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Adam Sheridan
University of Dayton

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KALON AND THE "SYMPHONY OF LAMENT":
THE INTEGRATION OF COSMOLOGY AND
SOCIAL ETHICS IN CAPPADOCIAN
THOUGHT

Thesis
Submitted to
The College of Arts and Sciences of the
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree
Master of Arts in Theological Studies


By
Adam Sheridan
Dayton, OH
May 2011



**KALON AND THE "SYMPHONY OF LAMENT": THE INTEGRATION OF
COSMOLOGY AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN CAPPADOCIAN THOUGHT**

Name: Sheridan, Adam

Approved by:



Kelly S. Johnson
Faculty Advisor



Silviu Bunta
Faculty Reader



Brad Kallenberg
Faculty Reader



Sandra Yocum
Chairperson

ABSTRACT

KALON AND THE “SYMPHONY OF LAMENT”: THE INTEGRATION OF COSMOLOGY AND SOCIAL ETHICS IN CAPPADOCIAN THOUGHT

Name: Sheridan, Adam
University of Dayton

Advisor: Dr. Kelly S. Johnson

This thesis examines the relationship of cosmology and social ethics in the work and thought of the Cappadocians within the context of the fourth century Roman Empire. It argues that this integration of cosmology and social ethics offers a theological and social vision that contrasts with the cosmological, social, and economic norms operative in Imperial ideology and policy. In order to illustrate the thesis, the work is divided into two parts. The first part attends to the cosmological aspects of Cappadocian thought. This includes the significance of creation *ex nihilo*, Christian eschatology, and the Imago Dei for both the construction of the Cappadocians cosmological vision and also as challenges to prominent philosophical and theological claims operative in the fourth century Imperial thought. The second part attends to the social ethics in Cappadocian thought. This includes the cosmological significance of *koinonia* as the normative form of community. Furthermore, this second part attends to the Cappadocians' critiques of

the integrated processes of abject poverty, slavery, and usury. In sum, this thesis argues that the ethical critiques of the Cappadocians are grounded in their integrated cosmological and social vision.

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Introduction: Thesis and Context

The purpose of this thesis is to interrogate a crucial moment in the development of the Christian imagination and tradition of moral discourse. The period under discussion is the fourth century Roman Empire. The means for interrogating this moment are the Cappadocians, especially the brothers Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, but also including Gregory of Nazianzus and Macrina the Younger.¹ As will be shown, the works and thought of the Cappadocians are a case study in the development of the Christian moral imagination in late antiquity.

In this regard, this thesis will focus on two aspects in particular, cosmology and social ethics, and the integral relationship of the two. The first part will attend to the cosmological works of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, including, but not limited to, Basil's nine homilies on creation or the *Hexaemeron*² and Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On the Creation of Humanity*.³ Central to Basil's cosmology are the moral implications of

¹ Recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge the role of Macrina the Younger in the development of Cappadocian thought. This is especially the case for the spiritual development of Gregory of Nyssa, whom he paid homage to in his work *On the Soul and Resurrection*. Because of this, this thesis will employ the term "Cappadocians" instead of "Cappadocian Fathers". For a brief discussion on Macrina the Younger as the "fourth Cappadocian" see Jaroslav Pelikan's Gifford Lectures *Christianity And Classical Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1993), 8-9, Gregory of Nyssa *On The Soul And Resurrection* trans. Catharine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1993), passim.

² Strictly speaking the term 'hexaemeron' refers to the six days of creation according to the first chapter of Genesis. For the purposes of expediency, the *Hexaemeron* will refer to Basil's nine homilies interpreting the hexaemeron, not the Hexaemeron itself or other hexaemeral works.

³ It is widely acknowledged that Basil's discussion on creation in his *Hexaemeron* is a foundational work of Christian cosmology that influenced not only his fellow Cappadocians but also the cosmological works of Ambrose of Milan, Jerome, and Augustine. As for Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Creation of Humanity*, Wilken argues, "Earlier Christian thinkers had dealt with occasional questions concerning human beings, most notably freedom of the will and the soul, but Gregory was the first to deal systematically with the Christian doctrine of man [sic] in its fullness." On Basil see Agnes Claire Way *Saint Basil Exegetical Homilies* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press 1963), vii-viii; On Gregory and Basil see Robert

creation *ex nihilo*. Furthermore, it will be argued that for Basil the cosmos was created in harmony with and oriented toward eschatological fulfillment or *kalon*. It is important to note here that the term *kalon* is not easily translated into a univocal concept. As it pertains to Cappadocian thought, *kalon* is generally translated as “beauty” or the “beautiful”. The difficulty of this translation is the possibility of reducing “beauty” to an aesthetic concept. As will be discussed, while *kalon* does entail an aesthetic quality, it is not reducible to an aesthetic quality. For the Cappadocians, the term also entails a moral quality. At the same time, it is not reducible to a moral description of ‘good’. Instead, for the Cappadocians, *kalon* encompasses both the aesthetic and moral as intertwined concepts.⁴ Put another way, *kalon* as it is employed in Cappadocian thought and as it will be employed throughout this thesis can best be described as the *beauty of moral harmony*. While a description of what this entails in Cappadocian cosmology is forthcoming, it is important to note here that *kalon* is a multivalent term that encompasses aesthetic and moral descriptions.

That being said, within the Cappadocians’ cosmology of *kalon* lies their anthropology. In this regard, Gregory of Nyssa’s treatise *On the Creation of Humanity* was explicitly written as a supplement and complement to Basil’s *Hexaemeron* and, thus, is inseparable from that cosmology. Central to this relationship is Gregory’s interpretation of the *imago Dei* and his understanding of humanity’s natural and

Louis Wilken *The Spirit Of Early Christian Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2003), 137-138, 147.

⁴ An example of this difficulty can be found in comparing the translations of *kalos* in the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus. Susan Holman understands the *kalos* of virtue in Gregory’s oration *On Love of the Poor* as “beauty”. Martha Vinson translates *kalos* in the same work as “fine things”. Neither is incorrect, yet neither is complete. *Kalos*, as employed in Cappadocian thought, would require both to encompass the fullness of the term. See Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying* (New York: NY: Oxford University Press 2001), 206 fn 32; Gr  gory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor, St. Gregory of Nazianzus Selected Orations* trans. Martha Vinson (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2003), Oration 14.13, 39.

communal role within the cosmos. To illustrate their importance, it will be shown how this cosmological perspective engages and critiques prominent cosmological theories within Hellenism and the ideological implications of that critique. Thus, it will be argued that these works and their description of the cosmos in scriptural and moral terms have profound implications for their works on social ethics.

