

## ST. BASIL AS DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY AND SPIRITUAL EXAMPLE FOR THEODORET OF CYRUS\*

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**ABSTRACT.** The present article proposes to investigate a few examples of doctrinal, terminological as well as spiritual links between St. Basil and the theologians of the Antiochene tradition, especially Diodore of Tarsus and Theodoret of Cyrus. Basil's doctrinal authority for the Antiochenes of the fifth century is evinced e.g. by Theodoret's reply to Cyril of Alexandria's fifth anathema against Nestorius, where he refers explicitly to Basil, quoting him from his memory. Perhaps the greatest theological influence exercised by Basil over the Antiochenes was his highly accurate terminological distinction between the expressions applied in the treatment of the Trinitarian doctrine. Theodoret's work *Eranistes* is a very good example of how the so-called Neo-Nicene refinements of the Cappadocians could settle the theological vocabulary troubled by the Arian controversy. Finally, Basil's brave stance against Emperor Valens' attempt to intimidate him and impose Arianism upon the communities belonging to his see becomes not only a past example to be followed, but viewed in the actual context of the historiographer (who had been exiled because of his resistance against Eutychianism) it becomes a source of consolation and inspiration for the wronged bishop of Cyrus.

**Keywords:** St. Basil, Theodoret of Cyrus, Diodore of Tarsus, Christology, Neo-Nicene terminology, spiritual example

The Cappadocian Fathers had played an extremely important role in Theodoret's spiritual and theological development. In his writings, especially during the intense doctrinal controversies, in which, unfortunately, he had to partake, Theodoret refers repeatedly to Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa.

The encounter between the Antiochene tradition (the member of which was Theodoret also, being its last great theologian) and the theological thinking of the Cappadocians was not accidental, and in Theodoret's case it had a good precedence as a starting point. As it becomes evident from his *Epistle no. 99*, Basil had met

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Diodore of Tarsus (probably in 372) in Armenia, during his visit to the exiled Meletius.<sup>1</sup> Theodoret makes a brief allusion to the fact that during this period Diodore was ‘discoursing alike at home and abroad’.<sup>2</sup> Adam M. Schor’s clarification to consider the Antiochene tradition as a network rather than a ‘school’ helps us very much to understand and interpret correctly the multiple spiritual relations between the Eastern fathers and theologians of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>3</sup>

### St. Basil as a doctrinal authority

We find a very eloquent example of St. Basil’s doctrinal authority for Theodoret in his reply to St Cyril’s fifth anathema. First we cite Cyril’s text:

<p>Εἴ τις τοιμᾶ λέγειν θεοφόρον ἄνθρωπον τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ οὐχὶ δὴ μᾶλλον θεὸν εἶναι κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ὡς υἱὸν ἕνα καὶ φύσει, καθὸ γέγονε σὰρξ ὁ λόγος καὶ κεκοινωνήκε παραπλησίως ἡμῖν αἵματος καὶ σαρκός, ἀνάθεμα ἔστω.</p>	<p>If anyone has the temerity to say that Christ is a God-bearing man instead of saying that he is truly God, as the only Son by nature, inasmuch as the Word became flesh and shared in flesh and blood like us (cf. Heb. 2:14), let him be anathema.<sup>4</sup></p>
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In his answer to this anathema Theodoret begins with the idea – later rejected by Cyril in his *Explanations* – that the issue at stake here could be a change of the Word into flesh. Within this reply, Theodoret makes two direct references to the works of St. Basil – with a small, yet significant error (see below). Similarly, it is highly probable that during the somewhat precipitated composition of his answers to these anathemas – an action performed by him during February 431 at John of Antioch’s request, and not from his own initiative<sup>5</sup> – Theodoret did not have at hand all the works he was referring to, but rather cited them from memory. The relevant part of his reply is as follows:

<p>Οὐκοῦν τῷ τῆς κοινωνίας ὀνόματι χρώμενοι, ὡς ἕνα μὲν υἱὸν προσκυνοῦμεν τὸν λαβόντα καὶ τὸ ληφθέν, τῶν δὲ φύσεων τὴν διαφορὰν γνωρίζομεν. καὶ τὸν θεοφόρον δὲ ἄνθρωπον ὡς πολλοῖς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων εἰρημένον οὐ παραιτούμεθα, ὧν εἷς ὁ</p>	<p>Therefore, whilst we apply the phrase ‘partaking’ we worship both him who took and that which was taken as one Son, nevertheless, we acknowledge the distinction of the natures. Nonetheless, we do not reject the term ‘God-bearing man’, as uttered</p>
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<sup>1</sup> St. Basil, *Ep.* 99. In *Saint Basile: Lettres*, Edited by Yves Courtonne, vol. 2 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1961) (TLG: 99, 3).

