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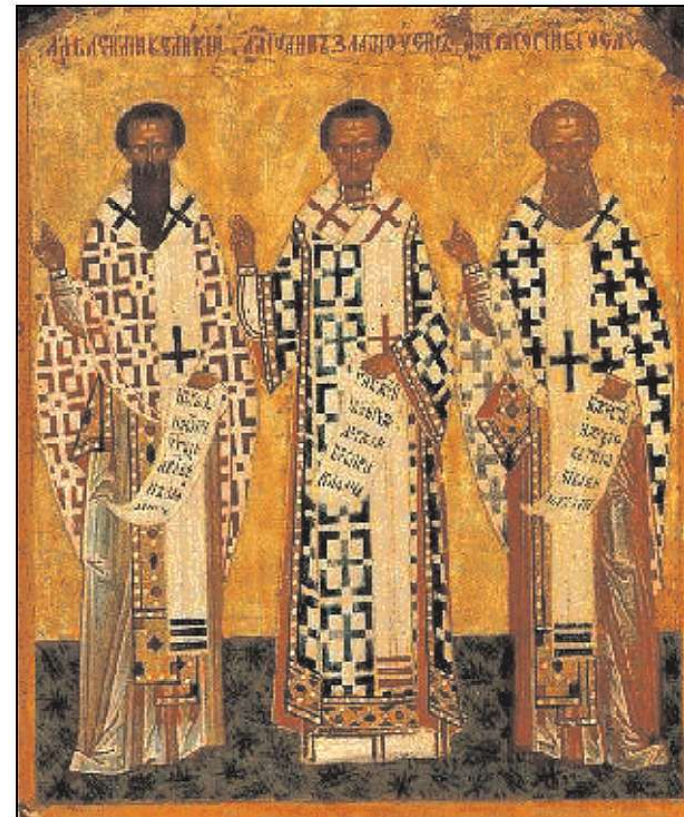
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On the Holy Spirit by Saint Basil the Great



Saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Gregory the Theologian
Image courtesy of On-line Novgorod

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through them he establishes the antiquity of his doxology. One cannot be an innovator by following ancient practices!

General Conclusion

In demonstrating the divinity of the Holy Spirit, St. Basil's treatise, *On the Holy Spirit*, lays the foundations of Eastern Orthodox trinitarian theology both conceptually and terminologically. Although refined and clarified by the Cappadocian Fathers who survived him, St. Basil's work laid the foundations of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381. This alone justifies the study of this work since it is fundamental to Orthodox trinitarian theology. Yet its value transcends being a theological source. St. Basil uses and discusses here the sources and methods of Eastern Orthodox theology. His masterful use of Holy Writ, the worship traditions of the Church, the writings of the Church Fathers, of logic, and of precise theological language make this treatise an example of how Orthodox theology is done. *On the Holy Spirit* is therefore a work which every Orthodox Christian should both read and reread.

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traditions are so ancient that they seem incomplete to many. Yet they use St. Basil's doxology. He also cites the Syriac traditions of Mesopotamia, and the local dialect of Cappadocia, in which the conjunction and must be used in the doxology for grammatical reasons. Given these unwritten and ancient traditions, how could St. Basil be an innovator regarding this doxology?⁵⁸ Now St. Basil turns to several written sources which establish the propriety of his doxology. These include St. Dionysius of Alexandria who writes in his second letter, "On Accusation and Defense," to his namesake in Rome, "since we have received a form and a rule from the presbyters who have gone before us, we offer thanksgiving in harmony with them, and following everything they have taught us, we conclude our letter to you, To God the Father, and the Son our Lord Jesus Christ, *with the Holy Spirit* be glory and dominion unto ages of ages. Amen." He cites Clement of Rome who writes (1 Clem. 58), "God lives, and the Lord Jesus Christ, *and the Holy Spirit*." He also cites Eusebius of Caesarea (the Church Historian) who invokes, "the holy God of the prophets, the Giver of Light, through our Lord Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit." In addition to these Fathers, St. Basil cites St. Irenaeus of Lyons, St. Dionysius of Rome, St. Basil's predecessor, Firmilian, Meletius of Antioch, and several excerpts from Origen (where he acknowledges long established Christian usage), Africanus the Historian, the Vespers Hymn, "O Gladsome Light" (φοῦς ἰλαριον), and so forth.⁵⁹

One thus sees St. Basil's use of three sources for theology. By far, Holy Writ is the most commonly cited source. In defense of his doxology, he cites the unwritten traditions of worship and prayer of the Church. Finally, to establish the antiquity and propriety of his doxology, he cites the writings of several Church Fathers. For St. Basil, Holy Scriptures is the sources of sources. Even the traditions of the Fathers are valuable because the Fathers understood and adhered to Holy Writ. Yet for St. Basil, both written and unwritten traditions of the Fathers are of equal force in both the theology and worship of the Church. To deny the validity of the unwritten traditions of the Church would hollow out the Gospel, reducing it to mere words. These unwritten traditions of worship are a natural source for St. Basil since it is a doxology, after all, which he is defending. Finally, St. Basil cites several writings of earlier Church Fathers. This is his least used source, but it is vital against charges of innovation since

58 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 111-113.

59 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 108-110.

Saint Basil the Great - His Life

Together with St. Gregory of Nazianzus ("the Theologian," c. 329-389) and St. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 330-395), St. Basil the Great is of one of the Cappadocian Fathers, namely the famous fourth-century theologians from Cappadocia (now central Turkey), who are best known for developing and perfecting the trinitarian theology of St. Athanasius the Great (c. 295-373). Their collective theological endeavors established the foundations of Orthodox Christian trinitarian theology. To understand Orthodox Christian trinitarianism fully, one must grasp the teachings of the Cappadocian Fathers.

Of the three, only St. Basil of Caesarea has earned the cognomen, "the Great." Among the three fathers, St. Basil was the most well-rounded. He was a theologian and intellectual of the first order, but was also a consummate ecclesiastical statesman, organizer and liturgist. He was not only the second Athanasius in defense of Orthodox theology, but a founder of monasteries, hospices, hospitals, and so forth. St. Basil of Caesarea has earned the cognomen, "the Great," not only for his teachings, but for his actions and life as well.

St. Basil was born circa 330 in Caesarea of Cappadocia to a wealthy family known as both Christian and noble. His Christian lineage and relations are rather impressive. His father, also called Basil, was a rhetorician from Neocaesarea in Pontus (now north-central Turkey), who was a son of St. Macrina the Elder, a pupil of St. Gregory the Wonderworker (c. 213-270), bishop of Neocaesarea in Pontus. His mother, Emmelia, was a martyr's daughter. She gave birth to ten children, three of whom became bishops, i.e., St. Basil of Caesarea, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Peter of Sebaste. Her eldest daughter, St. Macrina the Younger (c. 327-379), was a model of the Christian ascetic life and is immortalized in St. Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina and On the Soul and the Resurrection*.¹

St. Basil received his elementary education at the hands of his father, Basil of Neocaesarea. For his higher education, the talented youth attended schools of rhetoric in Caesarea of Cappadocia, Constantinople,

1 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1983) 203-204.

and finally Athens (after 351). St. Basil thus received a first-rate education and this cultivation will tell in his later theological works. While studying at the famous school of Athens, he made the acquaintance and lifelong friendship of St. Gregory, the future bishop of Nazianzus. Around 356 he returned to his native Caesarea and began a short-lived career as a rhetorician.²

St. Basil soon renounced his secular career and sought a life totally dedicated to God. His first step was to be baptized, doing this at a time when adults usually delayed baptism until their deathbed in order to avoid enduring the rigors of a post-baptismal Christian life for a lengthy period. His second step was to journey through the eastern Mediterranean to visit the famous ascetics of Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. Their steadfastness in the ascetic life inspired and motivated him to emulate them as his strength allowed.