The second part will attend to the Cappadocians' works on social ethics. This entails the two aspects of their constructive social vision and their ethical critiques, or moral judgments, of particular social and economic practices. It will be argued that these homilies assert the community of *koinonia* described in Acts as both the natural and normative condition of human community. In turn, this thesis will focus on the moral judgments of the Cappadocians concerning the conditions and practices of abject poverty, slavery, and usury. For the Cappadocians, abject poverty is a privation from the cosmic *kalon* and evidence of moral failing within the natural⁵ and normative *koinonia* of human community. Likewise, the Cappadocians considered slavery to be an unnatural condition and practice. While, as will be discussed, the brothers diverge greatly in their conclusions on slavery, Gregory of Nyssa's critique is in continuity with Basil's assertion that slavery is an unnatural condition but also serves as a necessary corrective. Finally, the Cappadocians considered usury to be unnatural.⁶ It is the argument here that the

⁵ For the purposes of this discussion the term 'nature' will be employed as that which is natural to creation *ex nihilo*. In turn, the term 'nature' does not refer to a state antecedent to or outside of revelation. For the Cappadocians each moment of time and each aspect of the cosmos are saturated with God's creative activity. Thus, when the term 'nature' is employed here it is not disconnected from 'grace' or 'revelation'. Simply put the term 'nature' as it will be used here describes the entirety of the cosmos is in the grips of revelation.

⁶ These works and their unequivocal condemnation of the practice were essential for the prohibition on usury that would remain operative in Christian moral theology for centuries to come culminating in the comprehensive ban of usury under Theodosius. Casimir McCambley, "Against Those Who Practice Usury By Gregory of Nyssa", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 no. 3-4 (1991), 288, Brenda Llewellyn

Cappadocian perspective is in continuity with the scriptural tradition and the relationship of usury to the poor. Though engaged with Aristotelian logic, it will be argued that the Cappadocians' cosmology and social vision serve to undermine Aristotle's premise of the natural and normative community. This relies on their assertion that *koinonia* is not only normative but also natural. Each of these conditions and practices of abject poverty, slavery, and usury are interpreted by the Cappadocians as unnatural.

Beyond this, it is the argument here that the Cappadocians' treatment of impoverishment, slavery, and usury are not discrete arguments. Instead, for the Cappadocians all three represent aspects of the integrated process of enslavement. Inasmuch as all three aspects are judged as unnatural individually, as an integrated process they are exposed as a movement of dissonance against the natural orientation of creation. Thus, the Cappadocians' interpretation and condemnation of this process represents an integration of the cosmological perspectives and social vision, for it is against the view of the harmoniously created cosmic *kalon*, within which the human community is understood in terms of natural and normative *koinonia*, that this integrated process is judged as a "symphony of lament"⁷ and dissonance against not only the Christian community but creation itself. Simply put, it is through the Cappadocians' interpretation of what is "natural" to creation that this process is judged as "unnatural" in each of its parts and as a unified discordant whole. It is from their interpretation of the cosmic *kalon* within the interval between creation and eschaton that the Cappadocians construct crucial edifices of the Christian moral imagination. This framework is

Ihssen, "Basil and Gregory's Sermons on Usury: Credit Where Credit Is Due", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16 no. 3 (2008), 404-405.

⁷ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor*, *St. Gr̄gory of Nazianzus Selected Orations* trans. Martha Vinson (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 2003), Oration 14.13, 48.

implicated in their understanding of the natural and normative condition of human community as *koinonia*, as well as their understanding of the conditions and practices that represent a distorted vision relative to this moral imagination. Simply put, the relationship of cosmology and social ethics in Cappadocian thought is a case study development of the Christian moral tradition.

The Cappadocians in Context

In order to illustrate the significance of the Cappadocians' contribution to the Christian moral tradition, this discussion will describe aspects of Hellenistic thought and Roman ideology operative in the fourth century. In this sense, it must be explicitly stated that the focus of this thesis is not on the much-discussed conflicts within Christianity. While the conflict between the Nicenes and Arians are relevant to this discussion, especially as it pertains to the economic policies of the Arian emperor Valens, its importance is relative to the larger ideological frame of the Roman imperial state. Simply put, the focus of this thesis is not on the conflicts over who would be called Christian. Instead, the focus is on the contrast between the Cappadocian and Roman criteria for concern and membership in the social body. In order to understand this claim, it is essential to locate the Cappadocians in the ideological and economic context of the fourth century Eastern Roman Empire.⁸

⁸ It is vital to note here that the argument of this thesis is *not* that the Cappadocians "invented" Christian charity, concern for the poor, or critiques of the economic circumstances that surrounded and perpetuated poverty. There is ample literature that discusses the Christian antecedents to the Cappadocians in this regard, including but not limited to Clement of Alexandria and, as will be discussed, scriptural and non-canonical works such as the *Shepherd of Hermas*. Beyond this, and more specific to this discussion, the Cappadocians' condemnation of usury had antecedents within the Christian tradition. Specifically, various Church councils, including Nicaea, condemned usury not to mention the scriptural precedents. It is not either the argument here that the Cappadocians were the only Christian theologians in the fourth century attending to these issues. In this regard, there are the examples of John Chrysostom and monastic communities of the fourth centuries. Furthermore, it is not the argument here that Christians was alone in this concern. There is evidence that the Jewish community had a tradition of poverty that extended through

The Cappadocians: A Brief Biography

To begin, it is vital to briefly discuss some biographical aspects of the Cappadocians salient to this discussion, especially as it pertains to Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macrina the Younger. Simply put, they came from a wealthy Christian family from Cappadocia. The simplicity of this statement belies the complexity of each aspect when put in context. In terms of wealth, their family was part of what Jaroslav Pelikan describes as the “Cappadocian curial class” and “country aristocracy.”⁹ They were members of a “Christian elite” and thus were “distinguished and propertied, Christian and cultivated.”¹⁰ There are three aspects of this relevant to this discussion. First, Cappadocia lay in the Eastern half of the Roman Empire and was a vital cog in the Roman economy. Thus, as Susan Holman points out, “Politically, it (Cappadocia) was most important for its roads; all major routes between Constantinople and Syria went to the province and several intersected at Caesarea.”¹¹ Thus, the roads through Cappadocia were not only central intersections for economic activity but also potentially important military hubs. On one hand, this would ensure that Cappadocia would remain in the view of imperial concerns. On the other hand, as a trade route the effects of an economic crisis

the fourth century and beyond. The point here is that this thesis is not intent on describing the uniqueness of the Cappadocians as unprecedented; instead, the purpose here is to show the contrast between the Cappadocians, in thought and works, and the economic ideology of the Roman Empire within which they were embedded. For a discussion on the antecedents to the Cappadocians see Denise Kimber Buell, “‘Be not one who stretches out hands to receive but shuts out them when it comes to giving’: Envisioning Christian Charity When Both Donors and Recipients Are Poor”, *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* ed. Susan Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008), 37-47; Justo Gonzales, chapter 6 “The Old Catholic Church”, *Faith and Wealth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers 1990), 106-124. On the various councils on usury up to an including Nicaea, see Patrick Cleary, *The Church and Usury* (Dublin, Ireland: M.H. Gil & Sons Ltd. 1914), 44-48. For a discussion on Christian contemporaries to the Cappadocians, see Rudolf Brandle, “This sweetest passage: Matthew 25:31-46 and assistance to the Poor in the Homilies of John Chrysostom”, *Wealth and Poverty in Early Church and Society* ed. Susan Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics 2008), 127-139. For discussion on charity in the Jewish community antecedent to and contemporary with the Cappadocians see Holman, 42-48.

⁹ Pelikan, 6.