<sup>2</sup> οἴκοι μέντοι καὶ δημοσίᾳ διαλεγόμενος. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 4, 22. Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller 44, Edited by L. Parmentier and F. Scheidweiler (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954), 264 (TLG: 264, 12).

<sup>3</sup> Adam M. Schor, “Theodoret on the ‘School of Antioch’: A Network Approach”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15, 4 (2007): 517–562 (p. 538).

<sup>4</sup> ACO I, 1, 6, 126. Cf. Norman Russell, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2000), 183.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning the fact that Theodoret composed these replies at John’s explicit request, see the beginning of *Ep.* 1a (*Coll. Vat.* 167) of the bishop of Cyrus addressed to his colleague in: Théodoret, *Correspondance IV*, Sources Chrétiennes 429, Edited by Yvan Azéma (Paris: Cerf, 1998), p. 62. Cf. Blomfield Jackson, trans., *The Ecclesiastical History, Dialogues and Letters of Theodoret*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers III, Edited by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff (Oxford: James Parker, 1892), 324.

μέγας Βασίλειος ἐν τῷ πρὸς Ἀμφιλόχιον περὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος λόγῳ τούτῳ χρησάμενος τῷ ὀνόματι καὶ ἐν τῇ τοῦ πεντηκοστοῦ ἐνάτου ψαλμοῦ ἐρμηνείᾳ. καλοῦμεν δὲ θεοφόρον ἄνθρωπον, οὐχ ὡς μερικὴν τινα θεϊὰν χάριν δεξάμενον, ἀλλ' ὡς πᾶσαν ἠνωμένην ἔχοντα τοῦ υἱοῦ τὴν θεότητα.

by many of the holy Fathers, one among whom is the great Basil, who uses this term in his work [addressed] to Amphilochius about the Holy Spirit, and in his explanation of Psalm fifty-nine. But we call him man bearing God, not because he received some share of the divine grace, but as possessing all the Godhead of the Son united.<sup>6</sup>

St. Basil's doctrinal authority is evident within the above citation. The error consists in the fact that in both of his works referred to by Theodoret – at least within the versions which appear in modern editions – Basil uses the term 'God-bearing flesh' (ἡ θεοφόρος σὰρξ) instead of 'God-bearing man' (θεοφόρος ἄνθρωπος).<sup>7</sup> This detail, of course, also changes the doctrinal intake of these statements.<sup>8</sup> Our initial assessment that Theodoret quoted here from memory and did not have a version of Basil's works which would contain θεοφόρος ἄνθρωπος, is corroborated by another reference contained within a work composed many years after the closure of the Nestorian controversy. We mean Theodoret's book Ἐραμιστής, i.e. *The Beggar*, completed in 447 in order to defend the orthodox doctrine against Eutychianism. Here, within the impressive patristic florilegium (238 passages from 88 authors) attached to this work, we encounter the name of St. Basil as well. In *Florilegium I* we find the two passages to which Theodoret had alluded 16 years before, i.e. the citations from Basil's *Homilies on the Psalms*, as well as from his book *On the Holy Spirit*.<sup>9</sup> Both contain the version θεοφόρος σὰρξ. In Ἐραμιστής we also find other direct references to St. Basil, i.e. to the homily Περὶ εὐχαριστίας (*Homilia de gratiarum actione*), as well as to his *Adversus Eunomium*.<sup>10</sup> These passages pertain to Basil's Christological concept, adopted by Theodoret in various contexts.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> ACO I, 1, 6, 126. Cf. István Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus* (London: Routledge, 2006), 179 and 252, note 14.

<sup>7</sup> Ἀλλ' ὁμως ἐνταῦθα, ὁμοῦ μὲν τὸ διάφορον τῆς χρήσεως ἐνδεικνύμενος, ὁμοῦ δὲ καὶ τὸ σφάλμα τινῶν ἐν παραδρομῇ διορθούμενος τῶν οἰομένων πνευματικῶν εἶναι τοῦ Κυρίου τὸ σῶμα, ἵνα δείξῃ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρωπείου φυράματος ἡ θεοφόρος σὰρξ συνεπάγῃ, τὴν ἐμφατικωτέραν φωνὴν προετίμησεν μὲν γὰρ διὰ γυναικὸς παροδικῆν ἔμελλε τὴν ἔννοιαν τῆς γεννήσεως ὑποφαίνειν. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto* 5, 12. In Basile de Césarée, *Sur le Saint-Esprit*, Sources Chrétiennes 17 bis, Edited by Benoît Pruche, (Paris: Cerf, 1968), 284 (TLG: 5, 12, 20). The term θεοφόρος σὰρξ appears also in his *Homilies on the Psalms* in PG 29, 424B: Τάχα τὴν σάρκα λέγει τὴν θεοφόρον, ἁγιασθεῖσαν διὰ τῆς πρὸς τὸν Θεὸν συναφείας. Cf. PG 29, 468A: ὑπόδημα δὲ τῆς θεότητος ἡ σὰρξ ἡ θεοφόρος, δι' ἧς ἐπέβη τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

