (ESV). All biblical quotations are taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.

### 3. CHAPTER 3: THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN BASIL'S AGAINST EUNOMIUS

#### 3.1 Introduction to Basil's Against Eunomius

Basil of Caesarea (330-379) is revered as a Christian theologian, humanist, churchman, and ascetic. He lived in present day Turkey and came from a wealthy family, several of whom were ardent Christians with an ascetical disposition. Basil, together with his brother, Gregory of Nyssa (335-400), and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus (330-391), make up the trio known as the “Cappadocian Fathers”. Their life and writings have been influential since the late fourth century. Basil's impact on theology, philosophy, asceticism, social issues, and church politics were due to his familial upbringing and his mentors and friends, as well as his years spent receiving a first-rate Greek education. In *Against Eunomius*, Basil displays both his theological and philosophical acumen, which is an attestation to his title as “Basil the Great”.

Basil wrote profusely on many subjects, however, in this chapter I will focus on Basil's Trinitarian theology, particularly on what he says on the eternal generation of the Son, in his first “dogmatic writing”<sup>40</sup> *Against Eunomius*. I will start by giving an introduction to *Against Eunomius*. Then, I will survey Basil and Eunomius's Trinitarian theologies and highlight the differences between them. Finally, I will delve into the doctrine of eternal generation in the first two books of *Against Eunomius*. The burden of this chapter is to show that Basil considered the doctrine

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<sup>40</sup> *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. 1894. 2 Series. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. *Volume 8. Basil: Letters and Select Works*. Electronic Kindle Edition. Location 1547 of 23273. In his newest book on Basil, Stephen Hildebrand says “Is it easy for us to divide and separate what Basil did not. His Trinitarian thought, for example, is one thing, his ascetic and spiritual thought, another. But it was not so for him...It is a matter of fact that Basil's two great Trinitarian works, *Against Eunomius* and *On the Holy Spirit*, originated in an ascetic context...He and other ascetic leaders met to talk about various issues that arose in the lives of the monks [e.g. *epistle* 223], They spoke not just of spiritual matters but of properly theological ones. They discussed the meaning of particular scriptural texts and words. It is not the case, moreover, that this study of the scripture happens to take place in an ascetic context, as if there could be another.” Stephen Hildebrand, 2014, *Basil of Caesarea*, Baker Academic Publishing, p. 165.

of the eternal generation of the Son<sup>41</sup> to be essential for understanding the Father-Son relationship as revealed in scripture. As Mark DelCogliano (2011c:205) says, “Basil considers belief in the Father and the Son, and in the Father's begetting of the Son, as essential to Christianity[.]”<sup>42</sup>

First, an introduction<sup>43</sup> to Basil's first major doctrinal work, *Against Eunomius*,<sup>44</sup> is in order. *Against Eunomius* is often thought to have been penned circa 364 to 365 AD.<sup>45</sup> Hildebrand (2014:80) says the main point in *Against Eunomius* is Basil's criticism of core aspects of Eunomius's theology which, according to Basil, compromise the Christian's access to God the Father and undermines his salvation through Christ. Eunomius's theology was made public in his *Apology*<sup>46</sup>,

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41 For a short assessment of the theme eternal generation in *Against Eunomius*, see Kevin Giles, 2012, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 122-34 and Anastos, Basil's KATA EYNOMIOY, pp. 122-27.

42 Mark DelCogliano, *The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians on Basil of Caesarea's Decentralization of “Unbegotten”*, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 19:2, 197-223, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011. In his essay on *Basil of Caesarea on the Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, *Revue d'études augustiniennes et patristiques*, 57 (2011), p. 51, DelCogliano says that Athanasius and Eusebius of Caesarea also saw the Son's begetting as eternal and unique. Of those two, only Athanasius held that because of the eternal generation there was an identity of nature between Father and Son. This Basil also holds to be true and argues at length in this writing.

43 DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (2011:3-78) have given a superb introduction. See also: Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil: His Life and Doctrine*, chapters two through four; DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, passim; Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, 113-174; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, esp. pp. 41-75; Anne Gordon Keidel, 2007, *Eunomius' Apologia and Basil of Caesarea's Adversus Eunomium in Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, Vol. 82 (v.2). Brill Academic Publishing, pp. 485-493; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 282-93; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 1-63; Milton Anastos, Basil's KATA EYNOMIOY, pp. 67-136.

44 *The Fathers of the Church. St. Basil of Caesarea. Against Eunomius*. Translated & Introduction by Mark DelCogliano and Andrew Radde-Gallwitz. 2011. Abbreviated as *Eun*. The translation by DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz represents the first in the English language (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:3).

45 For the historical context leading up to and in which the letter was written see DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, *Against Eunomius*, pp. 18-35; Mark DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 3-14; Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea, A Guide to His Life and Doctrine*, Cascade Books, pp. 43-63; Stephen Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 33-45; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 191-209; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 1-20, 45-48; Philip Rousseau, 1994, *Basil of Caesarea*, University of California Press, pp. 93-107; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 676-99; JND Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine*, 1978 2nd Edition, HarperOne, pp. 223-269.

46 Eunomius's *Apology* is found in Vaggione, Richard Paul. 1987. *Eunomius. The Extant Works*. Text and Translation by Richard Paul Vaggione. Oxford Early Christian Texts. Oxford University Press. For more on Eunomius, his life and theology, see: Hildebrand, 2014, *Basil of Caesarea*, Baker Academic, p. 72ff; Holmes, *Quest*, pp. 97ff; Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, esp. chapters 2-4; *Against Eunomius*, pp. 11, 30-38; DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, passim; Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, passim, especially pp. 96-112; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 144-49; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 102ff, 267-296; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, passim; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 93-132; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 611-36. These portrayals are almost

which contained a defense of his interpretation of a creed which Basil accredited to Arius (Vaggione 1987:10). The quarrel between Basil and Eunomius is not about the creed itself but about its interpretation by Eunomius through other, more controversial claims which he made in his *Apology* (DelCogliano and Radde-Galwitz *Eun.* 2011:47).<sup>47</sup> In *Against Eunomius*, Basil offers “a point-by-point refutation of the...main tenets of Eunomius's Heteroousian<sup>48</sup> theology...Basil proceeds by citing a few lines...then arguing at length against the suppositions or ideas expressed” (DelCogliano and Radde-Galwitz *Eun.* 2011:38). DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz add that this letter is a “second-order” debate of language about language<sup>49</sup> (:46) and about how theology ought to be done by addressing what human beings can and cannot know about God (:5). Nonetheless, from *Against Eunomius* we are able to glean a more or less consistent doctrine of the Trinity (:45) that will later become a standard expression of pro-Nicene orthodoxy (:34).

Pertaining to the structure of *Against Eunomius*, Hildebrand (2007:162f) says, “There are three basic parts to Basil's argument against Eunomius on the relationship between the Father and the Son. First, Basil establishes that unbegottenness [ἀγεννησία, τὸ ἀγέννητον] is not the substance of God. Secondly, he establishes the similarity between the Father and the Son. And finally, he explains how divine generation ought to be understood. These three basic arguments are logically connected. The first prepares for the second, and the third

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always grounded in the reports of the historians Philostorgius, Theodoret, and Socrates as found in *Ecclesiastical History* and the work of Richard Paul Vaggione. See Vaggione, 2000, *Eunomius of Cyzicus and the Nicene Revolution*, Oxford University Press and Eunomius, *Apology*, trans. Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works*.

47 For the creed see Eunomius's *Apology*, p.39. Basil addresses the creed in *Against Eunomius*, p. 88.

48 Heteroousians are known in past scholarship as “Neo-Arians” and “Anomoians”. See Behr (2004:26n23) for a very short history of the terms. For a history of Eunomius and other “*Heteroousians*” see *Eun.* 28-38; Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 43-63; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 1-20. Radde-Gallwitz (2012:57, 62) says, “By the time Basil replied to Eunomius, he was a supporter of the Nicene faith...It is within the milieu of Homoiousians allying themselves with Nicenes in the 360's that we must place Basil early in his career.” For more of the Homoiousian and Nicene influences on Basil see Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, chapter two and Ayres, *Nicaea*, esp. chapters 6-9. For more on the group known as the Homoiousians see: Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 58-67; *Against Eunomius*, pp. 64-66, Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 149-153, 158-160; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 1-20; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 348-56.

49 Hildebrand (2007:41) says in *Against Eunomius* “Basil conceives, as it were, the rules that govern language about God (his 'grammar of divinity') and the words that best describe him (his 'vocabulary of divinity').”

strengthens the second.” Ayres, in general agreement with Hildebrand, sums up the three books of *Against Eunomius* saying, “The second and third books are respectively concerned with the generation of the Son and the status of the Spirit, while the first focuses on the nature of God” (Ayres 2004:191). My focus in this chapter will be on Basil's second and third argument in which he establishes “the similarity”, as Hildebrand puts it, existing between the Father and the Son<sup>50</sup> and employs the doctrine of eternal generation to show how the Father and Son can be one in being though differentiated as Father and Son for all eternity. However, before considering these matters, it is of importance to first give an outline of the differing understandings of God that so sharply divided Basil and Eunomius.<sup>51</sup>

Eunomius had made his views known in his *Apology*, which was composed several years before *Against Eunomius*. In his writing, Eunomius speaks of God in terms of a monad who alone is eternal (e.g. *Apol.*41). Eunomius's title or name for God is “the Unbegotten” (Αγέννητος)<sup>52</sup> (e.g. *Apol.*43). The Son's title is “Only-Begotten” (Μονογενής) or “the Only-begotten God” (*Apol.*53). Eunomius claimed that “Unbegottenness” constitutes the whole substance (*ousia*) of the Father (*Apol.*43), while “Begottenness” constitutes the whole substance (*ousia*) of the Son (e.g. *Apol.*49). Behr (2004:276ff) adds that for Eunomius the name “Father” was nothing more than a synonym for “Unbegotten” since both names referred to

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50 For a discussion on the philosophical and theological influences concerning the “relative names” of ‘Father’ and ‘Son’ and Basil's teaching concerning those names see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 222-53 and Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 198-202. Ayres (:202) says the “Father-Son terminology has important consequences for how we understand the nature of God even while telling us nothing about the *ousia* of God.”

51 For more on the polemic rhetorical style employed by Basil in this letter see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 154-160 and Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 56-61.

52 For a detailed analysis of Basil's advocacy for the term “Father” and disfavor towards the term “Unbegotten” see Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Decentralization of “Unbegotten”*, pp. 197-223. In this article DelCogliano argues that Basil borrowed his positive disposition towards the name “Father” primarily through the Homoiousians George of Laodicea and also Basil of Ancrya. DelCogliano claims that Basil argues against the term “Unbegotten” by modifying the Homoiousian arguments as well as in innovative ways. For the traditional Christian use of “Unbegotten” see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 98-124. For a general view of the entailment of viewing the Father/Son relationship only in Unoriginate/originate relations see T.F. Torrance, 1991, *The Trinitarian Faith*, p. 50ff. For a select overview of the historical use of “unbegotten” in Christian theology see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, chapter 3 and (of unbegotten/begotten) Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 202ff.

someone who is underived or is the origin of another.<sup>53</sup> Eunomius understood any name or term that was used in reference to both the Father and the Son, such as light, life, or power is to be synonymous to the essence to which it refers (*Apol.*57ff). The Father as “light” is thus Unbegotten light, the Son as “light” is Begotten light which for Eunomius highlights their unlikeness to one another. He believes that absolutely nothing can bridge the fundamental discrepancy between the Father and Son. This leads Eunomius to assert that the Father and Son are clearly seen to be “unlike in substance” (*heteroousios*)<sup>54</sup> and “not similar” (*anomoios*) in substance.

Concerning the generation of the Son, Eunomius is quite clear that he rejects any notion of an *eternal* generation of the Son for only the Unbegotten is eternal (*Apol.*45f). Furthermore, Eunomius considered God the Unbegotten as “wholly incapable of undergoing generation” (*Apol.*59). God the Unbegotten is simple and can have no counterpart. He can create, but not beget “a son” (Giles 2012:123f). According to Eunomius, the generation of the Son in scripture speaks of the Son's very essence having been begotten (*Apol.*49). The Son is a 'thing made' according to Eunomius (*Apol.*49), subject to the Father both in essence and will (*Apol.*71). Eunomius, however, does give the Son pride of place among created things due to the fact that “he alone was begotten and created by the power of the Unbegotten [and] became the perfect minister of the whole creative activity and purpose of the Father” (*Apol.*53).

John Behr (2004:275f), summarizing the teaching of Eunomius, says:

“Eunomius argues that it is not possible for God 'to share his own distinctive nature [unbegottenness] with that which is begotten,' as those who support the term *homoousios* would hold, nor does God admit 'comparison or association with the thing begotten,' as those who advocate the term *homoiousios* would argue (*Apol.* 9)...to claim that the Son is *homoousios*...would entail that God is a product and destructible, though Eunomius does not spell out this conclusion. To argue...that the Son is similar in essence...what then, Eunomius asks, will be different

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53 Behr (2004:277) adds, “Eunomius wants to separate completely the meaning of a term when applied to God and the meaning of the same term when applied in the human realm.” As will be seen below, Basil rejects this on the basis of his “common usage” argument.

54 For a summary of Heteroousian epistemology see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 34ff.

between them to enable a comparison?<sup>55</sup>...So, Eunomius concludes, it is not possible to liken, compare, or associate, with respect to essence, another being to the Unbegotten, for this can only conclude with an equivalence, driving one to conclude that the Son is equal (ἴσος) to the Father, which contradicts [John 14.28].<sup>56</sup>

Eunomius wishes to respect the pre-eminence of the Father (*Apol.*61) and it is of the Unbegotten he says, “[W]e ought to repay him the debt which above all others is most due God” (*Apol.*41f). Eunomius does not see his teaching as taking away from the Godhead of the Son, but, as Behr (2004:14) concludes, the logical conclusion of Eunomius's teaching is that “The Son is clearly relegated to the status of a demi-god, neither fully divine, nor fully man.”

In Basil's estimation, Eunomius's teaching is the pinnacle of impiousness and amounts to “the denial of the divinity of the Only-Begotten” (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:81). This prompts Basil to launch an attack on Eunomius's views. The focus of Basil's effort is to disprove Eunomius's claims concerning the name(s) of God and how names relate to the substance of a thing (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:5, 46). According to Basil, “Unbegotten” shouldn't be the primary name for God since it's not biblical (*Eun.*93).<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Basil says, “Unbegotten” is simply another way of saying what's not present to God (*Eun.*106). “Father” is much more preferable according to Basil, since it is well attested to in scripture, means the same as “Unbegotten” (having no source), and has the additional advantage of implying a relation, thereby introducing the notion of the Son (:94). At this juncture, it is important to speak

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55 Eunomius also rejects order (τάξις) and superiority based on time as possible explanations because order “would require someone prior to both to set them in order” and God exists “before the ages” (Behr 2004:275). Behr (:280) adds that for Eunomius “it is with respect to action, not with respect to essence, that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father (*Apol.* 24).” Thus the Son is simply “the perfect expression of God's activity, but not of what God is” (:281).

56 For Eunomius's rejection of both *homoousios* and *homoiousios* see *Eunomius, The Extant Works*, p.9f. Eunomius preferred to say that the Son is similar to the Father “according to the Scriptures” which was the formula used in several councils in the late 350's to 360 (Synod of Constantinople). See Vaggione 1987:63. Eunomius, who allowed only for a similarity “according to the Scriptures” was thus able to use certain scriptures to his advantage in order to prove the Son as unlike/dissimilar in essence to the Father, as being created by the Father, and subordinated to the Father in every respect so it follows that the Son's power is incomparable to the Father's (Vaggione 1987:69f).

57 “Basil adopts the non-scriptural argument of both Athanasius and George [of Laodicea]” (DelCogliano, 2011c:219). See also Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, p. 169.

about the role of the term conceptualization (*epinoia*)<sup>58</sup> in the debate. A conceptualization can be defined as a description of God in relation to humans brought about by continued reflection on him (cf. DelCogliano 2010:171; DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:48).

Eunomius had claimed that “Unbegotten” was not a conceptualization (*Apol.*:43) for he had disparaged this method of speaking about God in his *Apology* (*ibid*) by claiming conceptualizations will always yield fictitious thought about God (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:48). In book one section five through eight, Basil seeks to confute Eunomius's understanding and definition of conceptualization. Basil rejects Eunomius's claim that conceptualizations exist in utterance only (cf. *Apol.*:43). He reasons that concepts, even things that are false, remain in the mind long after the utterance has ended (*Eun.*:97). As they pertain to the divine, Basil says Christ uses conceptualizations, such as 'light', 'door', or 'bread', to talk of himself “[o]n the basis of his different activities and his relation to the objects of his divine benefaction” (:99). Despite of the plurality of names, Christ is still “one in substrate, and one substance, simple and not composite” (*ibid*). Basil’s main argument consist of his claim that the term “Unbegotten” in reference to God is itself a conceptualization (*Eun.*:100). If Basil is correct, this would undermine Eunomius’s whole teaching on the Father. Basil says Unbegotten conveys that God's life is without a beginning. Therefore, we should not forgo confessing it because it does tell us something true about God (*ibid*). We see that Basil, in contrast to Eunomius, does believe that conceptualizations do tell us true things about God. Finally, Basil claims if Eunomius does not accept conceptualizations as a legitimate way of speaking about God he must confess “that all things attributed to God similarly refer to his substance” (:101) and all names used of God mean the same thing (:102). Basil finds these options absurd.

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58 For the meaning and explanation of 'conceptualization' (which is but one translation for the Greek *epinoia*) see Panagopoulos and Terezis, *The Theological Controversy between Eunomius and Basil the Great: A Philosophical Approach*, pp. 3-28; *Against Eunomius*, pp. 47ff, 62, 68ff and within the letter itself especially pp. 96-104; DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 163-76; Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 59-66 (influence of and differences to Origen), 143-54; Johannes Zachhuber, 2007, Christological Titles—Conceptually Applied? *In Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium II*, Brill: Leiden, pp. 257-78; Basil Studer, 2006, Der Theologiegeschichtliche Hintergrund der *Epinoiai*-Lehre Gregor von Nyssa in *Durch Geschichte Zum Glauben. Zur Exegese und zur Trinitätslehre der Kirchenväter*. Studia Anselmiana 141. Roma. pp. 262-76, 282-4; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 191-8; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 285ff; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 75-78.

Concerning the Son, Basil cannot refute Eunomius's practice of calling the Son "Only-begotten" (*monogenēs*) for it is attested to in scripture (e.g. John 3.16). What he rejects is Eunomius's identification of the Son as "Only-begotten" in conjunction with the names "something begotten," "something made," and "creature" (*Apol.*49ff).<sup>59</sup> Basil notes that these phrases, when referenced to the Son, are not scriptural (e.g. *Eun.*132). Furthermore, those names should not even be inferred, as Eunomius had done (e.g. *Apol.*49), from Scriptural texts like Proverbs 8.22 and 1 Corinthians 1.24 . In arguing in this way, Basil seeks to undermine Eunomius's claim to be correctly interpreting the creedal phrase that the Son is similar to the Father according to the scriptures (ὁμοιος κατὰ τὰς γραφάς)<sup>60</sup> (Vaggione 1987:49n7).<sup>61</sup> Basil argues for the primacy of the name "Son" since Son is what the Father himself uses to address the Only-Begotten (cf. *Eun.*138ff; DelCogliano 2011a).

Similarly, Basil's argumentation that names do not communicate the substance of a thing is of great importance (*Eun.*103ff). Basil's inclusion of the term Unbegotten (*Eun.*106) as another example of this rule is of special importance in this debate. According to Basil, it is outright pride and impiety for Eunomius to say what God's substance is (*Eun.*108).<sup>62</sup> In contradistinction to Eunomius, Basil (*Eun.*105) claims "There is not one name which encompasses the entire nature of God and suffices

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<sup>59</sup> "Something made" and "Creature" were rejected as inappropriate references to the Son in a creed from 324 AD. See Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 66.

<sup>60</sup> This phrase comes from the Council of Constantinople in 360. For more on this council see *Against Eunomius*, pp. 9ff, 31-35 and Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 380ff, 600ff

<sup>61</sup> See also Vaggione's comments in *Extant Works*, p.9ff.

<sup>62</sup> This leads to Basil in sections 1.12 and 1.13 (*Eun.* 2011:108-111) to state implicitly that one cannot even know the substance of God. In light of Mt 11.27 and 1 Cor 2.10-12, Basil (*Eun.*113) says, "It is to be expected that the very substance of God is incomprehensible to everyone except the Only-Begotten and the Holy Spirit." To give an example, Radde-Gallwitz (2012:77) says, "[F]or Christ to be a faithful image, he must be that which he makes manifest to us. In our weakness, we grasp this revelation through a myriad of names and titles, revealed to us mercifully." He adds that Basil teaches that "We can know *that* the Spirit is holiness, but saying exactly *what* holiness is eludes us" (:84). Hildebrand (2007:46-7) adds "The *ousia* and *physis* of God may be described but not defined...but God is not so far above [the human mind] that it can know nothing whatsoever about him; human speech does not altogether fail before the mystery of God." Drecoll (1996:333) agrees. For more on if God is knowable in Basil see also Basils *Homily* 15 section 1 in *Christian Doctrine and Practice*. DelCogliano (trans.). 2012. See also my chapter on the letters of Basil, especially *epp.* 233-236. Basil does certainly have apophaticism in his theology but it not so radical that God is either totally unknowable or knowable only through *via negativa*. For more on Basil's apophatic theology see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, chapters 2 and 5.

to express it adequately. Rather, there are many diverse names, and each one contributes, in accordance with its own meaning, to a notion that is altogether dim and trifling as regards to the whole but that is at least sufficient for us.”<sup>63</sup> Thus, “Unbegotten” can neither be the only name for the Father nor can it name the substance of God (*Eun.*113). No one can know the “what-ness” of the substance of God. As Andrew Radde-Gallwitz (2012:76) puts it, “Basil sets himself against any doctrine that attempts to tell us exactly and definitively what or who God is.” No one name of God can define his essence because, for Basil, God's transcendence makes it impossible. The centrality of the transcendence of God in Basil's theology is emphasized by Drecoll (1996:86f), Hildebrand (2007:51), and Radde-Gallwitz (2012:135). It is very important to take note of how Basil considers the names used for God and how they relate to his substance (*ousia*). Drecoll speaks of Basil's relation between names and substance as the “*Prinzip der Unerkennbarkeit*”. Drecoll (1996:66-67) says:

“Die οὐσία selbst ist für Basilius nicht ausdrückbar, sie bleibt quasi transzendent. Doch beinhaltet die οὐσία neben diesem eigentlichen, unerkennbaren Kern eine Reihe an Eigenschaften, die sehr wohl erkennbar sind. Οὐσία ist für Basilius nicht etwas Qualitätsloses, sondern ein spezifisches So-Sein, das eben eine Reihe von wesentlichen Eigenschaften beinhaltet. Diese Eigenschaften sind zu einem guten Teil erkennbar, und zwar so sehr, daß aufgrund der Übereinstimmung der meisten Prädikate erkennbar bleibt, ob sich bei zwei Dingen um dieselbe οὐσία handelt oder nicht. Mit dem Prinzip der Unerkennbarkeit bezüglich der οὐσία ist also nicht gemeint, daß von einer Sache gar nichts mehr erkennbar ist...vielmehr ist gemeint, daß die οὐσία als solche nicht angebbar ist, sehr wohl angebbar dagegen eine ganze Reihe an Eigenschaften ist, die zur οὐσία dazugehören...Es bleibt quasi ein unerkennbaren Kern innerhalb der erkennbaren Eigenschaften.”<sup>64</sup>

Due to his *Prinzip der Unerkennbarkeit*, Basil rejects Eunomius's claim that the names “Unbegotten/Begotten” are the only names for the Father and Son, as well as his claim that “Unbegotten/Begotten” define the essences to which they refer.

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63 For an in depth account of how Basil disarms the argument of Eunomius's use of 'Unbegotten' as defining the substance of God (and in turn rejecting Eunomius's epistemology and account of divine simplicity) see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, ch. 5.

64 Behr (2004:288) summarizes Basil's principle this way: “The 'inaccessibility' of the essence should not be taken to imply that the 'essence' is something other than what is known through the activities, but it itself transcends each particular activity and the sum of all its activities.”

Basil's rejection of these two main tenets of Eunomius's epistemology and theology lead him to posit his own theory of names: the scriptural terms, Father and Son, lead one to posit a formula of substance<sup>65</sup>, or identity of being, between them as they "suggest a generative act in eternity" (Giles 2012:132). The formula of substance can be briefly defined as "that which indicates the sense in which God is one" (Radde-Gallwitz 2009:154f). The eternally existing formula of substance between Father and Son shows them to be an indivisible unity who perfectly shares the one divine being.

At the same time, Basil also considers that the names "Father" and "Son" refer to their distinguishing marks which, while truly coinhering with the divine substance, do not define it. The distinguishing marks (ἰδιώματα) and distinctive features (ἰδιότητες), which are the fatherhood of the Father and sonship of the Son, are defined as those qualities which "enable the knowledge of God as Father and Son...differentiate the Father from the Son...without knowledge of the divine essence itself" (DelCogliano 2010:196). Thus for Basil, the titles "Father" and "Son" speak not only of their oneness in divine being, but also of their eternal differentiation.

In Basil's understanding of the Father-Son relationship, the unity of substance and distinction between them is of utmost importance. On this point, DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (2011:51) say, "Basil argues that only when we grasp simultaneously both the common and distinguishing features do we begin to understand the Father and the Son." As we progress through this chapter, we will see Basil's insistence on both the formula of substance and on the distinguishing marks of the Father and the Son is grounded on the doctrine of the Son's eternal generation from the Father.

Now it is time to consider the impact of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son on the formulation of the Creed of Nicaea and its resulting influence on Basil.

The doctrine of the eternal generation as the nexus for the Creed of Nicaea has often been noted.<sup>66</sup> Kelly (1973:235) says that the clause "of/from the Father's

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65 Basil speaks of this sharing as the 'commonality of substance'. The shared formula of substance is the sense in which the deity is one for Basil" (Radde-Gallwitz 2009:154-55). Ayres (2004:194) sees the 'commonality of substance' as the core of Basil's teaching in this letter. (cf. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, pp. 226-32).

66 Philip Schaff (1910:620) claims that it was Alexander who, based on the teaching of eternal generation, deduced the *homoousia* or consubstantiality of the Son with the Father.

*ousia*” (*ek tēs tou patros ousias*) “nails up the thesis that...the Son was generated out of the Father's very substance or being. The implication...was that He shared the divine essence to the full.” Adams (1992:225f), Ayres (2004:171), and Fortman (1982:66f) offer similar assessments. Thus when the Creed of Nicaea speaks of the Son being “of/from the *ousia* of the Father” it is speaking of whence the Son is begotten. Philip Schaff (1910:620), T.F. Torrance (1993:116f), and Kevin Giles (2012:27ff) are in agreement that the phrase “*homoousios to Patri*” is grounded in the teaching that the Son is from the Father through eternal generation. Stephen Hildebrand (2014:79) says the Nicene anathema “before he was begotten, he was not” negatively intended what “*homoousios*” and “from the *ousia* of the Father” technically and positively intended: to teach the eternal generation of the Son. The connection between the Creed of Nicaea and the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was still intact a generation later as Zachhuber (2000:90ff) pointed out. He says that the participants of the Synod of 363 likely endorsed that “the Son is *homoousios* with the Father in so far as he is begotten of the Father’s *ousia*.”<sup>67</sup>

In *Against Eunomius*, Basil is reserved in his direct use of the Creed of Nicaea and its watchword “*homoousios*”. Basil does not explicitly mention the creed in *Against Eunomius* (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:16). Basil's single use of the Nicene phrase “from the substance of the Father” in *Against Eunomius* 2.23 reveals that he follows the traditional understanding of the phrase. This is seen in Basil’s interpretation of the Son's procession from God the Father's substance to make him his son according to nature (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:66f).<sup>68</sup> Basil employs the phrase *homoousios* in its theological sense only once in *Against Eunomius* (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:120n112). In its one use, it is couched in the traditional language of expressing the Son's closeness to the Father (Ayres 2007:437). Basil's preference in *Against Eunomius* is for the phrase “like in

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67 Stephen Holmes (2012:87), to the contrary, says “[T]he Creed of Nicaea stops short of affirming eternal generation – presumably because the idea was still too controversial – and instead uses philosophical language of *ousia*.” Except for Holmes, the rest of the patristic and historical theologians I came across hold that *ek tēs tou patros ousias* and *homoousios to Patri* were anti-Arian attempts at expressing of how rightly to understand the eternal generation and that they affirm essentially the same truth(s).

68 According to Radde-Gallwitz (2012:74), Basil's way of understanding the Nicene formula of the Son being “light of light” is that it described the Son's “equality...with the Father”. For Basil's understanding and use of “illumination”, see also *ibid.* p. 39 and *On the Holy Spirit* 26.64.

substance” (*homoiousios*).<sup>69</sup> It is worthy to note that he understands the Son's “likeness of substance” (*κατ’ οὐσίαν ὁμοιότης*) with the Father as a consequence of the Son's generation from him (Drecoll 1995:83; Ayres 2004:205). This reveals that he is very close to the traditional understanding of *homoousios*. Letter 9, written shortly after *Against Eunomius*, reveals that Basil's position concerning “like in substance” and “same in substance” had changed. There he writes that one should only use “like in substance” in conjunction with the safeguard “invariably” and his preference is for *homoousios*.<sup>70</sup> In *Against Eunomius*, Basil saw himself as upholding the basic sense of the Creed of Nicaea (Ayres 2004:189),<sup>71</sup> but there was a development of thought before Basil came to fully understand what it was the bishops at the council of Nicaea had realized, namely, “*daß durch Zeugung etwas Homousisches, durch Schaffen aber etwas Heterousisches entsteht*” (Hübner 1993:83). It was the doctrine of eternal generation that led him to accept the term *homoousios* (Carson, following Berkhof, 2012:81).

Historically, both the term *homoousios* and the subject of the distinction of Persons have always been intimately intertwined with the doctrine of eternal generation. Keith E. Johnson (2011:141) says, “The early church confessed that Jesus Christ is both consubstantial [i.e. *homoousios*] with and distinct from the Father. The doctrine of the 'eternal generation' played an important role in affirming both elements” (cf. Behr 2004:309). T.F. Torrance (1993:125) says “If the Son is eternally begotten of the Father *within* the being of the Godhead, then as well as expressing oneness between the Son and the Father, ὁμοούσιος expresses the distinction between them that obtains within that oneness.” Though Torrance

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69 For more on Basil and his developing understanding of *homoiousios* and *homoousios* see Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 62; Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 31-41, 76-82; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 187-209; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 299-305; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 63-74, 103ff and Hübner, *Basilios von Caesarea und das Homoousios*, pp. 70-91. For an assessment of *homoousios* before and after the Council of Nicaea see Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 190-202.

70 Apollinarius in letter 362 (written before *Against Eunomius*) to Basil (Defferari 4:341) describes the eternal generation to Basil as the Son being “‘consubstantial,’ transcendentally in all respects and peculiarity; not as things of the same class, not as things divided, but as of one class and kind of divinity, one and only offspring, with an indivisible and incorporeal progress, by which that which generates, remaining in its generic peculiarity, has proceeded into its genetic peculiarity.” For an erudite explanation of this letter and passage, see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, p. 27. For more on letters 9 and 362 see my chapter on the dogmatic letters of Basil.

71 See my chapter: *The history of the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son from Origen to Basil*

focuses on *homoousios*, he connects the term with the doctrine of eternal generation to ground both oneness in being and differentiation between Father and Son<sup>72</sup> (cf. John Behr 2004:238,244).

In the preceding pages, I have made apparent that for Basil the eternal generation of the Son is the nexus of his arguments for the unitary essence between Father and Son and their differentiation. As Kevin Giles (2012:134) says concerning Basil, the “doctrine [of eternal generation]...affirms two fundamental truths basic to the Trinitarian faith: the Father and the Son are one in divine being and power and yet at the same time indelibly differentiated as the Father and the Son[.]” This is vital to keep in mind due to the fact that Basil seldom addresses the doctrine of eternal generation by name in *Against Eunomius*. Therefore, whether Basil is discussing the Father and Son being “invariably like in substance,” “same in substance,” having the same “formula of substance/being” or being truly differentiated, his thinking is predicated on the doctrine of divine generation.<sup>73</sup> It was this doctrine for Basil, as it had been for several decades, which best articulated the union of the irreducible persons in the simple and unitary Godhead which was of utmost concern for pro-Nicene theologians like Basil (Ayres 2004:301).

I now turn to consider in more detail how Basil understands and explicates the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son by taking an in-depth look at the first two books of *Against Eunomius*. In order to stay on the topic of the Son’s generation, I will not comment on chapter three where Basil addresses the Holy Spirit. I have implemented the numbering system, which the translators have used to make cross-referencing with the translation simple.<sup>74</sup> All direct quotations in a section are to be found within the aforementioned section as found in the DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz translation.<sup>75</sup>

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72 Lewis Ayres (2004:141) says, “*Homoousios* safeguards the point that the Son’s generation is unlike the generation of human beings and does not involve the creation of one thing that may be separated from its originator. *Homoousios* renders impossible descriptions of the Son as created[.]”

73 The eternalness of the Son is another essential element in Basil’s doctrine of eternal generation (see Basil’s argument using John 1.1). The Son is eternal due to his eternal and timeless generation from the Father.

74 e.g. [1.1] is book one, section one. When I quote Basil or Eunomius, I also give scripture references in brackets [] and italicize scriptures that are used as the translators have done.

75 Regarding the text and translation see: DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:76ff.

## 3.2 Against Eunomius Book 1

Book one is concerned primarily with the nature of God and the likeness of Father and Son rather than with the Son's generation (Ayres 2004:191; Hildebrand 2007:162f). However, the doctrine is important in book one for Basil's account of the nature of God and his argument that a likeness in substance exists between the Father and Son. In addition, Basil's account of what it means for the Father to be "Cause" (*aitia*) and "Source" (*archē*) within the divine order (*taxis*) of the Godhead is addressed in book one. These terms and their explanations are important to consider when discussing Basil's understanding of the Son's generation from the Father. In this section, I will provide an overview of Basil's and Eunomius's opposing accounts about the nature and substance of God. This discussion provides the groundwork for book two which focuses on the Son's generation.