¹⁰ Anthony Meredith S.J., *Gregory of Nyssa* (New York, NY: Routledge 1999), 2.

¹¹ Susan Holman, *The Hungry are Dying* (New York: NY: Oxford University Press 2001), 70.

would be immediately apparent. Thus, geographically, their status was embedded in a vital economic and political location.

Second, the wealth of their family afforded, at least for Basil,¹² considerable educational opportunity. Basil was educated at the universities in Constantinople and Athens (349-455), which were considered the educational and cultural centers not only of their time but also through the “middle ages.”¹³ This education granted Basil a wide and diverse engagement with Hellenistic thought, including Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, Aeschylus, and a myriad of other prominent thinkers. In turn, Gregory of Nazianzus, also from considerable wealth, was educated at the University of Athens, where one of his schoolmates was the future emperor Julian the “Apostate”.¹⁴ In both cases, their wealth afforded them an education saturated in Hellenistic thought. In fact, it has been argued that their friendship flourished after their return from Athens where together they engaged in the works of Origen, which “helped wean themselves from the seduction of classical philosophy.”¹⁵ The importance of this break from classical thought was essential for their understanding that orthodoxy did not exclusively entail “purity of doctrine” or philosophical speculation.¹⁶ Instead, the Cappadocians maintained that simple Christian believers were orthodox too, often more so than were “speculative

¹² In this regard, Gregory of Nyssa was the direct beneficiary of Basil’s education. As Anthony Meredith states of Gregory, “He attended none of the great universities of the day, and was entirely dependent on Basil for his cultural and philosophical training.” The irony of this statement is that Gregory is considered the most philosophically sophisticated of the Cappadocians. As Andrew Louth states, “Gregory of Nyssa seems to have been the Cappadocian for the twentieth century. Part of the reason for this is that Gregory of Nyssa is much more philosophically interesting than the other two: he has a sharp mind and concentrates on large issues.” While this thesis will argue with Louth’s assessment of the other Cappadocians’ philosophical sophistication, it is nonetheless true that the depth of Gregory of Nyssa’s thought belies his lack of formal education. Meredith, 3; Andrew Louth, “The Cappadocians,” *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 2004), 297.

¹³ Pelikan, 172; Phillip Rousseau, *Basil Of Caesarea* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1994), 28.

¹⁴ Rousseau, 5.

¹⁵ Ibid., 38.

¹⁶ Pelikan, 13; Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 23.12, 140.

thinkers”, and these simple Christians were “superior in wisdom to the philosophers among the Greeks.”¹⁷ Thus, while their wealth afforded them a considerable depth of classical knowledge, they eventually came to understand orthodoxy as located among the entire Christian body and thus privileged the common Christian over even the paragons of Hellenistic thought.

Third, the wealth of the Cappadocians is particularly telling when understood in the context of their charitable work. As will be discussed further, the famine that began in 368 had a profound effect on the Cappadocians and their works on social ethics. At the same time, it must be noted that this effect was not merely on how they perceived charity and the economic disparity amongst rich and poor. Instead, it affected their practices in relation to the poor. On one hand, the two monastic communities of the Cappadocians, the community of Annisa founded by Macrina the Younger and the monastic city of the Basileias founded by Basil, were both built on family land.¹⁸ In turn, Basil’s efforts to alleviate the suffering of the poor came directly from the family coffers. As C. Paul Schroeder states, “Basil distributed much of what remained of his paternal inheritance in order to help provide for the starving people of Caesarea.”¹⁹ While the political implications of this renunciation of wealth will be treated extensively, it is

¹⁷ It is vital to note that the operative distinction here is not between clergy and laity; instead, it is the distinction between a notion of philosophical elitism and the practices of the ‘common Christian’. Simply put, to be orthodox for the Cappadocians did not require a high level of intellectual sophistication. Orthodoxy, instead, was located first in the practice of the laity, which was true philosophy (praxis). Pelikan, 173-175; Gregory of Nazianzus Oration 23.12, 42.

¹⁸ Holman 74, Rousseau 73-76, A. Edward Siencienksi “Gilding the Lily: A Patristic Defense of Liturgical Splendor” *Wealth and Poverty in the Early Church and Society* ed. Susan Holman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2008), 269

¹⁹ C. Paul Schroeder, *On Social Justice: St Basil the Great* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 2009), 33; see also Justo Gonzalez, *Faith and Wealth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers 1990), 183-184.

important to note here that the renunciation of wealth by the Cappadocians was not merely a rhetorical device but a material practice in which they participated.

This leads to the second aspect of Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Macrina relevant to this discussion. They came from a Christian family. In a contemporary context, to make such a statement is not altogether remarkable. Yet, in fourth century Rome this fact would have far reaching implications. First, it is essential to note that the faith of their family was antecedent to both Constantine and Nicaea. The conversion of their family is generally attributed to their maternal grandmother, Macrina the Elder, and was the direct product of the "Apostle of Cappadocia", Gregory of Thaumaturgos' establishment of the Christian Church in that region during the third century.²⁰ Thus, the faith of their family spanned multiple generations. It must also be noted that, at least on his maternal side, Gregory of Nazianzus was also from an "ancient Christian family", although his father though a convert was "grafted in from a foreign olive."²¹ The ante-Nicene faith of the Cappadocians is important to this discussion insofar as their faith was, according to Phillip Rousseau, "untouched in many ways by the conversion and religious policies of Constantine."²² While "untouched" may be an overstatement from Rousseau, the salient point is that the Cappadocians alignment with Nicaea was not exclusively caused by Constantine's conversion. Their faith was antecedent to Nicaea. The reason this is important is that their lineage was directly affected by the persecutions under Maximin Daia or Diocletian (308-313), which forced their family to flee into the surrounding wilderness.²³ Thus, although the Cappadocians were born into decidedly less dire

²⁰ Anthony Meredith *The Cappadocians* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press 1995), 2.

²¹ Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 39.

²² Rousseau, 4.

²³ Rousseau, 4-5; Meredith, *Cappadocians*, 2.

circumstances, it is vital to note that they were not a full generation removed from the time when Christians were persecuted as an illegal sect.²⁴

In sum, these biographical aspects of the Cappadocians would profoundly influence the development of their work and thought. The fact that they were from “wealthy Christian and Cappadocian families” has particular relevance to this discussion in terms of geographical location socio-economic status, educational opportunity, and ante-Nicene memory. All of which, takes on particular significance when understood in the context of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Creed, Economy, and Roman Ideology

In order to understand the implications of the cosmology and social vision of the Cappadocians in the context of the fourth century, it is necessary to understand how these aspects of Cappadocian thought relate and contrast to Roman ideology. Now, volumes have been written on the politics of the fourth century both historically and theologically. It is not the intention here to do justice to the complexities of the political climate, theological struggles, or economic nuances of this period. Instead, the purpose here is to briefly sketch some salient aspects as they pertain to this thesis. In this effort, this discussion will focus on the political implications of the Nicene Creed²⁵ and the economic context within which the Cappadocians operated.

²⁴ Rousseau, 4.