<sup>8</sup> In order to avoid a detour from the main theme of our study, at present we shall not enter the details concerning the implications of the term θεοφόρος σὰρξ vis-à-vis θεοφόρος ἄνθρωπος during the Nestorian controversy. Concerning the Christological teaching of Theodoret see e.g. I. Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus*, 31–56.

<sup>9</sup> Theodoret, *Eranistes*, Edited by Gerard H. Ettliger (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 103–104.

<sup>10</sup> Theodoret, *Eranistes*, ed. Ettliger, 166 and 239.

<sup>11</sup> For example, if we put in parallel the passage Περὶ εὐχαριστίας of Basil (TLG: 31, 228) cited in the Ἐραμιστής with Chapters 13–14 of Theodoret's *De inhumanatione Domini* (PG 75, 1440–1441; cf. I. Pásztori-Kupán, *Theodoret of Cyrus*, 148–151), we can observe that the participation of Christ in human suffering is understood in very similar terms by both theologians.

Perhaps the strongest doctrinal influence of St. Basil upon the Antiochene tradition as well as upon Theodoret belongs to the domain of Trinitarian terminology, especially concerning the clarification of similarities and differences between the various terms used. If the anti-Arian anathema annexed to the *Nicene Creed* did not yet make a clear distinction between οὐσία and ὑπόστασις, *Epistle 38* attributed at the time to St. Basil<sup>12</sup> becomes the *sine qua non* of the so-called Neo-Nicene terminology, a distinction otherwise adopted and applied by all Antiochene theologians. Concerning our present goal it is sufficient to quote only one passage from the Ἐραμιστής in order to see the thoroughness and effectiveness of the Cappadocians' terminological distinction. In a certain moment, during the first dialogue, *Eranistes*, i.e. the *Beggar* (the representative of Eutychian doctrine) asks Orthodoxos:

EPAN. Ἐχει τινὰ διαφορὰν ἢ οὐσία πρὸς τὴν ὑπόστασιν; ΟΡΘ. Κατὰ μὲν τὴν θύραθεν σοφίαν οὐκ ἔχει. Ἡ τε γὰρ οὐσία τὸ ὄν σημαίνει, καὶ τὸ ὑφεστὸς ἢ ὑπόστασις. Κατὰ δέ γε τὴν τῶν πατέρων διδασκαλίαν, ἣν ἔχει διαφορὰν τὸ κοινὸν πρὸς τὸ ἴδιον, ἢ τὸ γένος πρὸς τὸ εἶδος ἢ τὸ ἄτομον, ταύτην ἢ οὐσία πρὸς τὴν ὑπόστασιν ἔχει. [...] Ὡσπερ τοίνυν τὸ ἄνθρωπος ὄνομα κοινόν ἐστι ταύτης τῆς φύσεως ὄνομα, οὕτω τὴν θεϊαν οὐσίαν τὴν ἁγίαν τριάδα σημαίνειν φαμέν, τὴν δέ γε ὑπόστασιν προσώπου τινὸς εἶναι δηλωτικὴν, οἶον, ἢ τοῦ πατρὸς ἢ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἢ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. Τὴν γὰρ ὑπόστασιν καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ τὴν ιδιότητα ταύτων σημαίνειν φαμέν τοῖς τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ὄροις ἀκολουθοῦντες.

ERANISTES: Is there any difference between *ousia* and *hypostasis*? ORTHODOXOS: In secular philosophy there is not, for *ousia* signifies that which is, and *hypostasis* that which subsists. But according to the teaching of the Fathers there is the same difference between *ousia* and *hypostasis* as between the common and the particular, or the race and the special or individual. [...] As then the name 'man' is common to human nature, so we understand the divine substance to indicate the Holy Trinity; but the hypostasis denotes any person, as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; for, following the definitions of the Holy Fathers, we say that hypostasis and individuality mean the same thing.<sup>13</sup>