### 3.2.1 Basil's Discussion of Unbegotten and Begotten (Section 1.16-18)

We find a primarily scriptural argument for the eternal generation of the Son in section 1.16-1.18. Basil's main point in this section is his rejection of Eunomius's use of Unbegotten and Only-Begotten instead of Father and Son. According to Basil, Eunomius uses Unbegotten and Only-Begotten as an attempt to support his claim that an unlikeness of substance exists between them (*Eun.*115, 118).

In 1.16 Basil starts by quoting Eunomius who says,

"But if God is unbegotten as in the preceding demonstration, he could never admit a begetting which would result in his giving a share of his own proper nature to the one who is begotten, and he would escape all comparison or fellowship with the one who is begotten."(*Apol.* 42)

In response to the quote above, Basil accuses Eunomius of wanting "to show that the only-begotten Son and God is unlike the God and Father, [therefore] he keeps silent about the names of 'Father' and 'Son,' and simply discusses the 'unbegotten and the 'begotten.' He conceals names that belong to the saving faith[.]" Basil then takes Eunomius's statement "But if God is unbegotten...he could never admit a begetting (*Apol.* 42) to mean that God "does not admit of becoming Father, and so he does not 'give a share of his own proper nature to the one who is begotten.'" This leads Basil in section 1.17 to say, "if he could never admit a begetting which would result in his giving a share of his own proper nature to the one who is begotten,' then God is not Father and there is no....It is better for us to leave this blasphemous statement incomplete." Basil regards the Father's begetting of the

Son as revealing a fundamental aspect of who they are. Without the begetting, there is neither a Father nor a Son. Additionally, the Son's generation from the Father means he “share(s) in the Father's own proper nature”. This is vital for one of Basil's central arguments in this section: there is affinity in substance between Father and Son. For Basil, their affinity in substance is attested to by John 14.9 “*whoever has seen me has seen the Father*”<sup>76</sup> and John 12.45 “*And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.*” These verses, according to Basil, demand the closest comparison possible between Father and the Son. Hence, Basil rejects Eunomius's statement that there is no comparison or fellowship between the Father and the one begotten (Apol. 42). He proceeds to use the biblical imagery that the affinity between Father and Son is like a seal and its impression and an archetype and its image.<sup>77</sup> These descriptions make “it...clear that there is identity in each.” DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (2011:117n104) note, “The phrase means either that there is something identical in each or that they are identical. We prefer to retain the ambiguity of the Greek.”<sup>78</sup> Basil's point is that the Son is inseparably bound with, and unmistakably identical to, the Father in the realm of substance.

This brings us to *Against Eunomius* 1.18. In this section, Basil argues for the full divinity of the Son (cf. Kevin Giles 2012:128f). He does so by continuing his argument of the Only-Begotten being “a seal”. He quotes John 6.27 and

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76 Hildebrand (2007:160-172) posits that John 14.9 is the scriptural center to Basil's conception of the Father and the Son. It “plays a key role within the overall theological argument that Basil is making, and he uses it to interpret all the crucial Christological texts.” We observe here that Basil does indeed start off his scriptural defense for the similarity of the Father and Son with John 14.9. For a brief discussion on the historical use of John 14.9 see Hanson, *The Search*, p. 835f.

77 Eunomius also uses the language of “image” to talk about the Son. He says that the “Only-begotten God our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things were made, [is] the image and seal of [the Father's] own power and action” (Apol. 69). For Eunomius the Son as Image “would refer the similarity back, not to the essence of God, but to the action unbegottenly stored up in his foreknowledge prior to the existence of the first-born and of the thing created ‘in him’” (Apol.65). Eunomius believed that the Son is simply the Image of the Father's action and action does not disclose essence. (e.g. Apol. 63). Therefore, Eunomius can continue to claim them to be unlike in substance. We see the irreconcilable difference between Eunomius and Basil on how to understand “Image” as it pertains to the Son. The use of the Son as image (εἰχών) in expounding the doctrine of eternal generation has its roots in Alexander of Alexandria (Widdicombe 1994:133).

78 To translate the phrase “there is identity in each” as “they are identical” would seem to put Basil in the position of having to defend himself against a strong “Sabellian” statement. This charge is negated when we read a few lines later where Basil says the Son is “self-existent life which always preserves the indistinguishability, not by likeness or shape, but in his very substance.”

Colossians 1.15 where the Son is addressed as the seal and image of God. Basil maintains that the Son is not a lifeless image or a product but “self-existent life which always preserves the indistinguishability, not by likeness or shape, but in his very substance.” Basil then turns to address the distinction between Father and Son. He quotes Philippians 2.6 where the Son is said to exist “*in the form of God.*” Philippians 2.6, he says, “reveals the distinctive feature of the divine substance”<sup>79</sup> and likewise speaks about the Son's generation from the Father.

In *Against Eunomius* 1.18, Basil also argues against Eunomius's alienation and separation of the Only-Begotten from the Father. For Basil this has dire consequences because, “[T]he Son is the route to knowledge of the Father because he is kin to the Father. Thus...[Eunomius]...destroys the way of knowledge of the Father” (Hildebrand 2007:69).<sup>80</sup> Separation between Father and Son not only severs the way of knowledge to the Father, but creates a disjunction in the fellowship and comparability of Father and Son. Basil sees this disjunction as clearly contradicting John 5.26,<sup>81</sup> 17.10, and Hebrews 1.3.

To recap we have seen that Basil uses John 6.27 (seal), Colossians 1.15 (image)<sup>82</sup>, and Hebrews 1.3 (radiance and subsistence of the Father) as scriptural attestation of the intimate fellowship and comparability existing between Father and Son. Moreover, these passages are his scriptural grounds for postulating the Son's indistinguishable oneness with the Father. Philippians 2.6 and John 14.9<sup>83</sup> are texts he claims reveals the distinctive features of Father and Son. Hildebrand (2007:165) says of John 14:9, “[I]t makes sense of the other texts. It expresses

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79 Milton Anastos (1981:87) says for Basil “in the form” (of God) in Phil. 2.6 is synonymous with *ousia*.

80 This will be a theme in Basil's writings, e.g. *Homily* 15

81 Concerning John 5.26 and the eternal generation, D.A. Carson (2012:68-69) says, “The proffered explanations [of John 5.26]...are legion, but I suspect the best explanation is an old one: this is an eternal grant. It is not a grant given to Jesus at some point in time, as if *before* that point he did *not* have life-in-himself. After all, John has already insisted that the pre-incarnate Word had life in himself (1:4). Thus John 5:26 helps to establish the peculiar relationships between the Father and the Son, in eternity and from eternity. It is an eternal grant.” See also D.A. Carson, 1991, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Apollos, pp. 256f.

82 Basil notes at the end of his Hexaemeron that eternal generation teaches the Son to be the image and likeness of the Father. See Hexaemeron, book 9, section 6. Blomfield Jackson, (trans.), 1894. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church. 2 Series. Volume 8. Basil: Letters and Select Works*. Electronic Kindle Edition, Location 11278.

83 For the importance of John the evangelist for Basil (often coupled with Origen's influence on Basil) see *Eun.* pp. 57-63.

Basil's basic understanding of the relationship between the Father and the Son, and through it the other texts are given their theological meaning. The Son is in the form of God, he is the image of God, and he bears the seal of the Father because in him the Father is seen and known. Because of this epistemic role, the Son must have communion with the Father" (cf. *Eun.*128f).

### **3.2.2 Basil's Definition of the Commonality of Substance (Section 1.19-21)**

In sections 1.19-1.21, Basil claims that the Father and Son coinhere a common substance. Basil's argument enables him to refute Eunomius's claim that the Father is superior to the Son based on time. His argument in this section is mainly philosophical as Hildebrand (2007:73) says, "Though Basil invokes the metaphor of light, this passage lacks the biblical metaphors of the image of God and the way to the Father...Moreover, the employment of Stoic categories is evident in the clear use of *hypokeimenon* and *ousia* as synonyms...The absence of concrete biblical images and the presence of philosophical language make this explanation of divine communion more abstract." Though Basil never completely uses Greek metaphysical philosophy without modifying it in some (complex) way so as to make it compatible with scriptural revelation (cf. Ayres 2004:198ff; DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:55ff).

In Section 1.19, Basil quotes Eunomius's *Apology* 10.1-9 (*Apol.* 44). He rejects an understanding of the commonality of substance that Eunomius also rejects: that it is a "doling out and division of pre-existent matter." Basil's definition of the commonality of substance which follows represents his preferred language in *Against Eunomius* for talking about the unity and distinction between Father and Son (Radde-Gallwitz 2009:67). He says, "[I]f someone takes the commonality of substance to mean that one and the same formula of being is observed in both, such that if, hypothetically speaking, the Father is conceived of as light in his substrate, then the substance of the Only-Begotten is also confessed as light,<sup>84</sup>

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84 Radde-Gallwitz (2012:68) says that though Basil argues that these titles are literally true he has to "qualify the language of 'Father' and 'Son'. They do not carry any connotations of physical reproduction. The Father's substance is not passed to the Son in the same way that genetic reproduction works. Nonetheless, the language of 'Father' and 'Son' does tell us that the two are of the same nature and that the Father is the cause of the Son. Fathers do not produce offspring that are different from them in nature." T.F. Torrance (1991:120f) notes that the Nicene fathers recognized the dearth of human analogies and metaphors when speaking of God generally and the eternal generation particularly, so they would employ 'light' and 'radiance' "to help them elucidate the relation of Christ as Son and Word to God the Father. This had the effect of preventing any

and whatever one may assign to the Father as the formula of his being, the very same also applies to the Son.” Basil’s understanding of the commonality of substance “is not simply that the Son is ‘equal’ to the Father in light, life, and so forth...[m]ore fundamentally than the claim about the Son’s equality, Basil wants us to see that the Son is *inseparable from the Father* in every way.” (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:72). Basil adds that in addition to their inseparableness “there is a difference in number and in the distinctive features that characterize each.”<sup>85</sup> It is due to the eternal generation of the Son that there is both a “unity in the formula of divinity” between Father and Son and a “difference in number” due to the “distinctive features that characterize each.”

Now that Basil has given his definition of the commonality of substance, he turns his attention in section 1.20 to Eunomius’s statement “it is due to order and to superiorities based on time that the one is a first and the other a second.”

Basil asks concerning the Father and Son “whose substance is common, why is it necessary for them to be subject to order and to be secondary to time?” He quotes Hebrews 1.3<sup>86</sup> where it states that the Son is the radiance and the character of his subsistence “that we may learn that he is of the same substance [*homoousios*].”<sup>87</sup> Hebrews 1.3 has an important effect on how Basil understands ‘order’ when

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projection into God of the creaturely or corporeal ingredient in the terms ‘father’, ‘son’, ‘offspring’, ‘generation’, ‘word’, etc., but it also had the effect of making clear that as light is never without its radiance, so the Father is never with his Son or without his Word.”

85 One can note that *ousia* is not the controlling category for commonality of substance as Basil uses both *hypokeimenon* and *to einai* as synonyms for *ousia* in the passage (Hildebrand 2007:73). Additionally, *hypostasis* is not yet employed in the distinguishing of Persons. Ayres notes that Pro-Nicenes, such as Basil, “are still stumbling towards a clear sense of how to defend their terminologies for persons and essence (2004:203) and the discussion of the individual persons is strongly shaped by the consequences of the divine distinction and simplicity (:278). For more on the Pro-Nicene understanding and terminology concerning divine personhood see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 278-80, 292-96.

86 Hildebrand (2007:61) remarks on Basil’s interpretation of Hebrews 1.3 saying, “Basil’s interpretation of Hebrews 1:3...confirms his use of *hypostasis* as a synonym for *ousia* [in *Against Eunomius*]. This text hinders those who wish to distinguish *ousia* and *hypostasis* in order to give technical linguistic expression to Trinitarian belief...In point of fact, he uses the text only to repudiate Eunomius’s radical subordinationism...*Hypostasis* in Hebrews 1:3 refers to what the Father and Son have in common, not to what makes each unique, and this is how Basil takes the passage. Indeed, the only theological use of *homoousios* occurs in connection with...Hebrews 1:3...and [Basil] consistently uses [this passage] to show that the Son is not subordinate in being to the Father.” Therefore, in this letter “Basil does not set out to distinguish *ousia* from *hypostasis* [or] to make such a distinction the foundation of his Trinitarian thought” (Hildebrand :63).

87 “This is the only place in *Against Eunomius* where Basil describes the Son as *homoousios* with the Father” (DelCogliano/ Radde-Gallwitz 2011:120n112).

talking about the Father and Son. Basil teaches that there is a natural order and an order by deliberation. Basil accuses Eunomius of concealing natural order and mentioning only order by deliberation in order to strengthen his argument.<sup>88</sup>

Basil states that the natural order of Father and Son “is not established by our imposing it but which is found in the natural sequence of things.” He gives an example of natural order as “the kind of order between fire and the light which comes from it. In these cases we say that the cause is prior and that which comes from it is secondary. We do not separate these things from one another by an interval, but through reasoning we conceptualize the cause as prior to the effect.” Giles (2012:215) says, “Possibly the most important contribution the Cappadocian fathers made to the developing orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was their exclusion of the Neo-Platonist premise that what is caused is less than its originating cause, a premise...Eunomius...presupposed. Basil...saw clearly that speaking of the Son as eternally begotten of the Father implied derivation and cause, but [he] would not allow that this language resulted in any subordination whatsoever” (cf. Kurt Erlemann 2012:17n2).

Basil also rejects Eunomius's assertion that “begottenness” can be understood in no other way than as a sequential action. Basil offers a different explanation: “[W]e say that the Father is ranked prior to the Son in terms of the relation that causes have with what comes from them, not in terms of a difference of nature or a pre-eminence based on time. Otherwise, we will deny even the very fact that God is the Father since difference in substance precludes their natural connection.” Milton Anastos (1981:88) says for Basil “[T]here was no need to have subordination in order or for one to be second to the other chronologically. For, he says, it was not possible for God not to coexist eternally with his own timelessly illuminated image (Hebrews 1.3) and not have union with it which transcended all time and ages...Thus, in causal relationship the Father comes before the Son in order—not by difference in nature or in time.” Basil employs a divinely appropriate conceptualization: the order of Father and Son is like fire and light. Fire and light “stand in a necessary relationship, such that if one exists, so does the other. If there is fire, there is light...But, despite this close relation, it would be mistaken to

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<sup>88</sup> By mentioning only order by deliberation, Eunomius was able to claim that the Son is necessarily posterior to the Father in time. This would entail that the Son's generation should be understood as coming from the will of the Father and not according to nature, i.e., God is not generative by nature.

say that 'being fire' and 'being light'...are the same properties. They always go together, but they are not identical with one another” Radde-Gallwitz (2009:160).

Basil ends section 1.19-1.21 by refuting Eunomius's understanding of time.

Basil's explanation of the Father and Son having the same formula of being reveals how he understands the indivisible unity in substance. His explication of the Father as “cause and principle of the Son” reveals how he differentiates them without subordinating the Son in any way. Taken together this section provides a good example of his philosophical account of the eternal generation.

### **3.2.3 Basil's Claim that a Likeness in Substance Exists between Father and Son (Section 1.22-27)**

In sections 1.22-27, Basil counters Eunomius's claim that no likeness between Father and Son exists. In addition, he reinterprets John 14.24, 28 “*The Father who sent me is greater than I*”<sup>89</sup> which Eunomius used as scriptural proof that no equality of substance exists between Father and Son.

Basil begins *Against Eunomius* 1.22 by quoting Eunomius

*“Moreover it is not possible for anything to exist within the substance of God, such as form or mass or size...But if it neither is nor ever could be lawful to imagine any of these things or others like them as being linked with the substance of God, what sort of account will still allow for likening the begotten to the unbegotten?...But no one is so stupid or so defiant of piety as to say that the Son is equal to the Father! For the Lord himself explicitly declared: The Father who sent me is greater than I [Jn. 14.24 and 28].” (Apol. 46)*<sup>90</sup>

Basil starts by questioning Eunomius's logic. Basil says that Eunomius's statement that God must be incomposite and free from form, mass, and size must certainly be said of the Son also. Therefore Eunomius's definition must allow for likeness between Father and Son.

Basil carries the argument for the likeness of Son and Father into *Against Eunomius* 1.23. To begin this section Basil gives his view of divine simplicity as he argues for the likeness of Father and Son: “I consider their likeness to consist in this very thing, since just as the Father is entirely free from composition, so too is the Son altogether simple and without composition...one does not consider

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89 This argument using John 14.28 goes back to Arius. See Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, p. 46.

90 Eunomius, *Apology*, 11.1-12. (EW 46.)

likeness according to the identity of form, but rather according to the substance itself.” Basil continues, “[A]ll that remains for the nature that is without form and...shape is that it has likeness in the substance itself, and in this case equality is ...[an] identity of power. *Christ the power of God* [1 Cor. 1.24]. It is clear that all the Father's power is contained in him. Hence, whatsoever he should see *the Father doing, these same the Son does likewise* [Jn. 5.19].” Basil's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 1.24 and John 5.19 allows him to move quickly from arguing for a likeness of substance to arguing for an equality of substance between Father and Son. Hildebrand (2007:71) says, “Basil and Eunomius conceive differently the relationship between nature and power. For Eunomius, in a sense, God is powerless; that is, the divine essence 'can have no products at all'...divine ingeneracy and divine simplicity demand as much. Basil...with other Pro-Nicenes sees the relationship among substance, power, and product as a strong argument for the similarity of the Father and the Son. Power expresses substance; if Father and Son have the same works, then they must have the same power, and if the same power, then the same substance” (cf. Behr 2004:278ff).<sup>91</sup>

In *Against Eunomius* 1.24, Basil continues his case for the equality of the Son with the Father by bringing John 5.18b into the debate (cf. Anastos 1981:90). Basil explains that even the Jews understood what Jesus was implying in his statement “*that he called God his father* [Jn. 5.18a]. They inferred what follows from this on their own, namely, that *he makes himself equal to God* [Jn. 5.18b]. For 'he has God as his father' necessarily entails that 'he is equal to him.’” Basil says Eunomius admits the first statement but denies the second in his explanation of John 14.24.<sup>92</sup> Basil asks, “[H]asn't he heard the Apostle, who said: *He did not count being equal to God a thing to be grasped* [Phil 2.6]?” As in *Against Eunomius* 1.18, Basil quotes Philippians 2.6. Here Basil uses this passage a bit different than in 1.18, namely, here he uses it as a proof-text for the equality of the Son with the Father. Basil concludes that if Jesus wanted to indicate that the Father has pre-eminence of substance “he would have said: 'The Unbegotten is greater than I.’” Basil now moves away from a primarily scriptural refutation to a primarily logical, perhaps scientific, refutation. Basil maintains that “the designation 'Father' signifies activity and not substance...when you say that the Father is

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91 For Eunomius's argument on essence, power, and will see *Eunomius, the Extant Works*, pp. 57-67.

92 For more on John 14.28 see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 169-174 and Hanson, *The Search*, p. 836.

greater than the Son, you allege that the activity is greater than the product.” Basil reasons that if “the Father is greater than the Son [as Eunomius explains it], it means nothing other than that they posit that the activity is disproportional to the product...But when they stick to this position,<sup>93</sup> they cannot declare that the Father is greater. For every activity, provided that nothing external opposes it, is proportional to its own end-results.” Basil proceeds to give Eunomius two alternatives: admit 'Father' does not indicate activity or stop claiming that John 14.24, 28 teaches the Father to be greater than the Son in essence for it creates both a logical fallacy and impiously implies the Father was not able to produce a Son equal to his activity.

In 1.25 Basil finally gives us his own interpretation of John 14.28. Basil says, “[G]reater than [Jn 14.28] is said either according to the account of cause, or according to excess of power, or according to pre-eminence of dignity, or according to superabundance of mass[.]” Since they both agree that “greater than” can't refer to mass (*Eun.* 126), Basil turns to the question if the Father is greater in power (cf. *Eun.* 122). He again quotes 1 Corinthians 1.24 along with John 10.29 “*My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all*” and 10.30 “*I and the Father are one*”<sup>94</sup> as scriptural proof that the Son should clearly be understood as equal to the Father in power. Concerning the question if the Father is greater in dignity, Basil asks, “[I]f the 'throne of God' is a name of dignity (as we ourselves believe it to be), what else does this seat reserved for the Son at the right hand of the Father signify if not the equal honor of their rank?”

This argument allows Basil to argue that the Father is greater than the Son only “according to the account of cause.” He says, “Since the Son's principle comes from the Father, it is in this sense that the Father is greater, as cause and principle... *The Father is greater than I* [Jn. 14.28], clearly mean[s] insofar as he is Father. But what else does 'Father' signify, other than that he is the cause and the principle of the one begotten from him?”<sup>95</sup> On this passage, Ayres and Radde-

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93 That is, that 'Father' indicates activity. (Translators note 2011:126n135)

94 For a brief discussion on the historical use of John 10.30 see Hanson, *The Search*, p. 835.

95 In interpreting John 14,24, 28 as the Father being greater than the Son as “of principle and cause,” Basil is said to be following Athanasius (cf. Torrance 1991:78; Drecoll 1996:99; *Eun.*127n141). For more on Basil's use of/dependence on Athanasius, see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 154-59; DelCogliano, *The Influence of Athanasius and the Homoiousians*, pp. 197-223; DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, *Against Eunomius*, pp. 63-64; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 186-229; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 264f; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 96ff, 103; T.F.

Gallwitz (2010:466) say, “The Son is casually dependent upon the Father, but in a timeless manner; there is 'begetting' without 'becoming'.” The Cappadocians reference to the Father as “Cause” has often raised eyebrows. Robert Letham (2007:95) says,

“The Cappadocians have been (wrongly) taken to task by some for making the Father the cause of the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit [but]...The monarchy is not limited to one person so that, although the persons are numerically distinct, there is no severance of essence. The Father is the begetter and emitter, the Son is the begotten, and the Holy Spirit the emission, but this is so in the context of equality of nature, a union of mind, an identity of motion[.]”<sup>96</sup>

Ayres argues that Basil's understanding of the Father as “cause” (*aitia*) existing alongside an ontological equality between Father and Son was a novel development in pro-Nicene Trinitarianism.

“In Basil, the Father's sharing of his being involves the generation of one identical in substance and power. The combination of distinguishing *ousia* and *ιδιώματα* and yet maintaining the role of the Father as source heightens the paradox of the incomprehensible depth of the Father's self-giving, and emphasizes even more clearly that in the generation of the Son God's perfection is eternally realized...Basil's skill was to see that one could in fact make use of an account of co-ordinate realities while a robust conception of the Father as source would protect against unacceptable consequences” (Ayres 2004:207).

Basil's explication of the generation of the Son from the Father upholds the ontological equality of the Son with the Father, yet allows that the Father is the source (*archē*) of the Son. In this argument order in divine life is acknowledged, but not hierarchical order. Furthermore, ditheism (two first principles) is excluded (cf. Ayres 2004:207, Giles 2012:130, Radde-Gallwitz 2012:72).<sup>97</sup> As Prestige

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Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 313-20. Partitive exegesis provides an additional explanation of the text: this verse is said of the Son in his humanity.

<sup>96</sup> I disagree with Letham that Basil considers the Father as the “cause” of the Son's deity. On the Father as “Cause” see also Cunningham's helpful comments in *These Three Are One*, p. 112.

<sup>97</sup> T.F. Torrance (1991:78) says the early church understood 'Father' in a “two-fold but indivisible way, as the one being of the Godhead, and as the Father of the Son, whose Person is distinct from the Person of the Son...if the Son is 'whole and complete God, then in a real sense he too must be Origin and Principle of being along with the Father. There cannot...be two or three Sources...but with 'one Godhead and one Principle...it is

(1940:87) says, “The truth is that God is one, not because one divine Person is more important than the others, whether as being their source or on any other ground...because all three Persons are distinct expressions of a single divine reality.”<sup>98</sup>

In 1.26-27, Basil moves away from John 14 and concentrates on refuting Eunomius's statement, “*I believe that what I have already said is sufficient for demonstrating that the one God of all things is unbegotten and incomparable*” (*Apol.* 46). The gist of Basil's argument in these two sections is that it is a contradiction to say the Father is “greater than” (Jn. 14,24ff) the Son and also call the Father incomparable as Eunomius had done (*Eun.* 130). Basil again seeks to prove their likeness in substance by quoting John 10.30. Basil says in this passage the Son “is making himself one (so to speak) with the Father and by these words expressing their indistinguishability of nature.”

In a recapitulation of the material covered, we have seen that due to the scriptural names 'Father' and 'Son' Basil believes that generation belongs to the nature of God (*Eun.* 115ff) and not simply to the Father's will. The generation of the Son which results in him “sharing in the Father's proper nature” allowed Basil to assert that an affinity or likeness of substance exists between Father and Son. He went a step further by claiming that an *equality* of substance exists between Father and Son for scripture teaches them as having the same power and dignity. Though the Father is considered the cause (*archē*) of the Son, this in no way indicates that the Son is ontologically inferior to the Father. The Father as cause and source (*archē*) of the Son simply speaks of divine order (*taxis*) not subordering (cf. Giles

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the *triune* God...who is the one only ultimate Principle or ἀρχή of all things.” A problem, for Torrance (:241), is that he thinks the 'Cappadocians' (note Basil is not expressly named) conflated the two senses of Paternity. Therefore the Person (*hypostasis*) of the Father became, in contrast to Athanasius, the Principle, Cause, or Source of Deity. For Torrance this weakened the oneness of Father and Son and, though subordinationism is ruled out, it implied a hierarchical structure within the Godhead which created problems for future generations. For more see *ibid.*, p. 78ff, 236-43, 317f and Giles account of Torrance's understanding of Basil's use and understanding of “source” and “cause” in *Eternal Generation*, pp. 240ff. G.L.Prestige (1940, 1964) and John Zizioulas (1995) offer different readings of the Cappadocianson this point than Torrance. Finally, in Basil's own comments in the Hexaemeron he speaks of the Son and the Holy Spirit as the principle Cause but in the context of creation (in which the Father is also involved). See Book three, section 4. Jackson, (trans.). *NPNF. 2 Series. Volume 8. Basil: Letters and Select Works*. Electronic Kindle Edition, Location 9181.

98 See similar remarks expressly referencing the Cappadocians, in *God in Patristic Thought* pp. 233, 249, 254f, and 258.

2012:130). In any case, Basil agrees that “substance cannot be greater than substance” (Aristotle, *Cat.* 5. 3b33-4a9; *Eun.* 127).

Now we will move on to book two which more specifically addresses the Son's eternal generation from the Father.

### 3.3 Against Eunomius Book 2

In book two of *Against Eunomius*, Basil focuses on the Son and his generation from the Father (Ayres 2004:191; Hildebrand 2007:162f). Eunomius does not believe that it is possible that God can beget one like himself (*Apol.* 43, 53, 59).

For Eunomius any talk of the generation of the Son should be understood to indicate an unlikeness of substance between the Father and the Son.

Furthermore, Eunomius argues that the Son's generation implies a temporal beginning in the life of the Son which requires his ontological subordination to the Father (*Apol.* 63). In contrast, Basil holds that God is generative by nature.

Furthermore, he is thoroughly convinced that the Father begets the Son in an ineffable manner which results in an affinity in substance existing between Father and Son and the Son's full and complete deity. Additionally, the generation of the Son needs to be understood as eternal and timeless.

In this section, I will provide a detailed account of Basil's understanding of what it means for the Son to be begotten from the Father by looking at Basil's direct statements about the Son's begetting.<sup>99</sup> These statements are often found within the context of the “correct” interpretation of disputed scriptural texts surrounding the Son's begetting, ontological status, affinity to the Father, and his eternity. Basil's partitive exegesis and Eunomius's univocal exegesis are two diametrically opposed hermeneutical presuppositions which make rapprochement between the two impossible. Partitive exegesis interprets scripture as teaching that certain passages are said of Christ's human nature and other passages speak about his divine nature. On the contrary, univocal exegetes, such as Eunomius, did not

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99 Some of Eunomius's views will come from Basil's interpretation of Eunomius's *Apology*. Though Basil almost always accurately quotes or paraphrases the *Apology* (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:39), the polemical style in which he wrote demands trying to understand Eunomius's theology as he meant it. On the rhetorical style used by Basil in this treatise see *Against Eunomius*, pp. 38-46. For more on Eunomius's theology see note 46 above.

make this distinction. Behr (2004:14) says that for Eunomius Christ is viewed as a demi-god, not fully divine or fully man.<sup>100</sup>

While Basil's primary source is the biblical text, he clearly uses Greek (metaphysical) philosophy to help him fortify his arguments (cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:46, 55). Basil admitted as much in his homily, *On Faith*. He said, "I was compelled to fight the heresies that arose from time to time...by arguments gleaned from various sources as the need of those weak in faith required; and in many cases these were not written, yet were not out of harmony with sound Scriptural teachings." Thus, I will give some attention to Basil's philosophical and rational/logical arguments which he employed in order to gird his scriptural defense of the Son's eternal generation, but I will not go into any detailed analysis of Basil's philosophical sources. Meredith (1995:118), discussing the impact of the Hellenic tradition and Greek philosophy on the Cappadocians, expresses well the general attitude of Basilian scholarship when he says, "Basil is less obviously dependent [than the two Gregories] on any one author" (cf. Ayres/Radde-Gallwitz 2010:460).<sup>101</sup> The question of how philosophy informed Basil's theology and vice versa is still a contested subject in Basilian scholarship.<sup>102</sup>

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100 For more on partitive and univocal exegeses see: Mark DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, p. 55; Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, ch. 4; Ayres, *Nicaea*, p. 44; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, vol. 1 pp. 8-17, 126, 149 and vol 2. p. 292; Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*. Hildebrand (2014:80) notes that in this treatise there are few places where Basil employs partitive exegesis, but when he does it is always in conjunction with his distinction between "theology" and "economy." Drawing on John Behr, Hildebrand (:82) says that partitive exegesis must make the distinction between theology and economy. I will address Basil's distinction between theology and economy below.

101 For a (conflicting) account of Basil's possible philosophical sources and his implementation and modification of their terms and/or ideas see: DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz, *Against Eunomius*, pp. 67-75; Ayres & Radde-Gallwitz, *Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, pp. 459-470; DelCogliano *Anti-Eunomian Theory of Names*, passim; Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, passim; David G. Robertson, 2008, *Mind, Language, and the Trinity in Basil of Caesarea* as found in *Reason, Faith, and History. Philosophical Essays for Paul Helm*. M.W.F. Stone (ed.), Ashgate Publishing Company, pp. 13-27; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, passim; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, passim; Anthony Meredith, 1995, *The Cappadocians*, St Vladimirs Press; *Basil of Caesarea Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, 1981, Paul Fedwick editor: Miton Anastos, Basil's KATA EYNOMIOY p. 118n 170, John Rist, *Basil's "Neoplatonism,"* and George Kustas, *Saint Basil and the Rhetorical Tradition*.

102 For other appropriations of Pro-Nicene and especially Basil's utilization of Greek philosophy (in general agreement with Hildebrand) in service of Christian theology see also Spyros P. Panagopoulos and Christos Terezis, 2013, *The Theological Controversy between Eunomius and Basil the Great: A Philosophical Approach*, specifically pp. 3-5 and 25f; Holmes, *Quest*, pp. 196ff; Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, pp.

### 3.3.1 Basil Refutes Eunomius's use of "Something Made" and "Something Begotten" (Section 2.1-10)

Basil spends section 2.1-10 refuting Eunomius's reference to the Son as 'something made' (ποίημα χαταγγέλουσι) and 'something begotten'(γέννημα).<sup>103</sup> His main argument is that these terms are unscriptural and show a lack of piety towards both the Son and the Father.<sup>104</sup>

Basil begins by quoting Eunomius (*Apol.* 47, 49) at length. Eunomius wrote,

“The Son is also one, for he is the Only-Begotten. Now it would be possible to get rid of all concern and trouble associated with this subject simply by quoting the saying of the saints in which they declare that the Son is both something begotten<sup>105</sup> and something made, thereby making the difference in substance clear by the distinction in the names. Yet because of those who assume that this begetting is corporeal and stumble over homonymies, it is perhaps necessary to speak briefly about these matters too.”

In 2.2 Basil asks, “Which of the saints called Christ 'something begotten' and 'something made'? What scriptural passages demonstrate this?” He assumes it is

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146ff; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 39f; Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 27-60, 106f; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 676ff, 730-7, 856-66, 870f.

103 Vaggione (1994:46) translates γέννημα simply as 'offspring'.

104 Dörries remarks that Basil does not just differentiate between “true” and false,” but for all important doctrines he also differentiates “pious” from “impious.” Hermann Dörries, 1956, *De Spiritu Sancto*, Göttingen, p. 48n1. Concerning the effect piety had on exegesis: “All [Church Fathers] agreed that personal disposition and spiritual health affect one's ability to read Scripture well” (Christopher Hall, *Reading Scripture*, quoted by Hildebrand 2007:159). If Basil could “prove” that Eunomius was impious it would be easy for him to render Eunomius's exegesis of scripture as tainted and undeserving of adherence. It would also allow Basil to present his own exegesis as the “correct” interpretation. This is also Basil's reason for comparing Eunomius with the well-known heretic, Marcion. See DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, p. 62.