²⁵ It is important to note here that the term Nicene Creed, as it will be used here, refers specifically to the Creed affirmed at the Council of Nicaea and not the developments that led to the form of the Creed affirmed at the Council of Constantinople. It has been pointed out that the form of the Creed affirmed in contemporary Christian liturgy ought properly be called the Nicene-Constantinople Creed insofar as the form of the Creed familiar to contemporary Christians entails the significant developments of Constantinople. Insofar as this discussion exclusively focuses on the interval between Nicaea and Constantinople the developments are not germane to this conversation. Obviously this applies to the *filioque* clause as well, which did not become an official addition to the Creed in Western Christianity until the 11th century. For a succinct discussion of these aspects see Berard Marthaler *The Creed* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications 2005) 93-94, 247-258.

To begin, it is inarguable that the Nicene Creed arose within the shifting political climate of the fourth century Roman Empire. In this regard, for better or worse, the fourth century is recognized as a decisive period in Christian history. As a political term, the "fourth century" generally refers to the interval between the reigns of Constantine (306-337) and Theodosius (379-395). As this specifically relates to the ambiguous and ambivalent marriage between Christianity and the Roman State, this interval is defined by the Edict of Milan (313), which legalized Christianity, and Theodosius' gradual development of Christianity as the official state religion of the Empire (381). In theological terms, the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381) mark this period. In turn, the development of the Creed, from its original Nicene form to its more familiar form from Constantinople, arose in a climate with profound political implications. It is not the purpose here to dispute this interpretation. In fact, it is because of the political implications that this period requires interrogation.

Insofar as the period under interrogation represents a scant forty-two years, this period often lends itself to an interpretation that the Edict of Milan, Constantine's ambiguous conversion, and the Council of Nicaea set in motion the machinery that would make the proclamations of Theodosius inevitable.²⁶ Beyond this, the theology of the Creed is often interpreted as exclusionary, a *regula fidei* or "test of orthodoxy" specifically aimed at the "false and heretical teachings" of the Arians.²⁷ On one hand, it

²⁶ For example, Dale Irvin and Scott Sunquist note that with the Edict of Milan "a transition from (Christianity) being an illegal faith was under way." In turn, Jurgen Moltmann argues, "Beginning with Constantine, and then consolidated in the legislation of the Emperors Theodosius and Justinian, the Christian religion took over the social place of the old Roman State Religion." The key phrases here being "transition. . . under way" and "consolidated in legislation," both of which lend to a interpretation of inevitability. Dale Irvin and Sundquist *History of the World Christian Movement* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2006), 162; Jurgen Moltmann *Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of Christian Eschatology* (New York, NY: Harper and Row 1967), 306.

²⁷ Marthaler, 9-11.

would be irresponsible to deny the latter point. On the other hand, married to the former point, the political implications of the Creed draws a particular picture of the developing Nicene Christianity. Once assured of its inevitable political triumph, the Creed served as a mechanism for separating the “wheat from the chaff”. Put another way, to *not* affirm the Creed was to align oneself against the inevitably triumphant Nicene regime. Thus, in this interpretation Creed and Empire become virtually synonymous.

Now, as it pertains to the Western Empire, this interpretation, potentially, has some merit. Including Constantine and Theodosius, four emperors sympathetic to Nicaea ruled in this interval with the emperors Constans (337-350) and Valentinian (364-375) comprising the other two. The non-Nicene Emperors of this period were, in the West, the Arian Constantius (350-361), the infamous pagan “Apostate” Julian (361-363), and the Arian Valens (375-378), all of who ruled over a unified Empire. Simple math dictates that within this century, only nineteen years of Western rule was non-Nicene. If one excludes Constantine and Theodosius, this interval is split roughly in half, with a slight preponderance towards the Nicenes. From this perspective, it is reasonable to interpret the century as representing the death knell of pagan Rome and the triumph of Nicene orthodoxy. At the very least it can be argued that Nicene Christianity held sway over the Western Roman Empire for the vast majority of the fourth century, which lends credence to the argument outlined above.

In contrast, scrutiny of the Eastern Empire draws a vastly different picture. In this case, the frame of Constantine and Theodosius represents the only two regimes sympathetic to Nicene Christianity. In this regard, Constantius, Julian, and Valens ruled the Eastern Empire exclusively, which partially overlapped with their consolidated

regimes in the West. The math here is quite different, insofar as the slight preponderance stands in favor of non-Nicene regimes. While this does not quite frustrate the previous argument, by reframing the political context the contrasting picture becomes decidedly starker. First if the reign of Maximin Daia is included, his reign and ensuing persecutions were fresh in the Cappadocians' memory. Second the reign of Theodosius ought to be excluded as inevitable. Even the oracle at Delphi could not make that prediction with historical precision. Once reframed there is, on one side, an Empire hostile to the development of Nicene Christianity and, on the other, an open question of the status of Christianity within the Empire. Understood within this frame, Constantine and his ambivalent sympathies were the lone exception to both the antecedent history and also every regime leading up to Theodosius. Simply put, in the interval between Constantine and Theodosius, there was no moment where Nicene Christianity enjoyed the sympathies of the Empire. Thus, there is little evidence suggesting to the Eastern Nicene Christians that their eventual triumph was inevitable. Therefore, if one accepts the premise that the Creed is a political declaration, then it is also necessary to accept that in the Eastern Empire where Cappadocia was located this declaration placed one in a political community distinct from the Roman state. Simply put, a people affirming the Creed were affirming their faith in contrast to the Empire. In this interval, in this location, the Creed and the State were anything but synonymous.

This point is illustrated most clearly in the regimes of the two emperors who figure prominently in this thesis, Julian the "Apostate" and Valens. The significance of these regimes relates, respectively, to the two foci of this thesis, cosmology and social ethics. In terms of the former, Julian's understanding of the political implications of

cosmology is essential for both affirming the political implications of the Creed as well as illustrating the vastly different understandings of these implications. In terms of the latter, Valens' economic policies are central to understanding the contrast between the Cappadocians' social vision and Roman ideology. Now, it is important to note that Julian the avowed pagan and Valens the Arian are not representative of a unified social vision or cosmology. Instead, as this thesis is intent on showing, the Cappadocians' integration of cosmology and social ethics contrasts to the cosmology espoused by Julian and the economic policies of Valens. If anything, the unity of these regimes is not found in the relationship of these aspects but in their mutual hostility towards the developing Nicene Christianity and the moral imagination it represents. In turn, their unity was representative of a Roman State at odds with the development of Nicene Christianity.

To begin, Julian the "Apostate" has been the source of vast scholarship and scrutiny that belies the brevity of his reign. His reign began after the death of Constantius (361) and ended in an ill-advised campaign against the Persian Empire (363).²⁸ Depending on one's perspective, in spite of or because of this Julian is regarded as either the last gasp of a vacant pagan religion or the last chance for a Hellenistic culture uncorrupted by Christianity.²⁹ It is the argument here that the latter is a more accurate description. In turn, Julian serves as an important contrast to the Cappadocians.