Much time had I spent in vanity, and had wasted nearly all my youth in the vain labor which I underwent in acquiring the wisdom made foolish by God. Then once upon a time, like a man roused from deep sleep, I turned my eyes to the marvelous light of the truth of the Gospel, and I perceived the uselessness of "the wisdom of the princes of this world, that come to naught." I wept many tears over my miserable life and I prayed that guidance might be vouchsafed me to admit me to the doctrines of true religion. First of all was I minded to make some mending of my ways, long perverted as they were by my intimacy with wicked men. Then I read the Gospel, and I saw there that a great means of reaching perfection was the selling of one's goods, the sharing them with the poor, the giving up of all care for this life, and the refusal to allow the soul to be turned by any sympathy to things of earth. And I prayed that I might find some one of the brethren who had chosen this way of life, that with him I might cross life's short and troubled strait. And many did I find in Alexandria, and many in the rest of Egypt, and others in Palestine, and in Coele Syria, and in Mesopotamia. I admired their continence in living, and their endurance in toil; I was amazed at their persistence in prayer, and at their triumphing over sleep; subdued by no natural necessity, ever keeping their souls' purpose high and free, in hunger, in thirst, in cold, in nakedness, they never yielded to the body; they were never willing to waste attention on it; always, as though living in a flesh that was not theirs, they

2 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 204.

baptismal tradition, let these opponents follow the principles of true religion, allowing us to glorify God with the same terms we use to profess our faith. If they reject this doxology because there is no written authorization for it, let them give written authorization for all the essential practices St. Basil just cited. Since there are so many unwritten traditions which are important for the mystery of true religion, how can they refuse to concede a single word which is used by the Fathers?⁵⁵

The rejection of *with the Spirit* as invalid without written authorization is appropriate only if no other unwritten traditions can be found. If many invaluable mysteries have been handed down from unwritten sources, let them follow this one as well, since it is apostolic to follow unwritten traditions. "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor. 11:2). Also, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).⁵⁶

If St. Basil were in court, would not a crowd of witnesses secure his acquittal, even if he did not have written evidence? After all, "at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established" (Deut. 19:15). Since the charge is innovation, would not his witnesses be convincing if their testimonies covered a long period of time, establishing the antiquity of the practice? Such a defense would not only demonstrate the frivolity of the charges of innovation, but would also increase one's reverence for the phrase *with the Spirit*, since its hoary antiquity would inspire it. Many of the witnesses joined the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son with the preposition *with*, while others used the conjunction *and*. Logically, however, the meaning and intent is the same.⁵⁷

Now St. Basil cites his witnesses. Some of these sources are unwritten. For example, he received this doxology from the man who both baptized him and ordained him as priest, namely Eusebius, metropolitan of Caesarea. He also cites the tradition of the churches of Pontus which follow the tradition of St. Gregory the Wonderworker. These churches allow no deviation from the rites established by that great father and saint. In fact, their worship

55 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 101-103.

56 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 106-107.

57 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 107.

would fatally mutilate the gospel, regardless of one's intentions, since thereby one would reduce the Gospel teachings to bare words.⁵³

St. Basil then begins to cite several unwritten traditions of the Church, mainly concerning Christian worship, which he saw as essential to Christian practice. Some examples of these are: **a)** signing with the Cross those who are enrolled as catechumens, **b)** the words uttered during the invocation over the Eucharistic bread and the cup of blessing which are beyond what one finds in the Gospels and the words of St. Paul, **c)** the blessing with oil both of the baptismal water and of the candidate approaching the font, **d)** triple immersion at baptism, **e)** the renunciation of Satan and his angels, **f)** facing eastward in prayer because one seeks the Paradise which God planted in the East of Eden, and so forth. What written sources are there which authorize these vital apostolic traditions? Would not the Church be greatly diminished without them? Furthermore, the proper awe for the priceless *dogmata* are preserved by the silence surrounding them. There is a message for the world, the *kerygma*, which must be proclaimed. But to protect these precious *dogmata* from the devaluation which comes from cheap familiarity, they are shrouded in silence. Certainly Moses did not open all sections of the Tabernacle to everyone (Num. 4:20). Moses also judged that only the Levites were worthy of divine service (Num. 18:22ff). Only one chosen priest was chosen to enter the Holy of Holies, and only once per year (Ex. 30:10, Lev. 16:2). Moses was wise enough to know that triteness and familiarity breed contempt. In the same way, when the Apostles and Fathers of the Church established ordinances, they protected the dignity of the mysteries with silence from the beginning. Unwritten tradition protects the knowledge of the *dogmata* from the scorn and neglect which comes from easy familiarity.⁵⁴

St. Basil concedes that the list of unwritten traditions in the Church is so vast as to be impossible to cite in this treatise. Yet there is the tradition handed down, namely our confession of faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Where is this written? But if we are obliged to believe in that into which we are baptized, then we must make our confession of faith in the same terms as our baptism. Since we have received these terms from the

53 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 98-99.

54 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 100-101.

*shewed in very deed what it is to sojourn for a while in this life, and what to have one's citizenship and home in heaven. All this moved my admiration. I called these men's lives blessed, in that they did in deed shew that they "bear about in their body the dying of Jesus." And I prayed that I, too, as far as in me lay, might imitate them.*³

Upon his return, he followed the advice of the Lord to the Rich Man, dividing all his possessions and distributing it to the poor.⁴ He then went into solitude near Neocaesarea on the Iris. He was not alone for long. Many soon joined him and shared the cenobitic life with him.⁵ When St. Gregory of Nazianzus visited St. Basil in 358, they compiled the *Philocalia*, an anthology of Origen's (c. 185-254) works, as well as the two *Monastic Rules* which were influential in the spread of the communal ascetic Christian life. These monastic rules, in fact, earned St. Basil the title of the Lawgiver of Greek Monasticism since they laid the foundations of Byzantine monastic life. Even in this early phase of his career, St. Basil showed himself a man of action by founding several monasteries.⁶

Such industry could hardly go unnoticed, hence St. Basil caught the eye of Eusebius, the metropolitan of Caesarea (d. c. 370). In 364, he ordained St. Basil a priest. Before long, St. Basil became indispensable as administrator, advisor and teacher. Upon Eusebius' death in 370, St. Basil succeeded him, becoming bishop of Caesarea, metropolitan of Cappadocia, and exarch of the civil diocese of Pontus. His swiftness in charity soon won him the love of his flock. He established hospitals, homes for the poor, hospices for travelers, and so forth.⁷

As able as he was in administration, St. Basil is best known as a champion of orthodoxy in an age wherein Arian theology held official favor. The works, *Against Eunomius* and *On the Holy Spirit*, for example, are his two dogmatic treatises addressing trinitarian theology. His courage was as noteworthy as his sagacity. When the Arian emperor Valens (c. - 378) sent

3 Saint Basil the Great, *Letters* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. Rev. Blomfield Jackson, M.A.; NPNF 8, Second Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983) 263 (*Letter 223, ch. 2*).

4 Matthew 19:21

5 The communal monastic life after the pattern set by St. Pachomius (c. 290-346), in contrast to the anchoritic, or solitary ascetic life pursued by Saints Anthony the Great (c. 251-356) and Paul of Thebes (d. c. 340).

6 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 205.

7 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 205.

the prefect Modestus, threatening confiscation and exile, St. Basil withstood him so resolutely that Valens reconsidered and withdrew his decree of banishment.⁸

In an age when the Church was sorely divided, St. Basil sought unity. To improve relations between the Christian East and Rome, he enlisted the help of St. Athanasius who had made himself well-known in the West during earlier periods of exile. St. Basil was convinced that orthodox theology would only prevail if no effort was wasted in internecine church battles. Unfortunately, his efforts were hindered due to the struggle between Meletius and Paulinus for the episcopal throne of Antioch. St. Basil's appeal to St. Athanasius and Rome to heal this schism failed since St. Basil was supportive of Meletius while the latter were supportive of Paulinus. The letters he received from the West affirmed the community of faith, but offered no concrete assistance regarding the Antiochene succession.⁹

St. Basil did live to see the dawn of better times, however. The Arian emperor Valens died in the catastrophic battle of Adrianople (9 August 378) and was succeeded by the orthodox emperor, Theodosius I (ruled 379-395). St. Basil passed away on 1 January 379, not yet 50 years of age. In 381, through the Second Ecumenical Council at Constantinople, Theodosius I brought order and unity to the Church. This council also promulgated the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed for which St. Basil laid the theological foundations.¹⁰ The Orthodox Church celebrates his feast on 1 January.