105 For more on the names 'something made' and 'something begotten' see Mark DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, pp. 45-69. DelCogliano says in using both terms Eunomius aligns himself in the Eusebian tradition (:48) and that 'something made' probably has its roots in Origen (:50). “Hence Basil opposes a long tradition of deriving certain divine names based on what scripture says about the divine person in question. I call this the principle of scriptural implication (:46)...and up to this point almost no one had denied that the Son was 'something begotten' (:47). 'Something begotten' was a central term for Athanasius (albeit in a different context) (:53). DelCogliano (:64) remarks that Basil's use of 'something begotten' wasn't so stringent. For “Basil himself sees value in the term and in fact at times calls the Son 'something begotten' [in *Homily 24*].” But he only endorses “the usage of 'something begotten' for the Son if it is understood that it is a relative term that communicates the Son's natural relation to the Father and for this reason does not communicate substance as Eunomius claimed [in *Eun.* 2.23].”

based on Acts 2.36.<sup>106</sup> In Acts 2.36 “[Peter] says: *Let all the house of Israel know that God has made him Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.*” Basil denies that one can call Christ 'something made' based on this verse because “this testimony has no connection to the issue at hand.”<sup>107</sup> According to Basil, Acts 2.36 is a “testimony about the God and Father, that *he has made*” but, Eunomius alters the phrase “*he has made* so as to call the Maker of the universe 'something made'.” DelCogliano (2011a:59ff) notes that theologians had always derived names for the divine person from what was written *indirectly* about them through the exegetical practice called “scriptural implication.” Nonetheless, Basil rejects Eunomius's scriptural implication of saying God “has made” to name the Son 'something made' and considers it to be a grammatical derivation. “His main point is that scriptural language is so precise that it needs to be strictly adhered to” (DelCogliano :61) (cf. *Eun.* 139).<sup>108</sup> Basil's insistence on using precise scriptural language leads him to argue that scripture only points to creation and never the Son as 'something made'. He uses Genesis 1.1, Psalm 142.5, and Romans 1.20 as proof for his claim. Therefore Basil says, “So 'something made' is passed over in silence as unsuitable for the splendor of his glory...nowhere at all does scripture call [the Son] 'something made'.”<sup>109</sup>

In 2.3, Basil continues his exegesis of Acts 2.36. He says “it was not the intention of [Peter] to communicate to us the subsistence of the Only-Begotten before the ages, which is the subject at hand.” Basil says that scripture does communicate to

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106 Vaggione (1987:49n6) thinks Eunomius is alluding to Prov. 8.22 and 1 Cor. 1.24 in section 12 and not Acts 2.36. In section 26 (*Apol.*71) Eunomius does explicitly quote Acts 2.36 in the context of the incomparability between the Son and the Holy Spirit. Whatever passage, or passages, Eunomius had in mind in section 12 does not have much import for Basil's argument. Eunomius does use these terms of the Son in his *Apology* and in the course of book two Basil will reinterpret all of the passages mentioned above.

107 DelCogliano (2011a:57) notes “Basil's arguments against 'something begotten' and 'thing made' are mainly unique to him...For Basil rejects the principle of scriptural implication that most previous fourth-century theologians had accepted.” DelCogliano (*ibid.*) sees Basil as denying the use of these two name using “two distinct tactics: (1) scripture does not derive these terms in the case of the Son, and (2) scripture only uses these terms when it is not a question of the Son.”

108 For more on Basil's argument against using grammatical derivations see DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea on the Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, p. 59ff.

109 For more on Basil's understanding and use of Acts 2.36 see DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, pp. 57-64; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 119-120. In Acts 2.36, Drecoll (:120) sees Basil using and modifying the arguments of Athanasius in his *Orations Against the Arians*. DelCogliano would agree with Drecoll when Basil is refuting 'something made,' but according to DelCogliano (:53) 'something begotten' was central to Athanasius and Basil's refutation of it would not be building upon Athanasius.

us the subsistence of the Only-Begotten in passages like John 1.2. In contrast, passages like Acts 2.36, Philippians 2.7,<sup>110</sup> 3.21, and 2 Corinthians 13.4, “[Do] not teach us in the mode of theology, but [hint] at the reasons of the economy.”<sup>111</sup> Basil's distinction between the theology and economy of Christ in Acts 2.36 is a prime example on how “Basil and Eunomius differ on how to understand the relation of Christ's humanity and divinity” (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:75). Basil says that Acts 2.36 is “a clear reference to his humanity and to what all saw. But Eunomius transfers the expression 'he made' to the original begetting. Also the term 'Lord' as it is used in Acts 2.36 “does not name a substance but rather is a name of authority...He is not describing his arrival at being.” Basil exhortation here is to “*distinguish* theology and economy, but never *separate* them” (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:75). Basil's partitive exegesis underlies his distinguishing between the theology and economy of Christ.

In 2.4, Basil continues to rail against Eunomius calling the Son 'something made'. Basil argues again that names, even proper names like Peter and Paul,<sup>112</sup> do not communicate substance (cf. *Eun.*:103ff). Therefore 'something made' does not

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110 Hildebrand notes that Eunomius, in his *Apology for the Apology*, attacks Basil's partitive exegesis as being blasphemous for suggesting two Lords and two Christ's. Furthermore, Basil's statement here could be understood as suggesting that “God the Word, or the substance of God the Word, would be one subject, and the one who emptied himself would be another” (Hildebrand 2014:86). “By a later standard, Basil's language here is odd not only because it is open to a Nestorian interpretation but also because he uses the phrase 'ousia of the Word' instead of 'hypostasis of the Word.’” (:179n39). Nevertheless, since Basil writes that Peter was not “describing his arrival at being” or the “original begetting of the Only-Begotten”, both texts refer to the same person (Hildebrand :86).

111 For Basil Christ's eternal divine begetting is theology which is distinguished from the economy of his saving actions (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:133n7). For more on Basil's use of “theology and “economy” see *Against Eunomius*, pp. 51ff; Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 80ff; Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, chps 3-7, passim; DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, p. 55, 62; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, p. 206; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 218-21; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 290-93, 318-24; Kustas, *Saint Basil and the Rhetorical Tradition*, pp. 221-79. Behr (:293) says, “Theology proper...begins only after the economy is concluded, for...all theological reflection is a response to God's act of salvation. Beginning with the one it knows from the economy of salvation, theology then speaks of him...as does John after the Synoptics, in eternal and non-temporal terms, describing his non-temporal begetting from, and eternal presence with, the Father.”

112 For a discussion on Basil's understanding of proper names within his theory of names, see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 190ff. For a discussion on Basil's use and understanding of 'ousia' in this passage see Johannes Zachhuber, 2006, Stoic substance, non-existent matter? Some passages in Basil of Caesarea reconsidered. *Studia Patristica* 41, pp. 425-31. For more on the distinguishing marks in this section see the philosophical tradition of the bundle theory of individuals. DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 196-203.

name the Son's substance. Basil finishes by reiterating his claim that 'something made' is found nowhere in scripture in reference to the Son.

Basil now begins his refutation of Eunomius's use of 'something begotten'. Basil starts by quoting Eunomius that there are “those who assume that this begetting of the Lord is corporeal.” Basil chides Eunomius for being “utterly fleshly in his thinking” as to bring the divine begetting “down to the level of corporeal impressions...[for]...who is such a brute that when he hears that God the Word came forth from God...he sinks down in his thoughts to the level of the body's passions?” Basil, in 2.6, says in regards to God only a weak-minded person who hears 'to beget' would entertain thoughts of a certain division and change and effluence on the begetter's substance. Furthermore, when Eunomius teaches that the Son is 'something begotten' such a weak-minded person will think “that material is introduced from an external source [when] 'something made' [comes] from nothing into existence.”

Basil thinks that Eunomius is averse to speak of the Son as “begotten”, not due to possible corporeal connotations, but because it will ruin his teaching that the Son has no affinity in substance with the Father. This is due to the fact that Basil believes that one who is begotten “must have complete and indistinguishable affinity with the begetter.”<sup>113</sup>

Basil proceeds to point out in section 2.6 that he has never found the Son called 'something begotten' in scripture (cf. *Eun.*166). Basil knows the word translated as “begotten” is found in the Bible in conjunction with the Son so why can't Eunomius call him 'something begotten'? This is due again to Basil's high regard for the exact words recorded in scripture (cf. *Eun.*132f).<sup>114</sup> In 2.7, Basil reasons that Isaiah 9.5 says the begotten child's name is “angel of great counsel” and not “something

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113 In the argument from 2.4-6 we see quite well the thesis of DelCogliano of how to understand *Against Eunomius*. “The central feature...was a rival theory of names. A theory of names explains how names operate...it gives an account of what names signify when they are applied to objects...Eunomius maintained that those names...applied to God...revealed the divine substance...Basil denied that God's names allowed such knowledge...he formulated a theory of names in which...all names fall short of disclosing essence, but nonetheless express accurate and useful knowledge of those who bear the names” (DelCogliano 2010:1). This thesis is not a novel understanding of the letter. See Hanson, *The Search*, p. 630.

114 See also *Eun.* 2.17 where Basil refers to the text of the Bible as “the very words of the Holy Spirit.” In the Hexaemeron Basil says, “[I]n the inspired words [i.e. scripture], there is not one idle syllable.” Book 6, section 11. Jackson, (trans.), *NPNF, Basil: Letters and Select Works*. Electronic Kindle Edition, Location 10234. Concerning Basil's view of inspiration of the biblical text, see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 40ff

begotten". Furthermore in Mathew 16.16,<sup>115</sup> Peter calls Jesus "the Christ, the Son of the living God".<sup>116</sup> Finally, Paul often used 'Son' but never 'something begotten'. Basil tells us we should not alter "the phrase *'he has begotten,'* which is used with reference to the Father, in order to designate the Son of God as 'something begotten'." Basil's point, as DelCogliano (2011a:67) has said, is not that 'Son' only has scriptural warrant, but 'Son' is the Father's preferred name.

Basil continues his scriptural defense against calling the Son 'something begotten' in 2.8. He starts with Philippians 2.9 "*God has...bestowed on him the name that is above every name*"<sup>117</sup> and adds Psalm 2.7 "*For you are my Son, today have I begotten you.*" Basil reasons that the Father in scripture calls him 'Son' and not 'something begotten'. DelCogliano (2011a:67) remarks on the "unusual exegetical move" of Basil's use of Philippians 2.9. The common reading of Philippians 2.10 is that the *name above every name* is taken to be 'Jesus', but as DelCogliano (ibid) notes, "in contrast Basil views the name above every name as 'Son', and cites Psalm 2:7...His use of Psalm 2:7 is clever because it demonstrates that when the Father begets the Son, he himself names him, not 'something begotten', but 'Son'. It is the same argument used for Isaiah 9:6...Thus the proper designation for one who is begotten of God the Father is 'Son', not 'something begotten'."

Basil buttresses his argument by listing many scriptures, as well as arguing from common usage,<sup>118</sup> that human children are kindly called 'my son' or 'my child' and never addressed as 'something begotten.' Scripture does not even call the Son 'child' (Τέκνον)<sup>119</sup> "since it has something too human about it." Basil says the Apostle (Paul) gives other names for the Son, such as 'first-born', 'image', and

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115 According to DelCogliano (2011a:66-68), Basil's use of Matthew 16.16, Paul (in general) in Philippians 2.9, and Psalm 2.7 is to argue "that Scripture's preferred designation for the Son is nothing other than 'Son'."

116 DelCogliano (2011a:67) says that George of Laodicea used this same verse out of Matthew when he likewise argued that the Son should be called 'Son' and not 'begotten'. This is because, as DelCogliano notes, "Peter's use of 'Son' is but a mediation of the Father's own name for the Son."

117 Basil uses Phil 2.9 similarly but pairs it with Acts 4.12 in *letter 210*.

118 DelCogliano (2010:159) explains that the common usage argument means "Basil seeks to understand names by appeal to how speakers of Greek would ordinarily use them. For him the ordinary sense of terms determines their meaning in theological contexts...[this is] meant to contradict Eunomius's claim that names operate entirely differently when applied to mundane and divine realities. Common usage is distinct from scriptural usage, though for Basil in practice they are never opposed." DelCogliano (2010:186) adds that common usage language needs to be purified of created or material connotations when used of God. For more on Basil's use of common usage see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 114-22.

119 Translators' note 141n47.

'radiance.' So "the term 'something begotten' has been exposed as foreign to both common usage and scriptural usage."

In 2.9, Basil wants to know if 'something begotten' "can be applied to the very substance of the Son." He again implements his theory that names do not define substance and applies it here to relative and absolute names.<sup>120</sup> 'Something begotten' does not name the substance, but is a relative term that "only signifies the relation [of one] to another." Even absolute names, like 'human being' or 'ox', only tell us of the distinguishing marks<sup>121</sup> of a thing.

He carries his argument about names and substances to its logical conclusion in 2.10. Basil says it is a logical absurdity if Eunomius is correct and "Unbegotten" is both the Father's name and substance; otherwise everything that comes from the Father, including creation, would have the quality of "unbegottenness." Likewise, 'something begotten' cannot constitute the Son's substance but simply relays to us that "one has been brought into being by the other through begetting[.]" Therefore speaking of the Father as unbegotten and the Son as begotten does not preclude their oneness in substance.<sup>122</sup> Hildebrand (2007:91) notes "[I]n *Against Eunomius*, Basil has no word to describe what results from the addition of divine *ousia* and fatherhood (or sonship); the Father is simply unbegotten *ousia* and the Son, begotten *ousia*."<sup>123</sup>

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120 For a short discussion of Basil's understanding and use of relative names, see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 248ff. For Basil's understanding and use of absolute names see *Against Eunomius* p.72f; DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 212-222, and Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 131f.

121 Radde-Gallwitz (2009:133) notes that Basil's use of "distinguishing marks" is different than in Eun. 2.4. In this passage the distinguishing marks are "features peculiar to a common nature that distinguish that nature or shared substance from others; [they are] *propria* of natures." For a definition of *propria* see *ibid*, pp. xx-xxi, 107f.

122 With the phrase "has been brought into being by the other through begetting" it is important to keep the whole of Basil's argument in mind. This does not imply a beginning to his generation or a temporal gap between Father and Son for the generation is eternal-thus the Son is eternal. Also ontological subordination is not meant (for he argues the Son possess all the deity of the Father), but divine order is established as is differentiation.

123 Hildebrand (2007:62) notes that in *Eun.* 2.4 Basil still equates *ousia* with *hypostasis* and that "*ousia* is taken in the sense of *hypostasis*, not vice versa, and *hypostasis*, etymologically and historically, is the more concrete term" (cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:4). It is the *ιδιώματα* or *ιδιότητες* which truly differentiate the Father and Son at this juncture in Basil's theology (Hildebrand (2007:75). In *letters 210* and *236*, Basil clearly differentiates between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.

### 3.3.2 Basil asserts that the Son is Truly and Eternally Begotten (Section 2.11-18)

Section 2.11-18 focuses on Basil's refutation of Eunomius's claim that "The substance of the Son was begotten but did not exist before its own constitution, yet it exists after it was begotten before all things by the will of the Father" (*Apol.* 49). Basil's main assertion in this section is that the Son is truly and eternally begotten from the Father. This runs contrary to Eunomius who Basil presents as teaching the Son's generation as not from the Father but from nothing (cf. *Eun.* 144, 147, 151) which results in the Son being a creature. Eunomius also understands the generation of the Son as speaking of his temporality (e.g. *Apol.* 49, 61; *Eun.* 145).

In 2.11, Basil takes issue with Eunomius's representation of the Son as "posterior to time and...to the ages" for it does harm to Basil's presupposition that the Father is always Father.<sup>124</sup> In 2.12, Basil argues if God was not always Father then it was due to either a lack of knowledge of what is best or a lack of power which is blasphemy against the notion of the perfection of God. Basil says that God "has a Fatherhood (if I may give it such a name) that is coextensive with his own eternity." Basil understands the relative term 'Father' to be an eternal name which necessitates the notion of a 'Son'.<sup>125</sup> This leads Basil to say, "From whatever point the Father exists, the Son also exists." Although the Father is the Son's origin and cause, there is absolutely no void or interval between their existences (cf. *Eun.* 120f, 126f, 153). Any interval between their existences would create an irreparable breach, precluding both their communion with one another and the Son as the way to knowledge of the Father (cf. *Eun.* 118; Hildebrand 2007:69).

Basil continues his contention that the Son is eternally from the Father by putting forth both a scriptural and common usage argument in section 2.13. His common

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124 Basil draws upon Origen (cf. DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:145n62; Radde-Gallwitz 2012:72n17). For Origen the Son's generation "entails the affirmation of the eternity of God's fatherhood (Widdicombe, *Fatherhood of God*, p. 66). For more on the Father and Son as eternally Father and Son see: DelCogliano, *Christian Doctrine and Practice*, p. 264; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 22-30; Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*. On his discussion of the homily *On Not Three Gods*, DelCogliano (2011b:111) says for Basil "'Father' and 'Son' are not mere names, but truly signify who the Father and Son are." For more on Basil's understanding that the Father is eternally Father see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 120f. Drecoll argues that God as eternally Father entailing an eternal Son comes out of the Aristotelian understanding of relative names. It was developed and modified by Origen and later by Alexandrian bishops like Alexander and Athanasius.

125 For more on relative terms and their significance for the doctrine of the eternal generation see DelCogliano, *Theory of Names*, pp. 222-253 and Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 198-202.

usage argument demonstrates that every interval is classified as either a 'time' or 'age'. His scriptural argument, based on Hebrews 1.2 and John 1.2-3, shows that the Son is not only before anything that could be called time or ages, but he has created time and ages. Therefore, Basil says, the mind “will not discover any means at all by which it could extend itself beyond the beginning of the Only-Begotten.”

Basil continues on in 2.14 by quoting and paraphrasing Eunomius that the Son

“was begotten by the will of the God and Father. *For God has begotten the Son either when [the Son] existed or when he did not exist. But if it occurred when he did not exist, no one should accuse me of audacity. But if it occurred when he did exist, this reasoning is not only the pinnacle of absurdity and blasphemy, but also utter silliness. For that which exists has no need of begetting.*” (*Apol.* 49)<sup>126</sup>

We see Eunomius's view, which comes to us from a faithful paraphrase by Basil (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:148n68), is that the begetting of the Son has to imply his non-existence before his begetting. Any talk of the Son's begetting while he existed is absurd, silly, and blasphemous. Therefore, Eunomius speaks of the Son being from the “will of the Father” which comes from the 'Eusebian' theological trajectory (Ayres 2004:53). The Son being from the will of the Father has the effect “both to secure the generation of the Word against materialist division of God, and to emphasize the unique character of the Father as true God” (*ibid*)<sup>127</sup> though it “would mean the same as saying [the Son] was created in time and thus a 'product' or 'work' external to God” (Giles 2012:132).<sup>128</sup>

Since Eunomius teaches the Son to be from the will of the Father (e.g. *Apol.* 49), he considers himself able to teach begetting in non-corporeal terms (cf. *Eun.* 137, 148). Basil, however, accuses Eunomius of understanding the Son's begetting in a fully human manner. Eunomius believes that “one begotten today did not exist yesterday.” Eunomius then “transfers this notion to the subsistence of the Only-Begotten” so that “since [the Son] has been begotten, he did not exist before his

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126 “The words in italics are actually a paraphrase of Eunomius—and a faithful one at that.” (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:148n68).

127 For more on Eusebius and the 'Eusebians' see *Against Eunomius*, p. 63; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 52-61; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 10ff, 74,79, 126.

128 A discussion of why the Son's generation is a “necessary act of God” is found in the introductory chapter.

begetting.” Eunomius's view moves Basil to defend the eternalness of the Son through his eternal begetting. Basil's defense of his position comes primarily through an exposition of John 1.1.<sup>129</sup> Basil says 'was' in John 1.1 is not used relative to something else as in Sirach 1.14, Proverbs 16.7, or Genesis 1.1 nor does “'was'...suggest temporal existence” as in Job 1.1, 1 Samuel 1.1 or Genesis 1.2. “'Was' is coextensive with the unsurpassibility of this beginning.” Basil interestingly notes how “the evangelist himself showed us the meaning of 'was' in this sense when he said: *I am the one who is and who was, the Almighty* [Rev.1.8]. The one *who was* is just like the one *who is*: both are eternal and non-temporal alike...For something prior to the beginning is inconceivable, and the being of God the Word is inseparable from this beginning.”

In 2.15, Basil considers his interpretation of an eternal generation to be scripturally grounded when he says that “the divine sayings testify to the Son's begetting before the ages.” He first tells how the three synoptic Gospels relate the “corporeal origins.” That is good, but it was the evangelist John who was given the ability to “[apprehend] the beginning itself and left behind all corporeal and temporal notions.” Basil quotes John 1.1 and says that this verse teaches the “Son's existence from eternity. His begetting without passion. His connaturality with the Father. The majesty of his nature. All these points he covers in a few words. By including *was*, he guides us back to the beginning.” Basil continues with John 1.2 where the evangelist “by including the phrase '*was*' connects the begetting of the Only-Begotten to the eternity of the Father.” He adds John 1.4 and 1.9 as “passages that include phrases indicative of eternity [and] thereby confirm this account.” This leads Basil to ask, “But if, as you claim, this begetting was not in the beginning, could there be a more conspicuous fight against the saying of the gospels in which we believe?” For Basil the opening of John's Gospel serves as scriptural testimony to the Son's eternal generation from the Father (cf. Behr 2004:293; *homily* 16).

In 2.16, Basil finally gives his view on how to, and how not to, understand the Son's generation from the Father:

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129 The translators (2011:149n71) mention that Basil here “draws upon Origen. For a more detailed exegesis of John 1.1-2 by Basil see his *Homily on the Beginning of the Gospel of John* in *Christian Doctrine and Practice*, Mark DelCogliano (trans.) 2012. For more of Basil's use and understanding of John 1.1 in *Against Eunomius* see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 85-92.

“I think anyone with even a slight concern for the truth would dismiss corporeal comparisons, avoid sullyng the notions about God with material imaginations, and follow the theological teachings transmitted to us by the Holy Spirit. Instead of posing these questions, which have no lack of conundrums, in which either of the options contains a risk, they should, on the one hand, conceive of a begetting that is worthy of God, one without passion, partition, division, and temporality, being led to the divine begetting in a way consistent with the radiance that shines forth from light. They should, on the other hand, conceive of the image of the invisible God [Col. 1.15],<sup>130</sup> not as that which is produced later than the archetype like those images produced by human skill, but as that which is co-existent with and subsists alongside the one who brought him into subsistence. For the image exists by virtue of the fact that the archetype exists. The image is not formed through imitation, since the whole nature of the Father is manifest in the Son as in a seal. It may help you if we say that it is like a teacher inculcating the full reality of art in his disciples: the teacher loses nothing, and the disciples attain the fullness of the art. But this example surely does not exhibit an exact resemblance because of the temporal interval. It is more suitable to say that it is like the nature of concepts that co-exist non-temporally with the motions of the mind.” (*Eun.* 2011:152)

On this passage Behr (2004:309) says, “The Son's 'begetting,' therefore, refers not so much to a discrete divine act as to the particular relationship in which the Son stands to the Father, one of derivation and identity of being.” Behr’s explanation of section 2.16 shows that he understands the doctrine of eternal generation to uphold both the 'formula of substance' and differentiation between Father and Son.<sup>131</sup>

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130 Drecoll (1995:92) notes that here Christ is identified as εἰκών (Col. 1.15) and the “Ziel der Vergleiche ist es, die Gleichzeitigkeit von Vater und Sohn zu zeigen.”

131 The so-called Cappadocian settlement states that God has revealed himself as “one *ousia* and three *hypostasis*.” Basil does not use this expression or “formula” in this letter (cf. DeICogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:4). It will later become “orthodox Christianity” (:35). Radde-Gallwitz (2012:96) says, “Basil himself first used 'three *hypostases*' in *Eun.* 3.3 However, only in 376 did it become his preferred language for naming the three.” Hildebrand (2007:199) says, “strictly speaking, he never employed [the formula].” This time quoting Lienhard, Hildebrand (:199n37) says, “the formula, 'one *ousia*, three *hypostasis*,' is 'more a piece of modern academic shorthand than a quotation from the writings of the Cappodocians.” The closest that Basil got to the formula that I have seen is in *homily 24 (Sab)* in section 2 paragraph 2 and section 3 paragraph 2 in *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, Mark DeICogliano (trans.), pp. 292 and 294 respectively and *letter 236 (D 3:403)*. In regards to this letter and the use of “one substance and three Persons” see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 283f.

At the start of 2.17,<sup>132</sup> Basil gives his own appraisal of what he said in 2.16. “No one should quibble over our account here, if none of the examples harmonize completely with the matter at hand. For trivial and insignificant things cannot be adapted exactly to divine and eternal realities.<sup>133</sup> They are used only insofar as they refute the false pretenses of those who cannot apprehend begetting with their mind in a way that does not involve passion.” Basil is keen to exclude any notion of passion when speaking of the Son's begetting (cf. *Eun.* 151ff, 163f). Banishing thoughts of passion in God was one aspect of the Son's generation in which Eunomius and Basil agreed upon (e.g. *Apol.* 53; *Eun.* 151ff, 163ff).

In order to give a non-corporeal and passionless account of the Son's begetting, Basil turns to scripture. He starts with a passage which he used in 2.16, namely, “the Son is said to be and is the begotten *image* [Col. 1.15; 2 Cor. 4.4].” He continues that the Son is “*the radiance of the glory of God* [Heb. 1.3], and...God's *wisdom, power* [1 Cor. 1.24], and *righteousness* [1 Cor. 1.30],<sup>134</sup> though not as a possession, nor as a faculty. On the contrary, he is living and active substance and *the radiance of the glory of God* [Heb. 1.3]. For this reason, in himself he reveals the Father in his entirety, as he is the *radiance of his glory* in its entirety. So isn't it utterly absurd to claim that the glory of God is without its radiance? That at some point the wisdom of God was not with God?”<sup>135</sup> Drecoll (1995:93) says with the verses above “[S]etzt Basilius...drei Akzente; er betont a) die

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132 For a good discussion on *Eun.* 2.17 see Anastos, 100f.

133 For Basil's use of analogy despite its inadequacy in the light of God's incomprehensibility see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 282ff.

134 For more on these verses see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 92-96,103, Kurt Erlemann, *Trinität*, p.56, Holmes, *The Quest*, p.137. Concerning Basil's use and understanding of Col. 1.15 together with 2 Cor. 4.4, see Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 73ff.

135 Calling the Son “Wisdom” and, at the same time, attributing 'wisdom' to God is the practice of appropriation. Ayres (2004:297) defines this, as it relates to Pro-Nicenes, as “the practice of attributing to one divine person an attribute or action that is common to the Godhead and thus to all divine persons[.]” He notes that appropriation is closely linked to divine simplicity and inseparable operations. So in this section, Basil, appropriating the Son as 'Wisdom' within an understanding of the simple essence of God has the effect of proving that the Son both is and possesses that which belongs alone to God, showing in the process that the Son is divine both in his essence and in his acts. Attributing the practice of appropriation to Basil might be charged with being anachronistic. The doctrine is found in later Latin theologians (e.g. Augustine) but not specifically in the Greek Fathers. For another helpful definition of appropriation see Christiane Tietz, *Systematisch-theologische Perspektiven zur Trinitätslehre*, in *Trinität*, Volker Drecoll (Hg.), Tübingen, p. 175. Drecoll (2011:266) thinks that the term '*hypostase*' is more marked than appropriation especially when grounding the totality of the divine person's individual existence.

Gleichzeitigkeit von Vater und Sohn, b) den unlösbaren Zusammenhang zwischen beiden und c) die wesensmäßige Übereinstimmung zwischen beiden.” Similarly, Ayres (2004:279) says for Basil “God is one power, glory, majesty, rule, Godhead essence, and nature” which he uses in 2.17 in a metaphysical sense to emphasize divine unity (cf. *Eun.*118ff). In addition to affirming what Drecoll and Ayres say, I would argue that in 2.17 Basil also understands these verses as scriptural references to the eternal generation of the Son. Hildebrand supports this reading. He (2007:168f) says, “The centerpiece of Basil's explanation of divine generation is John 14:9. Basil uses a cluster of scriptural texts to describe what takes place in divine generation...In [*Against Eunomius* 2.17] Basil explains the generation of the Son with allusions to key Christological Scriptures, and all of these point to the teaching of John 14:9.” Important here to note is that Hildebrand (2007:169) translates the phrase “he reveals the Father in his entirety” which is found in the DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz translation (*Eun.*153) as “he wholly shows himself in the Father” and makes a reference to John 14.9. The DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz translation does not make any mention of John 14.9 in this section.

Basil continues 2.17 by postulating a possible objection from Eunomius “But if he was, then he has not been begotten.” Basil answers this objection by saying “[L]et us answer that it is because he was begotten that he was. He does not have unbegotten being, but he always is and co-exists with the Father from whom he has the cause of his existence.” If Eunomius would ask: “So, then, when was he brought into being by the Father?” Basil's reply would be: “From whatever point the Father exists...[since]...the Father is from eternity...the Son is also from eternity, being connected in a begotten way to the unbegottenness of the Father.” I agree with Giles (2012:132) when he says that for Basil “if the Father and Son are alike eternal, and one is rightly understood to be 'unbegotten God' and the other 'begotten God,' then the eternal generation of the Son logically follows.”

Basil continues his scriptural defense of the Son's eternal begetting. He quotes John 1.1 in conjunction with “the Psalm spoken in the person of the Father: *From the womb before the daybreak I have begotten you* [Ps 109.3].<sup>136</sup> When we combine both of these, we can say both that he was and that he has been begotten. The phrase *I have begotten* signifies the cause from which he has the origin of his being. The phrase *he was* signifies his non-temporal existence even

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136 For a very brief discussion on the historical use of Psalm 109.3 in the “pro-Nicene and Arian arguments” see Hanson, *The Search*, p. 834.

before the ages.” Here Psalm 109.3 functions as an explicit scriptural reference to the Son's generation. John 1.1, which Basil had used in 2.15 to refer to the generation of the Son and to his eternity, is now employed as referencing only the Son's eternalness.

Basil ends 2.17 by turning to a semantic argument about the words “ages,” “unbegotten,” and “eternal.” Basil mentions again that the Son is the creator of the ages (cf. *Eun.*144ff) and must be before them. In discussing 'unbegotten' and 'eternal,' Basil makes an important “notional difference” between the two. He says, “For 'unbegotten' is said of that which has no beginning and no cause of its own being,<sup>137</sup> while 'eternal' is said of that which is prior in being to every time and age. Therefore, the Son is eternal but not unbegotten.” DelCogliano (2011c:222) says, “Basil's point here is that each term gives rise to a distinct notion; they are non-synonymous. His argument demonstrates his awareness of the Eusebian and Heteroousian tradition of viewing these names [i.e. unbegotten/eternal] as synonymous. 'Unbegotten' is not the privileged term that the Eusebians and Heteroousians thought it was.”

In 2.18 Basil starts by quoting Eunomius

“For our part, clinging to that which has been demonstrated by the saints of old and even now by us, since the substance of God does not admit begetting and since there is no other substance existing which serves as the substrate for the begetting of the Son, we assert that the Son was begotten when he did not exist.” (*Apol.* 51, 53)

Basil chides Eunomius for denying the eternity of the Son and thus “destroy[ing] the glory of the Only-Begotten.” Basil now makes use of the Old Testament to support his claim that the Son is eternal. Basil asks if the Son “Didn't...find a designation well-suited for himself and fitting for his own eternity when he named himself *He Who Is* in his oracle to Moses his servant?<sup>138</sup> He said: *I am He Who Is*

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137 This is “another aspect of Basil's demotion of 'Unbegotten' that finds no analogue in his predecessors. He rejects the Eusebian and Heteroousian equation of the adjectives 'unbegotten,' 'beginningless,' and 'eternal.’” (DelCogliano 2011c:221).

138 For a brief summary of Basil's exegetical assumptions regarding the Old Testament see *Against Eunomius*, pp. 58-60 and Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 102-139. As DelCogliano and Radde-Gallwitz (2011:59) note, Basil stands in the exegetical tradition of interpreting the 'angel of the Lord' as pre-incarnational theophanies of the Son.

[Ex. 3.14].<sup>139</sup> No one will object when I say that these words were spoken in the person of the Lord, at least no one who does not have *the veil* of the Jews upon his heart...[2 Cor. 3.15].” Next, Basil mentions the story of the angel of the Lord appearing to Moses in the burning bush. He notes carefully “After mentioning the angel at the outset of the narrative, scripture introduces the voice of God when it says that he said to Moses: *I am the God of your father Abraham* [Ex. 3.6]. So, then, who is this one who is both angel and God alike? Isn't it he whom we have learned is called by the name *the angel of great counsel* [Is. 9.5]?” Basil goes on to say that the Son “did not disdain the designation 'angel'.”<sup>140</sup> Basil notes how the 'angel of God' and the 'I am God' appear in Genesis 31.11, 13, and Genesis 28.13. “So, then,” Basil says, “it is clear to all that, where the same one is designated both 'angel' and 'God,' it is the Only-Begotten who is revealed...announcing the will of the Father to his saints.” Basil interprets “he [who] named himself He Who is before Moses, [the same is]...God the Word, who was in the beginning with God [Jn. 1.2].”

Basil's logic through his exegesis of Genesis 31.11, 13; Exodus 3.2, 6, 14 and Isaiah 9.5<sup>141</sup> is as follows: The angel of the Lord who speaks with Moses is also called God, thus the angel of the Lord is equated with God. The Son is called an angel (of great counsel) in Isaiah 9.5, thus the angel of the Lord is equated with the Son for a “normal angel” can't be called 'God' in the sense that the context in these verses demands. Thus, the Son is God, divine and eternal. The incarnation of the Angel of the Lord could also be interpreted as the corporeal and temporal manifestation of the incorporeal and eternal generation though Basil never makes this point.

In 2.11-18, Basil took pains to show that scripture teaches that the Son is eternal and has been eternally begotten from the Father. In support of his claim Basil used John 1.1-9, Hebrews 1.2-3, Colossians 1.15 often in combination with 2 Corinthians 4.4, 1 Corinthians 1.24. In the Old Testament, he referenced Genesis

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139 Eunomius had already used this verse in his *Apology* ((possibly section 8); 16.10-14; 17.1-2) to claim that the name God gives Himself here is synonymous with 'ingenerate'. This fits into his conception of divine simplicity that all names of God are synonymous (with 'ingenerate'). See Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp 104-5; 125-6 and Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 274.