First, Julian's rejection of Christianity, hence "Apostate", is well documented. What is not usually pointed out is that Julian's "Christian" upbringing was Arian.³⁰ Thus, even if Julian had remained faithful to his upbringing, there is little evidence to suggest

²⁸ G.W. Bowersock, *Julian The Apostate* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1978), 23; Constance Head, *The Emperor Julian* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers 1976), 28-29.

²⁹ Irvin and Suquist 181-182, Edward Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of The Roman Empire* vol.2 (New York, NY: P.R. Collier & Son (1899), xxviii.

³⁰ Bowersock, 73-74; Head, 33.

that this would have significantly changed his stance towards Nicaea. Suggestive of this point is that Julian, as emperor of a unified Rome, lifted any persisting bans on Arian teaching in the West.³¹ While his vitriol against Christianity included the Arians, his policies towards the Arians suggest a nod to his early formation.

In turn, it is inaccurate to label Julian as an impious emperor using Hellenistic paganism as a Machiavellian tool. Julian was considered a devout follower of the pagan faith he espoused.³² Furthermore, his theological agenda for the Roman Empire was prompted by a vision in which his “destiny was to restore the religion of his forefathers to Rome.”³³ The point here is not that Julian ought to be admired for his pagan allegiance; instead, it is only to point out that Julian’s reestablishment of Hellenistic paganism, as the official state religion, was not merely a political ploy. By all accounts, it was genuine.

Of course, this genuine piety framed his intolerance of Christianity. As Glen Bowersock argues, “He never contemplated any other solution to the religious problem than total elimination. His view of Christians was utterly intolerant from the start.”³⁴ This intolerance is exemplified by his policies. Generally speaking, Joseph Hoffman describes Julian’s agenda as an effort to “isolate Christians from the mainstream of Roman society by limiting their rights and abrogating certain benefits to which they were entitled under the law.”³⁵ It is important to note that Julian’s agenda towards Christians did not entail a campaign of persecution or, at least, such a campaign never came to fruition. Instead, it was a campaign based on political identity and citizenship in the Roman state. For example, Julian revoked the policy where one could “defer or avoid

³¹ R. Joseph Hoffmann, *Julian's Against the Galileans* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books 2004), 33.

³² Hoffman, 50.

³³ Ibid., 27.

³⁴ Bowersock, 84.

³⁵ Hoffmann, 32.

compulsory military service on the grounds that they were Christian.”³⁶ On one hand, to declare oneself as Christian was to place oneself literally in the line of fire. On the other hand, this obligation eliminated the distinction between Roman citizen and Christian. Military conscription was how Julian dissolved the distinctions between Christianity and Roman ideology.

Beyond this was his infamous banning of Christians from teaching in Roman schools. In the letter justifying this ban, Julian argues that Christians should not be allowed to teach in Roman schools on religious grounds. Of specific importance to this discussion, he invokes the works of Hesiod as one who was “inspired by Hermes or one of the Muses.”³⁷ Equally important is his assertion that the creation account in Genesis is absurd when held against the philosophically superior account from Plato in the *Timaeus*.³⁸ While the significance of both these cosmologies will be discussed in detail, what is important here is that Julian’s justification for the ban is that Christians do not believe these accounts represent truth. He argues that it is not possible for Christians, “who have the duty to expound these writers,” to do so when they “revile the gods whom these writers loved.”³⁹ Thus, Julian considered the teaching of Hesiod and Plato to be in important ways a religious education. It is on these grounds that Julian bans Christians from teaching in Roman schools. Again, to be Christian was to maintain a distinction from the Roman State, in this case, in overtly theological terms. For Julian, the primacy of Roman ideology over Christianity extended to the theological aspects of “public education”.

³⁶ Hoffman, 33.

³⁷ As Constance Head points out that Julian had a particular affinity for Hesiod and the “hidden meanings” he found in his works. Head, 19, Julian, *Against the Galileans* trans. Joseph Hoffman, 149.

³⁸ Hoffman, 79, see also Julian, *Against the Galileans*, 99.

³⁹ Julian, *Against the Galileans*, 149.

The reason for these policies was not merely a theological disagreement. Instead, it was founded in Julian's not unjustified fear that Christianity as a political body was infiltrating Roman space. On one hand, Julian was concerned with the fact that the population was turning to the Church for "protection and security" instead of the Roman bureaucracy.⁴⁰ In turn, Julian discerned that the structures of the Church and their "theft of Roman political models" were being "turned against the power of the emperor himself."⁴¹ Thus, he considered Christianity a form of "sedition" and "apostasy from the state."⁴² This infiltration of Roman political authority was central to Julian's intolerant policies towards Christianity. As will be discussed, in the case of the Basileias this concern was not entirely unfounded. At the same time, this incursion was built on an entirely different understanding of the normative social body, at least for the Cappadocians, than the ideology of the Roman Empire.

To bring this back to the previous statements on the Creed, it is clear that Julian understood religion and the political body to be integrated. Furthermore, through his policies banning Christians from teaching in Roman schools, Julian explicitly argues that the cosmology of Christians is incompatible with this relationship. Simply put, Christians did not believe it and, thus, should not teach it. These policies and perspectives from Julian directly contrast to the political implications of the Nicene Creed as a proclamation from a social body. Similar to Julian, the Creed connects the political body to a cosmological frame, although with vastly different understandings of both the

⁴⁰ Hoffman, 35.

⁴¹ Ibid., 36.

⁴² Ibid., 36.

body and cosmos.⁴³ In this context, the initial affirmation of the Nicene Creed serves not merely as a proposition of belief or *reguli fidei* but as a statement from a political body that defies the cosmological claims espoused by Julian. Simply put, the affirmation of the Creed was political and cosmological but in contrast to, not reconciliation with, the Roman Empire.

This leads to the second regime vital to this discussion. Directly after the death of Julian, the Empire was divided once more between West and East, Nicene and Arian, in the reigns of Valentinian and Valens. Upon Valentinian's death in 375, Valens, like Julian, reigned over a unified Empire. Likewise, though from an Arian, not pagan, view, Valens' perspective was equally intolerant of Nicene Christianity. As Noel Lenski points out, "He (Valens) had not learned from the Christian persecutions of his third and early fourth century Illyrian predecessors that belief cannot be dictated by force."⁴⁴ While not erupting in full-blown persecutions, Valens' reign was marked by an increased intolerance of Nicene Christianity up to and including coercive force.⁴⁵ In turn, this increased intolerance set a trajectory towards state sanctioned persecutions.

It is important to note that one of the factors that stemmed this persecutory tide was not the triumph of a reified conception of the Nicene political agenda. Instead, it involves Valens' sick son, Galates, and Basil, then bishop, on the cusp of exile. As the account goes, Valens son was deathly ill and Basil, exiled by Valens, came to the deathbed of the emperor's progeny and prayed over him. While this story does not

⁴³ The original and, in the Eastern Orthodox tradition, still operative first word of the creed is *pisteuo*, "I believe". This differs from the contemporary language of "we believe". While the latter lends to a greater political emphasis, the former retains both the political significance of those affirming the Nicene Creed as well as the cosmological claims of "one God, father almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

⁴⁴ Noel Lenski, *Failure Of Empire: Valens and the Roman State in the Fourth Century A.D.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2002), 243.