About On the Holy Spirit

Composed around 375, *On the Holy Spirit* (περι του αγιου πνευματος) is dedicated to St. Amphilochius, bishop of Iconium (c. 240-395), a colleague in defense of Nicene Orthodoxy. The immediate occasion for this treatise was the accusation that the doxology St. Basil used in public worship, "*glory be to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit*" (μετα του υιου συν τω αγιω πνευματι) was an innovation. His opponents preferred, "*glory be to the Father through the Son in the Holy*

section addressing St. Basil's use of the argumentation from the authority of Holy Scriptures above. Hence this need not be demonstrated again. But there is more to St. Basil's use of Holy Writ than its frequency. The centrality of Holy Writ is essential for St. Basil's theological methodology. Holy Scripture, for St. Basil, is the source of sources. It is central to Christian revelation and the primary source of Christian theology. St. Basil also uses and values highly both the written and unwritten traditions of the Fathers. When citing the traditions of the Fathers to prove the validity of his doxology, however, he makes clear that one ought not be content with their support merely because they are the traditions of the Fathers, *but because the Fathers understood and followed the meaning of Holy Scripture*. The value of the Fathers and their traditions are precious and useful since they reflect the meaning of Holy Writ. For St. Basil, Holy Writ is an absolutely central source for Christian theology.⁵¹

St. Basil is hardly shy in citing the unwritten traditions of the Fathers in support of his doxology, "*glory be to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit*" (μετα του υιου συν τω αγιω πνευματι), and in support of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil stood accused of innovation by people who refused to accept the validity of these unwritten sources. As far as St. Basil was concerned, they were enemies of sound doctrine and were not raging against him alone, but also against the very faith itself. They would shake the faith of Christ to its foundations by utterly leveling apostolic tradition to the ground. They supposedly clamored solely for written proofs, rejecting any unwritten testimony of the Fathers as worthless. Hence they proved themselves worse than debtors who refuse to pay their debts without written proof of it.⁵²

The sources of Church teaching, whether publicly proclaimed (κηρυγμα, *kerygma*, proclamation or public notice), or reserved to the faithful (δογματα, *dogmata*, resolutions, decrees, things held to be true), include both written and unwritten sources from apostolic tradition. *For St. Basil, both sources have equal force in true religion*. No one who is in any way familiar with the ordinances of the Church would deny the validity of either. To denigrate unwritten customs as of little worth

8 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 206.

9 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 206-207.

10 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 207.

51 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 33-34.

52 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 46.

true worship is possible.⁴⁹

St. Basil also uses the analogy of the sunbeam to illustrate the mysteries of illumination and sanctification. The Holy Spirit does not dwell in the saint physically but comes as one withdraws oneself from the evil passions which have crept into the soul through friendship with the flesh. Once one has been cleansed from the stain of evil, has returned to his natural beauty, and has the Royal Image restored in himself, he may approach the Paraklete. Then, like the sun, He will reveal in Himself, the image of the invisible, and with purified eyes the saint will see in this blessed image the unspeakable beauty of its prototype. Through fellowship with Himself, the Holy Spirit makes men spiritual. As the sunbeam illumines a transparent substance, making it brilliant, so too, spirit-bearing souls, illumined by Him, become spiritual themselves, sending their grace forth to others. From the Holy Spirit comes knowledge of the future, the understanding of mysteries, the apprehension of hidden things, the distribution of wonderful gifts, heavenly citizenship, a place in the choir of the angels, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and the greatest desire of all, becoming God. Such is the greatness, dignity and working of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰

The Theological Sources of St. Basil

The three sources for St. Basil's theological work are: **a)** Holy Scripture, **b)** the unwritten traditions of the Fathers, and **c)** the written traditions of the Fathers. Of these three sources, St. Basil uses Holy Writ and the unwritten traditions of the Fathers most dynamically. How St. Basil uses all three sources is now the focus of this study.

By far the most frequently cited source in *On the Holy Spirit* is Holy Writ. Nearly all of his arguments begin with Holy Scripture as a source, or as a justification for his doxology. This is not very surprising since how could one pursue Christian theology without a lively and frequent use of Holy Scripture? That St. Basil uses Holy Writ as a source has already been demonstrated in this paper, especially in the

49 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 97.

50 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 44.

Spirit" (δια του υιου συν τω αγιω πνευματι), which was a traditional formula. The second doxology was supposedly superior in that it expressed more precisely what these contenders saw as the distinct levels of glory appropriate to the three persons of the Holy Trinity. Against this, St. Basil affirmed that the Church knew and used *both* formulas, each having its own context and meaning. St. Basil analyzes both doxologies and their respective usages, as well as the theological underpinnings of each. When he sets forth the theological implications underlying this confrontation, this treatise becomes a powerful defense of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Six years later, this work served as a source for St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan (c. 339-397) in his work, *De Spiritu Sancto*. Through this channel many of St. Basil's ideas came to influence the Christian West.¹¹

The wider context of this treatise is the half-century struggle of the varying strands of "Arian" theology against the defenders of Nicaea, who themselves were not entirely uniform. The old Nicaeans, e.g., St. Athanasius the Great, stood steadfastly by the term *homoousios* (ομοουσιος), "of one essence," used by the Nicene Creed. Hereby they defended the unity in essence of the Father and the Son, which was this term's strength. The New Nicaeans, such as St. Basil and the other Cappadocian Fathers, came out of a school of thought which preferred the term, *homoiousios* (ομοιουσιος), i.e., "of similar essence." The term, *homoousios*, did have its drawbacks. It was a new term whose usage could be construed, with some justification, as an innovation. Adherents of the homoiousian tradition feared that *homoousios* could imply more than unity of essence, but also confusion of the distinct persons of the Holy Trinity, namely, Sabellian heresy. The homoiousian tradition had the advantage of accentuating the distinctiveness of the persons of the Father and the Son. St. Athanasius the Great and the Cappadocian Fathers eventually recognized each other as allies in defense of Nicaea. Although their traditions varied somewhat in terminology, their theological intent and goals were the same. Yet among the homoiousians, however, were those who emphasized the divine unity of essence so little that it was hardly affirmed at all. These were the "Semi-Arians." Furthest away from the Old Nicaeans were those who placed the Son in the created order, namely the radical Arians. By the late fourth century, however, this group was becoming a very small minority.

11 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 210-211.

So the main battle was over the degree of adherence to the *homoousios* of those in the *homoiousian* tradition. Would they embrace Arianism (although not necessarily *Arius*) or Nicaea? St. Basil the Great, together with St. Gregory of Nazianzus ("the Theologian") and his brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, refined the meaning of the *homousios* to account more adequately for the distinct persons of the Father and the Son. In short, they defined the *homoousios* in light of the homoiousian tradition, safeguarding both the unity of the divine nature as well as the distinct persons of the Father and the Son. The great contribution of St. Basil and the Cappadocians was to win the vast majority of the homoiousians for Nicaea.¹²

Where does On the Holy Spirit fit into all this? In the controversies above, the issue was the consubstantiality of the Father and the Son. Theologically, the defenders of Nicaea had nearly won. The emperor Valens still backed Arianism. But with his demise at Adrianople (9 August 378) and the rise of Theodosius I (379), Nicene theology would be near complete victory within the Roman Empire. *But what about the divinity of the Holy Spirit?* This issue figured little in the previous debates. Christians had been baptized using the trinitarian formula based on Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*" But to what degree the Holy Spirit was divine had not yet been thoroughly discussed.

Among St. Basil's opponents were those who seemed to affirm the divinity of the Son, but had reservations, to say the least, about the divinity of Holy Spirit.¹³ Others seemed, perhaps, to see varying degrees of divinity in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively.¹⁴ These were possibly among the more radical Arians. It is likely that the opponents of the full

12 For a brief discussion of this background, see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 230-231, and David Anderson, "Introduction," *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit* (trans. David Anderson; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997) 7-10.

13 See Basil of Caesarea, *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit* (trans. David Anderson; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997) 45, 50-52, 75-76, 88-89. The arguments presented here are most forceful if the opponents affirmed the divinity of the Son but questioned or lessened that of the Holy Spirit.

14 See Basil of Caesarea, *St. Basil the Great: On the Holy Spirit* (trans. David Anderson; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997) 68-75. The concept of subnumeration, which St. Basil opposes, implies decreasing degrees of divinity from Father to Son to Holy Spirit, as if numbering them "one, two, three" indicated rank according to essence, i.e., "first, second, third," or "most, lesser, least."

hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing."⁴⁷

Therefore St. Basil's syllogism runs as follows. Holy Writ is authoritative. Romans 11:34-36 and Isaiah 40:13 are parts of Holy Writ. They refer either to God the Word or to nobody.