Even at first glance we may observe that these clear distinctions had to originate from within the luminated minds and works of the Cappadocians – referred to here as 'the Holy Fathers' – among them being, not in the least in secondary place, St. Basil. The arguably Origenian definition concerning the one οὐσία and three ὑποστάσεις of the Holy Trinity – a definition perturbed and even temporarily discredited during the Arian controversy (including their quasi-equalisation within the anti-Arian anathema attached to the Nicene Creed) – reappears within the discussions of terminological clarification of the Cappadocians, giving them the

<sup>12</sup> The epistle was later attributed to St. Gregory of Nyssa, who considered himself as being the continuator of his brother's work. See R. M. Hübner, "Gregor von Nyssa als Verfasser der sog. Ep. 38 des Basiliius", *Epiktasis. Mélanges patristiques offerts au Cardinal Jean Daniélou*, Edited by J. Fontaine și Ch. Kannengiesser (Paris: Beauchesne, 1972), 463–491; Johannes Zachhuber, "Nochmals: Der 38. Brief des Basiliius von Caesarea als Werk des Gregor von Nyssa", *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum*, vol. 7, 1 (2003): 73–90.

<sup>13</sup> Theodoret, *Eranistes*, 64–65. Cf. Blomfield Jackson, *Theodoret*, 162.

chance to redefine (this time without the peril of Subordinationism) all the relevant theological terms as well as their place within the vocabulary of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine.

The Cappadocian Fathers, including Basil, found themselves repeatedly in the same camp with the Antiochene theologians. For example, together with the apparition of the Apollinarian and Macedonian sects, both Basil and Diodore of Tarsus tried to protect orthodox Christology and Trinitarian teaching, including Pneumatology. In the year 376, in his *Epistle 244* addressed to Patrophilus, bishop of Aegea, St. Basil defends his friendship with Diodore and at the same time distances himself with regret from Apollinaris in the following manner:

The cause of the rupture was the allegation that I wrote to Apollinaris and was in communion with my colleague, the presbyter Diodore. I never considered Apollinaris as an enemy, and for some reasons I even respect him. But I never so far united myself to him as to take upon me the charges against him; indeed I have myself some accusations to bring against him after reading some of his books. I do not know that I ever asked him for a book on the Holy Spirit, or received it on his sending: I am told that he has become a most copious writer, but I have read very few of his works. I have not even time to investigate such matters. Indeed I shrink from admitting any of the more recent works, for my health does not even allow of my reading the inspired Scriptures with diligence and as I ought. What, then, is it to me, if someone has written something displeasing to somebody else? Yet if one man is to render an account on behalf of another, let him who accuses me for Apollinaris' sake defend himself to me for the sake of Arius, his own master and of Aetius, his own disciple. I never learnt anything from, nor taught anything to this man whose guilt is laid at my door. Diodore, however, as a nursling of the blessed Silvanus, I did receive from the beginning: I love him now and respect him on account of his grace of speech, whereby many who meet him are made the better men.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ἡ δὲ αἰτία τῆς ἀπορρήξεως ὅτι Ἀπολιναρίῳ, φησὶν, ἐπεστείλαμεν καὶ τὸν συμπρεσβύτερον ἡμῶν Διόδωρον ἔχομεν κοινωνικόν. Ἐγὼ δὲ Ἀπολιναρίον μὲν ἐχθρὸν οὐδέποτε ἠγησάμην, ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἐφ' οἷς καὶ αἰδοῦμαι τὸν ἄνδρα· οὐ μὴν οὕτως ἑμαυτὸν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ συνήψα ὡς τὰ ἐκείνου ἐγκλήματα αὐτὸς ὑποδέχεσθαι, ὅπου γε ἔχω τινὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ἐγκαλεῖν αὐτῷ ἐντυχῶν τισὶ τῶν συνταγμάτων αὐτοῦ. Οὐ μὴν περὶ τοῦ Πνεύματος τοῦ Ἁγίου ἢ αἰτήσας αὐτὸν οἶδα βιβλίον ἢ ἀποσταλὲν ὑποδεξάμενος. Ἄλλὰ πολυφωνότατον μὲν αὐτὸν ἀκούω πάντων συγγραφέων γεγενῆσθαι, ὀλίγοις δὲ ἐντετυχηκέναι τῶν συνταγμάτων αὐτοῦ· οὐδὲ γὰρ σχολή μοί ἐστι τὰ τοιαῦτα διερευνᾶσθαι, καὶ ἅμα δυσχερῆς τίς εἰμι πρὸς τὴν τῶν νεωτέρων παραδοχὴν, ᾧ γε τὸ σῶμα οὐδὲ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῶν θεοπνευστῶν Γραφῶν φιλοπόνως καὶ καθ' ὃν ἔδει τρόπον συγχωρεῖ παραμένειν. Τί οὖν πρὸς ἐμὲ τοῦτο, εἴ τις συνέγραψέ τι μὴ ἀρέσκον τῷ δεῖνι; Καίτοι εἰ δεῖ ἄλλον τὰς ὑπὲρ ἄλλου εὐθύνας ὑπέχειν, ὁ ἐμοὶ ἐγκαλῶν ὑπὲρ Ἀπολιναρίου ἀπολογεῖσθω ἡμῖν ὑπὲρ Ἀρείου τοῦ ἰδίου διδασκάλου καὶ ὑπὲρ Ἀετίου τοῦ ἰδίου ἑαυτοῦ μαθητοῦ. Ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐδὲ ἐδιδάχθημεν τι οὐδὲ ἐμαθητεύθημεν τῷ ἀνδρὶ οὐδ' ἐγκλήματα ἡμῖν περιτρέπουσι. Διόδωρον δὲ ὡς θρέμμα τοῦ μακαρίου Σιλουανοῦ τὸ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπεδεξάμεθα, νῦν δὲ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ περιέπομεν διὰ τὴν προσοῦσαν αὐτῷ τοῦ λόγου χάριν δι' ἧς πολλοὶ τῶν ἐντυχανόντων βελτίους γίνονται. Basil, *Ep. 244* (TLG: 244, 3). Cf. 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 VIII, Edited by Henry Wace and Philip Schaff (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), 286.