140 The translators (2011:156n91) note, “In what follows Basil demonstrates that the Lord was called 'angel' even before Moses.”

141 On these Old Testament verses see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 166ff.

31.11, 13, Exodus 3.2, 6, 14, Isaiah 9.5, and Psalm 109.3. Radde-Gallwitz (2012:33) says, “Since at least the time of Origen...it was understood that inquiry into difficult theological and doctrinal questions must be guided by scriptural paradigms. These are biblical passages that are meant to guide the reader's contemplation. So...passages such as 1 Corinthians 1:24 [were connected with] similar ones, such as...Proverbs 8. We will see that Basil's theology revolves around his interpretation of such passages[.]”<sup>142</sup> Radde-Gallwitz's mention of Proverbs 8 leads us to the next section.

### **3.3.3 Basil discusses Proverbs 8.22 (Section 2.20)**

Basil quotes Eunomius as saying,

“For this reason he is the Only-Begotten, since he was begotten and created by the power of the unbegotten, as only one from only one, thereby becoming his most perfect minister.” (*Apol.*53)

Basil takes issue with Eunomius linking 'Only-Begotten' with 'creature'.<sup>143</sup> The link implies the Son was begotten in the same way as all other creatures. That kind of implication goes against common usage and “the pious tradition of scripture.” Basil supposes Eunomius takes Proverbs 8.22 as a scriptural precedent for his language. Proverbs 8.22 was first employed by Arius to argue that the Son was a creature (Young 2010:46). Armed with Proverbs 8.22, Basil says men such as Eunomius “launch an assault on the faith. On the basis of that passage said in the person of Wisdom: the Lord created me [Prov. 8.22], they have supposed that it is permissible for them to call the Lord a 'creature'...First of all, this is said only once

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142 On a side note, Giles (2012:132) makes a case that for Basil the term *monogenēs* is *not* important for his doctrine on the eternal generation. This is mentioned because one contemporary objection to this doctrine is that it is based on a doubtful translation of the term *monogenēs*. Giles is correct in this assertion as it concerns Basil. Where verses in which *monogenēs* are found (John 1.14, 18; 3.16, 18; 1 John 4.9) only John 1.14 and 1.18 are used by Basil and the term *monogenēs* plays no part in his arguments that assert or defend the doctrine of the eternal generation. For an overview of the discussion of *monogenēs* and its (disputed) impact on the doctrine of the eternal generation see Giles, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 64-68, 144-48 and Robert Letham, 2004, *The Holy Trinity In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*, P& R Publishing, pp. 384-88.

143 Eunomius had only used the verb “created” (χρισθείς). Creature as a reference to the Son probably has its roots in Origen (DelCogliano 2011a:50). The differentiation between Creator and created, especially when arguing for the “irreducible unity of the three irreducible divine persons” was an axiom of Pro-Nicene theology, see Ayres, *Nicaea*, 278, 284f, 300f.

in all the scriptures.<sup>144</sup> Second, in this book a great deal of the meaning is hidden...dark sayings and enigmas, such that no one may take anything from it that is either indisputable or crystal-clear.”<sup>145</sup> Therefore, Basil concludes that Eunomius's use of 'creature' to talk about the Son does not stand on stable exegetical ground. DelCogliano (2008:185-86) says, “Basil is unique in acknowledging that no interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 is convincing. His predecessors had wasted much ink arguing for particular interpretations that failed to win over their opponents.”

Basil continues, “the following point [should not] go unnoticed: that other translators, who have hit upon the meaning of the Hebrew words in a more appropriate way, render it as “he acquired me” instead of he *created me*.” DelCogliano (2008:187) says that in referring to the different possible Hebrew translations “Basil is completely dependent on Eusebius [of Caesarea].”<sup>146</sup>

### **3.3.4 Basil discusses the names 'Father' and 'Son (Section 2.22-24)**

In 2.22, Basil starts his defense of the names 'Father and Son' as well as the term “begotten.” Eunomius's opinion on these terms is given in the following quote, “When one attends to the designation 'Father and Son,' one must not think of his begetting as human, and one must not start from generation among human beings and subject God to the names and passions of partnership.” (*Apol.*53)

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144 DelCogliano says that this a *hapax legomenon*. “The implication here is that because Scripture speaks of the Son’s creation only in this verse, it should be discounted in the face of abundant scriptural evidence elsewhere that the Son is begotten and not created. Eusebius of Caesarea made a similar point in his *Ecclesiastica theologia* when arguing against Marcellus of Ancyra’s interpretation of Prov. 8:22[.]” DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology. Journal of Theological Studies*, NS, Vol. 59, Pt 1 p. 185, April 2008.

145 For a short overview for his exegetical method on Prov. 8.22 see DelCogliano 2011a:66.

146 The translators note that “Basil never returns to the exegesis of Prov. 8.22, within *Eun.* or elsewhere in his corpus. (2011:160n104). Basil does address Prov. 8.22 in *homily 12, On the Beginning of Proverbs*, DelCogliano (trans.) 2012. In this homily, which is thought to precede *Against Eunomius*, Basil is aware of the teaching of Eunomius and likely addresses him (DelCogliano 2012:46). In *homily 12*, Basil's use of Prov. 8.22 is very brief and does not concern itself with possible Christological/Trinitarian implications, but he uses the verse to simply show that visible things (creation) proclaim that the world was made by God (:56). On a side note, Drecoll mentions that Meletius, whom Basil supported in his bid to become archbishop of Alexandria, relayed some of his understanding of Prov. 8.22 in a preaching, some of which is available to us. But due to extenuating circumstances (the presence of the Emperor, who was unfavorable to the theological position of Meletius) verse 22 only comprises “a sixth of the sermon” and thus we are not able to glean much that is useful to understand how Basil and those close to him interpreted this verse in the late 350's to early 360's. For more on Meletius' exegesis on Prov. 8.22 see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 10ff.

This quote leads Basil to charge Eunomius with denying that 'Father' and 'Son' actually refer to God. Basil claims that Eunomius teaches the name 'Father' is only a pseudonym and 'Son' is a mere designation, simply because of the danger of understanding these names in a way that conveys passion in God. In contrast, Basil considers the names 'Father' and 'Son' as essential to the faith. He says, “[T]here is no doctrine in the gospel of our salvation more important than faith in the Father and the Son...For we have not put our faith in the Creator and something made. Rather, we have been sealed in the Father and the Son[.]”

Basil contends that the pious can rightly reflect on the names 'Father' and 'Son' by repudiating anything that is unbecoming of God. Furthermore, the pious “think of the begetting [in a way] that is suitable for the holiness and impassibility of God.”<sup>147</sup> So in regards to the eternal begetting: “[One] must lay aside as ineffable and incomprehensible the manner in which God has begotten...[and] he must be mentally conveyed from the designation 'begetting' to likeness in substance” (cf. *Eun.*:152).<sup>148</sup> Here we clearly see that Basil claims the eternal begetting of the Son grounds the Son's likeness in substance to the Father.

In 2.23, Basil takes pains to show that a proper understanding of 'Father, Son, begetting' does not harm God's impassibility and immutability, nor do 'Father, Son, begetting' necessarily introduce notions of passion. He bases his claim on “our guide to the truth: since corruptible beings beget [in a way that involves passion, passibility, and mutability], the incorruptible one does so in the opposite way.” Here Basil is arguing by way of the Creator-creation distinction which is a fundamental Pro-Nicene axiom (cf. Ayres 2004:288).<sup>149</sup> As Ayres (:322) says, “Pro-Nicenes show a heightened sensitivity to the ways in which the created order mirrors the divine incomprehensibility and the extent to which it may serve as a training ground for our apprehension of the divine. The creation shares in and imitates divine qualities and modes of existence in a variety of ways consequent on its ordered division.”

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147 Hübner (1993:86) says that the following paragraph from Basil “[F]aßt die Überlegungen zusammen, mit denen Basilius von Ankyra in der Denkschrift seiner Synode von 358 die Gleichheit der *ousia* nach zu begründen sucht...und benutzt damit ebenfalls homoiousianische Begrifflichkeit.”

148 This argument seems to show that Basil believed “'Father' indicated 'he who provides to another the beginning of being in a nature similar to his own.' [*Eun.* 2.22]...is quite similar to those [views] of Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea.” Thus, “Basil of Caesarea's notion of divine Fatherhood is derived from the Homoiousians rather than Athanasius” (Mark DelCogliano 2011c:221).

<sup>149</sup> For more on the Creator-creation distinction in Pro-Nicenes see Ayres, *Nicaea*, chps, 11-12.

Furthermore, Basil argues, Jesus himself told us to call God our Father in Matthew 23.9. “So, then, how can Eunomius believe that we ought to reject these terms [Father, Son, begetting] because they principally indicate the passions of the flesh, when the Lord transfers them from human beings to God as fitting for his impassibility?”

Basil wraps up his argument dealing with the terms 'Father, Son, begetting' in 2.24. He states, “God is called Father in the proper and suitable sense...not a name of passion but affinity...by nature as in the case of the Only-Begotten” because he believes the names 'Father and Son' are not metaphors but true names (cf. *Eun.*165). Basil does consider 'begotten' to be used figuratively and metaphorically. Thus it needs to be stripped of its corporeal connotations just like when God is said to fall asleep or fly. The proper understanding of 'begotten' according to Basil is that it signifies “an affinity of nature between begetter and the one begotten.” This is what is meant by *From the womb before daybreak I have begotten you* [Ps 109.3] and *You are my Son; today I have begotten you* [Ps 2.7]. Since the Spirit so often employs the term 'begotten' in scripture Basil thinks we should not eschew the term but “put aside meanings that are less good.” Basil appeals to someone like Eunomius who would press for a humanly rational account of the divine begetting. Basil says, “Do not say to me: 'What is the begetting? What kind of thing is it? How could it happen?' Even now we are not going to repudiate the solid foundation of our faith in the Father and the Son because the manner of the begetting is ineffable<sup>150</sup> and utterly inconceivable”<sup>151</sup> for not everything of faith is “evident to our reasoning.” According to Drecoll, this passage in 2.24 once again betrays a Eusebian influence on Basil. He (1996:13) says, “Die Aussagen über die Unfassbarkeit der φύσις des Sohnes werden anschließend konkret auf die γέννησις angewandt, die in eusebianischer Tradition nicht näher expliziert werden kann...wer es dennoch versucht, dem wird es wie Zacharias gehen, dem Gott wegen seiner Voreiligkeit beim Sprechen Schweigen auferlegt hat.”

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150 According to Widdicombe (1994:134) it was first Alexander of Alexandria who took “the Origenian logic...a step further: if the Father is unknowable, so also the manner of origin...of the Son is beyond the grasp of created minds; the Father alone knows the divine mystery of the Son's generation.”

151 For an overview of the knowability of God in the writings of the church fathers in the time period covering the Nicene and Constantinople Creeds see T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 47-68.

In this section, Basil understands the names 'Father' and 'Son' to correspond to the reality of the Persons to which they refer. Therefore, when someone puts their faith in these names, this faith is saving faith. Basil intricately intertwines the “solid foundation of our faith in the Father and the Son”<sup>152</sup> with the Son's begetting.<sup>153</sup> As Giles (2012:132) says eternal generation “is a doctrine that arises out of [a conceptualization] (*epinoia*) on the biblical revelation that God is the Father and the Son, names that suggest a generative act in eternity.”<sup>154</sup>

### 3.3.5 Basil defines Nicaea's “Light from Light” (Section 2.25-28)

Basil wants to “pass on to his capital offense” in 2.25, which is Eunomius's reinterpretation of Nicaea's “light from light.”<sup>155</sup> Basil understands the Son as “begotten light” and the Father as “unbegotten light,” terms which imply both the notion of the oneness in substance and also differentiation. Hildebrand (2007:66f, 75) says, “The weakness—if it may be so called—at this stage in Basil's Trinitarian theology is that he has no distinct word for what the Father is and what the Son is. The Father is unbegotten *ousia* and the Son, begotten *ousia*...Though he does have a word for the unique and distinguishing traits of each—fatherhood and sonship are properties (ἰδιώματα or ἰδιότητες)--he does not have a unique word for the subject possessing these traits. Basil will refine his understanding of the divine plurality in his polemic against Sabellianism.”

Basil summarizes Eunomius as teaching “these lights are absolutely incomparable.” If someone does not acknowledge the incomparability, then, according to Eunomius, “we are obligated to confess that God is composite.” Basil will spend much time (sections 2.25-29) countering Eunomius's conception of begetting/divine plurality and its relation to divine simplicity.

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152 Since book 2 only deals with the Father and Son the Spirit is not added. Book 3 and later, in *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil will make it evident that the Spirit is also to be included in saving faith with Father and Son.

153 Volker Drecoll (2011:263) understands the Father-Son relationship to be an anthropomorphism. Basil, on the other hand, understood the names 'Father' and 'Son' to be true names of God (cf. Radde-Gallwitz 2012:68) rightly supplemented by other scriptural names giving us a sufficient notion of God (*Eun.*105). It was Eunomius that understood 'Father' as a homonym, a figure of speech (*Apol.*53, 55, 67), and a mere conceptualization (:55).

154 In the quote I changed Giles's translation of *epinoia* from “reflection” to “conceptualization” in keeping with the terminology used in this paper.

155 “The debate is not, then, a clash of creeds, but of interpretation of creeds (which are in turn assumed to be interpretations of scripture)” (DelCogliano & Radde-Gallwitz 2011:47). Hanson (1988:689) says that the phrase “light from light” is “a very old model used first, as far as we know, by Tertullian.”

Within 2.28,<sup>156</sup> we find Basil's "most extended treatment of the proper understanding of the divine plurality" (Hildebrand 2007:65). Basil says, "[B]egotten and unbegotten are distinctive features that enable identification and are observed in the substance, which lead to the clear and unconfused notion of the Father and Son...The distinctive features [begotten, unbegotten]...observed in the substance differentiate what is common by means of the distinguishing characters and do not sunder the substance's sameness in nature...the divinity is common, whereas fatherhood and sonship are distinguishing marks: from the combination of both, that is, of the common and unique, we arrive at comprehension of the truth."<sup>157</sup> Shortly after he adds, "upon hearing 'unbegotten light' we think of the Father, whereas upon hearing 'begotten light' we receive the notion of the Son." On this Hildebrand (2007:65) adds, "By their uniqueness these properties or characteristics [unbegotten, begotten] make a distinction in what is common but without disrupting the connaturality (*homophyes*) of the substance (*ousia*). Nor do these distinct properties violate the divine simplicity." Though Basil's terminology might be seen as wanting, it is Eunomius who makes the mistake of "having

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156 For a short discussion of *Eun.* 2.28, which is important for understanding Basil's conception of divine simplicity, see Ayres and Radde-Gallwitz, *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, pp. 468f.

157 At 2.28, Torrance sees Basil treating *ousia* as an abstract generic term by equating it with the *physis*. Against the view that Basil understands the oneness of God in a generic sense, see Volker H. Drecoll, *Trinität*, p. 113; Anatolios, *Discourse on the Trinity*, p. 447; Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 297f (context is *letter* 214); Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, p. 229f; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 196f, 696ff, 734ff and Christopher Stead, 1985, *The Significance of the Homoousios* as found in *Substance and Illusion in the Christian Fathers*, Variorum Reprints, p. 397-412. According to Torrance, Basil's treatment of *ousia* as an abstract generic term led to a shift away from a more personal concrete understanding of *ousia*. This, along with Basil's distinction between essence and energies, shifted the weight of emphasis from the identity of being to equality between the Persons, and transfers the element of concreteness in the doctrine of God almost entirely to the distinguishing marks of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, p. 317). The main weakness of Torrance in regards to Basil, as I see it, is his emphasis on speaking of the Cappadocians as a whole while rarely speaking of the nuanced differences of the three in addition to his acceptance of the textbook account that Basil stresses the Persons (in this letter the *idiomata* since *hypostasis* has not yet attained its distinction of identifying the 'Persons') to the detriment of the unity of God. One reason that Torrance might read Basil in this light is that he attributes *Epistle* 38 to Basil. Scholarship on Basil (Drecoll is a notable exception, see *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 297-331) has long ruled out Basil as the author of *Epistle* 38 found amongst his letters. Scholars have noted the strong Aristotelian influence (such as *ousia* being understood as a generic unity) within that letter. Finally, for Torrance the phrase one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*, or the "Cappadocian Settlement," is the crux of Cappadocian theology. But Basil never uses it in his corpus. The closest he comes is *Ep.* 236 and *Homily* 24. The theory of the Cappadocian use of "one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*" has been competently argued against by Joseph Lienhard, *The Trinity*, pp. 99-121.

transferred the opposition of the distinguishing marks [i.e. begotten/unbegotten] to the substance.”

Basil's designation of “unbegotten” and “begotten” as distinctive features of the Father and Son allows him to maintain that they are indivisible in regards to the undefinable divine substance (in 2.28 spoken of as “light”), but distinguishable due to their respective distinctive features. This is important as it gives Basil a tenable argument that the Son as 'begotten light' does not preclude his divinity in any way, but actually affirms his full and complete deity.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The burden of this chapter as stated in the introduction was to show why Basil concluded that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is essential for understanding the Father-Son relationship as revealed in scripture.

Firstly, the doctrine helped Basil to uphold several important scriptural presuppositions. One of these is that the Father is always Father which necessitates the notion of a Son. The names of 'Father' and 'Son' are true names<sup>158</sup> and “[T]here is no doctrine in the gospel of our salvation more important than faith in the Father and the Son.” In order to bring salvation, the Son had to make the Father known. In order for the Son to make the Father known, he has to have an affinity of essence with the Father and he must be “*inseparable from the Father in every way*” (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:72). In order to be inseparable from the Father in every way, the Son must be eternal. For the Son to have an affinity in substance with the Father, he must be from the Father in such a way that he possesses full and complete deity. In this chapter, I have shown that Basil connects all of these presuppositions above at one time or another to the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. As Johnson (2011:161) notes, “Critics of eternal generation sometimes present this doctrine as if it is merely dependent on a handful of dubious proof texts. At stake in this debate, however, are broader patterns of scriptural judgments regarding the nature of the eternal relationship of the Son to the Father.”

Secondly, Basil considered the Father's generation of the Son as the best explanation for several Christological and Father-Son texts. In this chapter, we have seen Basil interpret Colossians 1.15 (often with) 2 Corinthians 4.4, Hebrews

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158 In *Against Eunomius*, Basil's theory of names was significant to his explication of the eternal generation of the Son.

1.3, 1 Corinthians 1.24, John 1.1-2;<sup>159</sup> 14.9, Psalm 2.7, 109.3<sup>160</sup> as explicitly revealing the Son's generation. These verses help Basil to make his point about divine generation, namely, “that the Father makes himself seen in the Son, completely, eternally, and immaterially” (Hildebrand 2007:169).

Thirdly, Basil was able to show that the doctrine of eternal generation could harmonize with important doctrines such as God's perfection, aseity, immutability, and simplicity while giving a truly Trinitarian (when the Spirit's divine procession is included) account of God.<sup>161</sup>

To deny the generation of the Son means one ends up as Eunomius “with a supremely abstracted God, abstracted, that is, from any possibility of communicating himself: [his] God is neither able to beget a Son who is what he is, nor does his activity, the product of which is his Son, express what he is; he has revealed knowledge of himself, so that...Eunomius can claim to know him fully and accurately, but this does not enable us to share in his life” (Behr 2004:282).

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159 John 1.1-4 is most often employed by Basil to prove the eternalness of the Son.

160 When one studies the fourth century Trinitarian controversies it is clear that Basil marshals most standard proof-texts. But Hanson (1988:844f) notes that Basil “facing an opponent...more specific and more sophisticated...accepts and where necessary deploys the traditional proof-texts, is compelled to be more careful and more cogent in his appeal to Scripture.” Interestingly, Basil does not quote Wisdom 7 which Holmes (2012:40) notes is used for explicating eternal generation by Origen, and the eternalness of the Son (as Wisdom) by Alexander and Athanasius. Likewise Holmes (:41f) portrays the importance of Isaiah 53.8 for Christological purposes, especially, the ineffability of the eternal generation. Basil quotes the verse once in *Eun.* 1.12, not to address eternal generation, but within the larger context to refute Eunomius's claim that God's substance has been revealed/is definable. Lastly, Holmes (:42ff) cites Psalm 36.9 (its use of 'light'), 45.1 (as referencing the eternal generation of the Logos), 45.7 (as proto-Trinitarian), and John 5.19 as important to third to fifth century church fathers. These verses are all absent from this writing. Hanson (1988:833f, 836f) notes Is. 53.8 and Ps. 45.7 were often used by Arians and Heteroousians. For other verses which Eunomius uses in defense of his position see Vaggione's footnotes to the *Apology*.

161 Basil's explication of the eternal generation was also compatible with his account of the Father as the source, cause, and principle of the Son.

## 4. CHAPTER 4: THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN BASIL'S ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

### 4.1 Introduction to Basil's On the Holy Spirit

In this chapter, I will discuss Basil's doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son in his book *On the Holy Spirit*<sup>162</sup> primarily by way of comparison with the doctrine as explicated in his *Against Eunomius*.

*On the Holy Spirit* was written between 373 and 375<sup>163</sup> by Basil in order to answer questions put to him by his friend and fellow bishop, Amphilochius of Iconium (*Spir.*27). Basil's letter to Amphilochius revolves around Basil's doxology in which he "render[s] the glory due to God in both ways, namely, to the Father, with the Son together with the Holy Spirit, and to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit" (*Spir.*29). Basil's doxology was the crux of a dispute (cf. Behr 2004:305, Drecoll 1996:337, Kelly 1960:342) which caused his opponents to accuse him of introducing "foreign and contradictory words" (*Spir.*30) and confessing three gods (Hildebrand 2011:23). As Radde-Gallwitz (2012:109) says, "[F]or some Christians the idea of explicit worship of the Spirit went too far. The uproar was a manifestation of the debate between Basil and Eustathius, which had been brewing since 372."

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162 For a short introduction to this letter, see *On the Holy Spirit*. 2011. Translation and Introduction by Stephen Hildebrand. Popular Patristic Series #42, pp. 11-25. For an in-depth study of *On the Holy Spirit* and Basil's pneumatology see Dörries, 1956, *De Spiritu Sancto. Der Beitrag des Basiliius zum Abschluss des trinitarischen Dogmas*, Göttingen. For an overview of the letter and Basil's pneumatology see also Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 211-18, Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 305-18, Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, chps 4 and 5, Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 772-90, Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, pp. 148-153; Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 263-69; and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The "Spiritual Sense" of Scripture: The Exegetical Basis of St. Basil's Doctrine on the Holy Spirit in Basil of Caesarea Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, Paul Jonathan Fedwick, editor, pp. 337-60.

163 See Hildebrand 2011:22. Drecoll proposes a dating of 373 or before. See *Die Entwicklung*, pp.195-212, 243-250. Meredith prefers 375 (1995:31). Fedwick thinks chapter 9 was written in 373 and the rest was written in 375. In this he follows Hermann Dörries's influential study *De Spiritu Sancto*. See Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, pp. 16f. Jaroslav Pelikan (1981:338) thinks *On the Holy Spirit* was written from the end of 374 to the end of 375.

Those who opposed honoring the Spirit are usually called Pneumatomachians or “Spirit-fighters”.<sup>164</sup> Drecoll (1996:244ff) thinks Basil wrote to counter *Linkshomöusianer* (such as Eustathius). This is a group that did not hold to Nicaea, but rather belonged to the Eusebian tradition which subordinated the Son to the Father and the Spirit to the Father and the Son. Hildebrand (2011:22) sees the letter aimed at “win[ning] over the Macedonians who denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit.” The question of which group Basil had in mind while writing and if he directly addressed them in this letter remains disputed (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:109 contra Dörries 1956:81ff).<sup>165</sup> Whichever group was in the back of Basil's mind as he wrote, the problem remains the same; they did not honor the deity of the Spirit but rather subordinated him and Basil wanted to refute that position (cf. Drecoll 1996:247).

In order to address his opponents' objections, Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit* in three, easily distinguishable sections, reflecting an A-B-A structure (Hildebrand 2011:22).<sup>166</sup> The two A sections, 2.4-8.21 and 25.58-29.75, are treatises on prepositions. Basil takes time in these sections to show that his use of different prepositions in combination with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is orthodox according to scripture or tradition. In doing so, Basil also spends the first eight chapters defending the deity of the Son (Meredith 1995:31). In the process of defending the Son's deity, he restates his views of the Father-Son relationship. His premises concerning the Father-Son relationship, which will be the focus of this chapter, make his case for the Spirit's oneness with the Father and Son easier.

In section B, 9.22-24.57, Basil gives his scriptural defense of honoring the Spirit alongside the Father and the Son. Basil honors the Spirit by “[including] the Holy Spirit in the biblical metaphor that established the divine communion of the Father and the Son in *Against Eunomius*. In this way, he brings his defense of the divinity

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164 For more on Pneumatomachians, sometimes called Pneumatomachi, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 2005, Third Edition Revised, Eds. F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingston, Oxford University Press, p. 1312 and Young, *From Nicaea to Chalcedon*, p. 159f.

165 Drecoll (1995:183) notes that the “Ausgangspunkt für Dörries' These ist die Beobachtung, dass sich ab DSS X Einwände eines Gegners finden.”

166 For more on Hildebrand's structure see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 179-184. Radde-Gallwitz (2012:109) has a slightly different structure: Ch.1 Prefatory remarks to Amphilochius; Chps. 2-8 Remarks on the use of prepositions; Ch. 9 “Common concepts” of the Spirit; Chps. 10-29 Response to objections; Ch. 30 Lament on the sad state of the churches. For more on the structure see Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 81-93 (includes his *Protokollthesis*) and Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 183-212.

of the Holy Spirit into one of the biblical images that originally informed his vision of divine communion (Hildebrand 2011:25). The quote from Hildebrand makes clear that Basil builds his defense of the Spirit's divinity upon his understanding of the Father-Son relationship. In the first eight chapters of the present treatise, Basil expresses their relationship in much the same way as he did in *Against Eunomius*.

#### **4.2 Introduction to *On the Holy Spirit* Section One (Section 2.4-8.21)**

In this section, Basil sets out to prove that scripture uses certain prepositions interchangeably, in particular “from whom” and “through whom”, when speaking about the Father, Son, and Spirit. Basil's argument for the unity of nature existing between Father, Son, and Spirit is strengthened as Basil is able to show that scripture uses all prepositions under discussion in connection with more than one Person in the Godhead (*theotēs*). Basil's view is a direct rebuttal against those who taught that certain prepositions are used for only one particular member of the Godhead. This was proof for them of the difference in nature between Father and Son.

Basil's opponents argued another point, namely, only certain prepositions were allowable in reference to God. Therefore, they found fault with Basil's use of prepositions, such as “with whom,” which were not *expressly* found in scripture. Basil saw a need to go beyond a simple biblicism (cf. Fedwick 1979:84ff).<sup>167</sup> So he points out the similar semantic meaning of scriptural and non-scriptural prepositions which he used.<sup>168</sup> He also points to the attestation of non-scriptural prepositions in the tradition of the Fathers<sup>169</sup> (*Spir.7,16*).

Hildebrand (2011:22) sums up section one thus, “In [this] first treatise on prepositions Basil argues against the heretic's interpretation of the use of prepositions in the Scriptures and charges that they learned this approach to prepositions from pagan philosophers. He demonstrates from the Scriptures that their interpretation is groundless.”

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167 Hanson, *The Search*, p. 846ff and T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 57ff. Torrance also provides a justification for the Fathers use of the non-biblical term *homoousios* (:125ff).

168 Now Basil is no longer so stringent on sticking to the exact words of scripture (cf. *Eun.132f, 139*).

169 For the importance of tradition and the council of Nicaea see Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 163-70. For the importance of the Fathers and Tradition as correct interpreters of scripture, see JND Kelly, *Christian Doctrine*, pp. 29-51 and Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, pp. 1-22.

#### 4.2.1 Basil's Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8.6 (Section 2.4-5.12)

Of central importance in this section is Basil's interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8.6. This passage reads, "There is one God and Father, from whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things." This verse was the basis of Eunomius's creed in his *Apology* (*Apol.*39, *Eun.*89). It was also used by Eunomius's mentor, Aetius, as scriptural justification for speaking of the Father and Son as *heteroousios*.

In 2.4, Basil finds fault with his opponents' claim that prepositions are used exclusively in conjunction with either the Father or the Son. This assumption leads them to assert that a difference in substance, dignity, and power existed between the Father and Son. Basil claims this is what Aetius had done through his interpretation of 1 Corinthians 8.6. Basil tells us that from this verse Aetius taught "through whom" is different from "from whom"; therefore, the Son is different from the Father...Moreover, Aetius says that this use of [prepositions] never changes, so that, as I have said, the difference in nature is revealed by the difference in expression." According to men like Aetius, "from whom" talks of the Father and "through whom" speaks of the Son. The result of all this is that the creator of all [the Son] is reckoned no holier than an instrument." As in *Against Eunomius*, Basil strives to counter the assumption that the Father and Son are unlike in substance.

In 4.6, Basil continues his discussion of 1 Corinthians 8.6. He says, "From whom'...is [used] more customary in the Scriptures [to] refer to the highest cause as in this instance: 'one God, from whom are all things' (1 Corinthians 8.6)." Basil understands "from whom" as referring to the Father, "the highest cause" (cf. *Eun.* 120f, 126f, 153). His opponents, however, misuse 'from whom' in 1 Corinthians 8.6 in order to make the Son "different in nature from the Father." Basil says in section 5.7 that 1 Corinthians 8.6 "are not the words of someone who is making a law [about prepositions], but rather of someone who distinguishes the persons."<sup>170</sup> For the Apostle speaks thus not to introduce a difference in nature but to establish the unconfused conception of the Father and the Son."

Basil spends the rest of section 5.8-11 showing that scripture uses prepositions interchangeably to speak about the Father, Son, and Spirit. Basil's point is, "[I]f a

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<sup>170</sup> Hildebrand (2011:34n6) notes that Basil employs the Greek word ὑποστάσις. One notes the difference to *Against Eunomius* where Basil used *hypostasis* as a synonym for *ousia* and not as a "signal word" to distinguish the Father from the Son. Drecoll (1995:243) claims, "[D]och wird in DSS der Begriff [*hypostasis*] überhaupt zum ersten Mal bei Basilius *gezielt* für die Trinitätslehre eingesetzt."

difference in expression were to show a change in nature, as they argue, let the identity of expressions now shame them to confess that the substance is unchanged” (*Spir.*37).

According to Basil, the scriptural implication of interchangeable prepositions is that the Three need to be distinguished (*Spir.*33f) while the sameness of substance among them must also be confessed (*Spir.*37). In *Against Eunomius*, Basil had connected the distinguishing of Person and sameness of substance to the eternal generation of the Son (e.g. *Eun.*152), but he does not do that here.

#### **4.2.2 Basil declares the Son to be Eternal (Section 6.13-6.15)**

The chapter title is: “*A reply to those who declare that the Son is not with the Father, but after the Father, in whom there is an equality in glory and honor*”

Basil, in 6.13, says his opponents are “harsh toward us, because we perform the doxology to the Only-Begotten with the Father, and we do not separate the Holy Spirit from the Son.” This is because “The Son, they say, is not with the Father but after the Father. Therefore it follows that glory goes to the Father through him, but not with him. ‘With him’ makes clear the equality of honor, while ‘through him’ indicates subordination.” This paragraph reveals a vital part of Basil’s Father-Son understanding: the Father-Son relationship is one of equal honor and dignity (*Eun.*127). This has to be since Basil understands them to be of the same substance.

Next, in 6.14, Basil addresses the objection that the Son is after the Father in time (cf. *Eun.*144ff; *homily* 16, 27). “But no one is so stupid that he would say that the maker of the ages is second in time, since there is no interval of time mediating in the natural union of the Son with the Father.” He continues, “Now, how is it not only impious but even exceedingly foolish to measure the being of life that is superior to all time and ages in terms of its distance from the present—as if God the Father could be superior to God the Son, who exists before the ages, in the manner of things that come into being and decay? For the superiority on high of the Father is inconceivable insofar as it does not at all rise above the generation of the Lord either notionally or conceptually.” For the first time in *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil explicitly addresses the generation of the Son. He speaks of the generation of the Son as the “natural union” which exists between the Father and Son. As in *Against Eunomius* 2.25, Basil argues against understanding the generation of the Son as implicating that the Father is before the Son and uses John 1.1 to support his claim (cf. *Eun.*149ff; *homily* 16). He says, “First, thoughts cannot get beyond

'was'; secondly, the imagination cannot go further than 'the beginning'...And however much you strive to see the things beyond the Son, you will not be able to rise above 'the beginning.' It is pious, therefore, to think about both the Son and Father in this way.”

In 6.15, Basil addresses the assumption that the Son is less than the Father in rank and dignity. To counter this view, Basil cites Psalm 109.1 and Hebrews 1.3<sup>171</sup> to show that the Son has “a relationship of equality” with the Father. Basil says these scriptures speak of the Son at the right hand which “shows the Son's magnificent honor” (cf. *Eun.*1.25; *homily* 29). Similarly, the Son is not inferior to the Father in dignity. Basil bases this claim upon 1 Corinthians 1.24, Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and John 6.27. Concerning Basil's use of these verses, Drecoll (1995:219) says, “Basilius stützt sich auf die biblischen Hoheitstitel des Sohnes...solche...Aussagen belegen...die Gleichheit mit dem Vater im Bereich (Genitiv) der δόξα.” In *Against Eunomius* 2.16, Basil interpreted the verses above, except John 6.27, as a scriptural account of what took place in the generation of the Son.

Basil continues 6.15 by referencing John 1.14; 5.23; 14.9, and Mark 8.38 to make his point that the Lord Jesus himself didn't shy away from saying “that his own glory is equal in honor to the Father's.” Drecoll (1995:219) notes with these verses Basil shows “daß der Sohn ὁμότιμος mit dem Vater ist”.<sup>172</sup> The Son must be “same in honor” (ὁμότιμος) with the Father because Basil believes John 5.23 to teach that it is impiousness and blasphemy against God the Father not to honor the Son in the same manner as the Father.

