

Basil of Caesarea *On the Holy Spirit*, chs. 9-10,16,18-19,26-27 (§ 22-26,37,47-50,64-68)

(1) What do Basil's opponents have to say about the nature and rank of the Spirit?

- Why are they concerned to deny the Spirit's divinity? (See Hildebrand, pp. 30-31,33-34,77-78,84)
  - Aëtius: dissimilar terms indicate dissimilar natures (p. 30)
    - 1 Cor. 8:6: "one God and Father, *from* whom are all things and one Lord Jesus Christ *through* whom are all things"
      - Father and Son are therefore in a different position
      - The relation between *from* and *through* is a relation of different and unlike things
        - The same is thus true of the natures of the Father and the Son; their natures are obviously different and unlike one another.
          - The Father as Craftsman is alone the cause of all else.
          - The Son is a mere instrument and contributes only what a mere instrument (e.g. a tool or paintbrush) can contribute to the production of a work.
    - "*in which*" is used of the Spirit
      - This again shows that the Spirit stands in a different position, having a nature unlike the Father and Son.
        - The Spirit is even less than the Son, contributing nothing to the production of the work, but still being necessary for the production to occur (just as time and place contribute nothing but are a necessary condition).
  - Things which are different can be ranked in sequence, on the analogy of a numerical sequence
  - Just as
    - the nature of numbers is different and
    - each is *after* another and *has a different value*,
      - so also each of the natures which is ranked in sequence can be seen to be
        - not only *different*,
        - but also to have a *difference in value* (i.e. each nature will be of greater or lesser value)
  - Thus we must think of the Son as being *after* the Father, being numbered *under* the Father and being *less* than Father (since the Son had a beginning and was produced by the Father).
    - The same is true of the Spirit also, being subordinate to (and less than/inferior in dignity to) the Father and the Son.

- Obviously, then, the Spirit cannot receive praise as God (i.e. be the object of doxologies in Christian worship).
- Why, in Basil's opinion, are the opponents' arguments about the relation between language and essential natures fundamentally flawed (pp. 32-43)?
  - Basil's response:
    - One preposition is not used only of one person, but at different times can be used of any of the three persons.
    - Furthermore the various prepositions are sometimes used interchangeably, showing they are not different, as Aëtius claimed.
    - Paul's interest is only to distinguish the persons (i.e. to avoid confusing them or running them together), not to divide the natures.
  - How do names apply to God and what specifically about God do they indicate (pp. 36-41)?
    - Basil's response:
      - Language about God is used in a transferred sense (i.e. metaphorical speech, whose meaning must be carefully qualified if it is to be understood correctly).
        - Ideas about space, time and material objects are inappropriate here, since God is immaterial and not bound or circumscribed by limitations of space or time.
          - *Under, later* and other terms that are used to describe the numbering and position of created things have no relevance where God is concerned.
          - *Beginning* signifies remoteness and originality, rather than some point in time.

(2) In Basil's view, what does an examination of **the titles applied to the Spirit** in the Scriptures establish?

- What do these titles tell us about the Spirit's nature and activities? (See §22 on pp. 52-53; §37 on pp. 69-70; §§47-50 on pp. 82-87) Which of these titles and attributes proper to the Spirit are also titles and attributes proper to God (pp. 52-54, 69-72, 81-82, 84-86, 89-90)?
  - Spirit is associated with God
  - Spirit is immaterial, everywhere present and is an unlimited extension of divine power and authority (hence is called "Lord," just as Father and Son are).

- Gives life, holiness and perfection to others, without himself needing to be made alive, receive holiness from another or be made perfect by another.
  - In this, he is a source of divine goodness for others, just as the Father and Son are, without himself needing to be made good.
  - This good is part of who he essentially is, as is also the case for the Father and the Son.
- Makes others to know the fullness of God and the mind of God, which he could not do, if he were not divine and an integral part of the divine life.

(3) According to Basil, what role does the Spirit play in **communicating divine grace and effecting salvation** and why is this relevant to the question of the Spirit's essential divinity and co-equality with the Father and Son?

- Given the distinction between Creator and creatures, the Spirit is described as properly possessing divine grace and bestowing this upon creatures
  - If the creation must be saved and redeemed and the Son and Spirit bring this redemption by bestowing divine grace upon sinful creatures, then we must regard the Son and Spirit as properly divine.
- Basil takes over from Athanasius arguments for the divinity of the Son
  - pp. 49-51: the Father and the Son have the
    - same power,
    - equal glory and
    - are involved in carrying out the same plan of action
  - Basil then develops analogous arguments to argue for the divinity of the Spirit (pp. 81-82)
- How, in Basil's view, does the Spirit's role in the communication of divine grace (in baptism/salvation/adoption as children of God) reveal the divine identity of the Spirit (pp. 59,73-75,82-83,109)?
  - The Spirit is the final link in the divine life, through which God pours out his saving, life-giving grace on human beings and unites them to himself.
  - This reception of God's grace is visibly displayed in baptism, where the divine promises of our salvation by Christ and our being made children of God the Father are clearly proclaimed.

(4) According to Basil, why is the command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Mt. 28:19) significant?

- See *Ep.* CLIX.2 in Stevenson, *Creeeds, Councils and Controversies*, pp. 83-84:



- *Also assumes practices peculiar to the faith of believers were not shared with the as-yet-unconverted, so as to mockery of holy things or the descent into superstition.*
- Many of the interpretations of believers' worship practices given by Basil reflect the fourth century practice of mystagogical catechesis, i.e. the Church's teaching recently baptized believers how to rightly understand prayer, worship, baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  - Basil's point: we start with reflection upon primitive Christian worship (at least the elements of this that have been handed down to us) and see what this assumes and what it aims to teach us.
    - We should not pretend to start from scratch, taking a beginning from some novel philosophical or theological idea that has just been invented and seems plausible.
    - Furthermore, our observation of the tradition of the Church can be seen to agree with the teaching of earlier respected teachers of the faith, who made explicit this same faith, associating Father, Son and Holy Spirit as together properly agents of our salvation and therefore meriting equal honor and glory.

(5) Conclusion: According to Basil, how should the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit properly be understood? (See §37 on pp. 69-70; §§47-50 on pp. 82-87; §68 on pp. 107-109)

- p. 69: (in everything the Holy Spirit is indivisibly and inseparably joined to the Father and the Son)
- p. 70: (in every operation, the Holy Spirit is indivisibly united with the Father and the Son)
  - p. 84: For this reason the Holy Spirit also shares certain titles (e.g. Paraclete) with the Son.
- p. 82 on the Spirit as the means of access to God and union with God:
  - If we are illumined by divine power, and fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the indescribable beauty of its source, it is because we have been inseparably joined to the Spirit of knowledge.