The trap now has been laid. St. Basil's opponents accept Holy Writ as authoritative for theological discourse. They must therefore accept these verses which seem clearly to speak either of God, or some impossibly fantastic person. Yet they also insist that *from* must be used only regarding the Father and *through* only regarding the Son. But Romans 11:36 applies both prepositions to the same divine person! If they accept this verse as applying to the Son, *from* has been applied to the Son. If they reject this interpretation, then the only other logical candidate is God the Father. Yet even if they affirm this, *through* has been applied to the Father by Holy Scripture! Their syllogism does not stand since they must either accept the authority of Holy Writ or their prescriptions regarding prepositions. Romans 11:36 shows that they cannot have both as their argument requires.⁴⁸

St. Basil argues by analogy as well, especially using analogies of light and the sun. One sees an example of this in his elaboration of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit. As the Father is made visible through His Image, the Son, so also is the Son recognized in the Spirit. To worship in the Spirit implies that our intelligence has been enlightened. For this reason the Lord told the Samaritan woman that she must worship in Spirit and truth. By *truth*, He meant Himself. So if worship offered in the Son (the Truth) is offered in the Image of the Father, we can say essentially the same about worship in the Spirit since the Holy Spirit in Himself reveals the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now light cannot be separated from that which it illuminates, i.e., one cannot see in the dark. Likewise, one cannot recognize Christ, the image of the invisible God, unless enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Once the Image is seen, the light cannot be discarded since one necessarily sees the light and image simultaneously. Likewise, the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Father and the Son in worship since it is only through the illumination of the Holy Spirit that

47 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 22-24.

48 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 24.

is omnipresent. In contrast to this, the angels, who are also spiritual beings, are circumscribed by space and time. In light of this, what kind of nature does the Holy Spirit have, all-encompassing, or circumscribed as are the angels? Certainly it cannot be a circumscribed nature! Therefore it follows that the Holy Spirit is divine since He shares the divine attribute of omnipresence.⁴⁶

In defense of his doxology, "glory be to the Father *with the Son together with the Holy Spirit*" (μετα του υιοι συν τω αγιω πνευματι), St. Basil lays a logical trap for his opponents, who prefer, "glory be to the Father *through the Son in the Holy Spirit*" (δια του υιοι εν τω αγιω πνευματι). The adversaries prescribed the use of the preposition from regarding God the Father, through regarding God the Son, and in regarding the Holy Spirit. These prepositions supposedly demonstrate that the Father is the supreme cause, the Son is the instrument of the Father, while the Holy Spirit provides merely the occasion or place for this creative activity. Accordingly, each person of the Holy Trinity has a correspondingly different nature.

St. Basil received both doxologies as acceptable and mutually complementary. He acknowledged that Holy Writ often uses the prepositions as prescribed by his opponents. He also demonstrated, however, that Holy Scripture did not limit itself to their arbitrary terminological conventions. St. Basil uses Romans 11:36, "for from Him and through Him and to Him are all things," to set a trap for them. St. Basil analyzes the context of this verse to demonstrate that God the Son is the one to whom this verse refers, namely through St. Paul's previous citation of Isaiah 40:13 in Romans 11:34, "who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counselor...". The citation from Isaiah, as St. Basil understands it, refers to God the Word, the Maker of all creation. If this passage does not refer to God, it could not refer to anyone since only God can know His own mind. Therefore Romans 11:36 indicates that from God comes the cause of all things and that through Him all things are given structure and preservation. Hence comes the meaning of Psalm 145:15, "the eyes of all look hopefully to Thee," Psalm 104:27, "these all look to Thee, to give them their food in due season," and Psalm 145:16, "Thou openest thine

divinity of the Holy Spirit were as varied in their opinions as had been those who opposed the full divinity of the Son. In any case, these *pneumatomachoi*, or "Spirit fighters," did not affirm the full divinity of the Holy Spirit.

St. Basil answered the pneumatomachoi in several ways. Using the authority of Holy Writ, he demonstrated that the Holy Spirit was called Lord and thus ranked no less than the Father and the Son. From the magnitude and glory of the Holy Spirit's works in our illumination, sanctification and salvation, and in creation as well, he demonstrated the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Works attributed only properly to God can only be performed by God. Since such were the works of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit must be divine. St. Basil affirmed the distinct persons of the Holy Trinity, i.e., the Father as unoriginate, the Son as Begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Father. Yet all three shared equally in the divine nature and were therefore equally divine. St. Basil argued that to affirm the three fully divine persons of the Holy Trinity is the best way to avoid polytheism, which he saw as a logical consequence of his opponents' subordinationism in which three differing divine essences could imply three gods.

What one does not find in *On the Holy Spirit* is the forthright affirmation, the Holy Spirit is God. In better times, when Nicene Orthodoxy prevailed, some found St. Basil's apparent lack of candor scandalous. Yet St. Basil clearly accepted the verity of this affirmation. St. Gregory of Nazianzus relates that St. Basil affirmed this truth quite freely, both in private and in his public sermons. St. Basil was cautious about using this exact phrase in the current treatise, however, since it was found neither in Holy Writ nor in written traditions of the Church. The Arians still had the support of Valens, the emperor. Had St. Basil given them the occasion, his foes would have accused him of innovation and sought his deposition, thereby disrupting completely his public work. Instead, St. Basil expressed the truth of this phrase using other terms. In so doing, he would defeat them logically and therefore utterly. Hence St. Basil avoided the phrase, *the Holy Spirit is God*, in *On the Holy Spirit*. That this is his intended conclusion is beyond doubt, however.¹⁵

15 Saint Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration XLIII: Panegyric on Saint Basil* (ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace; trans. Charles Gordon Browne, M.A. and James Edward Swallow, M.A.; NPNF 7, Second Series; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983) 418-419 (ch. 68-69). For a brief discussion about St. Basil's approach to this phrase, see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology I*

46 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 85-86.

The Immediate Issue: St. Basil's Doxology

As stated earlier, the immediate occasion for this treatise was the accusation that St. Basil's doxology, "glory be to the Father *with the Son together with the Holy Spirit*" (μετα του υιου συν τω αγιω πνευματι) was both unscriptural and an innovation, whereas "glory be to the Father *through the Son in the Holy Spirit*" (δια του υιου συν τω αγιω πνευματι) was traditional. Since prayer and theology are inseparable (*lex orandi lex est credendi*), a debate over proper worship necessarily involved a debate about correct theology. In this section, the immediate issue studied is that of the doxology. The theological foundations of this issue will be analyzed later.

His opponents based their objections upon certain preferences regarding prepositions used concerning the persons of the Holy Trinity. Their apparent contention was that any mention of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as *different* facilitates the argument that they *are different in nature*. St. Basil accuses them of reviving therein an argument of the heretic, Aetius, who asserts that things different in nature are expressed in different terms. Therefore, the usage of the prepositions *from*, *through*, and *in* are significant for St. Basil's opponents. The preposition *from* is best used concerning God the Father, *through* concerning God the Son, and *in* concerning God the Holy Spirit. These prepositions indicate distinctions in essence and thus should not be used interchangeably. *From* supposedly indicates the cause of all things, *through* indicates instrumentality, whereas *in* indicates the time and place for such action.¹⁶

St. Basil attributes such meticulous use of prepositions to dependence on pagan philosophy, essentially, the four Aristotelian causes: **a) formal** (the form of a thing), **b) material** (the stuff from which a thing is), **c) efficient** (the agent of change), and **d) final** (that for the sake of which the change is).¹⁷ In St. Basil's review of these causes, *from* would refer to the material cause, *through* to the efficient cause

¹⁶ Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 18-19.

¹⁷ Aristotle discusses these causes in *Posterior Analytics*, Book 2, chapter 11. Aristotle, "Posterior Analytics," *The Basic Works of Aristotle*; (ed. Richard McKeon; Oxford: University Press, 1941) 170-172. See also David Anderson's note in Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 19.

Holy Scripture is clearly an authoritative source of theology, not only for St. Basil, but also for his opponents. Due to this shared assumption, the argument from the authority of Holy Writ can be a powerful theological tool, provided that one shows oneself to interpret Holy Scripture correctly. St. Basil did this persuasively, in his interpretation of Matthew 28:19, 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:5, Psalm 32:6 (LXX), in the other scripture passages above, and elsewhere in his treatise.