⁴⁵ Lenski, 243.

involve a miraculous recovery (Galates eventually succumbed), it did prompt Valens to revoke Basil's exile, to curb his hostility towards Nicenes, and to contribute state funds to the construction of the *Basileias*.⁴⁶ Thus, in spite of the considerable political and theological differences between them, the "virulence of Valens' persecution" subsided not because of political posturing but instead from the honest practice of loving one's enemy.⁴⁷ That being said, the policies of Valens in the antecedent years contributed to the climate in which the Cappadocians' economic critiques were embedded. In order to understand the relationship of these policies to the social ethics of the Cappadocians, it is necessary to understand the policies of the Roman state as they concerned poverty, slavery, and usury.

Before discussing these aspects, it is important to clarify two points concerning the Roman economy of agriculture and interest.⁴⁸ First, the economy was almost entirely agricultural.⁴⁹ For a pre-industrial economy this almost goes without saying. At the same time, it must be noted that the Roman economy was not only a pre-industrial but also a pre-money economy. Of course, money existed and was used for exchange, but in this context the foundation of the economy was agriculture and not the flow of capital. This is vital for understanding the second point: productive lending was virtually absent within this economy. This means that, contrary to our contemporary understanding of interest, the practice was not viewed as a "capital investment" where the lender and the debtor assumed a mutually profitable exchange. According to Hudson, "The only

⁴⁶ Rousseau, 351-353; Lenski, 253-254.

⁴⁷ Lenski, 254.

⁴⁸ Economic historian Michael Hudson offers a succinct and sturdy definition of interest. He states, "Economists define interest as the periodic payment of a stipulated rate of return on a capital obligation (the principle). Michael Hudson, "How rates were set, 2,500 B.C. – 1000 A.D.," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43 no. 2 (Spring 2000), 136.

⁴⁹ "The backbone of economic life for the Roman Empire was agriculture." Gonzalez, 13.

instances of productive lending (defined as that which provides borrowers with the means to repay their obligation) are commercial advances to merchants.”⁵⁰ Yet, even where these types of loans existed, they were a rarity. In the largely agrarian based economy of the Roman Empire, merchants with no direct connection to the production of goods were not common.⁵¹ Furthermore, these purveyors were considered to partake in a “vulgar” occupation.⁵² This perspective is exemplified in Aristotle’s view of both interest and retail as unnatural forms of economic exchange.⁵³ While Aristotle’s perspective will be discussed in detail, it is important to note here that productive lending as it pertains to merchants was rare and not encouraged. Thus, the issue is not whether the Roman economy was agricultural or whether people lent money at interest; instead, the issue is what type of agriculture was encouraged by State policies and what circumstances prompted loans.

In the first case, there were essentially two types of farms operative in the Roman economy. On one hand, there were the large farming estates, or *latifundia*, owned by wealthy social elites. As Justo Gonzalez points out, “a significant part of the labor was performed by chain gangs of slaves.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, the largely absentee landowners usually left the day-to-day operation of the *latifundia* to a “trusted slave”.⁵⁵ In turn,

⁵⁰ This understanding of productive lending at interest is familiar in the contemporary sense. For example, a person wishes to start a business selling olive oil. She takes out a loan at interest to get the business started. The borrower believes that the money loaned will produce enough profit to pay back the loan as well as enough profit for her to maintain the business. The lender agrees to the loan because the lender believes that the business will turn sufficient profit to pay back the loan with interest. If all goes right, the lender and borrower profit from the exchange. The merchant starts her business and successfully pays back the loan. The lender turns a profit for her investment. Each benefits. Hudson, 140.

⁵¹ Hudson, 133.

⁵² Gonzalez, 17.

⁵³ Aristotle, *Politics*, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* trans. Richard McKeon (New York, NY: Random House 1941), I.10 1258a 35-40, 1140-1141. All subsequent references to Aristotle’s works are taken from the McKeon translation.

⁵⁴ Gonzalez, 30.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

slaves also served other functions on the *latifundia* such as teachers or domestic laborers.⁵⁶ Thus, slave labor was an essential part of the *latifundia* as an *oikos* or household.

On the other hand, there was the small farm. This farm was usually subsistent and occupied a five to ten acre plot of land. It is important to note here that civic identity in Roman ideology was directly tied to possession of property, especially land. This entailed “political rights” as members of the Roman state.⁵⁷ In fact, with the glaring exception of taxes, the Roman economic ideology espoused the absolute right of ownership. One could “use, abuse, and enjoy” one’s property at will.⁵⁸ Thus, as landowners, they enjoyed the benefits of Roman citizenship but also operated at a social and economic distance from the wealthy elite. In turn, the common citizenry generally worked the small farm. There was a distinction between the wealthy landowners and the *latifundia* and the small-scale farm of the common citizen. While both enjoyed the benefits of Roman citizenship, the former was generally operated by slave labor; common citizens operated the latter. It is in favor of the former *latifundia* that the policies of Valens were oriented.

Once taking the imperial throne, Valens found the Roman Empire in dire financial straits. This was caused, for the most part, by the imprudent policies of his predecessor Julian. As Lenski points out, Valens enacted sweeping economic reforms in an effort to stabilize the Roman economy in the wake of “the financial mess created by Julian.”⁵⁹ This “mess” was caused in part by the “generous tax measures and his monumentally

⁵⁶ Gonzalez, 30.

⁵⁷ Holman, 116.

⁵⁸ “*jus utendi, jus fruendi, jus abutendi*”. Gonzalez, 19.

⁵⁹ Lenski, 286.

expensive Persian expedition.”⁶⁰ Thus, following a familiar theme, Julian relieved taxes on the wealthy while spending money on a war that relied on tax revenue from the common citizen.⁶¹ In response, Valens’ policies revolved around supporting the largest driver of the Roman economy, the *latifundia*. A few of these policies are of particular note. First, he enacted a policy in which abandoned land was auctioned off and those who purchased the land were exempted from taxes on the acquired land for three years.⁶² Thus, the policies of Valens were oriented towards those with the means and desire to acquire these parcels. Second, he enacted policies specifically oriented towards slavery. He enacted laws “enforcing the return of slaves” and punishment on “those who harbored them or used their labor.”⁶³ Thus, the policies of Valens particularly protected the labor pool of the *latifundia*. Therefore, the stabilization of the Roman economy for Valens entailed policies that encouraged the wealthy to acquire abandoned land as well as the protection of the slave labor pool.

While these policies did not overtly victimize the small farmer, they did not either protect them. At best, these policies maintained the status quo. Yet, it must be noted that this status quo included heavy taxation.⁶⁴ Furthermore, and especially relevant to this discussion, these policies were enacted between the years 367-369⁶⁵, a period that coincides with a drought that especially afflicted the region of Cappadocia. The drought begun in 368 exposed the lack of economic protection for the small-scale farmer proportional to the owners of *latifundia*.

⁶⁰ Lenski, 108.

⁶¹ In this regard, Lenski points out that Julian’s policies were “particularly liberal to his friends.” Lenski, 108.

⁶² Ibid., 284.

⁶³ Ibid., 284.

⁶⁴ Sigurd Bergman, *Creation Set Free* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2005), 60.