One year later, in no less words, yet in a much stronger tone, in his *Epistle* 263 addressed to those in the West, after having enumerated the negative effects of Arian and Pneumatomachian doctrines, Basil laments the fact that Apollinaris is ‘no less a cause of sorrow to the Churches’. With a subtle, yet detectable irony he reproaches the teacher of Laodicea that through his facility of writing, and ‘a tongue ready to argue on any subject’, ‘he has filled the world with his books’, disregarding the advice of the one who said ‘beware of producing many books’.<sup>15</sup> Paraphrasing *Prov* 10, 19, Basil exclaims: ‘How is it possible to avoid sin in a multitude of words?’ The most direct criticism brought against Apollinaris is the sentence that his theological works ‘are not founded on Scriptural arguments, but on human presuppositions’.<sup>16</sup> Thence derives the so-called ‘mythic’ character of his description of the resurrection, as well as his tendency to return to the rituals of the Old Testament. Concerning Apollinarian soteriology and Christology, Basil concludes:

Even concerning the Incarnation, he has made such confusion among the brethren, that few of his readers preserve the original form of piety; the majority, in their eagerness for novelty, have been diverted into investigations and quarrelsome discussions of his unprofitable treatises.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, only a year after his discrete self-distancing from Apollinaris, Basil takes a much more categorical stance both against Apollinarianism and Marcellus of Ancyra, whose Trinitarian doctrine was very similar to the Sabellianism of the previous century – another cause for anxiety, with which in fact the quoted epistle ends. Basil had to endure the hesitation of Pope Damasus to condemn Marcellus, a fact that led him again towards Antiochene theology, which, in its turn had also been fighting against Arianism and Apollinarianism as well as against Marcellus’ negation of the three divine *ὑποστάσεις*.

### St. Basil as spiritual example

At the date of the composition of his *Epistle* 263, Basil was already after the visit of the pro-Arian emperor Valens, a visit which took place in Caesarea in 372. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Theodoret dedicates an entire chapter to the presentation of this encounter between Valens and St. Basil.<sup>18</sup> The manner in which Theodoret evokes the entire confrontation serves one clear purpose: during and after Basil’s

<sup>15</sup> Cf. “And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” *Ecclesiastes* 12, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Basil, *Ep.* 263, 4 (TLG: 263, 4).

<sup>17</sup> Εἶτα καὶ τὰ περὶ Σαρκώσεως τοσαύτην ἐποίησε τῇ ἀδελφότητι τὴν ταραχὴν ὥστε ὀλίγοι λοιπὸν τῶν ἐντετυχηκότων τὸν ἀρχαῖον τῆς εὐσεβείας διασώζουσι χαρακτῆρα· οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ ταῖς καινοτομίαις προσέχοντες ἐξετράπησαν εἰς ζητήσεις καὶ φιλονεικίους ἐφευρέσεις τῶν ἀνωφελῶν τούτων ῥημάτων. Basil, *Ep.* 263.