Basil began this section by defending the Son's eternity alongside the Father. He did so by appealing to the Son's eternal generation. The Son's generation also allowed Basil to defend the Son's equal rank, honor and dignity with the Father.

#### **4.2.3 The Unity of Will between Father and Son (Section 8.17-21)**

The chapter title is: “*On the manifold meaning of 'through whom,' on the sense in which 'with whom' is better, and on the way in which the Son takes a command and is sent*”

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171 In *Eun.* 1.18, Basil used Heb. 1.3 to speak of the Son's fellowship and comparability with the Father. In *Eun.* 1.20, Basil used Heb. 1.3 to speak of divine order, and in *Eun.* 2.16 Heb.1.3 is a scriptural account of what took place in the eternal generation.

172 For more on ὁμότιμος “same in honor” in Basil see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 92ff.

Basil's point in this section is “the Father's creating through the Son neither proves that the Father's creative activity is less than perfect nor shows that the Son's energy is weak. Instead it demonstrates the unity of the will” (*Spir.*8.21).

In 8.17-18, Basil explains that Scripture sometimes speaks of the Son in the mode of theology and sometimes in reference to the economy (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:75).<sup>173</sup> Verses which address the Son in the mode of theology allow “insight into the nature of God that comes as a result of an ability to see beyond material reality, or beyond the material-sounding phraseology of some scriptural passages” (Ayres 2004:220). The economy of the Son “is used to describe a wide range of acts of ordering events and behaviour” (*ibid.*). The economy of the Son as recorded in scripture should not lead to subordinating the Son or separating him from the Father. As Basil says, “Let us not, then, think of this economy through the Son as compulsory service done out of a slave-like subjection, but rather as a voluntary solicitude that acts according to the will of God the Father out of goodness and tender-heartedness for his own creation. Thus we will piously confess that his power is perfect in all that has been accomplished, and we will in no way separate it from the will of the Father.”<sup>174</sup>

To start 8.19, Basil points out all the ways God helps us through the power of the Son. After addressing the topic for several paragraphs Basil stops and says,

“At the same time, though, lest we be distracted by the greatness of the works and imagine that the Son is without origin, what does life itself say? 'I live through the Father' (Jn. 6.57). And what does the power of God say? 'The Son can do nothing by himself' (Jn. 5.19). And what does absolute wisdom say? 'I received a command of what I should say and speak' (Jn. 12.49). Through all these words he is guiding us to union with the Father and raising to him our wonder at what has been made so that through himself we may know the Father. For the Father is seen not in a difference in his works...for whatever 'he sees the Father doing,' the Son also does (John 5.19).”

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173 For a discussion of Basil's understanding of “theology” and “economy” see *Against Eunomius* pp. 51ff. Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil: His Life and Doctrine*. pp. 73ff, 102 and Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 118ff.

174 For inseparable acts in Basil see Basil's *letter* 189; Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 280ff, 296-300; Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 137f; Johnson, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 158f; Anatolios, *Discourse on the Trinity*, p. 446; Alston, *the Trinity*, pp. 190ff.

Behr (2004:312) says that for Basil “The Father is not known independently from the Son through an activity distinct from the work of the Son, but is rather known as the recipient of our awe at the divine deeds wrought in and by Jesus Christ, making his distinctive characteristic to be ‘the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.’” Due to the relationship of origin, it is the paternity or fatherhood that alone differentiates the Father from the Son in Basil's Trinitarian theology (cf. *Eun.* 2.28; *Epp.* 214 and 236).<sup>175</sup> The relationship of origin results in the Father being considered as the “origin” (*archē*) of the Son's timeless begetting. Furthermore, the relationship of origin establishes divine order (*taxis*). Divine order designates the Father as the “origin” of the creative will which is carried out through the Son. The Son, as the one Only-Begotten of the Father, is eternal and without difference in substance which means the Son's will, power, and energy cannot be other than the Father's. Therefore, despite the Father designation of “origin” the Son cannot be subordinated to the Father in the slightest degree. These suppositions of the Father-Son relationship inform Basil how to interpret John 17.10 “All that is mine is yours.” On John 17.10 he says, “[R]esponsibility for creating comes down to [the Son], not in the sense that he needs help to act nor in the sense that he has been entrusted by a detailed stewardship...for such a function is not at all consistent with divine dignity. Rather since the Logos is full of the Father's goodness and shines forth from him, he does all things in a way similar to the one who begot him. For if he is without difference in substance, he will also be without difference in power, and for those whose power is identical, the energy also is wholly identical...He does not perform the instrumental service of some slave, but perfectly fulfills the creative will of the Father.”<sup>176</sup>

Basil's exposition of John 12.49, 50; 14.24, 31 in section 8.20 continues in the same vein. Basil's opponents had used these verses to subordinate the Son to the Father. Basil, however, understands these verses to express the eternal unity of will between Father and Son. Basil says, “[W]e should not take the command [from the Father as something]...that legislates for the Son what he must do under obedience. Rather, we should think of a sharing of will that reaches timelessly

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175 For Basil's opponents the Father is always “Creator.” Basil, however, refers to the Son here and *Spir.* 8.21 as “Maker”. In *Homily* 15, Basil calls the Son “Creator”. The only title or name that the Father and Son do not share are their respective names ‘Father’ and ‘Son’.

176 Here Basil quotes 1 Corinthians 1.24, John 1.3, and Colossians 1.16 as speaking about the Son's creative power as being the same as the Father's. In *Against Eunomius* (2011:124, 126f) Basil employed 1 Cor. 1.24 and John 5.19, 10.29-30 to speak of the Son as having the same power as the Father.

from the Father to the Son in a way suitable for God.” Basil finishes by showing the Son as the Wisdom of God demands that he be eternal otherwise he could never arrive at the Father's perfect wisdom.

In 8.21, Basil equates the will with the divine substance. Since he believes that the Father and Son are of same substance, it naturally leads him to posit that they have the same will.

In section eight, Basil explained how the Son took commands from the Father without it requiring the Son to be subordinated to the Father. According to Basil, divine order tells us that the Son is from the Father and that the Father works through the Son, but this should not be understood to impinge upon or negate the Son's deity. Moreover, divine order speaks of the fact that the Son has been begotten from the Father which grounds his affinity in substance with the Father (cf. *Eun.*138). It also establishes the Son's equality of power and unity of the will with the Father (cf. *Eun.*124). Thus, Basil is able to take the Son's deference to the Father seriously without subordinating him to the Father (cf. Drecoll 1996:253).

### **4.3 Introduction to On the Holy Spirit Section Two (Section 9.22-24.57)**

In section 1, Basil showed how scripture used prepositions interchangeably in reference to the Father and Son. This was but one piece of evidence which established the Father and Son's unequivocal unity of substance and the Son's right to be glorified alongside the Father.

Now in section 2 (9.22-24.57), Basil proceeds to argue that the Holy Spirit should be glorified along with the Father and Son.<sup>177</sup> In this section, Basil concentrates on the divinity of the Spirit, and in doing so, he makes a few remarks about the divine generation of the Son.

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<sup>177</sup> It is well known that Basil never explicitly calls the Holy Spirit “God,” nor does he say the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and Son. In regards to Basil's hesitancy, George Kustas (1981:233) notes, “A number of scholars have pointed out that ὁμότιμος [of like honor] and ὁμοούσιος amount to the same thing.” Hildebrand (2014:62) reports that Basil, in *On Faith*, a preface to his *Morals*, writes that “we believe and so we baptize, into a Trinity of one substance [*eis Triada homoousion*], according to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (On Faith 4; 96).” Hildebrand says that the phrase, “Trinity of one substance...is the closest that Basil comes to saying that the Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son” (Hildebrand :63). Finally, Behr (2004:208) says that Basil “followed Scripture in not applying the term ‘God’ to the Holy Spirit, preferring instead the word ‘divine’ (Θεῖον), but he is nevertheless clear that the Spirit must belong together with the Father and the Son rather than among created things.”

#### 4.3.1 Basil discusses sub-numeration (Section 17.43)

The title for chapter 17 is: “*Against those who say that the Holy Spirit is to be numbered not with the Father and the Son, but under them; and in this exposition there is also a general summary of the faith concerning the pious way of numbering [one] with [another]*”.

Basil asks in 17.43, “Do you say that the Son also is numbered under the Father and the Spirit, under the Son, or do you limit sub-numeration<sup>178</sup> to the Spirit alone? For if you sub-numerate the Son too, you renew the same impious position, namely, the unlikeness of his substance, the lowering of his dignity, his generation at a later time, and generally you admit at once all the blasphemies against the Son by turning back through this one word [sub-numeration]. To speak against these blasphemies would take us too far from the present course of argument, and I have argued against them effectively elsewhere and in other ways.”<sup>179</sup>

Here the generation of the Son is tied to his likeness of substance with the Father, his equal dignity to the Father, and his eternalness. Basil staunchly believes to deny any of these results in blasphemy.

#### 4.3.2 Basil on the monarchy of God (Section 18.44-47)

The title for chapter 18 is: “*How, in confessing three persons [ὑποστάσεων], we maintain the pious dogma of the monarchy; and along the way, a refutation of those who assert that the Spirit is sub-numerated*”

In this section, Basil explains how the three *hypostaseis* do not necessitate three gods. Basil does this by giving an account of the monarchy (μοναρχία) of God. Ayres (2004:196) remarks “By the 370's Basil had evolved a formula stating that the activities of God all come from the Father, are worked in the Son, and are completed in the Spirit...a way to speak of the unity of divine action while still preserving the priority of the Father and the sense of the Spirit as the agent of salvation.” Basil understands the monarchy of God to “teach that the one supreme divine rule (*monarchia*) is unitary, being shared perfectly by the Father and the Son, and when the Spirit come into focus, by the three divine persons in unity. It is triune” (Giles 2014:189). The monarchy of God in this section refers to the triune divine rule of Father, Son, and Spirit and needs to be differentiated from speaking

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178 For the context of this quote Basil's “sub-numeration argument” see *Spir.* 17.41-42.

179 Here Hildebrand references *Against Eunomius* Book 2.

of the Father as the sole source (*mia archē*) of the Son (e.g. *Eun.*126f) and Spirit, as this concept is also referred to as the monarchy.<sup>180</sup>

Basil, in 18.44, is intent on showing how the three *hypostaseis* do not sunder the one indivisible divine substance into three countable parts, i.e., three gods. Basil says, “When the Lord handed over 'Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit' he did not hand it over with number, for he did not say 'into the first, second, and third,' and he did not say 'into one, two, and three.' Rather, through the holy names, he gave the knowledge of the faith that leads to salvation...Number has been invented as a sign that indicates quantity of substances, but they use even the ability to count against the faith[.]”<sup>181</sup> A few sentences later Basil continues,

“O most clever of men, it is best to let what is unattainable remain beyond number...If, however, you must count, at least do not harm the truth in so doing. Either let the unspeakable be honored by silence or let holy things be counted piously. There is one God and Father and one Only-Begotten and one Holy Spirit. We proclaim each of the persons singly. Now, when we must count them together we are not carried away to the concept of polytheism by uneducated counting.”

Basil's account above reveals his hesitancy to speak of a “numerical three.” A Christian should rather acknowledge the distinction without resorting to mathematical numbers and simple addition.

In 18.45, Basil addresses specifically the Father-Son relationship within the monarchy, which he understands here as the Father and Son ruling together as one power.

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180 Giles's article highlights the need to differentiate between the Father alone as supreme ruler (Arian view), the Father as the sole archē of the Son, and the Father, the Son, and the Spirit as conjointly exercising the *monarchia*, i.e., the supreme rule. Thus when Radde-Gallwitz (2012:117n21) says for Basil the monarchy is “a single first principle” and refers to the teaching that God the Father is the origin of the Son and Spirit” he is combining (and confusing) two streams of thought: the Father as the sole archē of the Son and the monarchy, or rule of God, which is Triune.

181 Basil's understanding of Matthew 28.19 is important here. Radde-Gallwitz (2012:16) notes Matthew 28.19 [is] a verse he never tires of citing.” The importance of this verse was not as apparent in *Against Eunomius* as it is in *On the Holy Spirit* because Matt. 28.19, as the baptismal injunction from the Lord Himself, was important for Basil mainly in his defense of the deity of the Spirit. See Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 32 and Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, passim. Another point of emphasis in this letter compared to *Against Eunomius* is Basil's understanding and explanation of baptism as it relates to faith in the Triune God. Hildebrand addresses Baptism in *On the Holy Spirit* briefly in *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 118ff as does Dörries, *DSS*, p. 130ff.

“We do not count them as a group, making for ourselves an increase from one to many and saying 'one, two, three.'...Still we have not yet, even to this day, heard of a second God. By worshipping God from God, we confess the particularizing property of the persons and we stay within the monarchy. We do not scatter the divinity among a separated multitude because one form, as it were, has been imparted in the unchangeability of the Godhead and is contemplated in God the Father and God the Son, for the Son is in the Father, and the Father, in the Son. They have unity in the fact that the latter is whatever the former is and the former whatever the latter is. And so, with regard to the particularity of the persons, they are one and one, but with regard to the common nature, both are one thing. How, then, if they are one and one, are there not two gods? Because it is said that there is a king and the image of the king, but not two kings, for the power is not divided, and the glory is not portioned out. As the power that rules over us and the authority is one, so also one, not many, is the doxology from us. On account of this, the honor of the image passes over to the prototype by way of imitation [in the case of the king and his image]; the Son is this by nature. And just as in the arts there is a likeness according to form, so with the divine and incomposite nature, the unity is in the communion of the Godhead.”

Behr (2004:307) calls this a “very rich and dense passage contain[ing] allusions to most aspects of Basil's trinitarian theology.” However, in this long passage about the Father-Son relationship there is no reference to the Son's generation as Basil expounds on the “pious dogma of the monarchy”<sup>182</sup> and not on the Father as the one source (*mia archē*) of the Son. The monarchy, or divine rule of God, is shared perfectly and conjointly because Basil understands the Father and Son to be one in power and authority (Giles 2014:191).<sup>183</sup> Basil also brings the Spirit into the monarchy in 18.45. Thus, the monarchy of God is triune according to Basil. Holmes (2012:110) says in the 370's “it became clear on every side that this simply was the real issue: was the monarchy the Father's alone...or was the monarchy the shared glory of Father and Son (and Holy Spirit), in which case the Son was the of the same rank as the Father, and the choice of whether to say *homoousios* or *homoiousios* was of comparably little moment.”

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182 For a brief history of this dogma see Giles, 2014, The Father as the *Mia Archē*, The One Originating Source of the Son and the Spirit and the Trinity and the Monarchia, the One Undivided Sovereign Ruler. *Colloquium* 46:2, pp. 175-192.

183 See DelCogliano's similar remarks as he comments on *homily* 29 and 24 in *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, p. 263 and 282 respectively.

In 18.46, Basil wants to prove that the Spirit is divine because of his inclusion within the divine monarchy. Additionally, the Spirit is divine for he is “from God” in a similar fashion as the Son. To speak of the Spirit as “from God” means he has a communion of nature with the Father and Son. In order to speak of the Spirit as “from God,” Basil explicitly utilizes the concept of the Son's generation. Basil says, “[The Spirit] is said to be from God, not as all things are from God, but insofar as he comes forth from God, not begottenly as the Son does, but as the breath of his mouth.” While speaking about the Spirit's procession, Basil says that the Son's mode of being from God is by generation. The Son being begotten by God is an attestation for Basil that the Son has communion of nature with the Father and is not to be considered among created things. It is the Son and Spirit's origin of relation, or mode of being, which, for Basil, grounds their eternally inseparable bond with the Father so that the monarchy is understood as belonging to the Triune God.

#### **4.4 Introduction to On the Holy Spirit Section Three (25.58-29.75)**

The final section picks up the theme of section 1 which is the meaning and use of prepositions.

##### **4.4.1 Basil discusses the Prepositions 'with' and 'and' (Section 25.59)**

The title of chapter 25 is: “*That Scripture uses the word 'in' in place of 'with' and that 'and' has the same force as 'with'.*”

In this section, Basil addresses his opponents' complaint that the preposition 'with' which he used in his doxology is not found in scripture. Basil's argument is that 'with' has a similar meaning to the biblically attested preposition 'and.'

Furthermore, the Fathers have used both prepositions. By referring to the precedent set by previous Fathers, Mark DelCogliano (2012:30) says, “Basil of Caesarea is recognized as one of the first church fathers to explicitly deploy the so-called *argumentum patristicum*, that is, the appeal to the authority of a previous church father to support a current theological position.”

Basil says,

“Like the texts, “I and the Father will go' (Jn. 14.23) and 'I and the Father are one' (Jn.10.30)” [‘with’] is an excellent witness of the eternal communion and unending union [of persons] for the refutation of the evil of Sabellius with a force equal to that of 'and' and a proof of the individuality of the persons in the

same way as 'and.' For he who says that the Son is with the Father, simultaneously indicates both the particularity of the persons and the inseparability of their communion...Thus [the preposition 'with'] destroys the evil of Sabellius as none of the other words do and adds to the Sabellians also those who are impious in the opposite way (I am speaking of those who distinguish the Son from the Father, and the Spirit from the Son, by temporal gaps).”

In the paragraph above, we see the importance of the prepositions 'and' and 'with'. To speak of the “Father *and* Son” or the “Father *with* the Son” is to speak of an “eternal communion and unending union [of persons]” as well as “a proof of the individuality of the persons.” Basil puts a large theological load onto 'with' and 'and' in this section. He supposes that these two prepositions convey the Father and Son to have an eternal and unending union and be differentiated. However, in *Against Eunomius* Basil grounded unity, differentiation and eternalness within the Father-Son relationship on the eternal generation of the Son. In this section of *On the Holy Spirit*, Basil presupposes his theory of the names 'Father' and 'Son' as well as the Son's generation as explicated in *Against Eunomius* for surely the two prepositions by themselves cannot convey all the theological content which Basil gives them in 25.59.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

At the beginning I said I would analyze what role the eternal generation of the Son plays for Basil as he expounds and defends the divinity of the Spirit.

The Son's eternal generation informs Basil that the one Only-Begotten exists eternally in a communion of nature and “natural union with the Father.” This natural union gives the notion of the Son's eternity and so precludes the Father's superiority based on time. Their eternal natural union and communion of nature conveys that the Father and Son have an eternally united will and power so that both Father and Son are worthy of equal honor, dignity, and glory.

In addition, the eternal generation of the Son informs Basil how to conceptualize the Spirit's relation to Father and Son. Within the monarchy of God, Basil spoke of the Spirit's mode of being in a similar fashion as the Son's. The Son comes forth from God begottenly while the Spirit comes forth “as the breath of his mouth.” The Spirit's procession, as the Son's generation is unspeakable (*Eun.*164, *Spir.*81). Likewise, the Spirit's relation to the Father and Son demands expressions of eternal union (*Spir.*102).

Finally, I also pointed out how the eternal generation played a rather unimpressive role in *On the Holy Spirit*. The doctrine was not implemented in places where one might have expected it. For example, Basil mentions the generation of the Son only in passing as he discusses divine order in chapter 8. Basil's discussion of the prepositions 'with' and 'and' in chapter 25 carried the theological load which the generation of the Son had carried in *Against Eunomius* without mention of the doctrine.

In comparison with *Against Eunomius*, it could almost appear that Basil had a seeming disinterest in appropriating the doctrine. The surest explanation for the difference between the two letters is due to the different recipients and contexts in which Basil wrote. In 375, the disputes surrounding the Son's deity had settled down so that Basil only took up the defense of the Son's deity in the first eight chapters (Meredith 1995:31). The hot topic when Basil penned *On the Holy Spirit* was on the glorification of the Spirit. Additionally, foremost on Basil's mind was the defense of his doxology, which in contradiction to a creed, did not expressly mention the Son's generation. Therefore, it is easy to see why the generation of the Son played a more negligible role in his treatise on the Spirit when compared to *Against Eunomius* which focused on the Father-Son relationship. Despite the diminished role of the doctrine of eternal generation in this treatise, it is important to mention that what Basil expressly said about the doctrine in *On the Holy Spirit* confirmed what he had written approximately ten years earlier in *Against Eunomius*.

## 5. CHAPTER 5: THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN BASIL'S LETTERS

### 5.1 Introduction to Basil's Dogmatic Letters

In this chapter, I will outline what Basil of Caesarea teaches on the eternal generation of the Son in his so-called “dogmatic letters.” Basil's dogmatic letters, or epistles, include 9, 52, 125, 214, 233-236, 361, and 362.

I have followed scholarly consensus by excluding letters 8 and 38, though relevant to the subject of the Trinity, as foreign to (*spuria*) Basil's authorship. Johannes Quasten (1983:224) also deems letters 105 and 109 to be dogmatic epistles. These two letters address the Son in terminology reminiscent of the Nicene Creed, but do not provide anything of substance concerning Basil's understanding of eternal generation. Thus, I have not discussed them in this chapter.<sup>184</sup>

My source for these letters is the Roy J. Deferrari translation which is a collection of 365 letters of the Benedictine edition (Deferrari 1:xxxv).<sup>185</sup> Letters I to XLVI are considered to be written before Basil became a bishop (357-370 AD). Letters XLVII to CCXCI are considered to be written during his episcopate (370-378 AD). By and large the letters up to CCXCI are chronologically ordered. Deferrari (1:xi), following the Benedictine edition of Garnier and Maran, notes that “the chief concern of the editors was the establishing an accurate chronology...The most searching criticism has improved but little their chronology.”<sup>186</sup> The last collection, letters CCXCII-CCCLXV, cannot be assigned to any period and this collection also contains many doubtful and spurious works as Deferrari (1:xxxvi) argues.

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184 For Basil's Trinitarian confession in letters 105 and 159 see Stephen Hildebrand, 2014, *Basil of Caesarea*, Baker Academic Publishing, pp. 63ff.

185 Roy J. Deferrari, 1926, *Basil: Letters*, from the Loeb Classical Library, 4 Vols, Harvard University Press. For a short introduction to the letters, see Deferrari vol. 1, pp. xi-xiii, xxxvi-xxxviii. Quotes from Basil's letters are taken from this translation unless otherwise noted.

186 For more on the dating of the letters see Fedwick, 1979, *The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto, Appendix A, pp. 133-55 and Fedwick (ed.), *Basil of Caesarea Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, pp. 3-19. Since my study is not on the development of the doctrine of eternal generation within the writings of Basil, chronological sequence, though of interest, will not be a main focus of this chapter.

## 5.2 Letter 9 to Maximus the Philosopher

In *letter* 9, perhaps written around 361-362 (Deferrari 1:93;Fedwick 1979:139),<sup>187</sup> Basil responds to Maximus the Philosopher's request for the writings of Dionysius of Alexandria.<sup>188</sup> Basil expresses his wariness of Dionysius' overzealousness to counter Sabellianism. Basil sees him falling into the error of separating the Father from the Son according to substance, power, and glory. Drecoll (1996:41) says Basil's own Trinitarian teaching in this letter emphasizes the oneness between Father and Son, especially as it pertains to the unity of the *ousia* (cf. Behr 2004:301f).

In countering the teachings of Dionysius, Basil offers his own views saying,

“But if I may speak my own opinion, I accept the phrase 'like in substance,' [ὅμοιος κατ' οὐσίαν] provided the qualification 'invariably' [ἀπαραλλάκτως] is added to it, on the ground that it comes to the same things as 'identity of substance,' [τὰ αὐτὸν τῷ ὁμοουσίῳ] according it be understood, to the sound conception of the term. It was with precisely this thought in mind that the fathers of Nicaea consistently added 'of the same substance' [ὁμοούσιος] when they addressed the Only-Begotten as 'Light from Light,' 'True God from True God,' and so forth.”

In the passage above, we can glean Basil's understanding of the Creed of Nicaea. To speak of the Son as Only-Begotten (*monogenēs*), implies the Son's generation. The Son is “Light from Light, True God from True God” for his substance (*ousia*) is the same as (*homoousios*) the Father's. Drecoll (1996:40f) says, “Den Kern der damit vertretenen Position sieht Basilius darin, daß zwischen der οὐσία des Sohnes und der des Vaters keine Abweichung (παραλλαγή) anzunehmen ist, was dadurch ausgedrückt ist, daß...niemals ein Unterschied besteht” (cf. Prestige 1964:227).<sup>189</sup> Hildebrand (2007:76) says the importance of this passage is that it reveals Basil's “change of heart” towards the term *homoousios*. Basil only used *homoousios* once to describe the sameness of substance between Father and

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187 Hildebrand's opinion is that it was composed in 360-62 likely after *Against Eunomius*. Hildebrand notes that a date of 363-65 is also possible. See Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Thought*, pp. 210-22. Both dates reflect Basil's monastic stays in Annesi which is attested to in the letter. Drecoll (1996:28) suggests 363-64.

188 For an overview of Dionysius and questions of his orthodoxy, see JND Kelly, *Christian Doctrine*, p. 133ff.

189 Prestige says, “It is not the divine identity but the divine equality which Basil uses *homoousios* to secure.” For a critique of Prestige's understanding of *ousia* / *homoousios* see Christopher Stead, 1985, *The Significance of the Homoousios* as found in *Substance and Illusion in the Christian Father*, Variorum Press, pp. 397-412.

Son in his *Against Eunomius*. Both Drecoll and Hildebrand argue persuasively that at the beginning of the 360's Basil preferred the so-called "Semi-Arian" tradition of Eusebius of Caesarea in his use of *homoiousios* to describe the metaphysical relationship of the Father and the Son. In *letter 9*, Basil clearly favors a Nicene position through his predominate use of *homoousios* to describe the metaphysical relationship which exists between the Father and the Son (Hildebrand 2007:77). T.F. Torrance (1993:123) adds that Basil is one of several theologians at this time who came to believe "A proper understanding of *homoiousios* would have to imply *homoousios*."

Basil continues, "Now no one can possibly conceive of any variation either of light in relation to light, or of truth to truth, or of the substance of the Only-Begotten to that of the Father." There is no variation or caveat between the substance of the Son and the Father, for in contradiction to Arius, Basil maintains, the "Son was begotten out of the substance of the Father" (Deferrari 1:xxvi).<sup>190</sup>

Basil closes *letter 9* by summing up his view, "But if anyone eliminates the invariability of the likeness, as those in Constantinople<sup>191</sup> have done, I become suspicious of the expression [likeness in substance], on the ground that it diminishes the glory of the Only-Begotten. For, as you know, we are often accustomed to conceive of 'likeness' on the basis of similarities that are sometimes faint and fall far short of the archetypes. I have therefore myself

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190 I have altered the quote attributed to Arius. It is put in the positive form instead of the negation.

191 For a brief historical account of the council of Constantinople held in 359/60 see Deferrari, *Basil: Letters*, vol. 1 page 98n; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, p. 79; Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 380ff, and Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 164ff. The possibility of (mis)understanding "like in substance" as a generic "like" due to the council of Constantinople is the reason, according to Drecoll (1996:41), for Basil's use of *homoousios* from Nicaea instead of both the *homoios* of the Homoiousians and the position of the Homoians who avoided any talk of substance when speaking of the Father and the Son. Behr (2004:264) adds that Athanasius had already suggested in his work, *On the Councils*, that those who hold the Son to be *homoiousios* with the Father were really brothers who mean the same thing as those who use the term *homoousios*. He followed this up by conciliar action in Alexandria in 362. Behr (:264) thinks it is because of Basil's familiarity with *On the Councils* that he came to accept the term *homoousios* which he had problems with as expressed earlier to Apollinarius in letter 361. Behr (:275) points out that even Eunomius saw this when he says in his *Apology* section 9 "If he undertakes a comparison of this essence with something else, then, since a comparison cannot be made between things with nothing in common, the fundamental principle of the essence will be made common; but if that happens, the name will be made common as well."

adopted ['consubstantial,'] because I think that this term is less open to perversion.”<sup>192</sup>

In the quotation just given, we see again Basil's concern to see that the Only-Begotten Son receive the exact same glory as the Father (e.g. *Eun.*2.17). To simply say the Son is “like” the Father is no longer adequate in Basil's estimation. For Basil, at this stage in his theological development, the Son must be confessed as the *exact*, living image of the Father who is the archetype.<sup>193</sup> The term *homoousios* is the best term available to express this (cf. Hildebrand 2007:79; Drecoll 1996:41).

What is clear in this letter is that for Basil the eternal generation of the Son is the doctrine that explains how the Son is of the same being as the Father. He is the Only-Begotten Son (*monogenēs huios*), and as such “Light of Light and True God of True God”; *homoousios* with the Father. The Only-Begotten is the same in substance (*homoousios*), power, and glory with the Father because no variation between image and archetype exists.

### 5.3 Letter 52 To the Canonicae

This letter is placed early in Basil's episcopate, probably around 370 (Deferrari 1:327, Behr 2004:303, Fedwick 1979:142, et al.).<sup>194</sup> According to Deferrari (1:327n2), the “Canonicae were women of the early church enrolled to devote themselves to works of charity.” Drecoll (1996:276) calls them “women ascetics.”<sup>195</sup> There had been some defamation and slander going on which had caused problems between Basil and this group. Now Basil writes to them in order to respond to the rumors which had been circulating as well as to mention the (positive) report which the bishop Bosporius gave Basil concerning this group of women.<sup>196</sup>

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192 This quote is from Deferrari (1:99) except the last sentence which is an alteration of Deferrari's text by Hildebrand (2007:79n9). I prefer the translation using 'consubstantial' over Deferrari's 'likeness of substance' as I find it much less confusing.

193 For a discussion of Basil's use and understanding of the image-archetype metaphor see: *Against Eunomius* 1.17-18, 2.16; *On the Holy Spirit* 7.16, 18.45, Homily 15 (*Fide*) and Homily 25 (*Sab*).

194 Drecoll (1996:291n51) in or after 375. Looking at the internal evidence, I tend to agree with Drecoll.

195 For a short introduction and overview see letter CLXXIII (D 2:449n2); Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 276ff.

196 Drecoll says, “*Ep. 52...gehört in die Auseinandersetzungen um Basilius' theologische Position nach dem Bruch mit Eustathius.*” This reading is due to Drecoll dating the letter to 375. The traditional dating speaks against Drecoll's position because Basil's break with Eustathius occurred around 372-3. See *letter 125*.

The main problem Basil sought to clarify centered on the term *homoousios*. The Homoian creed of Niké/Constantinople, which was drafted and ratified around 360, had rejected all *ousia* language.<sup>197</sup> As Ayres (2004:165) notes, the creed of Niké/Constantinople “remained the imperially sanctioned statement of orthodoxy for almost two decades.” This fact, along with antithetical understandings of the term '*homoousios*,' made the use of this word precarious. Basil acknowledges the false teachings and misunderstandings associated with this word. Basil contends that *homoousios* cannot be understood as an entity prior to or underlying both God the Father and God the Son for this would imply “that the co-ordinate terms came from an underlying material” (Ayres 2004:94) and make the Father and Son brothers; brothers cannot be of the same substance.<sup>198</sup>

Therefore, Basil gives his fullest statement on the term *homoousios* in this letter (Behr 2004:303) in order to reassure the Canonicae that his teaching of *homoousios* complies with Bishop Bosphorius' teaching and the Nicene Fathers' understanding of this term.

Basil says, “And since even then there were those who said that the Son was brought into being out of the non-existent, to cut off this impiety also, the term 'likeness of substance' (*homoousion*)<sup>199</sup> was added. For the union of the Son with the Father has to do with neither time nor space.” In this quote, Basil makes the point that the Son is not created in time like everything else. He makes the same point in *Against Eunomius* 2.17 and *Homily* 16. The Son is not a creature because he is eternally begotten and not made.

Basil continues the paragraph commenting on the Nicene use of “Light from Light” to show “whatever idea of light is attributed to the Father, this will equally apply to the Son also...Since, therefore, the Father is light without beginning, and the Son is begotten light, yet one is light and the other is light, they rightly declared them 'alike in substance,' that they might set forth the equal dignity of their nature.” According to Basil, speaking of the Father and Son as *homoousios* mandates that

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197 For more on the creed of Niké/Constantinople see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 157-166 and Hanson, *The Search*, 371-86.

198 Athanasius had to counter a similar attack from “Arians.” They argued from a “third-man argument” that Athanasius’s Father-Son understanding resulted in the Father and Son being brothers. See Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, p.173ff.

199 Deferrari’s translation of “*homoousion*” is “likeness of substance” instead of the more common “same in substance.”

the Father and Son share in equal dignity. In other writings, the equal dignity of the Father and Son was based on the Son's eternal generation (cf. *Eun.* 1.25; *Spir.* 2.4, 6.13-15, 17.43; *Homilies* 15 and 24)<sup>200</sup>.

Basil's next point is that a right understanding of the term *homoousios* counters the Sabellian heresy for it “introduces a perfect notion of the persons of the Godhead...and at the same time set[s] forth the invariability of their nature.”

Next, Basil specifically discusses the doctrine of the eternal generation. He writes,

“But when we learn that the Son is from the substance of the Father, and begotten though not created, let us not fall into the corporeal conception of the process. For the substance in the Father was not divided to form the Son, nor did it engender by fluxion, or by putting forth shoots, as plants put forth their fruits; on the contrary, the method of divine generation is ineffable and inconceivable to the human mind. Indeed, it is a truly low and fleshly mind which likens invisible things to those perishable and temporal, and believes that just as corporeal things beget, so too does God in like manner; but piety demands that we proceed on the principle of opposites, and reason that, since mortal things do thus, the immortal being does otherwise. Therefore we should neither deny the divine generation, nor with corporeal conceptions defile our minds.”

In the quotation just given, Basil wants to oppose as much as anything else is the idea that the begetting of the Son from the substance of the Father<sup>201</sup> is to be understood in human and creaturely ways. Basil reinforces his point by teaching the generation of the Son to be “ineffable” and “inconceivable” to human minds. Basil taught the same thing in *Against Eunomius* 2.16, 22, 24.