⁶⁵ Lenski, 284-286.

The importance of the drought to this thesis cannot be overemphasized. On one hand, it exposes the economic ideology that drove the policies of Valens. On the other hand, the drought and ensuing famine was a pivotal moment in the development of Cappadocian thought. The latter point will be addressed subsequently and throughout this thesis. In terms of the former and the focus here, the famine of 368 exposed the ideological underpinnings of the Roman economic policies enacted by Valens.

According to Susan Holman, the drought of 368 was nothing less than a “catastrophic economic crisis.”⁶⁶ This drought was caused by an “unusually hot dry spring” in which “well and rivers dried up and crops failed.”⁶⁷ Thus, in Holman’s view this famine was instigated by unforeseen or, at least, uncontrollable environmental conditions. Theologian Sigurd Bergman has a slightly different perspective on the origin of the drought. According to Bergman, the cause of the drought was poor farming practices that resulted in “ultimate salinization from overwatering.”⁶⁸ In turn, according to Bergman, throughout the fourth century “agricultural yields steadily declined, resulting in regional famine.”⁶⁹ While both Bergman and Holman offer different perspectives on the ultimate cause of the drought and ensuing famine, it is the argument here that they are not incompatible. Put another way, it is entirely reasonable to affirm Bergmann’s point concerning the abuse of land and declining yields while also affirming the environmental conditions described by Holman as the tipping point that turned these declines into a full-blown famine. Regardless, what is not disputed is the fact that the drought and famine

⁶⁶ Holman, 54.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁸ Bergmann, 61.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 60.

occurred and that this had a catastrophic effect on agriculture and, in turn, the Roman economy.

While the condition of drought would certainly have negatively impacted the *latifundia*, the small farmer felt the brunt of its impact. Insofar as yields not only declined but also virtually evaporated, the basic livelihood of the small farmer was at considerable risk. Compounding this risk, without agricultural yields the small farmer lacked the productive capacity to satisfy the tax demands of the State. Coupled with imperial taxation, the drought had a pincer effect on the small farmer. Therefore, the status quo worked against the small farmer. It maintained their legal obligations without attention to their increasingly dire conditions. It is in these circumstances that the small farmer moved from subsistence to the edge of poverty.

In these circumstances, small farmers were left with scant and unattractive options. First, they could sell their land if they could find a buyer.⁷⁰ Second, they could abandon their lands and “flock to the city in hope of relief” which usually resulted in begging.⁷¹ Yet, the policies not only made it easy to obtain these abandoned lands but additionally offered tax incentives to those purchasing the land. It benefited the buyer to *not* buy the land directly but to wait and acquire abandoned land through auction.⁷² Therefore, there was not only a lack of incentive to pay a fair price, but the Empire supported incentives to avoid the issue altogether. With the right combination of capital and patience, one could simply wait and purchase the land cheaply. This combination of capital and patience was accessible to the wealthy elite and not the small farmer on the edge of poverty.

⁷⁰ Gonzalez, 29.

⁷¹ Holman, 69.

⁷² Gonzalez, 80.

In these circumstances, small farmers had recourse to a third unattractive option; they could take a loan as a temporary measure to either maintain their basic livelihood or pay Imperial taxes. These incentives for the small farmer are apparent; what is less apparent is the social incentive. As discussed, social identity and membership in the Roman political community were tied directly to property ownership. To sell or abandon one's land was to relinquish one's identity within the Roman social body. As Susan Holman put it, to be the unpropertied poor was a "form of social death."⁷³ These poor were stripped of not only the means of subsistence and livelihood but also of their "liberty" and, in the eyes of the State, "their humanity."⁷⁴ In this regard, the poor were "invisible" to the concerns of the Roman State. As Holman puts it:

While poverty was certainly a reality in the ancient world, the poor did not comprise a discrete social or political category, and poverty was *not* a criterion for assistance. Those at the receiving end of social benefits were eligible solely by nature of their membership in the community, either because they were citizens of the city or because of some socially recognized dependence to a particular patron.⁷⁵

In turn, there was no perpetual "poverty-relief program" within the Empire.⁷⁶

Furthermore, the only visibility the poor obtained was a potential disruption to the status quo. State action towards the poor was exclusively concerned with preventing civil unrest.⁷⁷ As will be discussed at length, these statements have more than a passing resemblance to Aristotle's perspectives on both slavery and the poor.⁷⁸ For now, what is

⁷³ Holman, 121.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 32.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 39.

⁷⁸ It is important to clarify that this is not an argument that either Aristotle or the Roman Empire were the inventors of slavery much less poverty. It goes without saying that the presence of poverty is a condition antecedent to either Aristotle or the Rome. The same goes for slavery. As S. Scott Bartchy points out, at the very least, slavery was a practice in the Ancient Near East that extended as far back as the 4th Millennium (59). While even a cursory glance at history affirms that slavery for Aristotle through the

important is that this is a situation that the farmer on the edge of poverty would have deep incentives to avoid. A loan would stave off not only material suffering but also the “social death” of impoverishment. The incentives would be more than maintaining one’s livelihood but also their status as ‘human’ in the eyes of the State.

At the same time, the wealthy had little incentive to lend to the poor in these circumstances. In a condition of drought, there was little assurance that the loan would be repaid. Furthermore, small farmers generally did not borrow money to invest in their land or any other entrepreneurial exercise. To put a finer point on it, economic historian Michael Hudson states, “Needy individuals borrowed out of abject necessity, not to earn profit.”⁷⁹ In turn, “It was the failure of a crop rather than the hopes for a prosperous bounty that forced most cultivators into debt.”⁸⁰ In short, the poor borrowed for consumption, meaning that the loans were ‘consumed’ in basic necessities and taxes. In this regard there is little financial incentive to lend to the poor. Of course, there may be a moral incentive but, as will be argued, this interpretation has a decidedly scriptural foundation absent from even the most prominent critique of interest, Aristotle’s, in

Roman Empire was a common practice, it is important to note that slavery in this context is not entirely synonymous with the ‘peculiar institution’ of slavery and the slave trade from a contemporary understanding of the practice that afflicted the Americas. As Bartchy rightfully points out slaves in the Roman context could marry, own property, and eventually be granted or buy their freedom (66). As will be discussed, it is these conditions that made slavery a preferred option to abject destitution. That being said, while a nuanced understanding of slavery in the Ancient Near East is important, the issue at hand for the Cappadocians is whether the sale and purchase of humans is natural or appropriate. As will be discussed, not even the Cappadocians fully agree on this point, at least on the latter point of ‘appropriate’. If there are points of tension in this thesis with Bartchy’s analysis, they are not in his analysis of slavery in contrast to contemporary conceptions of the practice. S. Scott Bartchy, “Slavery” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 6 ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday 1992), 58-73.

⁷⁹ Hudson, 139.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 139.