<sup>18</sup> Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 4, 19. Cf. Thomas Gaisford, ed., *Theodoretii Episcopi Cyri Ecclesiasticae Historiae Libri Quinque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1854), 340–346; Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, 242–246 (TLG: 242, 23 – 246, 11).

meeting with the emperor, who sought the obliteration of orthodoxy within the whole empire, the bishop of Caesarea became the very symbol of moral and doctrinal resistance against the abuses of secular power. Before having arrived to Caesarea, Valens had led a fully successful campaign against the opponents of Arian doctrine: Bithynia, which had resisted at first, became the scene of horrible tragedies. Galatia conformed without resistance. According to the observation of E. Venables, ‘the fate of Cappadocia depended on Basil’,<sup>19</sup> whose firm stance was aided also by the events within the imperial family – e.g. the sudden illness and subsequent death of Galates, the emperor’s only son – having at last been crowned with success: Basil finally carried the day.

The various episodes of this remarkable event within the history of the Christian Church are corroborated by several ancient authors, including St. Gregory Nazianzen, Sozomen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, Socrates Scholasticus, Ephraem the Syrian, Rufinus and Basil himself.<sup>20</sup> From our viewpoint, however, another aspect is similarly important regarding Theodoret’s attitude towards this event, namely: the period of the composition of his *Ecclesiastical History*. As it becomes evident from scholarly research, Theodoret wrote his own church history during the Eutychian controversy, concluding it in 449–450 during his exile in Apamea after his removal from his bishopric by the *Latrocinium Ephesinum* and Emperor Theodosius II.<sup>21</sup> Within this context, the example of St. Basil – similarly maltreated by the secular power for his refusal to accept heterodoxy – gains a different dimension. Basil, who in Theodoret’s memory represents Diodore’s faithful ally against the Arian, Apollinarian and Macedonian heresies, is not only a point of reference in doctrinal issues, but also a forerunner worthy to be followed in similar situations of unavoidable injustice. In this sense it is interesting to observe the words and expressions Theodoret puts into Basil’s mouth when he meets Modest, the prefect charged by Emperor Valens to offer him the choice between deposition and the acceptance of Arian doctrine. After Modest had promised him the emperor’s friendship in exchange for his abandonment of orthodoxy, and suggested that by doing this the bishop could become the very means of conferring great advantages upon many people around him, according to Theodoret’s *Ecclesiastical History*,

ὁ δὲ θεῖος ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ „μειρακίους” ἔφη „τούτους That divine man [Basil] said: this sort of ἀρμόττειν τοὺς λόγους, ἐκεῖνοι γὰρ καὶ οἱ ἐκείνοις talk is fitted for little boys, for they and their προσόμοιοι περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα κεχίρῳσιν· οἱ δὲ τοῖς like are gasping for such things. But they *who* θεῖοις λογίοις ἐντεθραμμένοι προέσθαι μὲν τῶν *are nurtured by the divine words* will not θείων δογμάτων οὐδεμίαν ἀνέχονται συλλαβὴν, suffer so much as a syllable of *the divine*

<sup>19</sup> William Smith and Henry Wace, eds., *A Dictionary of Christian Biography*, 4 vols (London: John Murray, 1877–87), I, 119.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. the sources mentioned by E. Venables in *Dictionary of Christian Biography*: Gregory Nazianzen, *Oratio* 20, 351; Sozomen, *Hist. eccl.* 4, 16 and 6, 16; Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Eunomium*; Socrates Scholasticus, *Hist. eccl.* 4, 26; Ephraem, *Monum. Eccl. Graec.* ed. Cotelier, III, 63; Rufinus, *Hist. eccl.* 11, 9; *Epp.* no. 68, 94, 104, 110, 111, 128, 244, 251, 279, 280, 281 etc.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 vols (Utrecht: Spectrum, 1950–1986), III, 551.

ὑπὲρ δὲ τούτων, εἰ δέοι, καὶ πάσας τοῦ θανάτου τὰς *teachings* to be let go, and for their sake are  
 ιδέας ἀσπάζονται. τὴν δὲ βασιλέως φιλίαν μέγα ready, should need require, to embrace  
 μὲν ἡγοῦμαι μετ' εὐσεβείας, δίχα δὲ ταύτης ὀλε- every kind of death. I hold the emperor's  
 θρίαν ἀποκαλῶ.” friendship to be of great value if conjoined  
 with piety; otherwise I doom it to be  
 devastating.<sup>22</sup>

The above statement of the great bishop, ‘the luminary of the world’<sup>23</sup>, as Theodoret called him, viewed not only within the context of the confrontation between Basil and Emperor Valens in 372, but also from the angle of the exiled historiographer’s situation, gains a new perspective if we compare it with some recurrent formulae in Theodoret’s letters composed during this period. Perhaps his most known apology, written in the summer of 448 is his *Epistle* 88 addressed to his unscrupulous opponent, Dioscorus of Alexandria, who, upon having convinced Emperor Theodosius II to issue an order confining Theodoret within the limits of his diocese (an antique version of house arrest), succeeds to obtain his condemnation and destitution *in absentia* at the *Latrocinium Ephesinum* in 449. Here, being already blocked by the imperial order, Theodoret tries to explain his own position concerning Christological doctrine, evoking his appreciation by Theodotus and John of Antioch, and making interesting allusions to their education in piety:

“Ἐξ μὲν γὰρ ἕτη διετέλεσα διδάσκων ἐπὶ τοῦ τῆς Six years I continued teaching in the time of  
 μακαρίας καὶ ὁσίας μνήμης Θεοδοῦτου τοῦ τῆς Theodotus, bishop of Antioch, of blessed and  
 Ἀντιοχέων ἐπισκόπου, ὃς καὶ βίῳ λαμπρῷ καὶ sacred memory, who was famous alike for his  
 τῆ τῶν θείων δογμάτων ἐκεκόσμητο γνώσει distinguished career and for his knowledge  
 τρία καὶ δέκα πάλιν ἕτερα ἐπὶ τοῦ μακαρίου of the *divine teachings*. Thirteen years I taught  
 Ἰωάννου, ὃς τοσοῦτον ἐγάννυτο διαλεγόμενων in the time of bishop John of sacred and  
 ἡμῶν, ὡς ἄμφω τῷ χεῖρε κινεῖν καὶ διανίστα- blessed memory, who was so delighted at  
 σθαι πολλάκις. Ὅτι δὲ παιδόθεν τοῖς λογίοις my discourses as to raise both his hands [i.e.  
 τοῖς θείοις ἐντεθραμμένος ἀκριβῆ λίαν εἶχεν applauded] again and again to start up: your  
 τῶν θείων δογμάτων τὴν εἶδησιν, ἐμαρτύρησεν holiness in your own letters has borne witness  
 ἐν τοῖς γράμμασιν ἡ ἀγιότης ἡ σή. how, *nurtured* as he was from boyhood by  
 the *divine words*, the knowledge which he  
 had of the *divine teachings* was most exact.<sup>24</sup>

The message is very clear: those who are ‘nurtured by divine words’ (τοῖς θείοις λογίοις ἐντεθραμμένοι) and know ‘the divine teachings’ (τὰ θεία δόγματα), represent the guarantee of orthodoxy – regardless of the age in which they live. Similarly, Basil himself had also used the term ‘the nursling of the blessed Silvanus’ (θρέμμα τοῦ μακαρίου Σιλουανοῦ) when referring to Diodore of Tarsus. Theodoret,

<sup>22</sup> Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.*, 4, 9 (TLG: 243, 14–20). Cf. Blomfield Jackson, *Basil*, 119

<sup>23</sup> ὁ τῆς οἰκουμένης φωστήρ. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.*, 4, 9 (TLG: 243, 1).

<sup>24</sup> Théodoret, *Correspondance II*, Edited by Yvan Azéma, Sources Chrétiennes 98 (Paris: Cerf, 1964), 208. Cf. Jackson, *Theodoret*, 279.



in his *Ecclesiastical History* uses the formula ‘nurtured/nursling in divine words/teachings’ in various places, especially when referring to the necessity of solving a conflict.<sup>25</sup>

In Theodoret’s correspondence we find examples when the formula ‘nurtured by divine words/laws’ is used as some kind of admonition addressed to those, who, in the vision of the bishop of Cyrus, had departed from this ‘nourishment’. The most eloquent example of the kind we find in his *Epistle* 113 addressed to Pope Leo I in 449 after his anathematisation by Dioscorus during the council of Ephesus in 449 (*Latrocinium*). Theodoret laments the fact that not even criminals are condemned by judges before they themselves do not confess their guilt or the testimony of others does not establish this fact. His critique directed towards Dioscorus, who, as the judge in Ephesus, did not give him the chance to present his own viewpoint, but rather deposed him without a trial, sounds as follows:

Ἡμᾶς δὲ ὁ τοῖς θείοις νόμοις ἐντεθραμμένος Yet he who had been nurtured in the divine  
πέντε καὶ τριάκοντα σταθμοῖς ἀφεστηκότας laws, condemned us as he wanted, whilst I  
κατέκρινεν ὡς ἠθέλησε. was thirty-five days’ march away.<sup>26</sup>

Theodoret’s argument here is that even secular laws prescribe the listening to both parties, yet Dioscorus, despite having been ‘nurtured’ even in ‘the divine laws’ (which surpass the secular ones), commits such a grave injustice against his colleague. Even so, Theodoret is ready to accept this condemnation and destitution if Leo were to advise him to do so. The tone of the letter is that of someone who had been wronged, who is seeking consolation and guidance from his illustrious colleague: it is rather difficult to consider it as ‘a letter of appeal’, as it has often been suggested.<sup>27</sup>

Using the above expressions (‘nurtured in divine words/teachings’) repeatedly (both projected into the past as well as in his contemporary personal correspondence), Theodoret, in a totally subtle, perhaps even involuntary manner, on the one hand leads us to perceive the similarities between different historical contexts of secular involvement in doctrinal disputes. On the other hand, he offers us some possible remedies by the historical example of the forefathers. If in the words attributed to the great Cappadocian forerunner there is a small amount of self-consolation as well, Theodoret, through the prism of the injustices which he had accepted with admirable spiritual nobleness, may be forgiven for this.