Building on the authority of Holy Writ, St. Basil frequently constructs logical syllogisms in defense of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. St. Basil, for example, argues that the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, a characteristic possessed only by a divine nature, whereas the rest of the bodiless powers are circumscribed by time and space. St. Basil demonstrates, on the basis of Daniel 14:33ff (LXX), that the Holy Spirit inspired both Daniel and Habakkuk simultaneously in Babylon, although both men were in different places. The same is true for Jeremiah in the dungeon and Ezekiel by the River Chebar (Jer. 20:2 LXX, and Ezek. 1:1). In all these cases the prophets were separated in place yet were inspired simultaneously by the Holy Spirit, demonstrating His omnipresence. In further support of the Holy Spirit's omnipresence, St. Basil cites Wisdom 1:7, "the Spirit of the Lord fills the world," and Psalm 139:7, "where shall I go from thy Spirit or where shall I flee from Thy presence?" He also cites Haggai 2:4-5, "I am with you, says the Lord of hosts. ... My Spirit abides among you." In contrast to this, the angels, although spiritual beings, are circumscribed by space and time. The angel who came to Cornelius was not with Philip at the same time (Act 10:3, 8:26). Likewise, the angel who spoke with Zechariah from the right side of the altar did not simultaneously occupy his place in heaven (Luke 1:11).⁴⁵

The syllogism is thus built. Holy Writ is divinely inspired and is a source for Christian theology. The Holy Spirit is a spiritual being. Omnipresence is a trait of divinity. Holy Writ demonstrates with the examples of the inspiration of the prophets above that the Holy Spirit

use of human language, notions and images, all of which are temporal and finite, to express in a limited way the eternal and infinite truth of God.

⁴⁵ Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 85.

how could Father, Son and Holy Spirit be united in a better way? If the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not rank the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, let one accuse St. Basil of innovation in ranking the Holy Spirit likewise. But since the Lord did rank the Holy Spirit as divine, let St. Basil be exonerated. Any notion of the natural subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son may therefore be discarded since the Holy Spirit is ranked with the Son as is the Son with the Father. So if the Holy Spirit ranks with the Son, He must also rank with the Father since that is logically implied. No one denies the divinity of the Father. Therefore one must admit logically, and on the basis of Matthew 28:19, that the Son and the Holy Spirit also are divine. Therefore this verse establishes both the divine dignity and essence of the Holy Spirit. As noted earlier, St. Basil uses this verse to establish His own doxology based on the logical equivalence of the conjunction and with the preposition with.⁴³

St. Basil even finds the hypostatic relationship unique to the Holy Spirit, procession from the Father, to be established in Holy Writ. The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26). This verse helps clarify Psalm 32:6 (LXX) which reveals the divine cooperation in creation, "by the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Spirit of His mouth." The Word is not mere speech, but He who was with God in the beginning (John 1:21). The "Spirit of His mouth" is not mere exhalation but the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). Behold these three: the Lord Who commands, the Word Who creates, and the Spirit Who strengthens. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit shares in the fullness of divinity since He proceeds from the mouth of the Father and is not begotten as is the Son. The mouth of the Father is neither a bodily part nor the Holy Spirit a mere physical exhalation. "Mouth" is used to the degree appropriate for language regarding God, namely anthropomorphically, and is thus no denigration of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is exalted, and is the essence of life and sanctification.⁴⁴

43 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 45, 70-71. Also page 7 above and Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 90-92.

44 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 42, 60-63, 72-73. Anthropomorphic language is the

(indicating instrumentality), while *in* refers to the time and space in which an action or change occurs. He notes that his opponents thereby reduce God the Son to a mere instrument while the Holy Spirit is reduced to mere location. So far, St. Basil notes, his opponents remain true to the methods of their pagan sources. But when they apply *from* to God the Father (associating *from* with the supreme cause of all rather than with the material cause), they are inconsistent with their pagan tutors, claiming that they are switching, in this instance, to apostolic usage. What is the result of this sophisticated wizardry? The cause (God the Father) has one nature, the instrument (God the Son) another, and the place (the Holy Spirit) yet another, namely three essences or degrees of essence within the Holy Trinity. St. Basil thus accused his opponents of polluting the clear and simple doctrine of the Holy Spirit with their love of pagan philosophical distinctions.¹⁸

Holy Scripture, furthermore, does not abide by these restrictions. Holy Scripture and Christians rightly bind the Master of all with all appropriate prepositions. The Word of truth often uses the expressions above, but is not bound to them. *From* can refer to matter, e.g., "you shall make a lamp-stand from pure gold" (Ex. 25:31; similar examples: Ex. 25:10, 1 Cor. 15:47). This preposition, however, is more likely to refer to the supreme cause of all, e.g., "one God, from Whom are all things" (1 Cor. 8:6; similar: 1 Cor. 11:12). Therefore Holy Writ, which is authoritative for Christian theology, does not mimic the fastidiousness of the pagans and their Christian heretical admirers.¹⁹

Holy Scripture, in fact, frequently contradicts his opponents' prescribed usage. For example, *through whom* is said not only concerning God the Son, but also concerning God the Father. *From whom* is spoken not only of the Father, but also of the Son and the Holy Spirit. "For *from*

18 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 19-22. St. Basil is not arguing against the study or use of pagan philosophy per se, rather against the inept usage which promulgates heresy. St. Basil had a formidable classical education himself. Although assigned a status far below Holy Writ, discerning study of classical literature and philosophy could be quite useful for educational purposes. St. Basil found in erudition a friend of faith rather than a foe, if used discerningly. For a brief discussion of this subject and St. Basil's work, *Ad Adolescentes*, see Johannes Quasten, *Patrology III* 214-215.

19 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 21-22.

him, and *through* him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11:36). St. Basil shows from the context of this verse that God the Son is the referent. But even if God the Father were the referent, *from* and *through* apply to the same person of the Holy Trinity. Whether the Father or the Son is intended, the usage of prepositions fails to match that of the pneumatomachoi. Other examples of *from whom* referring to God the Son are Colossians 2:19, John 1:16, and so forth. An example of *from whom* referring to the Holy Spirit is Galatians 6:8, "for he that soweth to his flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall *from the Spirit* reap life everlasting." Other examples are 1 John 3:24, Luke 1:20, and John 3:6. The attentive reader will therefore note that *from whom* is used in many ways. If Holy Writ does not follow the restrictions of the pneumatomachoi, why should anyone else?²⁰

But *through whom* and *by whom* are also used concerning Father, Son and Holy Spirit alike. Due to the multitude of references regarding the Son, which are acknowledged by his opponents, St. Basil does not cite them. But he does cite such usage regarding both God the Father and the Holy Spirit, further dismantling his opponents' argument. "God is faithful, *through whom* ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." (1 Cor. 1:9) Here *through whom* refers to God the Father. Other examples of such usage are 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 4:7, and Romans 6:4. 1 Corinthians 12:8 provides an example of *through whom* applying to the Holy Spirit, "for to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge *through the same Spirit*." Yet another example is 2 Timothy 1:14, "that good thing which was committed unto thee keep *by the Holy Spirit* which dwelleth in us."²¹

In whom, which should refer only to the Holy Spirit, refers to God the Father in, "*in God* we shall do valiantly" (Ps. 108:13). Other examples of such usage are found in Psalm 89:16, 2 Thessalonians 1:1, Romans 1:10, and so forth. Furthermore, at times Holy Writ uses prepositions interchangeably. *Through whom* or *by whom* are sometimes used with the meaning of *from whom* (e.g., Gen. 4:1, Num. 36:1, Gen. 40:8).

20 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 21-22.