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200 This list does not include speaking of the Father and Son as sharing in an *equal glory* which has a similar, if not synonymous, meaning for Basil.

201 That the meaning of “from the substance of the Father” simply meant “from God” for Athanasius, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 78-86. For more on the phrase “from the substance of the Father” see Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 90ff. On its exclusion from the Creed of Constantinople see Hanson, *The Search*, pp. 817ff. It seems that in the original Nicene Creed the phrase “from the substance of the Father” was more important than the word “*homoousios*,” which played an explanatory role (Ayres 2004:141). On page 171 Ayres says, “*Homoousios* is defended as a necessary consequence of the phrase ‘of the Father’s *ousia*.’” Though Ayres never addresses the topic as to why the phrase “from the substance of the Father” was left out of the Creed of Constantinople, Torrance (1993:116f) says the “changes made in these clauses at Constantinople evidently had little real significance beyond a tidying up through dropping unnecessary repetition.”

*Epistle 52* is important because it makes the confession of *homoousios* dependent on the eternal generation of the Son. T.F. Torrance (1991:125) sees Basil use of *homoousios* in conjunction with eternal generation in this letter as expressing the “oneness between the Son and the Father” as well as that it “expresses the distinction between them that obtains within that oneness” and thus a “bulwark against Sabellianism and Arianism.” While I agree with Torrance, we have seen that Basil was able to defend these assertions of the Father-Son relationship in his earlier *Against Eunomius* without employing *homoousios*.

#### **5.4 Letter 125: A Transcript of Faith Dictated by the Most Holy Basil, to which Eustathius, the Bishop of Sebaste, Subscribed**

This letter, written in the summer of 373 (Hildebrand 2007:24; Fedwick 1979:146),<sup>202</sup> is one of several letters between Basil and his one-time friend and mentor, Eustathius. In this letter, Basil explains the Creed of Nicaea and appends a section on the Holy Spirit (a transcript of faith) for Eustathius to sign. An addendum on the Holy Spirit is drafted and attached by Basil because at the time of the council of Nicaea “the doctrine of the Holy Ghost was laid down cursorily, not being considered as necessary of elaboration, because at that time this question had not yet been agitated, but the sense of it was unassailably inherent in the souls of the faithful.” Eustathius signs the letter as proof of his orthodoxy, but he later recants, essentially ending his longtime friendship with Basil.<sup>203</sup>

Hildebrand (2007: 83ff) sees Basil's use of *hypostasis* emerging into a Trinitarian technical term in this letter. As noted in *Against Eunomius*, *hypostasis* and *ousia* were formerly used by Basil as synonyms. Now, in this letter, Basil differentiates

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202 Deferrari dates the letter in 373 as does Radde-Gallwitz (2012:99). But on page 109n2 Radde-Gallwitz dates the letter to 372 (perhaps a typo for it is the first edition of the book). Drecoll (1996:203) dates it to May/beginning of June 373. Hauschild dates it to August of 373 (Fedwick 1979:146).

203 See epp. 99, 130, and 244 for more context on this letter. For a short account of this particular letter see Deferrari 2:259n;1 Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 99f, 109; Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp.24-25; Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 88-90; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 195-212, 270-276. For more on Eustathius's theology see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 77ff. For more on Basil's friendship with, and eventual estrangement from, Eustathius see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 77-80 and Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 70-76, 239-245. In *letter 263*, Basil names Eustathius as a “wolves in sheep's clothing” which the western church should be aware of.

between *ousia* and *hypostasis*.<sup>204</sup> As Basil says in this letter, “It is necessary, therefore, to confess the Son as of the same substance [*homoousion*] as the Father, as it is written, and to confess the Father in His own proper person, [*en idia men hypostasei*] and the Son in His own, and the Holy Ghost in His own, according as the Fathers themselves have clearly set forth.” The emphasis of Basil's interpretation of the Creed of Nicaea is that the oneness of substance (*homoousios*) and distinction of Persons (*hypostaseis*) needs to be maintained and, additionally, the Spirit must be mentioned alongside the Father and the Son and not creation. Lienhard (1999:105) also sees Basil clearly distinguishing between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, but he notes that Basil did not define them in any way. Finally, Drecoll (1996:270f) considers *letter 125* is important for the development of the formula “μία οὐσία – τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις” due to Basil’s emphasis on, and distinction of, *ousia* and *hypostasis*.

After his explanation of several words in the creed, Basil quotes the Creed of Nicaea (325):

“We believe in one God the Father Almighty, maker of all things, visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of the Father, the only Begotten, that is, of the substance of the Father;<sup>205</sup> God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten not made; consubstantial with the Father...And as for such who say 'There was a time when He was not,' and 'Before He was begotten He was not,' or that 'He came into existence from what was not,' or who profess that the Son of God is of a different person or substance, or that He changeth, or is variable, such as these the Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes.”

Here it suffices to note the emphasis the creed of Nicaea makes concerning the “begottenness” of the Son. His begottenness from the substance of the Father (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) shows him to be “of the substance (consubstantial) of the Father” “God of God” “Light of Light” and “true God of true God”. These statements convey the Son's full deity. To neglect or oppose the eternal generation is to put oneself at odds with the Creed of Nicaea of 325.

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204 Around ten years before, in 362, Athanasius, in his *Antiochene Tome*, helped to clarify what were acceptable understandings of *ousia* and *hypostasis*. See Ayres, *Nicaea*, p. 173ff.

205 Radde-Gallwitz (102n39) notes the phrase “of the substance” (ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας) “was part of the Nicene Creed of 325, but is not found in the Creed promulgated at Constantinople in 381; it is thus not part of the Creed recited by Christians today.” He says Basil also uses the phrase in *Eun.* 2.23 and *epp.* 52 and 140.

## 5.5 Letter 214 To Count Terentius

This letter was written in the fall of 375 (Deferrari 3:227n1; Fedwick 1979:148).<sup>206</sup> It records Basil's argument “not against the Marcellians and Sabellians...but against those within the communion of the Church who nonetheless confess only one *hypostasis* in God [i.e. the Paulinians in Antioch]” (Hildebrand 2007:86). Paulinians were those who supported Paulinus as rightful bishop of Antioch. Basil, however, supported Meletius.<sup>207</sup> Hildebrand (2007:86f) says, “Ep. 214...must be understood in the light of the controversy revolving around Antioch. The 'Arians' had accused the Paulinians of Sabellianism...In Basil's mind, how the Paulinians relate *hypostasis* and *prosopôn* will determine whether or not they clear themselves of the 'Arian' accusation that they are Sabellians. For Basil, the sense of *hypostasis* determines the sense of *prosopôn*: if *hypostasis* is synonymous with *ousia*, then *prosopôn* takes a Sabellian sense; if *hypostasis* is not synonymous with *ousia*, then it frees *prosopôn* of Sabellian connotations.”<sup>208</sup> Therefore, Basil thinks it necessary to confess three *hypostaseis* to avoid a Sabellian interpretation of *homoousios* (cf. Drecoll 1996:296; Hildebrand2007:88). Radde-Gallwitz (2012:96n15) says, “Basil himself first used ‘three *hypostaseis*’ in his *Against Eunomius* 3.3. However, only in 376 did it become his preferred language for naming the three.”

In this letter, Basil wishes to give a correct understanding of how the Father and Son, though having a “commonality of substance” (cf. *Eun.*1.19), are also distinct. Basil does not explicitly mention at this point the Son's eternal generation but the doctrine is clearly implied as he speaks about the *hypostasis* of the Father (*patros*) and the Son (*huios*). As Giles (2012:133) says, “Basil was not the first to recognize

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206 Hildebrand (2007:86) dates it to 376.

207 For more on the background to *letter 214* see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 86-89 and Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 295ff. For more on the “Antiochene schism” see Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 57-59, 135-37. For a historical and biographical account of Basil's interaction in the church affairs in Antioch see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 288-305, 314ff.

208 To found the differentiation *exclusively* in the economy of salvation or according to differing “roles” leaves questions of Sabellianism open. On this see Giles, *Eternal Generation*, pp. 220-235 and Johnson, *Augustine, Eternal Generation, and Evangelical Trinitarianism*, pp. 143ff, 157ff.

that the names Father, Son and their synonyms, 'begetting' and 'begotten' signify divine differentiation, but in his later writings [such as *letter 214*] he advanced this argument significantly by developing the idea that these terms speak of differing relations. For him what makes the divine persons distinct from each other, and not just nominally distinct, is their mutual and exclusive relations,<sup>209</sup> which are expressed by their proper names, which in turn indicate their relationships of origin” (cf. Kelly 1978:265).<sup>210</sup>

Basil says,

“But if we are to say briefly what we think, we shall speak as follows: what the generic idea is to the particular, this the substance is to the person. For not only does each one of us participate in 'being' in the common meaning of 'existence,' but So-and-so 'exists' in respect to his own individual traits, and so does So-and-so. So even here the concept of existence or substance is generic, like goodness, divinity, or any other abstract concept; but the person is perceived in the special character of fatherhood, or sonship,<sup>211</sup> or of holy power...let them [i.e. Paulinians] also enumerate them, in order that the idea of consubstantiality may be preserved in the oneness of the Godhead, and that the recognition of the holiness of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the complete and perfect personality of each of those named, may be proclaimed.”

In the quote above, Basil's uses 'fatherhood' (*patrotēs*), 'sonship' (*huiotēs*), and 'holy power' to “[speak] of the particular originating relations of the three *hypostaseis*” (Giles 2012:133). It is in differentiating the meaning of *ousia* and *hypostasis* that Basil sees the way forward against Sabellianism. A *hypostasis* belonging to the Father and the Son truly, eternally, and indelibly distinguishes the Father from the Son. The “content” of their respective *hypostaseis*, ‘fatherhood’ and ‘sonship’, protects against charges of tritheism when Basil employs the presupposition “like begets like.” Giles (2012:133) adds, “These relations can never change: they are essential to the person.” Elsewhere (e.g. *Eun.*1.25; *Spir.*18.44-47), Basil attributed the origins of relation to the unbegotten Father as

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209 The origins based on proper names as well as the mutual and exclusive relation between Father and Son comes from Origen. See Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God*, passim.

210 On this passage see Behr, *Nicene Faith*, p. 297f and Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, p. 296.

211 See also *letter 236* below. In *Homily 29* Basil uses 'Representation' and 'Image' to speak of the distinguishing features of the Son.

sole source (*mia archē*) of the eternally begotten Son. While Basil does not address the doctrine of eternal generation outright in this letter, it is but another example of the doctrine's bearing out on his advanced Trinitarian theology.

## 5.6 Letters 233, 234, 235 to Amphilochius

These letters will be grouped together as they were all addressed to Amphilochius. Additionally, they were written in early 376 (Deferrari 3:365; Fedwick 1979:149),<sup>212</sup> and have similar content. Radde-Gallwitz (2009:109n59) says letters 233-236 “may originally have been a single 'memorandum', later divided by the various questions answered. Basil refers to such a memorandum at the end of *ep.* 232.”

Though none of these letters deal explicitly with the eternal generation, they are important in two regards: First, they make known Basil's epistemology and his epistemology has significant import on his doctrine of eternal generation.

Secondly, as Hildebrand (2007:27) says, “Basil's *Ep.* 233-36 to Amphilochius sum up a great deal of his theological thought in its mature form. They were written after *On the Holy Spirit* and recapitulate the theological vision of *Against Eunomius*.”

### 5.6.1 Letter 233

In *letter* 233, Basil acknowledges the nobility of the mind, but at the same time the limitedness of it (e.g. *Homily* 15). Basil says, “But the mind that is tempered with the divinity of the Spirit is at last initiated into the great speculations, and observes the divine beauties, but only to the extent that grace allows and its constitution admits. Therefore it is the first concern of the mind to recognize our God, but to recognize Him in such a way as the infinitely great can be known by the very small.” According to Basil, if the human mind “gives itself up to the assistance of the Spirit, it will know the truth and recognize God. However, it will recognize Him, as the Apostle said, in part, but in the life after this more perfectly.” Basil takes the middle road between two extremes: yes, the human mind can, through the Spirit, comprehend divine things, but this is limited. His “epistemological humility” is ascertainable in *Against Eunomius*, which was written some 10-12 years prior (DelCogliano/Radde-Gallwitz 2011:5). His epistemological humility can also be observed in his reticence to speak about the eternal generation (cf. *Eun.* 2.22, 24,

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212 Drecoll (1996:282) dates them to Winter/Spring of 375. For an overview and recapitulation of these letters see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 282-290 and Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 258ff.

*Ep. 52, homilies 27, 29*). In a final analysis of this letter Drecoll (1996:287) says, “Basilius verteidigt somit die rationalen Bemühungen bei der Gotteserkenntnis; ein Gotteserkenntnis, die das unvollkommene menschliche Vernunftvermögen ausschaltet und ausschließlich als glaubende Verehrung und Anbetung verstanden wird, lehnt er ab.”

### 5.6.2 Letter 234

Basil responds to Amphilochius who was put to the test by the question: “What is one to say when he confirms that he *knows* who or what he worships, but can't say what the substance (*ousia*) of that thing is?” This question represents Eunomian epistemology (Radde-Gallwitz 2009:108f). Drecoll (1996:287) rightly says, “The concession, not to know the *ousia* of the object of worship means for the opponents the total ignorance of that object of worship.” Basil objects to such “all or nothing” propositions as absurd sophisms. He expands his teaching of the 'Principle of Unknowability' of God's *ousia* (cf. *Eun.* Book 1). Basil concludes that not to know God's *ousia* does not mean the same thing as God is totally unknowable (Drecoll 1996:287).

Basil rejects that the attributes (or activities) of God are revelations of the substance, for this “sophism...involves countless absurdities.”<sup>213</sup> God's attributes, according to Basil, tell us about God's activity: “[W]e say that from His activities we know our God, but His substance itself we do not profess to approach. For His activities descend to us, but His substance remains inaccessible.” This passage represents the well-known distinction in Basil's theology between the “energies” (ἐνέργειαι) of God and God's *ousia*. Regarding this distinction Drecoll (1996:287) says, “Basil maintains: That in God there is a differentiation between the οὐσία and the ἐνέργειαι. The first [*ousia*] is total and remains unapproachable and inaccessible, the [energies] are multifaceted and make possible the γνωρίζειν Θεόν.” I will not go into the details of Basil's apophatic theology here,<sup>214</sup> but this quote has relevance for the topic at hand. The eternal generation, though biblically revealed, must be considered by Basil to be an unapproachable, inaccessible, and ineffable mystery for it is located within the realm of the unknowable *ousia* since

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<sup>213</sup> Basil lists activities or attributes that seem to contradict, such as the awfulness and benevolence of God. Thus there would be both contradictions and parts (which violates divine simplicity) in God.

<sup>214</sup> The discussion surrounding the distinction between the energies and substance involves addressing apophatic theology. Basil never endorses a fully apophatic theology. On apophatic theology in Basil see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 124, 137-42 and Ayres, *Nicaea*, 196, 282ff.

the Father and Son are said to be *homoousios*. Thus salvation cannot come by way of knowledge and certainly not by complete knowledge of God's *ousia* as Heteroousians insisted.

Basil says that salvation comes through faith. Faith is complemented by knowledge *that* God exists, not *what* God exists of. He says,

“How then am I saved? Through faith. And it is faith enough to know that God is, not what He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him. Knowledge of His divine substance, then, is the perception of His incomprehensibility; and that is to be worshipped which is comprehended, not as to what its substance is, but as to that its substance exists.”

Basil then proceeds to give John 1.18, Genesis 15.6, Matthew 9.28, and John 9.35 an interesting interpretation, namely, these texts are used by Basil to substantiate his claim that God has never revealed His substance to anyone, but only His power. “But we understand God from His power,” Basil says. “Therefore we believe in Him whom we understand, and we worship in whom we believe.” Basil means that faith in God's existence is strengthened by recognition of his power which results in true worship of the true God (Drecolll 1996:288). This is possible due to Basil's (Pro-Nicene) premise that power reveals essence (cf. *Eun.*1.12; Hildebrand 2007:71; Behr 2004:278ff). What God does truly reveals who God is. Therefore by recognizing his works and how he works, God is known in a true way. This is how Basil understands faith to save without total comprehension of God's *ousia*.

### 5.6.3 Letter 235

“Which is first, knowledge or faith?” asks Basil to start *letter* 235.<sup>215</sup> This was possibly a question from Amphilochius between letters 234-235. Basil answers this question “But in faith in God, the notion of the existence of God precedes, and this notion we gather from His works [i.e. creation].” The word “knowledge,” Basil notes, is open to a multitude of uses such as “number, size, power, and manner of subsistence, and time of generation, and substance.” And as the word knowledge pertains to God “we know what is knowable about God, and yet to 'know' anything...that escapes our comprehension [and] is impossible.” On this passage Ayres (2004:196n39) thinks that “Basil seems both to want to show that pro-

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215 On this letter see Radde-Gallwitz, *Divine Simplicity*, pp. 122, 126-28. He notes that the Basil distinguishes between “knowing that” verses “knowing what” in this letter.

Nicene theology can be said to know what it worships, and to show that this 'knowing' is part of a continuum with faith, not in opposition to it." Basil goes on to list several examples (including our own self) which provide examples of the fact that one does not need to know the *ousia* of something to know it truly. This applies all the more to God.

Next, Basil points out that biblically the word "know," especially in reference to God, never means knowing his substance. The biblical sense of "know" is manifold and means the "apprehension of Him who has created us, and the understanding of His wonders, and the keeping of His commandments, and intimacy with Him." Radde-Gallwitz (2009:128) says, "For Basil, the Christian life...is a matter of growing into 'affinity' with God...something humans are by nature set up to do...[in letter 235] Basil has sketched an account of progress in knowledge of God, from knowing 'that' (i.e. gathering that God is powerful, wise, and so forth from his works) to intimate affinity with him, which Basil explicitly likens to a marital relation."

#### **5.6.4 Summary of Letters 233-235**

Drecoll (1996:290) summarizes these letters well when he says:

"Epp. 233-235 are important for the οὐσία-Term, in that they make a clear differentiation between a total unknowability, i.e. a general agnosticism, and the Principle of the Unknowability of the οὐσία...The content of God's οὐσία is not comprehensible or able to be specified...The area in which God is knowable is more closely defined as the δύναμις and the corresponding ἐνέργειαι...That the οὐσία of God is principally unknowable does not mean that absolutely nothing of it is knowable. On the contrary, the *ousia* contains both a declaration of existence [*Existenzangabe*] and several properties which manifest themselves in very visible efficacies. But in spite of them what the οὐσία consists of, remains incomprehensible. The οὐσία remains undefinable and unknowable" (Translation ZF).

Basil reveals what he believes are the epistemological parameters of the knowledge of God in *letters* 233-235. The *ousia* of God is unknowable and undefinable. Since the eternal generation belongs to the *ousia* of God (for Father and Son are said to be *homoousios*), Basil teaches that the Son's eternal

generation is unknowable and ineffable. He makes this apparent in *Against Eunomius* 2.22, 24, *Epistle* 52, and *homilies* 16, 27, and 29.

## 5.7 Letter 236 To Amphilochius

This letter is traditionally included with letters 233-235 though current scholarship is debating whether *letter* 236 was written by Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa (Ritter 2012:198). The probable date for *letter* 236 is 376 (Deferrari 3:236; Hildebrand 2007:86).<sup>216</sup>

The background to this letter is disputed. Hildebrand (1996:86) thinks that the background is the same as *letter* 214, i.e., a dispute with the Paulinians of Antioch. This letter only hints at the problem that *letter* 214 makes explicit. In contrast, Drecoll (1996:282) and Deferrari (3:386n1) both see the letter primarily as an answer to questions raised by, or not addressed in, *On the Holy Spirit* which was also addressed to Amphilochius.

Authorship, background, and content are reasons for this letter to be looked at separately from letters 233-235. Those letters dealt mainly with the activities (or attributes) of God, his *ousia*, and the role and ability of the human mind in comprehension of both. This letter deals with Basil's response to specific questions from Amphilochius. Two questions in particular, the first and the last, have relevancy in regards to the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son.

The first question which Basil addresses is how to understand and explain the passages in Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32<sup>217</sup> where Jesus says that no one knows the day or hour of the end except the Father. The Anomoeans, who are also known as Heteroousians, used Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32 "for the destruction of the glory of the Only-Begotten, as a proof of His unlikeness in

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<sup>216</sup> Drecoll on the other hand, dates it to the beginning of 375 as does Meredith (1995:104). Drecoll (1996:282) thinks it was sent along with *ep.* 232.

<sup>217</sup> For more on Basil's Christology and his understanding of the humanity of Christ see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 85-88, Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, chapter 7; Christoph Schwöbel. 1995. Christology and Trinitarian Thought in *Trinitarian Theology Today. Essays on Divine Being and Act*, Christoph Schwöbel (ed.), T&T Clark, pp. 128-37; Basil's letter to Sozopolis (D 4:CCLXI) as well as his *Homily* 29. For more on Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32 in patristic exegesis see Lionel Wickham, 1993, *The Ignorance of Christ: A Problem for the Ancient Theology* as found in *Christians Faith and Greek Philosophy in Late Antiquity. Essays in Tribute to George Christopher Stead*, pp. 213-226.

substance [ἀνομοίου, thus the name Anomoeans], and of His subordination in dignity, on the ground that He who does not know all things can neither have the same nature nor be considered of one likeness with Him who embraces the knowledge of everything[.]” For Basil the Incarnation does not demean the Son or impinge on his full and complete deity in any way. This is an important difference to all the so-called “Arian” theologies, where the Incarnation was proof of the Son's inferiority to the Father (cf. DelCogliano 2012:230, Ayres 2004:231; Adam 1992:221). They believed the Father, the true God, had to create an intermediary, the Son, for the Father could not interact with the world.

Basil unravels the knotty issues posed by Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32 by referring to the Father as “First Cause” (πρώτην αἰτίαν). First he quotes Mark 10.18, “None is good but one, that is God.” Basil says, “[N]ot even here does the Son, in these words, place Himself outside the nature of good.” That is, the Son does not claim not to be good, he simply points to the source of goodness, the Father. He underscores his point through his interpretation of Matthew 11.27 “‘No one knoweth the Son but the Father.’ For not even here does He charge the Spirit with ignorance, but he testifies that the knowledge of His own nature exists with the Father first.” Likewise, the “no one knoweth” of Matthew 24.36 was said by Jesus, according to Basil, to “[refer] to the Father the first knowledge of things that are and are to be, and was indicating to men by every means the First Cause.” As in *Against Eunomius* 1.25-26, Basil refers to the Father as “Cause” to help him re-interpret passages used by Heteroousian opponents who wished to relegate the Son to a second-tier deity. Basil was convinced that the Father as Cause and the Son's deference to the Father did not necessitate subordinationism or prove the Son's lack of full deity. Rather, the Father as Cause speaks of divine order.

Basil continues that the Father as “First Cause” “accord[s] with the rest of the evidence of Scripture, or how else can it agree with the general notions of us who believe that the Only-Begotten is an image of the unseen God, and an image, not of bodily appearance, but of the very Godhead and of the glories attributed to the substance of God—an image of power, an image of wisdom.” Basil claims this for he is convinced that the Only-Begotten was begotten by the Father, the “First Cause,” in a way that reveals him to be the exact image of the very Godhead (e.g. *Eun.*2.17).

Basil absolutely rejects any idea that the Son, as the Son of God, “doesn't know the day or hour.”<sup>218</sup> As the Image, Wisdom, and Power of God he must know (cf. Deferrari 3:391n5). In this letter, “the ignorance of Christ refers to ‘him who received all things economically (οἰκονομικῶς) and was advancing in wisdom and grace before God and humans’” (Behr 2004:292). Due to his partitive exegesis, Basil is able to base occasional statements such as Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32 on the Incarnation and the Son's taking on of human “flesh endowed with a soul.” Behr (2004:149) says Basil's partitive exegesis “conceptually distinguishes between what is said of Christ as divine and what is said of him as human...The reflection is not chronological, looking for his divinity “prior” to his becoming human, but is analytical, noting that he is spoken of as both God and human so that his divinity is manifest in one who is also described as human.”

Basil then points out to Amphilochius that he should compare the quotes as found in Matthew and Mark, for they are not exactly alike. The reading in Matthew is favorable to Basil for “no one knoweth, not the Angels of heaven, but the Father alone.” Mark adds “the Son” to “no one knoweth.” Basil asks, “What...is worthy of note in these words? That Matthew said nothing about the ignorance of the Son, but seems to agree with Mark in meaning[.]” The Son, being fully divine, must know the day and time. Basil quotes John 16.15 “*All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine*” and John 10.15 “*As the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father*” as proof that “the Father knows the Son entirely, so as to understand even all wisdom that dwells in Him, in like measure obviously will He also be known by the Son.”

Basil moves on to deal with the verse as it stands in Mark.

“[S]ince he seems clearly to separate the Son also from the knowledge, we believe thus: that no one knoweth...not even the Son would have known had not the Father known: that is, the cause of the Son's knowing proceeds from the Father. And this interpretation is unstrained to one who listens in a reasonable spirit, since 'alone' is not added as it is in Matthew. The sense, then, in Mark is this: regarding that day or hour no one knoweth...nay not even the Son would have known had not the Father known; for from the Father was knowledge given Him from the beginning. And this is most reverential and befitting the divinity to say of the Son, that from Him with whom He is

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218 Wickham (1993:224) says Eunomius also thought that the Son *did* know the date and hour of the end.

consubstantial he derives both His power of knowing and His being observed in all wisdom and glory befitting His Godhead.”

In the quote above, we see how Basil is able to a positive twist on the Son “knowing” or “not knowing”: He says it indicates the consubstantiality and unbroken relationship between Father and Son. Their oneness makes the exchange of knowledge and wisdom between the two possible and, in a natural sense, necessary. The Father as “First Cause” (αἴτιον) and “Principle” (ἀρχή) is emphasized, but Basil makes clear that this does not detract from the glory of the Son. The order (τάξις) is simply Father, Son, Holy Spirit, which does not represent a hierarchy because Basil understands the monarchy, the divine rule of God, to be triune (*Eun.*1.25; *Spir.*18.44-47) and not belonging to the Father alone.

After four other questions, Basil addresses how to understand the relationship between the substance (*ousia*) and person (*hypostasis*) as it pertains to the Father and the Son.

Basil says, “But substance and person have the distinction that the general has with reference to the particular; for example, just as 'a living creature' has with reference to 'a particular man.’” On this passage Hildebrand (2007:84) says, “The distinction of *hypostasis*<sup>219</sup> from *ousia* originates from, and develops within, a polemical setting. Basil distinguishes *ousia* from *hypostasis* not under the influence of pagan philosophical conceptions of God but in reaction to the thought of Marcellus of Ancyra and Paulinus of Antioch.”<sup>220</sup>

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219 Hildebrand (2007:92) helpfully defines *hypostasis*. “A *hypostasis* is not an *idiōma* [particular property]; rather the *hypostasis* (an individual or particular subsistent) is the combination of *ousia* and *idiōma*—of the common (*to koinon*) and the particular (*to idion*)—and the *idiōma* makes the *hypostasis* perceptible.” Drecoll (1996:285) describes the *hypostasis* as “The sphere of the *idiōmata* are delineated and describable, but remain mentally and terminologically not ascertainable because they are dependent on, and portray only a difference within, the unknowable *ousia*.” Therefore according to Drecoll (*ibid*), the *hypostasis* cannot be the starting point (*Ausgangspunkt*) in the doctrine of the Trinity because the *hypostasis* is the *ousia* and the *idiōma*. Rather for Basil, the uniform *ousia* is the starting point as this also accords with divine simplicity, which Hildebrand (2007:51,74) sees as Basil's starting point in all things theological. This is also important because, if true, it would go against common scholarship which teaches that eastern theologians start Trinitarian discourse by addressing the 3 *hypostaseis* rather than the common *ousia*.

220 Here Hildebrand (2007:84n31) follows both Hübner and Ritter. Hildebrand (:92n52) does however note that on this particular passage “Basil's choice of analogy here indicates...Stoic influence.” Meredith (1995:104f) sees Basil “Using a distinction which goes back to Aristotle, the relation between *ousia* and *hypostasis* is likened to that between general and particular, *koinon* and *idion*.” This is “a model drawn from logic, with slightly materialistic overtones” (:105) because of Basil's use of *to hypokeimenon* (:125n4).

Basil goes on,

“For this reason we confess one substance for the Godhead, so as not to hand down variously the definition of Its existence, but we confess a person that is particular, in order that our conception of Father and Son and Holy Spirit may be for us unconfused and plain. For unless we think of characteristics that are sharply defined in the case of each, as for example paternity and sonship<sup>221</sup> ...but from the general notion of being confess God, it is impossible to hand down a sound definition of the faith. Therefore, we must add the particular to the general and thus confess the faith; the Godhead is something general, the paternity something particular, and combining these we should say: 'I believe in God the Father.' And again in the confession of the Son we should do likewise—combine the particular with the general and say: 'I believe in God the Son.'...so that throughout the whole, both unity is preserved in the confession of the one Godhead, and that which is peculiar to the Persons is confessed in the distinction made in the characteristics attributed to each.”

On the passage above Drecoll (1996:283) says, “In the Godhead, Basil contrasts between the μία οὐσία and ὑπόστασις ἰδιόζουσα [*hypostasis* that is particular].” That is, Basil distinguishes between what is common to the Father and Son, the “one substance,” with what is particular to each, paternity or sonship (cf. Behr 2004:298f).

Basil continues, “And those who say that substance and persons are the same are forced to confess different Persons only, and in hesitating to speak of three Persons [τρεις ὑποστάσεις] they find that they fail to avoid the evil of Sabellius[.]” Drecoll (1996:284) says, “For the first time in *ep.* 236,6 Basil uses μία οὐσία in close proximity to τρεις ὑποστάσεις and in a context of a terminological demarcation of both terms from one another.” It needs to be noted that Basil is not using the phrase “μία οὐσία, τρεις ὑποστάσεις” as his, but he mentions the phrases in close proximity as he discusses the false teaching of the Sabellians (*ibid.*)<sup>222</sup>

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Meredith (:125n3) detects this in letters 52, 125, and 214 as well. The debate if Basil uses the two categories of being from Aristotle is still unresolved in Basilian scholarship.

221 Similar to *Ep.* 214 above.

222 Drecoll continues “*Ep.* 236,6 ist somit das früheste Zeugnis für eine begriffliche Fixierung der beiden Begriffe als ontologisches Grundgerüst der Trinitätslehre überhaupt. Wenn man also den Ursprung der neoneozänischen 'Formel' μία οὐσία - τρεις ὑποστάσεις suchen möchte, wird man in das Jahr 375 auf *ep.* 236,6

To wrap up this letter, Behr (2004:299) says, “Basil's great contribution was to differentiate the terms 'essence' [*ousia*] and *hypostasis*, each with a clearly defined meaning, so that the distinct reality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit can be affirmed without introducing any compromise with regard to their unity and identity of being or 'essence'.” This Basil does without direct reference to the eternal generation of the Son. As in *letter 214*, the doctrine is implied by Basil's reference to the origin of relationship when speaking about the *hypostasis* of the Father (paternity) and the *hypostasis* of the Son (sonship).

## 5.8 Letter 361/362 to Apollinarius

With this letter,<sup>223</sup> we take a step back in time to 360<sup>224</sup> (Hildebrand 2007:76, Behr 2004:300) and get a glimpse of Basil's early conception of the relationship between Father and Son.

The addressee is Apollinarius who by 360 had become a bishop and was a supporter of the Nicene faith (Radde-Gallwitz 2012:127).<sup>225</sup> Hildebrand (2007:37) says, “The council, called by Acacius of Caesarea in Constantinople in 360...nullified all previous formulae and banned the term *ousia* in theological discourse (cf. Ayres 2004:165). So Basil inquires of Apollinarius to give him insight

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zugehen müssen.” Basil never uses the phrase „one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*“ in his corpus and certainly not in a way in which those who teach about a „Cappadocian Settlement“ often claim. The theory of the Cappadocian use of “one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis*” has been competently argued against by Joseph Lienhard, 1999, *The Trinity. An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, Eds Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, Gerald O' Collins, Oxford University Press, pp. 99-121 (cf. Behr 2004:308).

223 For an overview and background to letters 361-364 see Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 37-40; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 21-37, Ayres, *Nicaea*, pp. 189-91, and Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 299-302. For a historical and biographical account of the friendship between Apollinarius and Basil see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 245-54, Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, pp. 94-98, 101f, and Hübner, *Basilius von Caesarea und das Homoousios*, pp. 70-91.

224 Behr, following a long line of scholarship dates it to the council in Constantinople in 360 or shortly after. Drecoll (1996:23) dates it to the end of 362 to 363. Deferrari does not give us a date. Concerning the authenticity of the letter see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, p.21n2 and Hübner, *Basilius von Caesarea*, p. 70.

225 Deferrari (4:331n1), as others, notes that at the Synod of Alexandria in 362 Apollinarius was condemned as a heretic. Radde-Gallwitz (2012:127, 129) says that the condemnation was for his Christological view that Christ did not have the same flesh as ours and he also denied that Christ had a rational mind and in this way his humanity was “incomplete”. For more on Apollinarius's life and theology see Prestige, *Fathers and Heretics*, pp. 94-119. Basil rejects Apollinarius's teaching in *letter 236* above as well as *letters 263* and *265*. For more on Basil's view of the Incarnation see *Homily 27 On the Holy Birth of Christ*. For more on the Christological differences between Basil and Apollinarius, see Hildebrand, *Basil of Caesarea*, p. 85ff, Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, ch. 7 and Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 319ff.

as to the use of substance (*ousia*) in Scripture, for the word is being “cast aside...as foreign to the Divine Scriptures.” Basil rejects this view because *ousia* is used in Matthew 6.11 and Titus 2.5. On the other hand, his Homoian opponents do not accept these verses as valid for using *ousia*-language to describe the Father-Son relationship (Drecolll 1996:23). These circumstances prompted Basil to write to Apollinarius.