Returning to the letter addressed to Dioscorus of Alexandria, amongst other fathers of the Church, Theodoret refers also to St. Basil, listing him together with the ‘luminaries of the world’:

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* (TLG: 73, 21; 201, 2; 211, 10; 218, 2; 234, 4; 247, 11; 267, 4; 271, 7; 282, 14; 309, 24).

<sup>26</sup> Théodoret, *Correspondance III*, Edited by Yvan Azéma, Sources Chrétiennes 111 (Paris: Cerf, 1965), 62. Cf. Jackson, *Theodoret*, 294.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jackson, *Theodoret*, 297.

Ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ παρὰ τῆς θείας Γραφῆς ἐδιδάχθημεν καὶ παρὰ τῶν ταύτην ἡρμηνευκόντων Πατέρων, Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ἀθανασίου τῶν μεγαλοφώνων κηρύκων τῆς ἀληθείας, οἱ τὸν ἀποστολικὸν ὑμῶν διεκόσμησαν θρόνον, καὶ Βασιλείου καὶ Γρηγορίου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῆς οἰκουμένης φωστήρων.

These lessons we have learnt alike from the holy Scripture and from the holy Fathers who have expounded it, Alexander and Athanasius, loud voiced heralds of the truth, who have been ornaments of your apostolic see; from Basil and from Gregory and the rest of the *luminaries of the world*.<sup>28</sup>

Within the context of this letter's genesis, the elegant allusion to the fact that Alexander and Athanasius were 'the ornaments' of Dioscorus' throne leads us to perceive also the expectation from their successor to be 'a herald of the truth' himself. The epistle is composed with humility, but the author does not flatter his addressee: even if they are not contrasted with Dioscorus directly, 'the luminaries of the world', i.e. Basil and Gregory are still 'the rest' or 'the others' – as opposed to the actual patriarch of Alexandria.

In his own *Ecclesiastical history*, a few chapters after the evocation of the encounter between St. Basil and Valens, towards the end of vol. 4 of the work, Theodoret dedicates a chapter 'to the illustrious bishops of the time in Asia and Pontus'. The tone of the short eulogy brought to the example of the three Cappadocians by the banned prelate of Cyrus speaks for itself:

Among the bishops were the two Gregorii, the one of Nazianzus and the other of Nyssa, the latter the brother and the former the friend and fellow worker of the great Basilius. These were foremost champions of piety in Cappadocia.<sup>29</sup>

The bishop of Cyrus concludes his history in exile, yet the choice of the final event is significant: on the last page he writes about the death of Theodore of Mopsuestia in 428. In the same year Nestorius will be made patriarch of Constantinople, yet this episode does not appear at the end of the book: the author does not wish to present any event at which he participated (including the doctrinal controversies), leaving this task for the posterity. Theodoret's *Ecclesiastical History*, therefore, does not become a personal apology: this is further evidence revealing the remarkable human personality of the blessed bishop of Cyrus.

## Abbreviations

ACO = E. Schwartz et J. Straub (eds.), *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, Series I (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1914–1984); Series II, ed. sub auspiciis Academiae Scientiarum Bavaricae (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984ff).

PG = Jacques Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, 161 vols, (Paris: 1857–1887)

TLG = *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* (CD-rom) <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/>

<sup>28</sup> Théodoret, *Correspondance II*, 208. Cf. Jackson, *Theodoret*, 280.

<sup>29</sup> Ἐν ἐπισκόποις δὲ Γρηγόριος ἑκάτερος, ὃ τε Ναζιανζοῦ καὶ ὁ Νύσσης, ὁ μὲν ἀδελφός, ὁ δὲ σύσκηνός τε καὶ συνεργός τοῦ μεγάλου Βασιλείου τυγχάνων. οὗτοι μὲν οὖν ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ τῆς εὐσεβείας ὑπερμαχοῦντες ἠρίστευον. Theodoret, *Hist. eccl.* 4, 30 – Theodoret, *Kirchengeschichte*, p. 270 (TLG: 270, 3–6).