21 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 25-27.

question for those who would deny the divine dignity of Holy Spirit is, who is the *Lord* in this sentence? If it were God the Father, one would expect, "May the Lord direct your hearts to *His own love*." If the subject were the Son, one would expect to find, "*and to His own steadfastness*." If the Father or the Son were *Lord* here, this sentence would be awkwardly composed. Yet only a divine personage is intended by the title, Lord. Who else could this be but the Holy Spirit? Can Basil's opponents find another personage equal to the title of "Lord" in this verse? St. Basil also cites 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, "May the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints." Which *Lord* is St. Paul entreating to establish the hearts of the Thessalonians in holiness before *our God and Father* and at the coming of *our Lord Jesus*? If St. Basil's opponents would rank the Holy Spirit alongside the angels, as some apparently did, who is Lord here? Given their assumptions, they cannot answer satisfactorily. But if one ranks the Holy Spirit as divine the answer is easy. The Holy Spirit is *Lord*. Furthermore, let them hear such verses as, "now the Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17), and "this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). How much more clear can Holy Scriptures be? They attribute the divine title Lord to the Holy Spirit, indicating thereby the divine nature of the Holy Spirit.⁴²

The baptismal command of the Lord, "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ..." (Mat. 28:19), is one of St. Basil's key scriptural references in establishing the divinity of the Holy Spirit since it comes out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Who, as a Christian, would question the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ? If the pneumatomachoi refused to rank the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son due to a different nature and inferior dignity, how could they deal with this verse wherein the Lord Jesus Christ Himself did not disdain divine fellowship with the Holy Spirit? If they insist that the Holy Spirit is inferior to God the Father and God the Son, are they not disobeying God's own command? If they will not admit that the arrangement in this verse testifies to their union and fellowship,

42 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 81-83.

the three persons of the Holy Trinity, namely, the Father as *unoriginate* (logically implied), the Son as *begotten of the Father*, and the Holy Spirit as *proceeding from the Father*. The Creed now emphasizes the eternal nature of the Son's begetting as expressed in "begotten of the Father *before all ages*." The Creed of 381 also declares much more about the Holy Spirit, whereas the Creed of 325 merely stated, "*and (we believe) in the Holy Spirit*." The Creed of 381 embraces the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father, the Holy Spirit as *speaking through the prophets*, as *Lord*, and as *Giver of life*. It also embraces the common worship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit in, "Who (the Holy Spirit) with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified," emphasizing hereby the unity of the Godhead as well as the divinity of the Holy Spirit. These clarifications of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed have their foundations in St. Basil's theological endeavors, as evident in *On the Holy Spirit*, in collaboration with Sts. Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa. The other Cappadocians, having survived St. Basil, clarified and refined his trinitarian notions and language somewhat. But the essentials of the Creed of 381 and Orthodox Christian trinitarianism are found clearly in this treatise.

The Theological Methods of Saint Basil

Holy Writ is central to St. Basil's theological argumentation in *On the Holy Spirit*. Far more than any other source, St. Basil cites scripture passages as foundational for his arguments. He may build syllogisms, create analogies, and so forth, but in most cases he builds these edifices upon the bedrock of Holy Scripture. If St. Basil were debating against pagans, such a method would fail since they would not share St. Basil's assumptions concerning the authority of the Christian scriptures. His opponents were Christians, however, and therefore acknowledged the authority of Holy Writ. *As a result, the argument from the authority of Holy Scripture was an effective intellectual tool for St. Basil in this controversy.*

One example of this form of argumentation is when he cites Holy Writ referring to the Holy Spirit as Lord, in an effort to show that the Holy Spirit shares in divine titles, indicating thereby the loftiness of His nature. His first citation is 2 Thessalonians 3:5, "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God, and to the steadfastness of Christ." The

Sometimes scriptures do the opposite, using *from whom* with the meaning *through whom* or *by whom* (Gal. 4:4, 1 Cor. 11:12). In short, Holy Scripture is not bound by the preferences of the pneumatomachoi regarding any preposition.²²

St. Basil's use of *with* regarding the Holy Spirit offends his opponents on the grounds that it is an innovation and is never used by Holy Writ. Such usage would glorify the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son, a communion of glory and essence which the pneumatomachoi deny. Holy Scripture, St. Basil argues, sometimes uses *in and by* (of which the pneumatomachoi approve) with the force of *with*, citing as examples Psalm 65:13 (LXX), Psalm 104:13 (LXX), and Psalm 43:9 (LXX). Furthermore, the conjunction *and* is used to connect names with the same logical meaning as the preposition *with*. Examples of this are 2 Corinthians 13:14, Romans 15:30, and of course Matthew 28:19, "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen." The usage of *in and by* with the meaning of *with* undermines the opponents' objections. Due to the logical equivalence of *and* and *with*, the baptismal commandment of the Lord does not differ in meaning from St. Basil's formula, "glory be to the Father *with the Son together with the Holy Spirit*." As a result, St. Basil's formula has effective authorization from Holy Scripture since it uses the logical equivalent of his formula. How then is he an innovator? St. Basil then taunts his detractors. They demand exact conformity with Holy Scripture but their own doxology, "glory be to the Father *through the Son in the Holy Spirit*," is nowhere found in it. If they insist that St. Basil follow such exact conformity with scriptural usage, they had better find some scriptural examples to support their own doxology!²³

St. Basil affirms that the Church knows and uses both doxologies. Both

22 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 27-28.

23 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 89-92, 102-103. For a similar argument concerning *through and with* concerning the Son, see Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 33-34. St. Basil also demonstrates support for *with* regarding the Holy Spirit in the writings of several Church Fathers, and in the unwritten traditions (mainly regarding liturgy and worship) of the Church. This will be discussed later when addressing the theological methods of St. Basil. See Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 106-113 and 98-103 respectively.

have their proper context in worship and prayer, each with their unique emphasis. *With the Holy Spirit* expresses best the communion of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son in essence and in all the relations and activities of the Holy Trinity. If one would emphasize the relationship between the Holy Spirit and us, namely in the magnitude of blessings we receive from the Holy Spirit, *in the Holy Spirit* is most apt. These doxologies are therefore complimentary rather than contradictory.²⁴

Why bother oneself so much with mere prepositions? The pneumatomachoi made such terminological usage central to their objections. After all, an objection to a specific doxology's wording was the immediate occasion of *On the Holy Spirit*. But on a higher note, our goal is to become like God in so much as possible for human nature. Without knowledge of God, one cannot become like Him. Without instruction there is no knowledge and instruction begins with the fundamentals. The proper use of speech is among the fundamentals of any education, and words and syllables are parts of speech. If one spurns such fundamentals, one never advances to higher things. So if humans are to know God, they must wrestle with how God is expressed in human language. For the pious, therefore, learning precision in language concerning divinity is a first step in becoming God. As St. Athanasius the Great wrote, "*He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God.*"²⁵ Such wrestling with language points to significant theological ideas which we shall study next.

The Divinity of the Holy Spirit

The arguments reviewed above concerning the propriety of St. Basil's doxology are only valid if one accepts the assumption underlying them, namely the divinity of the Holy Spirit. For St. Basil this was a fundamental truth. His opponents, of course, would have none of this. Hence this debate over the doxology was more fundamentally a debate concerning the Holy Spirit. Was the Holy Spirit divine, and if so, to what degree? This was the theological axis around which the doxological debate revolved. It is this subject which this study will now address.

24 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 93-102.

25 Athanasius of Alexandria, *St. Athanasius: On the Incarnation* (trans. Religious of the C.S.M.V.; intro. C. S. Lewis; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973) 93.

But it was not entirely adequate against Sabellian heresy, i.e., the notion that the three persons were no more than the three modalities of one divine essence. The three persons, as revealed in the Church, are distinct and must not be swallowed up, so to speak, by the divine essence. By utilizing the collective emphasis of *ousia* and the individual emphasis of *hypostasis*, St. Basil and the Cappadocians found a way to express in theological language the simultaneous revelation of the common divine essence and the three distinct persons of the Holy Trinity. In this way, they refined the *homoousian* tradition of the one divine essence with the *homoiousian* concern for the distinctiveness of the three divine persons.⁴⁰ Once trinitarian theological language was properly clarified, it became much easier to avoid both the tritheism implied by multiple divine essences or degrees of essence (Arianism), and the confusion of the three distinct persons (Sabellianism). Orthodox theological language was now sufficiently refined to facilitate the contemplation of the mystery of the Holy Trinity insofar as it is possible in human language and thought.

St. Basil's theology, as seen in *On the Holy Spirit*, and that of the Cappadocian Fathers therefore laid the foundations of Eastern Orthodox trinitarian theology. Both the common divine essence and the three distinct persons were established as theological givens, neither being derived logically from the other. To derive the persons from the essence tends logically toward Sabellian heresy. To overemphasize the distinctiveness of the three persons, on the other hand, tends toward Arianism.⁴¹ Orthodox trinitarian theology proclaims both the common essence and the distinct persons equally, without emphasizing one more than the other.