In addition, Basil also requests Apollinarius' insights regarding how to understand *homoousios*. Basil understands *homoousios* as *not* referring to “a common overlying class” (cf. *ep.* 52) as this would make the Father and Son two gods (Drecolll 1996:23). Basil also rejects understanding *homoousios* as “an underlying pre-existent material” (cf. *Eun.* 1.19) and “no division of the first into the second.” Drecolll (1996:23) says the last assertion would imply that before the generation of the Son there was only one God who then separated a piece of himself, the Son, so that there are two Divine Pieces (*Götterteile*).

Ayres (2004:190) says there are two ways of understanding Basil's problem here with *homoousios* and we can't be sure which one it is. It may be “Basil...expressing an anti-Marcellan concern with *homoousios*.” That is Basil may be concerned with a form of modalism which the term *homoousios* had raised in the past in conjunction with the theology of Marcellus. It may also be that Basil understands *homoousios* to imply “Father and Son are of identical ontological status...[which is] unacceptable because it implies the existence of two ultimate principles” (ibid). This would be the error of ditheism.

Basil already holds a *general* Nicene understanding for he says “that whatever by way of hypothesis the substance of the Father is assumed to be, this must by all means be assumed as also that of the Son.” Basil goes on to use one of his favorite word-pictures of the Son as Light<sup>226</sup>: “So that if anyone should speak of the substance of the Father as light perceptible to the mind, eternal, unbegotten, he would also call the substance of the Only-Begotten light perceptible to the mind, eternal, unbegotten.”<sup>227</sup> Basil here uses the Nicene phrase “Light from Light” and already envisions the Son as being eternal. Interestingly, he calls the Son here “unbegotten.” Nowhere else in Basil's dogmatic corpus has this been

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226 Drecolll (1996:24) says, “Das Beispiel des Lichtes ist deshalb besonders geeignet, weil zwischen Licht und Licht kein quantitativer Unterschied besteht, es aber auch nicht unbedingt Identität bedeutet: Jedes Licht hat ja durchaus seinen eigenen Umriß.”

227 On this passage see Johannes Zachhuber, *Basil and the Three-Hypostases Tradition*, pp. 18ff.

encountered. The Son is always “begotten” or Basil's preferred term “Only-Begotten.” Hildebrand (2007:39), and Drecoll (1996:24), when discussing this paragraph translate it “the substance of the Only-Begotten as immaterial, eternal, *begotten* light” (emphasis ZF). Neither comments on Deferrari's translation. In the Greek stands “φῶς νοητόν, αἰδίον, ἀγέννητον καὶ τὴν τοῦ Μονογενοῦς οὐσίαν ἐρεῖ.” Begotten, γεννητόν, is found nowhere in this portion of text. According to Ayres (2004:112f), Athanasius saw the term 'unbegotten,' (or 'unoriginate,') as having two meanings when referencing the Son: “[T]he Son is also unoriginate if one means by that 'what is not a work and always was'. If by the term one means 'existing but not generated of any nor having a father' then only the Father is ungenerated.” I am not proposing that Basil is following Athanasius here, but perhaps he is simply making a similar distinction in the possible semantic meanings of the word when applied to the Son. Later orthodox teaching on the divine generation similarly states that “The generation, properly speaking, has no reference at all to the essence, but only to the hypostatical distinction. The Son is begotten not as God, but as Son, not as to his *natura*, but as to his ἰδιότης, his peculiar property and his relation to the Father. The divine essence neither begets, nor is begotten” (P. Schaff 1910:659).

At the time of this letter, Basil is quite reserved towards using *homoousios* and supports *homoiousios* which shows his preference for the Dedication Creed of Antioch in 341 as developed by Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea (Behr 2004:300). Basil says, “And in such a meaning the expression 'like without a difference' [cf. *ep.* 9; *homily* 24] seems to me to accord better than 'consubstantial.' For light which has no difference from light in the matter of greater and less cannot be the same (because each is in its own sphere of substance), but I think that 'like in substance entirely without difference' could be said correctly.” Hildebrand (2007:39) says, “[F]or Basil at this point in time, *homoousios* is properly predicated of things that are not truly distinct.”

Though the letter does not specifically discuss the divine generation of the Son, it is important as Basil reveals his thoughts on the Father-Son relationship. One would not expect Basil to discuss the finer points of divine generation when he does not yet have a clear definition and conception of the *homoousios*-relationship between Father and Son. Basil's main thesis in letter 361 is that “whatever...the substance of the Father is assumed to be, this must by all means be assumed as also that of the Son.” This will remain an axiom in his Father-Son theology

throughout his lifetime and in *Against Eunomius* it will be seen as a necessity due to the Son's divine generation.

In letter 362 to Basil (D 4:341), Apollinarius calls the Father the “beginning” (ἀρχή) and describes the eternal generation to Basil as the Son being “consubstantial,<sup>1</sup> transcendentally in all respects and peculiarity; not as things of the same class, not as things divided, but as of one class and kind of divinity, one and only offspring, with an indivisible and incorporeal progress, by which that which generates, remaining in its generic peculiarity, has proceeded into its genetic peculiarity.” Apollinarius's conception unifies identity and differentiation (Drecolll 1996:26) and has several striking similarities to Basil's doctrine of eternal generation. Despite the similarities, Basil will reject aspects of Apollinarius's teaching on the generation such as Apollinarius's clear subordinationism of the Son. *Letter 362* is important for it gives us a reliable source for Basil's early understanding of the eternal generation of the Son.

## 5.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that Basil seldom expressly focuses on the doctrine of the Son's eternal generation, this doctrine is rather assumed. Indeed in all the letters Basil discusses the term *homoousios* (though his opinion of the term changes significantly). In several others, he additionally discusses *hypostasis/hypostaseis*. On a superficial level, it might appear that these terms are more important to Basil's Trinitarian understanding than the doctrine of eternal generation. I propose that the doctrine of eternal generation has impacted Basil on how to understand those key terms.<sup>228</sup> Before he even understands the term *homoousios*, Basil, in *letter 360*, already holds “that whatever by way of hypothesis the substance of the Father is assumed to be, this must by all means be assumed as also that of the Son.” This statement is a basic tenet of one who believes the Son to be truly from the substance of the Father in a begotten way for it implies derivation and identity of being (cf. Behr 2004:309). Concerning *homoousios*, *letter 52* provides crucial evidence that, as Basil attempts to clarify misunderstandings surrounding the term, he allows *homoousios* to supersede eternal generation. Interestingly, after Basil has clarified what it is that the term *homoousios* teaches about the Father-Son relationship, he then turns to the generation of the Son,

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<sup>228</sup> We have seen it before in the chapter on *Against Eunomius*. In addition, in *homily 24*, section 4 Basil says as begotten the Son is *homoousios* with the Father.

implying the generation of the Son as the determinant for speaking of the Father and Son as *homoousios*.

Furthermore, in *letters* 214 and 236 Basil understands the *hypostasis* of the Father to reveal, his fatherhood (*ep.* 214) and paternity (*ep.* 236). The *hypostasis* of the Son reveals his sonship. The fatherhood of the Father and the sonship of the Son speak of their relationship of origin which has been everlastingly so due to the Father's eternal generation of the Son.

Basil's letters are important as they give a glimpse into his development as a theologian. As the debates of his time became more technical, the discussion of the meaning of terms and their theological significance had to be addressed. Basil, as bishop of the church, did indeed address them. Basil could teach that *homoousios* communicated the Father and Son to be of the same substance and *hypostasis* to reveal the fatherhood and sonship because he held the eternal generation of the Son to hold precedent. One must dig deeper to uncover the doctrine's import within his dogmatic letters on the Trinity.

## 6. CHAPTER 6: THE ETERNAL GENERATION OF THE SON IN BASIL'S HOMILIES

### 6.1 Introduction to Basil's Dogmatic Homilies

In this chapter, I will discuss Basil of Caesarea's doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son from Basil's homilies which address the Father-Son relationship or the Trinity. These homilies include: Homily 15-Homily on Faith (*Fide*), Homily 16-Homily on the Beginning of the Gospel of John (*Verb*), Homily 24-Homily against Sabellians, Anomoians, Pneumatochians (*Sab*), Homily 27-Homily On the Holy Birth of Christ (*Chr*), and Homily 29-Homily on Not Three Gods (*Trin*).<sup>229</sup> These homilies are sometimes referred to as dogmatic homilies (Hildebrand 2007:194n9) or moral homilies (DelCogliano 2012:21).

Basil's homilies display his theological and rhetorical brilliance on many subjects, but for most Christians they are relatively unknown. As DelCogliano (2012:26) notes, "There has not been a new edition of Basil's Moral Homilies since the 1720's—nearly 300 years ago." Additionally, DelCogliano adds, "In the Anglophone world, Basil's Moral Homilies have been one of the most untranslated portions of his corpus—that is, until recently" (:34). Great progress has been made on translating and publishing Basil's homilies since the turn of the century (:25).

All direct quotes of homilies 15, 16, 24, 29 come from Mark DelCogliano's translation *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*. Homily 27 comes from Mark DelCogliano and Susan Holman (trans.) *On Fasting and Feasts*.<sup>230</sup> I will reference each new section to make cross-referencing easy. "The division of the homilies into numbered sections is found in Julien Garnier's edition" (DelCogliano 2012:38).

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229 Concerning which of Basil's homilies are considered dogmatic homilies see *On Christian Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 15-25, Hildebrand, *Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 194n9, and Blomfield Jackson (trans.) *The Treatise de Spiritu Sancto. The Nine Homilies of the Hexaemeron and the Letters of Saint Basil the Great*. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2.8. Originally published in 1895. Electronic Kindle Edition. Location 3105. For more on the content of the homilies see Volker Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 160-167 and Klaus Koschorke, 1991, *Spuren der Alten Liebe. Studien zum Kirchenbegriff des Basiliius von Caesarea*, Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, pp. 74-87. For more on how Basil's education in Athens shaped the style and delivery of his homilies see Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 46ff. For a discussion of the homilies as a specific literary genre see: Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, Matthew J. O'Connell (trans.), *Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature*, vol. 2 *From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period*, pp. 96ff.

230 Homily 27 was translated by DelCogliano.

## 6.2 Introduction to Homily 15 - *On Faith*

According to DelCogliano (2012:227), Basil's homily *On Faith (Fide)* "is one of the classic expressions of [Basil's] Trinitarian doctrine. Here he provides...his concept of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." In this homily, the doctrine of the eternal generation is clearly seen to be a vital element in Basil's Trinitarian thought.<sup>231</sup>

As to dating, DelCogliano (2012:233) is of the opinion that "the most that can be said with any confidence is that *Fide* probably postdates *Against Eunomius* (364-365) but precedes *On the Holy Spirit* (375)." Fedwick (1979:145) dates *Homily 15* to 372, possibly in September of that year.

### 6.2.1 The Eternal Generation of the Son in *On Faith*

Basil starts section one by addressing one of his reoccurring themes: the difficulty of the human mind to grasp, and human language to articulate, "the grandeur of true realities" about God (cf. *Eun.*1.12ff: *Epp.* 233-235; *Verb.*). "But since every ear is now open to receive theological instruction and the church finds no satiety in hearing such things...we must speak insofar as we are able." Basil stresses the need to free oneself from all material and bodily limitations if one is to even remotely contemplate the divine nature. Finally, Basil describes the divine nature "with thirteen attributes that emphasize the utter transcendence of God. These attributes are a mixture of biblical and Platonist descriptions of God" (Volker Drecoll quoted by DelCogliano 2012:228).

In section 2, after arriving at the contemplation of the divine nature, Basil delivers one thunderous proclamation after another on how to imagine the Father-Son relationship within the Trinity:

"There we find Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the uncreated nature, the lordly dignity, the natural goodness. The Father is principle of all, the cause of being for whatever exists, the root of the living. From him proceeded the source of life;<sup>232</sup> the wisdom, the power [1 Cor. 1.24], and the indistinguishable image of the invisible God [Col. 1.15]; the Son who was begotten from the Father; the living Word; he who is both God and with God [Jn. 1.1]; he who is,<sup>233</sup> not adventitious; he who exists

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231 For more on *Homily 15* see also Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 97ff, 156f; Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*. pp. 146-151, 162ff, and Radde-Gallwitz, *Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 101ff.

232 DelCogliano (2012:236) sees Basil referring to John 4.14 here.

233 DelCogliano (2012:236) thinks Basil is referring to Ex. 3.14 and John 8.58 here.

before the ages, not a late acquisition, he who is Son, not something possessed; he who is Maker, not something made; he who is Creator, not creature; who is everything that the Father is. Note that I have said: 'Son and Father.' Please keep in mind these distinctive features [ιδιότητος] of theirs.

In the quote above, Basil recapitulates what are arguably his most important beliefs about the Father-Son relationship: The Father is principle and cause of the Son's procession and begetting and yet they are one in being (cf. *Eun. Ep.* 236; *Fide, Sab*). The Son is inseparable from the Father because he is the Power and Wisdom of God as 1 Corinthians 1.24 and Colossians 1.15 indicate (cf. *Eun.* 1.18, 2.13; *Spir.* 6.15). John 1.1 teaches the Son to be both God and differentiated from God (cf. *Eun.* 1.23; *Verb*). The Son as “he who is” and “before ages” is reminiscent of *Against Eunomius* 2.17-18. Basil had called the Son “Maker” in *Against Eunomius* 2.2 and *On the Holy Spirit* 8.21. Basil expressed the Son as “everything the Father is” in *Against Eunomius* 1.19 and *letters* 9 and 361. Interestingly in this paragraph Basil gives an honor to the Son that has not been encountered up to this point: he calls the Son “Creator”.<sup>234</sup> Lastly, Basil is careful to remind his hearers that though one in deity and substance, the Father and Son are distinguishable by way of distinctive features which their proper names reveal. Basil made this claim in *Against Eunomius* 2.22-24, *On the Holy Spirit* 25.59, as well as *letters* 214 and 236.

Basil continues juxtaposing the oneness and differentiation between Father and Son. He does this by making mention of the Son's generation:

“So then, the Son, while continuing to be Son, is everything that the Father is, according to the statement uttered by the Lord himself: All that the Father has is mine [Jn. 16.15]. For surely all things whatsoever present in the archetype belongs to the image of that archetype. The Evangelist says: We have beheld his glory, glory as of the Only-

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234 Perhaps calling the Son Maker and Creator is an instance of appropriation which is closely linked to divine simplicity and inseparable operations (cf. Ayres 2004:296ff). Calling the Son “Maker” and “Creator” is important for modern Trinitarian debates of how to ground distinctions between the Persons of the Godhead. Grounding the differentiation of the Persons solely by economic names or actions will necessarily result in modalism according to some theologians (e.g. Giles, K.E. Johnson). Basil, as other supporters of eternal generation, ground the differentiation of the Persons of the Godhead only on their eternal origins and relationship. See Giles, *Eternal Generation*, ch. 9 and Brandon Jones, 2008, *The Unbegotten Son? A Defense of the Eternal Generation of the Son against the Arguments of Evangelicals Like John S. Feinberg*, pp. 11-15.

Begotten from the Father [Jn. 1:14]. In other words, that marvelous glory was not given to him as a gift or by grace, but the Son possesses the dignity of the Father's divinity on account of their community of nature. For 'receiving' is a trait shared with the created order, but 'having by nature' is proper to the one who is begotten. So then, as Son, he naturally possesses what belongs to the Father; as Only-Begotten, he contains within himself all that is the Father's, with none of it being passed down to another. Therefore, the very designation 'Son' teaches us that he shares in the nature [of the Father], not created by a command but having shone forth from the Father's substance<sup>235</sup> and been conjoined to him instantaneously beyond all time, his equal in goodness, his equal in power, sharing in his glory. And indeed what is he but the seal and image that reveals within himself the whole Father?"

Here Basil explains the name 'Son' in the context of him being the 'Only-Begotten' so as to give 'Son' a proper context when speaking of God as Son. Basil teaches that 'Only-Begotten' implies sameness of substance with the Father for "he contains within himself all that is the Father's with none of it being passed down to another." In addition, he argues, the title "the Only-Begotten" indicates that he is the exact and whole Image of the Father who is the archetype (cf. *Eun.* 1.16, 2.16; *Spir.* 7.16, 18.45; *letter* 9; *Sab*). The generation of the Only-Begotten thus explains how the Son possesses "by nature" marvelous glory (cf. *Eun.* 2.2; *Spir.* 6.15) and "community of nature" with the Father (cf. *Eun.* 1.19; *Spir.* 8.21). As begotten, he is beyond all time (cf. *Eun.* 2.17; *Chr*), equal in goodness with the Father (cf. *ep.* 236), equal in power (cf. *Eun.* 1.23; *Spir.* 8.17f) and glory (cf. *Eun.* 2.17). As begotten he is also Son, which conveys the differentiation between him and the Father (cf. *Eun.* 2.16).

Basil continues section 2 by focusing on the "economy of human salvation" where in his incarnation the Son took the form of a servant. Basil denies "that the Son loses or damages his divinity in the incarnation" (cf. *ep.* 236; *Verb, Chr*). This section has an "anti-Eunomian intent" (DelCogliano 2012:230). Basil rejects the

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235 DelCogliano (2012:230) says "from the Father's substance" is an allusion to the original Nicene Creed of 325. This phrase was removed in the revised version of the Nicene Creed formulated at the Council of Constantinople in 381.

Eunomian interpretation of the Johannine texts 5.30, 14.31, 20.21<sup>236</sup> which were used by them to belittle the Son and diminish his deity. The verses in John, according to Basil, speak not about the “theology” of the Son, but about him in the “economy of human salvation” (cf. *Eun.*2.3; *Spir.*8.17-18).

Basil finishes the homily by focusing on the Holy Spirit and his place alongside Father and Son.

To sum up, Basil's classic expression of the Trinity in *Homily 15* shows the eternal generation of the Son to be a vital doctrine for him as he expounded on the relationship between the Father and Son. The generation of the Son, as in *Against Eunomius*, is understood by Basil as the teaching which grounds the Father and Son's complete oneness in substance and deity, as well as, their indelible and eternal distinction.

### **6.3 Introduction to Homily 16 - On the Beginning of the Gospel of John**

*Homily 16*, known as *Verb*, is Basil's exegesis of John 1.1-2. According to Basil, the verses clearly teach the eternal generation of the Son. The importance of John 1.1f is clear when one looks at the dogmatic writings of Basil. In addition to this homily, Basil employs John 1.1f to explicate the Father-Son relationship in *Against Eunomius* 2.13-17, *On the Holy Spirit* 6.13-14, and *Homily 24*. As DelCogliano (2012:241) remarks, Basil “saw in John 1.1 a refutation of a number of mistaken ideas about the Trinity held by his opponents and a succinct confirmation of his own doctrine.” From John 1.1f, Basil concludes that the Word is eternal. Secondly, John 1.1 also makes clear “that the begetting of the Son from the Father takes place without any passion (πάθος), that is, without suffering and change.” Finally, Basil claims John 1.1-2 reveals the “Son's essential likeness to the Father” (DelCogliano 2012:242f).

Most Basilian scholars date *Verb* after *Against Eunomius* but before *On the Holy Spirit*, that is, circa 365-375.<sup>237</sup>

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236 These verses are alluded to according to DelCogliano's translation (2012:237n9-11).

237 For dating of this homily see DelCogliano, *Christian Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 248ff. Fedwick (1979:145), following Bernardi, dates it to 372 and before *Homily 15*. For more on *Homily 16* see Drecoll, *Die Entwicklung*, pp. 165ff.

### 6.3.1 The Eternal Generation of the Son in *Verb*

Section 1 starts with an introduction in which Basil praises the Gospel writers, especially John, over the revelations contained within the Old Testament. Basil then proceeds to express the inability of the human mind and human speech to comprehend and explain the meaning of the words found in John 1.1.

Nevertheless, he concludes that the words contained in John's prologue “hand on to us what pertains to the theology<sup>238</sup> of the Son of God,” and refute those who teach the Son to be created.

Next, Basil gives his hearers answers to an imaginary interlocutor who rejects the full deity of the Son on the basis of his generation: “If one of them says, 'If he was begotten, he was not,' then retort: *In the beginning he was*. 'But,' he continues, 'how could he exist before his begetting?' Do not let go of *he was*. Do not forsake *in the beginning*. The very tip of the beginning cannot be comprehended. What is beyond the beginning cannot be found.” Basil's teaching above is quite similar to *Against Eunomius* 2.13-14 where he used John 1.1 to defend the eternity of the Son on the basis of his eternal generation.

Basil continues section two by explaining the phrase “*In the beginning*”. Mirroring what he said in *Against Eunomius* 2.14, Basil says, “beginning,” in regards to the Son, cannot have any sort of temporal implications, but it is a beginning “linked with nothing,” “impossible to transcend...in thought,” and “impossible to discover anything beyond it.” Thus this “beginning”, which John the Evangelist speaks of, “is always beyond and greater than what can be conceived.”

Next, Basil addresses the begetting of the Son in connection with John 1.1 (cf. *Eun.* 2.15-17). If someone claims: “[B]efore his begetting, he was not.” Basil asks, “Do you really know when he was begotten, such that you can apply the world 'before' to that time?...How is it logical that the maker of time has a begetting that is subject to temporal designations?” Basil ends the section by exhorting his flock never to forsake *he was* as a way to offset temporal implications of the term “begetting”.

In section three, Basil discusses what is implied by calling the Son “*the Word*”. Drecoll (1996:165) says, “Joh 1,1 war schon in AE zur Grundlage der Christologie

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238 Ayres (2004:220n102) says, “We should be particularly wary of treating [theology and economy] as synonyms with modern discussions of the 'immanent' and 'economic' Trinity.” Such a distinction is “alien to Basil's thoughts” (ibid). The term 'immanent Trinity' was first used in 1840 (Tietz, 2011:73).

geworden. Basilius hatte dabei jedes einzelne Wort aus Joh 1,1 interpretiert – bis auf λόγος...*Hom. XVI* [stellt] einen Fortschritt dar, insofern sie die in AE gebrauchte Argumentation aufgreift und sie durch eine Erläuterung des Begriffes λόγος ergänzt...Dann interpretiert Basilius Joh 1,1 auf die auch in AE belegte Art und Weise.”

John tells us “*In the beginning was the Word.*” To which Basil asks, “What kind of Word?” He proceeds to differentiate between a “word expressed with the voice,” an “internal word which subsists in our hearts, the mental word,” and an “articulated word.”<sup>239</sup> He advises his hearers to “take ‘word’ in a way appropriate to God.” For when the Only-Begotten is said to be light in John 1.4 “you did not reduce it to the perceptible light that can be seen with the eyes...so too, when you hear *Word*, guard against letting your weakness of mind drag you down to lowly and humble senses of the term. Rather, seek out its intended sense.” Here Basil is exhorting his hearers to “[make] a distinction between common usage for created realities and common usage for divine realities...The common usage of terms *in theological contexts* is attained by purifying them, as they are commonly used ‘here below,’ of their inappropriate or irrelevant content. For Basil, this means primarily removing their corporeal or materialistic overtones” (DelCogliano 2010:161).

Basil then asks the important question “Why did John use the term ‘Word?’” Basil answers, “So that it may be understood that it proceeds from the intellect...Because he was begotten without passion [and]...Because he is the image of his begetter, showing in himself the whole of the begetter, not divided from him in any way and existing perfect in himself, just as our word also reflects the whole of our thought. In a similar vein, Basil continues explaining that John

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239 DelCogliano (2012:246) notes this differentiation between the expressed *logos* and the internal *logos* is a well-known Stoic distinction. On the topic of *logos endiathetos* (inner speech) and *logos prophorikos* (language expressed) and the Stoic heritage of the terms see David G. Robertson, *Mind, Language, and the Trinity in Basil of Caesarea*, pp. 13-27. Pages 22-27 deal explicitly with *Homily 16*. In section 3 Robertson (:24) sees “[S]urprising originality to the ideas he works into his theological arguments. The most interesting philosophical points are (1) that speech is a kind of image of the speaker’s mind and (2) the passionless, timeless production of speech.” I do take issue with Robertson in regards to his view that in “Basil...*all* the contents of the mind are expressible in language and thus can be grasped by others. The idea seems to be that nothing is lost in translation into language.” In regards to *God’s* self-expression this is surely Basil’s position, but I would deem it untenable to say this is Basil’s position in regards to human thought, language, speech, as it pertains to divine things. For the difficulties of the mind to understand and the tongue to explain the things of God see *homilies* 15, 16 and 27 and *letters* 233-235.

used “Word” “[S]o that he could communicate to you the Father's passionless begetting and teach you the theology of the perfect existence of the Son, and through these demonstrate the Son's non-temporal conjunction with the Father.” A “passionless begetting” of the Word entails for Basil that the Word “is neither severed nor divided from the intellect, nor does it flow out from and leave the intellect. On the contrary, while the whole of the intellect remains in its proper state, it brings the word whole and complete. And the word that comes forth contains within itself all the power of the intellect that has begotten it.” On this section Robertson (2008:23f) says, “[W]e see the analogy to human speech and the mind at work...The passage reworks the classic Greek theology of the image of God in a striking way; care is taken to point out the perfection of the image, and the characteristics of permanence, of existing in its own right, balanced by the union of the image to what is imaged.”<sup>240</sup>

Basil then posits another question: Why did John use 'Word' and not 'Son'? Basil answers, “Now if [John] had said 'In the beginning was the Son,' the notion of passion would have been introduced along with the designation 'Son.' For in our case, that which is begotten is begotten in time and begotten with passion. For this reason, in anticipation he said *Word*, preemptively correcting inappropriate suppositions so that your soul could be kept unharmed.” Basil reiterates several times in section three that the generation of the Son is passionless. Whether or not passion (*pathos*) was involved in the generation of the Son was a hot-topic issue (cf. *Eun.*2.15-17, 2.22-24). According to Zachhuber (2000:93), even the bishops at the Council of Nicaea in 325 were careful to exclude any notion of passion with regard to eternal generation. Though Pro-Nicenes, like Basil, denied any passion being involved in the generation of the Son, they were continually charged with introducing passion into the Godhead on account of their understanding of the names “Father” and “Son” (Weedman 2007:150ff).

In the last section, section 4, Basil explains the words, “*And the Word was with God. And the Word was God.*” Basil says that “with God” expresses the distinction

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240 Edmund Fortman (1982:77) says, “Nowhere do the Cappadocians say or imply that the Son's generation is by way of intellect, but they do ascribe to the generation of the Word a relation to the Father's intellect that they do not ascribe to the Spirit's procession from the Father...It need not appear too surprising, then, that Western theologians will later seize on the relation of the Word to the mind of the Father to indicate why the Son's origin from the Father is by way of generation and the Spirit's is not.”

of the Son's subsistence from the Father. In making this point, he seeks to exclude Modalism (cf. *Sab*).

Finally, when conflict arises with those who belittle the Son's begottenness Basil exhorts his listeners to return to John 1.1f which affirms four times that “*he was*.” It is likely that Basil is following tradition with his insistence on “*he was*.” Jan Doehhorn (2011:31) writes, “Bischof Alexander von Alexandria jedenfalls hat laut Theodoret (*Historia ecclesiastica* 1,4,15-19 = *Urkunde* 14,15-19) das Imperfekt ἦν in Joh 1,1f seinem Presbyter Arius entgegengehalten, der den Logos als Geschöpf ansah.”

*Verb* is an exegetical *tour de force* in which Basil explains and defends the Word's eternal generation from the Father from the first two verses of John's Gospel.

#### **6.4 Introduction to Homily 29 - On Not Three Gods Against Those Who Calumniate Us, Claiming That We Say That There Are Three Gods**

From the title, *On Not Three Gods (Trin)*, it is clear that Basil is defending himself against the charge of tritheism. “This charge of tritheism was most likely imputed to Basil by the followers of Eustathius of Sebasteia...Thus in this homily we encounter Basil late in his career...articulating and defending his views...and thus providing us with essential evidence for understanding the contours and development of his Trinitarian theology” (DelCogliano 2012:260).

According to DelCogliano (2012:261), who cautiously follows Johannes Zachhuber,<sup>241</sup> the followers of Eustathius were defaming Basil with charges of both Sabellianism and polytheism. These two opposing Trinitarian heresies were levied against Basil because of his insistence that the Son has equality with the Father *qua* substance and not as derivation *qua* substance as previous theologians had done. DelCogliano (2012:262) says, “According to Zachhuber, if Basil's understanding of Trinitarian equality *qua* substance is not also properly qualified with this distinction between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, 'this would necessarily result in either tritheism or Sabellianism: in the former case the three persons would be independent principles, in the latter, simply aspects of the one divine being.’”<sup>242</sup>

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241 Johannes Zachhuber, 2000, *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa: Philosophical Background and Theological Significance*, VCS 46.

242 Basil had already realized this when he wrote *letter* 125, written in 373, likely before this homily.

Basil refutes the charges brought against him by stressing the divine unity while affirming three truly differentiated *hypostaseis*.

DelCogliano (2012:268f) dates *Trin* from the mid to late 370's and Fedwick (1979:153) dates it to 378. The dating is based on the content of the homily and that it was likely written after Basil's and Euthathius's friendship had been irreconcilably broken.<sup>243</sup>

#### 6.4.1 The Eternal Generation of the Son in *Trin*

In sections 1 and 2, Basil bemoans the state of the church for its infighting. He even believes that there are spies in the audience waiting to use his words against him.

In section 3, Basil addresses the charge of tritheism head on: “[T]hose who do not fear the Lord say...that we proclaim three gods[.]” He defends himself from this charge by claiming that his teaching of honoring Father, Son, and Spirit is “the faith of the fathers” and in line with Matthew 28.19. Basil charges his audience to honor Father, Son, and Spirit,<sup>244</sup> otherwise they “[denigrate] baptism and [impugn] the faith.”

Basil then turns his listeners’ attention to the divine unity between Father, Son, and Spirit. He says “*One Lord* [Eph 4.5]. Learn from Paul. He did not say 'two' or 'three.' Even if I name the Son 'Lord,' I do not dole out the lordship to two lords or to many gods. The Father is Lord; the Son is Lord. *One faith* [Eph 4.5], because of one Lord.”

DelCogliano, (2012:263) summarizing the passage above, says,

“Basil employs the phrase 'formula of being' (and its equivalent 'formula of substance') to signify the sense in which God is one; it is that which accounts

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243 For a critical analysis regarding the authenticity of *Trin*, see DelCogliano “Basil of Caesarea's Homily on *Not Three Gods* (CPG 2914): Problems and Solutions,” *Sacris Erudiri* 50. 2011:89-93 and for problems of integrity see *ibid* pp. 105-115. Concerning the integrity of the homily DelCogliano (:114) says, “Therefore, once *On Not Three Gods* is understood to be a refutation of the charge of tritheism and not a defense of the Holy Spirit's divinity, and once Basil's anti-Heteroousian tactic for responding to the Pneumatomachian charge of polytheism is realized, the integrity of *On Not Three Gods* becomes clearer.” For more on *homily* 29 see Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 100ff, 158. Dörries (1956:101) accepted this homily as authentic.

244 In most of section 3 Basil makes his case for honoring the Spirit with the Father and Son and not counting him among creatures or things created. It seems that especially for his views on the Spirit that is he impugned as believing and teaching that there are three gods. This makes sense if the homily is indeed addressed against Pneumatomachians (cf. DelCogliano 2012:260f).

for divine unity. And so, a term predicated in common of Father and Son ['Lord'] signifies a property of the common nature or substance shared by Father and Son. Though predicated of both Father and Son, 'Lord' signifies the single divine sovereignty and omnipotence, which the Father entrusted to the Son. [They share] a...single divinity; they are neither two lords nor two gods. And so, Basil deploys his logic of common terms to demonstrate his belief in divine unity against the charge of tritheism.”

Basil continues to stress divine unity while simultaneously making an allowance for divine differentiation.<sup>245</sup> He says, “The perfect is neither decreased nor increased. There is one unbegotten God. There is one only-begotten of him, the Son and God. Just as there is not another co-unbegotten God with the one [unbegotten], so too there is not another co-begotten Son...The Father is God; The Son is God. The Father is perfect God; the Son is also perfect God. The Father is incorporeal; the Son is incorporeal, the *representation* [Heb. 1.3] of the incorporeal and the incorporeal *image* [Col 1.15].”<sup>246</sup> DelCogliano (2012:264) adds, “Each of these terms [God, perfect God, incorporeal] signifies a property of the common divine nature.” In addition, Basil mentions the distinguishing marks applied uniquely to each, such as 'unbegotten' and 'Father,' and 'only-begotten,' 'Son,' 'Representation,' and 'Image' so as not to leave himself open to accusations of Sabellianism (DelCogliano :264). As in *Against Eunomius*, the names “Father” and “Son” are used by Basil both to argue for divine unity and the distinctions between them (cf. DelCogliano 2012:264). However, Basil's use of 'Representation' and 'Image' as distinguishing the Son from the Father shows a contrast to *Against Eunomius* 1.18, 2.11-18 and *homily* 24. In those writings the Son as 'Image' is

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245 From here to through the beginning of section 4 DelCogliano (2012:266) notes, “One of the remarkable features of this homily is that it exhibits verbal parallels with two non-Basilian texts composed after Basil was dead, I have argued elsewhere that both these later texts and Basil are quoting from a common source that is no longer extant. From midway through [section] 3 to midway through [section] 4 there is a long, more-or-less verbatim parallel with the *Historia ecclesiastica* once attributed to Gelasius of Cyzicus, and in [section] 4 there is a short verbatim parallel with an anonymous homily entitled *Oratio in resurrectionem domini*.” See also DelCogliano, Basil of Caesarea's Homily on *Not Three Gods*, in *Christian Doctrine and Practice*, pp. 93-105, 115-130.

246 DelCogliano (2011:121f) notes that this quote has its parallel in the *Historia ecclesiastica* as found in G. C. Hansen, ed., *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte (Gelasius Cyzicenus CPG 6034)*, GCS n.f 9, Berlin, 2002. DelCogliano (:128) argues, “Thus a plausible interpretation of these parallels is that they exist because AKG has borrowed from *On Not Three Gods*.” But he goes on to add “even though this is a plausible interpretation, another...is possible, that AKG and *On Not Three Gods* are quoting (and adapting) from the same source, a source now lost.”

used by Basil to argue *for* the Son's divine unity with the Father and *not* his distinction from him.

As to the rest of content of the homily, DelCogliano (2011b:111) sums it up well when he says, “The remainder of the homily deals with various possible objections to Basil's account of divine unity, that Father and Son are equally God, and yet one God. The major potential objection identified by Basil is the divine begetting. As Eunomius and others before him had argued, the fact of the divine begetting suggests that the Son's divinity is inferior to the Father's...Basil is concerned to give an account of the divine begetting which preserves his account of the divine unity of the Father and Son.”

Basil asks, “Do you believe that he has been begotten? Do not inquire how. For if it is possible to inquire how the unbegotten is unbegotten, it is possible to inquire also how the one who has been begotten has been begotten...Do not inquire about what cannot be discovered, since you will not find it.”<sup>247</sup> Basil teaches the eternal generation of the Son to be incomprehensible and ineffable (cf. *Eun.* 2.22, 2.24; *Spir.* 18.46; *Ep.* 52; *Chr.*). He asks if we can learn about the eternal generation “from the ages.” The answer is “no” because “The Only-Begotten is before the ages” (cf. *Eun.* 2.11-13, 2.17; *Verb, Chr.*).

In section 4, Basil turns once again to John 1.1 in his defense of calling the Son God (cf. *Eun.* 2.14-15; *Spir.* 6.14; *Verb*). Basil contrasts how the “was God” of John 1.1 is totally different in meaning from how he “became” a human being in John 1.14. Basil then moves to a short excursus on the Incarnation. According to DelCogliano (2012:265), Basil's thoughts on the Incarnation reveal two things about his Trinitarian theology. First, “it appears in Basil's mind discussion of the eternal begetting of the Son and the birth of the incarnate Word from Mary went hand in hand, forming a kind of natural progression.” Secondly, “that in the incarnation the divinity of the Word is preserved intact, not diminished or destroyed in any way...He was and remains God, but became human...Thus Basil eliminates another one of the Heteroousians' chief arguments for the substantial inferiority of the Son, the incarnation” (cf. *ep.* 236; *Chr.*). As Basil himself says, “So then, do not take away the divinity of the Only-Begotten because of the events of the economy.”

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247 DelCogliano (2011:123f) notes that this quote has its parallel in the *Historia ecclesiastica* as found in G. C. Hansen, ed., *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte (Geladius Cyzicenus CPG 6034)*, GCS n.f 9, Berlin, 2002.

After his excursus on the Incarnation, Basil comes back to the topic of the divine begetting speaking of it in a similar manner as earlier in section three. Basil says,

“Let the begetting of the Only-Begotten from the Father be revered in silence. For only the one who has begotten him and the one who has been begotten understand it. Indeed, we ought to know about what we speak and about what we must keep silent...So then, that begetting which is ineffable, let us revere it in silence. And indeed if we should find that this wears us out, let us not be sad. For that ineffable begetting is awesome because of its nature, but this nature is hard to explain because of its otherness.”<sup>248</sup>

To end this homily, Basil stresses how we humans understand and experience “father” and “beget” is incongruent with God the Father who begets a Son. In relation to God, begetting does not involve time, development, and passion. “But God, whose power is concurrent with his will (cf. *Spir.*8.17-21), begot one worthy of himself, begot as he himself knows[.]”

Basil gave substantial attention to the eternal generation of the Son in this homily partially due to the fact that this doctrine represented a major objection by detractors (cf. DelCogliano 2012:264) and because this doctrine was paramount to Basil in order to free himself of charges of Sabellianism and tritheism. Basil understood the Son's eternal generation to teach both the divine unity and distinction between the Father and the Son. If this homily was indeed composed in or after 375, the teaching therein on the eternal generation shows almost no variation to what he wrote approximately ten years earlier in *Against Eunomius*.

## **6.5 Introduction to Homily 24 – Against the Sabellians, Anomoians, and Pneumatomachians**

In Homily 24, also known as *Sab*, Basil gives “a detailed account of his Trinitarian theology from late in his career that reflects the mature development of several currents of his thought...In many ways this homily constitutes a synthesis and summation of Basil's Trinitarian thought” (DelCogliano 2012:277-78). Most scholars date *Sab* “around or after 372” (:288) “and quite possibly to the years 375-376” (:290).<sup>249</sup>

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248 The following quote is also quite similar to the opening section of *homily 27*.

249 As to content DelCogliano (2011b:116) says, “Joseph Lienhard has demonstrated that *Contra Sabellianos et Arium et Anomoeos*, the homily of Basil mostly closed linked with *On Not Three Gods*, is heavily dependent

As the title indicates, Basil focuses his theological and rhetorical prowess to counter the Sabellians (cf. *Trin* and *Verb*), Anomoians,<sup>250</sup> (cf. *Eun.* and *Verb*) and Pneumatomachians, (*Spir.* and *Trin*). “In this homily Basil polemically presents his own doctrine of the Trinity as the middle way between the extreme viewpoints of the 'Sabellians' and 'Anomoians’” (DelCogliano 2012:277). Basil's Trinitarian teaching contained in *Sab* is

“a consistent, though not entirely systematic, account of the Trinity...This communion [of Father, Son, and Spirit] is rooted in the fact that the Father is the source of Son and Spirit, who are both 'from' the Father, though in different ways. This 'derivational' unity preserves their commonality and distinction. At the level of divinity, nature, substance, rank, dignity, honor, and glory they are eternally conjoined together, inseparable, and indivisible, yet at the same time they are three distinct, perfect individuals, or persons. According to Basil, Trinitarian orthodoxy is preserved only if one confesses that the Father, Son and Spirit are both three distinct persons *and* one nature” (Mark DelCogliano 2012:279).

Pertaining to structure, DelCogliano (:278) notes that this “homily can be divided into two main parts. The first...refutes the errors of the Sabellians and Anomoians (sections 1-4) and focuses mainly on the relation between Father and Son.” The second part (sections 4-7) focuses on the Spirit and Basil's refutation of Pneumatomachian accusations and teachings.

### **6.5.1 The Eternal Generation of the Son in *Sab***

To begin this homily, Basil makes a comparison between Greek polytheism and Heteroousianism. Heteroousianism is polytheistic, according to Basil, because they worship the Father and the Only-Begotten, who they consider to be a creature. Sabellianism, on the other hand, is nothing more than Judaism for it denies the Son is True God. These positions are untenable for Basil since Christianity is neither polytheistic, nor does it deny the Son's deity.

Basil directs his first rebuke against the Sabellians: He uses John 1.1 to argue for the “distinct existence” of the living Word from the Father. The Father and Son are

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on the pseudo-Athanasian *Contra Sabellianos*.” For more on *homily 24* see Dörries, *De Spiritu Sancto*, pp. 94ff, 157f.

250 They are also known as “Heteroousians” and that is the term I will refer to them as.

not to be conflated into one, nor is the Son, as Word, lifeless and lacking subsistence.

At the beginning of section two, Basil turns his sights on the Heteroousians using John 14.9 "*He who has seen me has seen the Father*". Basil considers John 14.9 as apt to quash all Heteroousian arguments which posit a difference in substance between Father and Son. John 14.7 and 14.9 taken together "puts an end to the blasphemies on both sides." For both verses in John "clearly [distinguish] the persons...[and] communicate the indistinguishability of the divinity." "For," as Basil says, "the begetter has not begotten one who is foreign to him but one who is such as he is."

Basil then quotes John 10.30 "*I and the Father are one*" against the Heteroousians and John 16.10, 28 "*I have come from the Father and I go to him*" against the Sabellians. "One of you [i.e. the Heteroousians] should understand that their unity is a question of indistinguishability of nature; the other [i.e. the Sabellians], that *I have come from him...is a question of the distinction of the persons.*"

After further arguments directed toward the Sabellians, Basil again turns his attention back to the Heteroousians. Basil rails against their teaching that the Son is unlike the Father and that the Son is not eternal:

"Honor Paul who says: *He is the image of the invisible God* [Col.1.15], and grant that the living image is indistinguishable from the archetypal Life. Confess that the Father has produced a Son, not a creature. And in this true confession of the Father, grant that the one begotten to him is of the same honor, mindful of the testimony of the gospel: *he called God his Father, making himself equal to God* [Jn 5.18]. Now his equality with the begetter is understood in terms of nature, not in terms of physical size. How did he not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped [Phil 2.6], if, as you blaspheme, he was never equal to him? How was he in the form of God [Phil 2.6], when, according to your account, he was never like him?"

As in *Against Eunomius* 2.16-17, Basil uses Colossians 1.15 as a biblical precedence to liken the Father and Son to an archetype and image. This picture of archetype and image should convey that they are co-existent and indistinguishable due to the (ineffable) way in which the Father begot the Son. Furthermore, the Son's begetting means he shares in the same honor as the Father (cf. *Eun.* 1.25; *Spir.* 6.13-15, 8.19-21. In conjunction with John 5.18 and Philippians 2.6, the Son's

begetting should also be understood to convey that the Son is equal to the Father in substance (cf. *Eun.*1.23-24).

To end this section Basil says, “So then, in order to make clear for you the distinctness of persons, count the Father by himself and the Son by himself, but in order to avoid secession into polytheism, confess one substance in both. In this way both Sabellius falls and the Anomoian will be shattered.”

Now in section 4,<sup>251</sup> Basil discusses what he means by saying the Father and Son are of “one substance”:

“But when I say 'one substance,' do not think that two are separated off from one, but that the Son has come to subsist from the Father, his principle.<sup>252</sup> The Father and Son do not come from one substance that transcends them both. For we do not call them brothers, but confess Father and Son. There is an identity of substance because the Son is from the Father, not made by a command but rather begotten from his nature, not separated from him but the perfect radiance of the Father, who himself remains perfect.”

The Father and Son, though one in substance, are also differentiated. This does not imply the divine substance has been separated (cf. *Eun.*1.19), nor do Father and Son come from a transcendent substance for they are not brothers (*ep.* 52). Instead the Son is from the Father who is the principle (*archē*) (cf. *Eun.* 1.19-21; *ep.* 236; *Fide*). Basil says the identity of substance (and differentiation) is due to the fact that the Son is begotten from the Father's nature. However, one must take caution not to understand his generation as coming from the command or will of the Father, for in that case, the Son could be imagined as non-essential to the Father and thus as a contingent being. In *Against Eunomius* 2.14, Basil had rejected Eunomius's notion of the Son as coming from a command or from the will of the Father as this would necessarily subordinate him to the Father. The Son cannot be from the Father's will for the have one and the same will (*Spir.* 8.17-21).

Despite Basil's meticulous explanations of the one divine substance, his opponents still accuse him of preaching two gods (cf. *Trin*). Basil refutes this accusation of ditheism. He says, “There are not two gods because there are not two fathers. Whoever introduces two first principles preaches two gods. Such is

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251 Hübner thinks that in section 4 Basil has used a “pseudoathanasianischen Traktat” and identifies Apollinarius as the true author. See Hübner, *Basilios von Caesarea and das Homoousios*, pp. 87-91.

252 Here DelCogliano gives us the Greek of this phrase: ἐκ τῆς ἀρχῆς τοῦ Πατρὸς (2012:295n26).

Marcion[.]” Basil maintains since he teaches the Father and Son to be of one substance he cannot be libeled as a polytheist. It is actually the Heteroousians who preach two gods, according to Basil, for they maintain that an unlikeness of substance exists between Father and Son but worship both.

Basil proceeds to give another account of the Father and Son which is neither Sabellian nor Heteroousian (polytheistic): “For wherever there is one principle and one thing from it, wherever there is one archetype and one image, the formula of unity is not destroyed. Therefore, the Son exists from the Father in a begotten way and by nature he expresses the Father in himself: as image he has indistinguishability [τὸ ἀπαράλλακτον],<sup>253</sup> as something begotten [γέννημα]<sup>254</sup> he preserves sameness in substance [τὸ ὁμοούσιον]<sup>255</sup>.”

In this theologically dense sentence, Basil likens the Father-Son relationship to principle and “one thing from it” alongside archetype and image. Basil explains that the Son as Image means he is completely unified in substance with, and indistinguishable from, the Father (DelCogliano 2012:296n29; *Sab* section 3). He also reiterates that the Son is begotten from the Father. As begotten, the Son is *homoousios*, same in substance, with the Father. Basil teaches Principle and “one from it”, Archetype and Image, and the Son as begotten to convey essentially the same notions, but I do not think he uses these phrases synonymously. The notion which each phrase conveys definitely overlaps to a large degree, but each picture reveals something unique about the Father-Son relationship. This is similar to *homily* 15. There Basil taught that 'Son' and 'Only-Begotten' convey similar concepts or notions, but he did not completely parallel them in meaning.

Next, “Basil employs a frequently used metaphor of the emperor and his imperial image: just as the emperor and his image do not constitute two emperors but a single imperial rule...so too are God the Father and his image the Son distinct but manifest the same power and are to be accorded the same respect” (DelCogliano

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253 In letter 361, written around 360, and *letter* 9, written around 361-362, Basil used a form of ἀπαράλλακτον, namely, ἀπαραλλάκτως (invariably), in order to describe the Father and the Son as “like in substance without a difference” (*ep.* 361) and “invariably like in substance” (*ep.* 9).

254 For Basil's use and definition of this term see my chapter on *Against Eunomius*. See also the helpful remarks from Mark DelCogliano, *Primacy of the Name 'Son'*, p. 64.

255 DelCogliano (2012:296n31) says, “This is the only use of the term *homoousios* in this homily.” For more on Basil's use of *homoousios* in this homily see Hübner, *Basilios von Caesarea*, pp. 87ff. Possibly in this homily the divine generation of the Son could be understood to give scriptural authority to *homoousios*. The generation of the Son is interpreted to mean that the Son is same in substance with the Father.

2012:282). Basil connects the metaphor of the emperor and imperial image to one of his favorite Christological passages, Hebrews 1.3. Grounding the metaphor in Hebrews 1.3 allows Basil to avoid wholly corporeal impressions and defend it as scripturally justifiable. Basil says,

[W]henever you “hear ‘image,’ [as pertains to God the Son] take this to mean the *radiance of glory* [Heb 1.3]. What is this radiance? And what is this glory?...*the representation of the subsistence* [Heb 1.3].<sup>256</sup> So then, the subsistence is the same as the glory and the representation the same as the radiance. Thus while the glory remains perfect and never diminishes, perfect radiance proceeds. And so, the formula of the image, if taken in a way appropriate to God, communicates to us the unity of the divinity. For the one is in the other and the other in him because the one is such as the other and the other is such as he. Thus the two are united by not being different in kind, nor is the Son understood according to another form and an alien representation. So then, once again I say: ‘One and one, but their nature is indivisible and their perfection unwavering.’ So then, God is one because through both we contemplate one form which is shown in its entirety in both.”

Hebrews 1.3, as explained by Basil above, gives a scriptural account of the oneness of nature and differentiation between Father and Son (cf. DelCogliano 2012:282). The Son is indelibly differentiated from the Father as his Image, Radiance, and Representation. On the other hand, the indelible differentiation should never be understood to contravene the Father and Son’s eternal unity of divinity; Whatever the Father is, the Son is the exact and indistinguishable Image, Radiance, and Representation. *Thus, that which describes the Son as permanently “other than the Father” is exactly that which makes the Son everlastingly one with him.* The conclusions extrapolated from Hebrews 1.3 parallel the teaching of the Son's eternal generation, but we do not see Basil directly correlate Hebrews 1.3 to the doctrine of eternal generation as he had done in *Against Eunomius* 2.17 and *homily* 27.

In section four, Basil expresses well his position as the middle road between modalism and tritheism: indivisible unity and true distinction. The concepts of

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256 Here Hildebrand (2007:83-84) notes “[T]he single instance of *hypostasis* in the homily designates what is one in God...Thus in *Contra Sabellianos*...Basil does not use *hypostasis* for what is three in God. Rather, *prosôpon* suffices to express divine plurality.”

Principle and “one from it,” Archetype and Image, and the Son as begotten from the Father were indispensable for Basil to maintain his position.

## 6.6 Introduction to Homily 27 - On the Holy Birth of Christ

*Homily 27*,<sup>257</sup> also known as *Chr*, starts with Basil addressing the eternal birth of Christ. However, the majority of the homily concerns itself with Basil's interpretation of Matthew 1.18-2.11 (Holman 2013:13). As DelCogliano (2012:30) says,

“The bulk of Basil of Caesarea’s neglected *Homilia in sanctam Christi generationem* is a commentary on select verses of Matthew 1:18-2:11. He explicitly approves or rejects other interpretations, though without ever naming their authors. This study...examines how he engaged with previous and contemporary theologians and exegetes in a critical, selective, and creative manner. It shows that while Basil may have borrowed from Eusebius of Caesarea and refuted Eunomius, his primary conversation partner was Origen. Basil’s use of Origen is by no means uniform, but ranges from wholesale adoption to outright rejection.”

DelCogliano's thesis is that Origen is Basil's main theological conversation partner in this homily. I believe his thesis could be supported by Basil's mentioning of eternal generation. Origen is said to have been the first to propagate the doctrine of eternal generation (cf. Ayres 2004:22). In addition, Basil like “Origen acknowledges the difficulty in finding a way to speak about the eternal generation of the Son that does not imply temporality” (Widdicombe 1994:68).

*Homily 27* was long placed among the *dubia* of Basil's corpus, but recent scholarship has shown that it should be taken as authentic (cf. DelCogliano 2012:31n5).

Holman (2013:13) dates homily 27 to Basil's episcopate (370-79). Fedwick (1979:153) dates it to 378. Additionally, “Several leading liturgical scholars argue that this sermon is one of the earliest witnesses to December 25 for the Christmas feast” Holman (2013:13).

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<sup>257</sup> For an introduction and overview of this homily see Mark DelCogliano, *Tradition and Polemic in Basil of Caesarea's Homily on the Theophany, Vigiliae Christianae* 66, 2012, pp. 30-55 and the introduction written by Susan Holman, 2013, *On Fasting and Feasts*, pp. 12-13. The theme of eternal generation is not given any attention in either overview.

### 6.6.1 The Eternal Generation of the Son in *Chr*

To begin this homily, Basil exhorts his listeners to “Revere in silence that birth of Christ which was first and fitting and proper to his divinity. We should keep our mind from searching into it or being inquisitive about it.” He continues, “For when no time nor age comes between them,<sup>258</sup> when there is no way to imagine things, no spectator present, no narrator, how can the intellect even form a thought? How can the tongue serve the mind? Indeed, the Father was and the Son was born. Do not say, “When?” That’s a stupid question. Do not ask, “How?” An answer is impossible. For “when” has temporal overtones and “how” makes us slide toward corporeal ways of conceptualizing his birth.” The preceding passage represents classic Basilian teaching on the eternal generation: Basil insists on the inadequacy of human mind and human language to understand the begetting (*Eun.* 2.22, 2.24; *Verb, Trin*).<sup>259</sup> Basil had argued in *Against Eunomius* 1.19-20, 2.13-17 that no time or age intervenes between Father and Son. In *Against Eunomius* 2.24, Basil had disallowed asking “what” the begetting is and “how” the generation of the Son took place.

Basil affirms that there is something that can be said of the Son's eternal birth: “I can say only what Scripture says: as radiance from glory and as an image from the archetype. But since this rationale for responding to such questions does not put an end to your inquisitive thoughts, I take refuge in the ineffability of its glory. I acknowledge that the manner in which the divine birth took place is incomprehensible to human thoughts and impossible to express with human words.” The scriptural pictures of radiance/glory and image/archetype are taken from Hebrews 1.3 and Colossians 1.15. These are routine verses for Basil when speaking of the Son's generation (e.g. *Eun.* 2.17; *Sab*). He implies that these scriptural texts are all the revelation God has given Christians to peer into the otherwise impenetrable, incomprehensible, and ineffable mystery of the Son's divine generation.

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258 The translators (2012:27) note Basil is trying to show “that since the Son's birth from the Father is non-temporal, the human mind, which can operate only in a temporal manner, is unsuited for understanding it.”

259 It is important to note that in this respect eternal generation is described in the same way as the *ousia*, cf. *letters* 233-35.

Basil continues by admonishing on how not to speak or think of the Son's generation. "Do not say 'If he was born, he was not.'<sup>260</sup> Do not wickedly seize upon the vulgar interpretation of these words, corrupting the truth and defiling the divine teaching on the basis of examples here below." Here Basil has made a distinction between the theology and economy of Christ (DelCogliano/Holmes 2013:28n6).<sup>261</sup> Basil's distinction of the theology of the Son from his economy helps Basil to put the phrase "he was born" into its proper context. "He was born," as Basil says, "indicate[s] his origin and cause, not so that I could expose the Only Begotten as posterior to time. Do not allow your intellect to tumble into the pitfall of making the ages prior to the Son, seeing that they did not yet exist nor had yet to come into being. For how can things that have been made be prior to the one who made them?" In this quote, Basil understands the Son's begetting to point to the Father as origin and cause as he did in *Against Eunomius* 1.22-27, *On the Holy Spirit* 4.6, *letter* 236, and *homily* 24. He also mentions a second time in the opening section that the Son is neither posterior to time nor ages.

Basil continues, "But I see that unawares I have gotten into what I wanted to avoid in the course of this sermon. So then, let us put aside talk about the eternal and ineffable birth, realizing that our intellect is quite unequal to understanding such realities and our speech quite insufficient for expressing such thoughts." Again Basil repeats what he has earlier said about the eternal generation, namely it is ineffable so that human intellect and speech are unable to either comprehend or verbalize it.

In the opening section, Basil has looked to reign in futile and unproductive speculations of the Son's eternal birth by imperatively telling his audience "Do not" five times. The first words of Basil sum up well his general attitude of how his listeners should approach this doctrine: "Revere in silence."

Basil continues this homily by commenting on Matthew 1.18-2.11.

In section six, Basil teaches about the Incarnation in a similar way to the eternal generation. Basil says, "Please think of the incarnation of the Lord in a way appropriate to God...The magi adore him but Christians inquire how God can be

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260 The translators (2013:27n4) say, "This of course is a version of what Arius is supposed to have claimed: it logically follows from the fact of the Son's birth that the Son did not exist before he was born. Pro-Nicene theologians such as Basil denied that the Son's birth implied a beginning to his existence[.]"

261 For Basil's use and understanding of "theology" and "economy" as it pertains to the Son see *homily* 16 above, *letter* 236, and *Against Eunomius* book two.

flesh, what sort of flesh he has, and whether the humanity he assumed was perfect or imperfect! In the Church of God such superfluous matters should be passed over in silence [but they] become the object of pointless speculation.”<sup>262</sup> As in *homily* 29, there is never any explicit connection made by Basil between the Son's eternal generation and his Incarnation. At most, a connection between both “births” is implied as they are talked about in the same homily and in a similar fashion.

## 6.7 Conclusion to Basil's Homilies

In Basil's homilies, we find an emphasis on the importance of the Son's eternal generation that we have not seen since his *Against Eunomius*.

In *Homily* 15 the doctrine of eternal generation receives attention throughout. Basil employed the eternal generation to establish both the “community of nature” between Father and Son as well as their eternal distinction as Father and Son.

*Homily* 16 is very important because it gives Basil's most detailed exegetical basis for his doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. John 1.1-2 is scriptural evidence for Basil that the Son is eternal, that he is begotten from the Father, and that the Son has an essential likeness to the Father.

In *Homily* 29 Basil defended himself (mainly) against tritheism. He argued through divine generation that the Father and Son are exactly alike in all respects. To dismiss accusations of modalism, he reasons that the names predicated of Father and Son (and those names in particular) prove true differentiation. In this homily, Basil also alluded to the Incarnation of Christ as a shadow of the eternal and divine generation.

In *Homily* 24 Basil was on the offensive against Heteroousians and Sabellians. He argued that the eternal generation pointed to both the commonality of substance (*ousia*) and their distinction of persons (*hypostasis*). Through eternal generation, monotheism was maintained for Father and Son are one God. Their differentiation was safeguarded by the names Son and Father which designate distinct persons.

In *Homily* 27 Basil insisted that his hearers “Revere [the Son's generation] in silence.” Human intellect and language are too feeble to think and speak about it. At the end of the homily the Incarnation was spoken of in a similar way as the eternal generation of the Son: do not speculate on it, do not ask questions that

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262 Basil discusses the Incarnation in *letters* 260-63, 265. See Behr, *Nicene Faith*, pp. 111-24.

can't be answered, accept in silent reverence what Scripture affirms. In my estimation when Basil is engaged in polemics he tiptoes, if not crosses the line of, speaking about the “whats” and “whens” of the eternal generation (cf. *Eun.*; *Verb, Sab*). When Basil is engaged with his “lay” audience he backs away from any explanations and encourages his audience to do the same (cf. *Trin, Chr*), though Basil always stresses the final incomprehensibility and ineffableness of eternal generation for it remains a mystery within the realm of God's unknowable *ousia*. In conclusion, the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son was seen to be essential in Basil's dogmatic homilies both to defend and confess oneness of substance (*ousia*) between Father and Son and their distinct *hypostasis*.

## 7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Summary of Findings

Basil believed the divine nature of God was simple, immutable, impassible, and ineffable. Basil also believed God to be eternally Father. This premise necessitates that the Son also be eternal for there could be no eternal Father without an eternal Son. Basil had always been convinced that whatever the substance of the Father is assumed to be, this must by all means be assumed of the Son also. What this meant for Basil is that the Father and Son together (with the Spirit) are the one God.

The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son provided Basil with an explanation of how the Father and the Son constitute the one God. The Son having been eternally begotten from the substance of the Father indicates that the Son is the same in substance (*homoousios*) with the Father. The unity of Father and Son is an eternal and indivisible unity in substance, deity, will, power, authority, honor, and glory.

The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son also provided Basil with an explanation of how the unified Father and Son are indelibly and eternally differentiated. The Son is distinguished by his eternal relation of origin; He is the eternally begotten Son of the eternal Father. The only distinction Basil allows between Father and Son is the “fatherhood” of the Father and the “sonship” of the Son.

The eternal generation of the Son informed Basil how to conceptualize the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and Son; He argued that the Spirit eternally “proceeds” from the Father. Thus, the eternal generation of the Son and eternal procession of the Spirit allowed Basil to claim that God is one and eternally triune; Basil's doctrine of God as triune, based on his understanding of the relations of origin, excludes both modalism and tritheism.

Basil believed that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son to be scripturally warranted. In support, he primarily appealed to Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and John 1.1-2. In addition, he saw 1 Corinthians 1.24, 2 Corinthians 4.4, John 14.9 and Psalms 2.7 and 109.3 as also supporting this doctrine. These scriptures show that the Son's eternal begetting needs to be understood as excluding passion, temporality and other materialistic or anthropomorphic

connotations. Basil bases this doctrine on scripture, but he also argued that the eternal generation of the Son was both philosophically tenable and explicable, although it will always remain an ineffable and incomprehensible truth for human beings.

## 7.2 Conclusions

This study has shown that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is essential to Basil's understanding of the Father-Son relationship revealed in scripture. Basil believes that "there is no doctrine in the gospel of our salvation more important than faith in the Father and the Son." As did Origen, Basil considered the scriptural names 'Father' and 'Son' to be true names which suggest a generative act in eternity. For this reason, he also believed that the begetting of the Son belongs to the solid foundation of our faith (*Eun.2.24*). The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is indispensable in order to understand his Trinitarian theology as a whole. Basil successfully modified the doctrine of eternal generation by delineating substance (*ousia*) and persons (*hypostasis*). Thus, the generation of the Son from the Father united them in substance, while talk of persons truly distinguished them.

Basil believed the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son to be scripturally justified because scripture speaks of a Father, a Son, and a begetting. Additionally, scripture references the Son as begotten and calls him "Only-Begotten" (*monogenēs*). It is likely that Basil's acceptance of the doctrine led him to interpret verses such as Psalm 2.7 and 109.3, Colossians 1.15, Hebrews 1.3, and John 1.1-2 as teaching the eternal generation of the Son. Whether or not these verses sanction the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son will remain debated among contemporary exegetes. However, when one takes into account Basil's hermeneutical and philosophical presuppositions about the Father and the Son, it is understandable how he arrived at his conclusions as he read the verses mentioned above.

Certain scriptures, such as John 10.24, 28, Matthew 24.36, and Mark 13.32 were cited by Basil's opponents to prove that the Son's generation (as well as his Incarnation) revealed him not to be "True God" like the Father. Basil reinterpreted all verses used to separate the substance of the Father and Son or diminish the deity, power, or authority of the Son by employing the practice of partitive exegesis. This practice allowed him to claim that scripture mentions both the "theology" of the Son (e.g. John 1.1f) as well as his "economy" (e.g. Phil. 2.7). The

distinction between theology and economy provided Basil a way to distinguish when scripture was referring to the full deity of the Son, due to his eternal generation of the Father, or his true manhood due to his Incarnation.

Basil considers the Father as source/principle (*archē*) and cause (*aitia*) of the Son. The unbegotten Father is always to be understood as the *archē* of the begotten Son. It is not subordination; it is the only thing that differentiates them. The relationship of origin reveals the *taxis* to be from Father to Son, not because the Father enjoys a preeminence based on nature or time, for they are understood to be one in being, power, and majesty. In his *Against Eunomius*, Basil employed the conceptualization of fire and light to explain the order between Father and Son. One can conceptualize the fire as before the light, but in reality they are inseparable. As soon as there is fire, there is light. This conceptualization also served to show that the Father and Son are not identical to each other, neither is the Son subordinate to the Father. The Father is the sole source (*mia archē*) of the Son, but the rule of God (*monarchia*) is triune.

### **7.3 Summary of Contributions**

Basil's dogmatic writings on the Trinity, as most Trinitarian debates of the fourth century, centered on how to understand the Son's eternal generation from the Father (Ayres 2004:3). Basil wrote so much about this doctrine because he considered it to be essential to the Christian faith as Mark DelCogliano (2011c:205) has pointed out. Basil himself acknowledges that 'begotten,' though scriptural, is used metaphorically. I think Basil's admission opens the door to a discussion of the term's usefulness and precision in speaking about the relationship between Father and Son. The metaphorical status of the term, along with its relatively meager occurrence in scripture, should move us to understand how and why the doctrine was formulated in order to properly understand what is at stake if we eschew the doctrine. Evangelical critics of this doctrine make much of the fact that no scriptural text explicitly speaks of the eternal generation or begetting of the Son. These critics also argue that the texts quoted by Basil and other church fathers in support of the doctrine are inconclusive. Their arguments fail to recognize that the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is an explanation of what "Father" and "Son" mean in relation to God and how the eternal Father is related to the eternal Son. It is built on hints and inferences found in scripture and requires a careful Trinitarian hermeneutic. The doctrine of the Trinity itself is also built on hints and inferences but is not eschewed. Therefore, I

am in agreement with Basil as well as contemporary theologians such as Kevin Giles (2012), Keith E. Johnson (2011), and Robert Letham (2004) who see this doctrine as both biblically warranted and essential for maintaining historic, orthodox Trinitarian theology. Eternal generation is *the* doctrine which tells us how the Father and Son are both God, indelibly one in substance but eternally distinct persons. Furthermore, I am in agreement with Giles, Johnson, and Letham that the acceptance or rejection of the doctrine is not affected by the translation of *monogenēs* as “unique, only” or “only-begotten”. Basil did understand *monogenēs* to mean that the Son is the Only-Begotten. Interestingly, the verses in which the term *monogenēs* occurs, namely, John 1.14, 18, 3.16, 18; 1 John 4.9, are never used by Basil to explicate the doctrine.

As far as the oft mentioned “East-West” divide on the Trinity, commonly called “The De Régnon Hypothesis,” I find nothing in Basil to support this. For De Régnon and those who follow him, Eastern theologians are portrayed as starting with the three *hypostaseis* and then explicating the one substance. The West, however, follows Augustine and moves in the opposite direction. In Basil's dogmatic, exegetical, and homiletic Trinitarian writings, I do not see him giving any precedence to the three *hypostaseis* and moving secondarily to the one *ousia*. Divine simplicity was too fundamental for Basil. Furthermore, oneness and distinction were two sides of one coin for him. Both need to be equally emphasized in order to avoid Sabellianism and Heteroousianism (ditheism).

In studying Basil, I also found confirmation for the conclusion from Volker Drecoll (1996), Joseph Leinhard (1999), and John Behr (2004): Basil never used the phrase “*mia ousia, treis hypostaseis*”, commonly known as the “Cappadocian Settlement” to speak of the one, triune God.

Finally, Basil insisted that the substance of God cannot be defined or known. Since the generation of the Son belongs necessarily to the *ousia* of God, it is for this reason that he considered the generation of the Son to be incomprehensible to the human mind and ineffable for the human tongue. However, this did not stop Basil from explicating what the Son's eternal generation reveals about the substance and person of the Father and of the Son (cf. *Eun.*; *Verb*).

## 7.4 Suggestions for Future Research

My chapter on Basil's dogmatic homilies has shown the importance of Colossians 1.15 for Basil's teaching on the eternal generation of the Son. Basil believes that it is a scriptural attestation to the eternal generation of the Son for it teaches that the Father and Son are indistinguishable in substance to the Father and distinct from him (cf. *Eun.*, *Chr*, *Sab*). I did not come across any article which addressed the Archetype/Image language in Basil or its relation to, and influence on, understanding the Son as begotten.

In letter 362, it is clear that Apollinarius gives Basil his own understanding of the Son's generation from the substance of the Father. Apollinarius' explanation has a striking similarity to Basil's doctrine of eternal generation: it unifies identity and differentiation. Despite of the similarities, Basil rejects Apollinarius's clear subordinationism of the Son. Thus, I think it would be of interest to research more thoroughly Apollinarius' impact on Basil's understanding of the doctrine of eternal generation especially in light of current Basilian scholarship which is critically questioning Athanasius' influence on Basil's theology.

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