Other trinitarian notions expressed in *On the Holy Spirit* are fundamental to Orthodox Christian trinitarian theology as well. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) certainly embraces what the Creed of 325 embraced, such as the Son being of one *essence*, or *homoousios* (ὁμοουσιος) with the Father, the Son as begotten of the Father, and so forth. But it also embraces more extensively the hypostatic relations of

40 Henceforth, for the ease of the reader, the traditional western terms, essence and person will be used.

41 For a succinct, but thorough discussion of these and other trinitarian theological issues from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, see Lossky, *Mystical Theology* 44-66.

For the ease of the reader, the terms essence and person have been used, which do not obscure the meaning of the concepts explained. But to understand these concepts more clearly, and to understand the theological contribution of St. Basil and the Cappadocian Fathers more aptly, it is good to have a basic understanding of the actual terms they used. ουσια and υποστασις are the terms preferred by the Cappadocians. ουσια (henceforth *ousia*) is the being, essence, or substance of a thing, namely the material of which it consists. It can refer both to the substance of an individual item, or to the substance shared by several items, e.g., the golden lampstand or the coins of gold. Here gold is the essence of the things mentioned. Thus essence has both individual and collective usages. This term is relatively clear and thus requires no further discussion. The meaning of υποστασις (henceforth *hypostasis*), on the other hand, usually requires additional explanation. It often has the meaning of existence, and in that usage is virtually synonymous with *ousia*. Hence some Greek Fathers have used these terms synonymously. *Hypostasis* can mean existence in general, or can be applied to individual existence. Applied to a common noun, e.g., humanity, the first usage could refer to the general existence or essence of humanity. The second usage would refer to the existence of an individual, e.g., Peter, Paul, or John. To clarify the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, the Cappadocian Fathers adopted the meaning of *ousia* in its collective usage, and *hypostasis* in its individual or particular usage.³⁹

Therefore when referring to the divine essence common to the three persons (or *hypostases*) of the Holy Trinity, the Cappadocians use the term, *ousia*, or essence. When referring to the three distinct persons of the Holy Trinity, they use the term *hypostasis*, with the meaning of individual existence. The Holy Trinity, therefore, is one divine *ousia* in three *hypostases*. This is the great terminological contribution of St. Basil and the Cappadocians to the trinitarian issue. The term, *homoousios* (ὁμοουσιος), "of one essence," was already used by the Creed of 325 and stoutly defended by St. Athanasius and other defenders of Nicaea. The term was an excellent choice when emphasizing the common divine essence of the Father and the Son.

³⁹ For a more complete discussion of the terms, ουσια and υποστασις, in Eastern Orthodox theological usage, including the issue of the relation of the term *hypostasis* to the Latin *substantia* and *persona*, see Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 50-54.

St. Basil wholeheartedly embraces the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The titles of the Holy Spirit are so exalted and noble that they could apply only to God. Who would not be exalted in soul by just hearing them? Holy Scripture refers to the Holy Spirit as Lord (2 Cor. 3:14-18, 2 Thess. 3:5). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). Furthermore, the first and most proper title for the Holy Spirit is, in fact, *Holy Spirit* since no other name is more appropriate for a being which is incorporeal, immaterial and indivisible. For this reason the Lord informed the Samaritan woman that one must worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:24). She had believed that God must be worshiped only in certain places. He revealed to her, however, that an incorporeal being cannot be circumscribed. Unlike created beings, such a being is subject neither to change nor variation. Instead, we are to lift our minds on high and ponder an intelligent being, boundless in power, of unlimited greatness, and generous in goodness. He is the source of holiness. All things seeking holiness seek the Holy Spirit. He vivifies them and enables them to reach their goal. The Holy Spirit perfects all things but lacks nothing. He gives life to all but is never depleted. The Holy Spirit can neither be increased by addition nor diminished, but is always complete, self-established and everywhere present.²⁶ Are these the titles and characteristics of a mere creature?

The Holy Spirit's works for our salvation are magnificent. He gives life and is the source of sanctification. He is the source of spiritual light which illumines all who use His powers to seek the truth. The illumination which the Holy Spirit gives is not extrinsic to Himself, but is Himself. The Holy Spirit distributes His energy in proportion to the capacity of the recipient. He is distributed but never changed, shared but always whole, unapproachable in nature but approachable through His goodness. Take the analogy of the sunbeam which lights all things wherein each recipient rejoices in the sun as if it existed only him. The Holy Spirit, likewise, is given to all, and yet to each person as if possessed by that person alone. Those who receive His grace are filled with joy according to their capacity rather than according to the measure of His power.²⁷ Are these the works of a mere creature?

²⁶ Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 42-43, 75-76, 81-83.

²⁷ Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 43-44.

The Holy Spirit illuminates humanity, and the illumination which He shares is Himself. The Holy Spirit reveals in Himself, Christ, the blessed Image in Whom one sees the unspeakable beauty of the Image's prototype, the Father. Indeed, as the Father is only revealed through His Image, the Son, the Son is beheld only through the Light of the Holy Spirit. As a statue is invisible without a light shining upon it, the light of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the only natural Image of God, the Son. Through this illumination, the Holy Spirit illumines, perfects and sanctifies the souls who seek God. As the sunbeam makes transparent things brilliant, so also the Holy Spirit makes Spirit-bearing souls, illumined by Him, spiritual as well. From the Holy Spirit comes knowledge of the future, understanding of mysteries, heavenly citizenship, endless joy in the presence of God, becoming like God, and the highest goal, becoming God. Spiritual illumination, sanctification, and divinization come from the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, God the Father and God the Son would remain hidden to us. Such is the greatness, dignity and working of the Holy Spirit.²⁸ Could such works come from anyone less than God?

God was known through prophets because their prophesying was a gift of the Holy Spirit. When Ananias and Sapphira tempted the Holy Spirit, St. Peter rebuked them for lying to God (Acts 5:1-11). The Holy Spirit is always described as united with the Godhead. Considering such things, would St. Basil's opponents rank the Holy Spirit with creation, or with God? The Holy Spirit is confessed in the creed, is named in saving baptism and in the performance of miracles. Nobody can utter a word in defense of Christ without the Holy Spirit (Mat. 10:19-20). The Lord has given the Holy Spirit His proper place. Why then should the Holy Spirit accept the lower ranking of creature, especially since all creation is in bondage and the Holy Spirit frees it (2 Cor. 3:17)? How could anyone who has ever partaken of the Holy Spirit try to sunder Him from the fellowship of the Father and the Son? In everything the Holy Spirit is indivisibly and inseparably joined to the Father and the Son.²⁹

The Holy Spirit not only performs the works of God, but communes in the divine nature as well. The Holy Spirit is organically united with God, not contingently, but essentially through communion with the divine nature.

28 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 44-45, 59-60, 95-97.

29 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 60=62, 87.

Father and is not begotten like the Son. Of course, the reverse is logically implied and applies as well.³⁶ So there is one God, one divine essence, in three distinct and eternal persons.

It is essential to understand that these relations of origin are eternal, and thus outside of time and creation. Hence they are not derived from divine cooperation in creation and redemption.³⁷ Because these relationships are eternal and not temporal, there are no temporal gaps between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St. Basil expresses this with extraordinary clarity when speaking of the begetting of the Son from the Father. In no way is the Son ranked after the Father, in time, rank, or dignity. The Son cannot be younger than the Father. One cannot, in fact, conceive of one without the other. Creatures subject to birth, corruption and time can be described as being before or after. But how can we compare God the Father as superior to God the Son Who exists before all ages? How can one extrapolate these eternal relationships from anything temporal? The supreme eminence of the Father is inconceivable. Thought and reflection are utterly unable to penetrate the begetting of the Lord. As the evangelist John says in John 1:1, "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Thought cannot reach beyond that "was," nor imagination beyond that "beginning." Thus true religion teaches us to think of the Father with the Son.³⁸ Although St. Basil does not make it explicit in this treatise, the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father is also eternal. As a result, the three persons of the Holy Trinity have never been without each other since temporal succession does not apply to them.

36 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 29-30, 62-63, 72-73.

37 Frequently, references to the Holy Spirit's procession from the Father through the Son among the Greek Fathers deal with the actions of the Holy Trinity regarding creation and redemption, *not with the eternal relations of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the Holy Trinity, i.e., their hypostatic relations*. Hence many supposed citations of the Greek Fathers in support of the filioque clause are thereby misapplied since only the eternal interrelations within the Holy Trinity are relevant to this issue. This study has found no instances of the "double procession" of the Holy Spirit in *On the Holy Spirit*. There are two instances of the phrase, "through the Son," yet these do not address the hypostatic relations within the Holy Trinity. The first instance shows how the Holy Spirit illumines and sanctifies believers in Himself, through His sharing of the divine attributes of knowledge, goodness, holiness and royal dignity with the Father and the Son. The second instance emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is one, as is the Father and the Son, in contrast to the plurality of the created order. Here the Holy Spirit is united to the Father through the Son, completing the Holy Trinity. Both instances, therefore, demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit through sharing divine attributes with the Father and the Son. Since the hypostatic relations *are unique to each person and not shared*, these instances of, "through the Son," cannot support the filioque clause. See Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* 72-73, 73-74.

38 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 29-30.

is patently absurd. If such a principle is ridiculous in the created order, how dare anyone apply it to eternity and say that the Holy Spirit (or the Son, for that matter) is subordinate based on subnumeration? To speak of inferior essences, degrees of rank, or subordination based on numbers is nothing but pagan sophistry.³⁴ Therefore, Father, Son and Holy Spirit possess one divine nature, not three varying natures.

Regarding the Holy Trinity, one may count but never add. In this context Christians do not say, "one, two, three," or "first, second, third." God says (Isa. 44:6), "thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God." Christians have never heard of a second God. Christians confess the uniqueness of the three persons, but worship God from God, maintaining the unity of the Monarchy. Divine knowledge is not divided. The power is neither divided nor the glory separated. Christians give glory, not glories, to God. The Son is in the Father and the Father is in the Son. What the one is, so is the other. The persons are unique, but remain one since they share a common nature. The Holy Spirit is one, as is the Father and the Son, since He is joined to the Father through the Son, completing the all-praised and blessed Trinity. As is the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is described in the singular, never ranked with the plurality of creation. Since reason demands the distinction of the singular from the plural, the Holy Spirit cannot have a created nature. He is united to the Father and the Son as unit dwells with unit. Since the divine nature is not composed of parts, the union of the persons is accomplished by partaking of the whole. The persons are therefore distinct, but always united through sharing one divine essence. To acknowledge the one divine essence uniting the Holy Trinity avoids the error of polytheism suggested by the three essences, or degrees of essence, which derives from any natural subordination of one divine person to the other.³⁵

St. Basil affirms clearly the uniqueness of each divine person. If the essence is one, how are the three persons distinct? Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct in their eternal relations of origin. These are as follows: the Father is unoriginate, the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father. There is no confusion of persons here as, for example, three Unoriginate Ones. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the

He is joined to the Lord, not brought in by our efforts. The Holy Spirit is described in the singular and not ranked with creation. He is unique, one of one, not one of many. The Holy Spirit is one as is the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is described to be of God, not as all things are said to be of God, but because He proceeds from the mouth of the Father and is not begotten like the Son. He is called the Spirit of Christ due to His natural relation to Christ (Rom. 8:9) The Holy Spirit is glorified by His communion with the Father and the Son, and by the testimony of Christ which warns against the unforgivable sin of blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mat. 12:32).³⁰

The Holy Spirit shares the attributes of divinity together with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is called holy, as is the Father and the Son. Creatures receive holiness from the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit is intrinsically holy. He is not sanctified but sanctifies. As the Father and the Son are called good, so is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit embraces the goodness of the Father and is called upright because He is truth and uprightness personified (Ps. 92:15). The heavenly powers were established by the Holy Spirit (Ps. 32:6 LXX) and continue in goodness through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit existed, preexisted and co-existed with the Father and the Son before all ages. Together with the Son He is called the *Paraklete* (παράκλητος, advocate, comforter, helper), and as Paraklete He reflects the goodness of the Paraklete Who sent Him, namely the Father. He is everywhere present. He is in all things, He gives life. He not only shares the titles and works of the Father and the Son, but like Them, the Holy Spirit is incomprehensible (John 14:17-19, 17:25). The world, which is bound by the carnal life, cannot receive the Holy Spirit. But as the disciples were cleansed by the teaching of Christ and given the ability to see spiritually (John 15:3), so also can holy men can contemplate Him in purity of heart. Is there any limit to the honor which the Holy Spirit deserves?³¹

The Holy Spirit shares the titles of God. The Holy Spirit performs the works of God. The Holy Spirit is unique and united essentially with God. The Holy Spirit shares the same divine attributes as do the Father and the Son. How could one then honor the Holy Spirit too much? How could one deny that He is God? Although St. Basil never utters the words, "the Holy

34 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 70-71.

35 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 71-73, 75.

30 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 48, 52, 72-73, 87.

31 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 43, 60-61, 73-77, 84-85, 88.

Spirit is God," this remains the indisputable logical conclusion of this work.

The Holy Trinity

Above one has a sampling of St. Basil's argumentation defending the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Yet this defense addresses as well the unity of the Godhead and the eternal relations of the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son within the Holy Trinity. Not only does this augment his defense of the Holy Spirit, it completes St. Basil's trinitarian theology, thereby laying the foundations of Orthodox Christian trinitarian theology. This will now be the focus of our study.

The unity of the Godhead is reflected in the works of the Holy Trinity. Whether regarding creation or human redemption, the works of the Holy Trinity are always one, revealing the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. A good example of this unity of action is in the creation of the angels. These pure, spiritual and transcendent powers are called holy because they receive their holiness from the Holy Spirit. In considering the angels, or any other creature, it is best to think of the Father as the cause of all that exists. Then one should think of the Son, Who is their creator, and the Holy Spirit Who is their perfecter. The angels exist, therefore, due to the will of the Father and are brought into being through the work of the Son. They are perfected by the presence of the Holy Spirit since they persevere in the holiness which comes from Him. The Originator of all things is One, creating through the Son and perfecting through the Holy Spirit. The Father's work is in no way imperfect since He accomplishes all in all. The Son's handiwork is not deficient if not completed by the Holy Spirit. The Father creates through His will alone and needs not create through the Son, but chooses to do so. Similarly, the Son works as the Father's likeness and needs no further cooperation, choosing to complete His work through the Holy Spirit. Psalm 32:6 (LXX) reveals this divine cooperation, "by the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Spirit of His mouth." The Word is not mere speech, but He who was with God in the beginning (John 1:21). The "Spirit of His mouth" is not mere exhalation but the Spirit of truth Who proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). Behold these three: the Lord Who commands, the Word Who creates, and the Spirit Who strengthens.³² Such voluntary cooperation reveals both the divinity of the Holy Spirit as well as the unity of the Godhead in creation.

32 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 60-62.

In demonstrating divinity of the Holy Spirit through His redemptive works, St. Basil also illustrates the unity of the Holy Trinity's redemptive work. By nature, the Holy Spirit is good, as is the Father and the Son. Creatures wishing to share in goodness, on the other hand, must choose to do so. The Holy Spirit searches the depths of God, whereas creatures receive divine illumination only through the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives true worshipers the knowledge of God personally, or in Himself. For believers, divine knowledge comes through the Holy Spirit since the way to such knowledge ascends from the Holy Spirit (the Illuminator) to the one Son (the Image) to the one Father (the Prototype). Likewise, goodness, holiness, and royal dignity reach from the Father through the Son to the Holy Spirit. Therefore believers share in divine knowledge and goodness in the Holy Spirit and all three persons of the Holy Trinity participate in human illumination and sanctification. The Holy Spirit gives life to all, together with the Father Who enlivens all things and the life-giving Son. Romans 8:11 reveals, "but if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." Goodness, illumination, holiness, and resurrection come therefore from the cooperative work of the Holy Trinity, demonstrating both the divine dignity of the Holy Spirit and the unity of the Godhead.³³

The Godhead in three persons is one God, sharing one divine essence. Against anyone who would subordinate the Holy Spirit regarding the divine essence, St. Basil cites the baptismal command of the Lord, "go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit ..." (Mat. 28:19). Here the Lord Himself ranks Father, Son and Holy Spirit together unambiguously, revealing both the divine dignity of the Holy Spirit and that the ranking of all three are equal regarding the divine essence. This is not an example of subnumeration wherein rank or superior or inferior essences are implied, as some of St. Basil's opponents apparently asserted. Numbers deal with quantity, not with essence. One may use numbers to weigh gold or tin. Numbers are practical tools, but they deal with quantity and never with the essence of a thing. To suppose a thing's essence could be modified by applying higher or lower numbers to it, or by placing it in a different order,

33 Basil of Caesarea. *On the Holy Spirit* 74-75, 88.