Hellenistic thought. For now, what is important is that the primary incentive for the wealthy to lend to those on the edge of poverty was interest on the loan or usury.⁸¹

It must be pointed out that usury in the ancient economy served a somewhat benign, perhaps even a somewhat positive, function. Historically, interest was taken as a form of "compensation of risk".⁸² Simply put, ancient rulers would periodically enact "Royal Clean Slate" programs that cancelled all debt within their communities.⁸³ The jubilee tradition within Judaism follows along these lines.⁸⁴ Thus it was fairly common that debt would be canceled and the lender would take a pure loss on the loan. It is not unreasonable to imagine a borrower waiting out the loan for a jubilatory proclamation. In turn, interest was intended as protective measure for the lender. Magnanimity notwithstanding, interest was assurance to the lender that the loan would be repaid. Now, as Hudson points out, "By classical Greek or Roman times, no palace rulers were left to cancel agrarian debts and otherwise keep creditors in check."⁸⁵ In this case, the more benign reason for usury to exist in the first place was eliminated. It was no longer a protective measure for the lender. Instead, the "periodic payment" of interest turned to "profit on a loan."⁸⁶ While the profit always existed, it was by the fourth century

⁸¹ While, in a contemporary sense, usury and interest are not synonymous terms (if used at all), it is vital to note that this is a particularly modern distinction between morally acceptable forms of interest and immoral 'usury'. For the majority of economic history interest and usury were interchangeable terms. It is not within the scope of this discussion to argue how and why these terms became distinct, much less whether they should be considered distinct. Instead, the point is that for the purpose of this thesis, in the context the terms are used, they are interchangeable.

⁸² Hudson, 137.

⁸³ Ibid., pg 90.

⁸⁴ This issue as it relates to compensation of capital is discussed at length in Yoder's *The Politics of Jesus*. See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1972), 64-93.

⁸⁵ Hudson, 153.

⁸⁶ Hudson, 136; John T. Noonan *The Scholastic Analysis Of Usury* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1957), 1, 15.

unchecked by the debt cancellation that prompted its existence in the first place. Simply put, the incentive for lending was no longer compensation but profit.

This orientation of loans at interest was supported by Roman economic policy. On one hand, Roman law did limit interest rates to somewhere between five and twelve percent.⁸⁷ Yet, for the small farmer in the midst of drought, since she consumed the loan and still had failed crops, a meager five percent interest would be a cold comfort. Beyond this, interest rates on food were not so limited, at times reaching upward of fifty percent.⁸⁸ For those on the verge of poverty, the 'theoretical evil' would certainly be surpassed by the 'actual evil' of starvation. Regardless, as Holman points out, these limits were a "creative fiction at best" insofar as the loan was ensured by contract written by a scribe in the lender's employ.⁸⁹ Furthermore, even if one were to expose abuse of the contract, the fees required for legal action would likely be beyond the borrower's reach.⁹⁰ Thus, the policies of Valens concerning usury favored lenders as much as his agricultural policies favored the wealthy. It is the argument here that these are not unrelated.

To illustrate this point, one must scrutinize the nature of interest as an incentive for the lender. Clearly, the lender did not expect that the small farmer's fortune would take a drastic turn for the better. Insofar as the loan was consumed, the lender neither had expectation that the capital would be returned without such a drastic turn. Thus, the profit derived from usury was not based on capital. It was based on collateral. In this case, the farmer would be required to put up her cattle, land, and even family labor as

⁸⁷ Hudson, 135; Holman, 115.

⁸⁸ Holman, 118.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 118.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 118.

collateral.⁹¹ In an important sense, this collateral was not merely insurance on the loan; it was the purpose of the loan. For in these circumstances, default would be virtually assured. In the case of default, the farmer would pay off her interest through the aforementioned securities. Bit by bit, the small farmer would relinquish the cattle that grazed the land, the family labor that worked the land, and eventually, the land itself. In turn, the very means that the farmer would need to pay off the original capital was consumed in the payment of defaulted interest.⁹² Thus, the temporary relief that the borrower enjoyed quickly turned against her. As Gregory of Nyssa describes it, this process was like “quenching fire with oil.”⁹³ In the end, small farmers were pushed over the edge into abject poverty. In this condition, the small farmer would have lost their livelihood and, in turn, social identity. Beyond this, the “social death” spanned generations. The loss of patrimonial inheritance eliminated the social status of citizenship for generations to come.⁹⁴ In turn, the small farmer would still be on the hook for both the loan and the interest even though the potential means for repaying that loan had been consumed through interest payments.⁹⁵ The now abject poor would be in a condition of virtual enslavement to debt.

Yet, this was not just virtual enslavement. On one hand, in this condition of abject destitution the poor could “flock to the city” and beg for survival. More often than not, they “wandered the roads” with the visage of “living cadavers.”⁹⁶ As will be

⁹¹ Hudson, 140.

⁹² As Hudson puts it “It is the debtor’s own productive assets that produces a usufruct. Such usury is a pure lose to the debtor on the land.” Hudson, 111.

⁹³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth homily on Ecclesiastes, Homilies on Ecclesiastes* ed. Stuart George Hall (New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter Co. 1993), 344.16, 80.

⁹⁴ Holman, 69.

⁹⁵ Furthermore, As Hudson points out, “personal bankruptcy was not available as a means of extracting oneself from debt.” Hudson, 158.

⁹⁶ Holman, 69.

discussed, Basil drives the image of starvation home, in graphic detail. On the other hand, they could sell themselves or their children into slavery. Now, often slavery was a consequence of defaulting on the loan in the first place. The labor exchanged for interest transitioned to the condition of slavery.⁹⁷ Yet, at the same time, slavery was preferred to abject poverty. At the most basic level, there is the obvious reason that the slave had food and shelter. Beyond this, the slave enjoyed some status within Roman ideology. They were protected from excessive abuse (although one wonders what this entailed) and by the fourth century slaves could marry and have families with permission from their masters.⁹⁸ As discussed, some slaves were trusted, if not respected, members of the *oikos* or household. Most importantly, slaves could receive a *peculium* or property gift from their masters and even eventual freedom.⁹⁹ While the freed slave would not enjoy status as Roman citizens, “the son (or daughter) of a freedman was a full citizen.”¹⁰⁰ To sell oneself or one’s children into slavery was an opportunity to reverse the “social death” accelerated by usury. The slave was fed, housed, and offered a modicum of hope for future generations. Considering the alternative, slavery was the preferred amongst tragic options.

This leads back to policies of Valens. It is the argument here that the policies of Valens not only privileged the wealthy elite and their *latifundia* over the plight of the small farmer in a condition of drought and ensuing famine. It did not merely maintain the status quo. Instead, the active policies concerning slavery and usury, in concert with the lack of policies protecting the small farmer and the poor, fed directly into the labor

⁹⁷ Holman, 124; Hudson, 140; Gonzalez, 29.

⁹⁸ Gonzalez, 30.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 30.

pool of the *latifundia*. The policies not only neglected the poor and at risk. They did not only perpetuate a descent into abject poverty. They also created conditions where slavery became a preferable option. Simply put, the policies of Valens comprised a process of enslavement. In turn, this process was a systematic driver of the labor force of *latifundia*. Within this framework, the social ethics of the Cappadocians confront the poverty, slavery, and usury as an integrated whole, a “symphony of lament”.

In short, the argument of this thesis is that the integration of cosmology and social ethics in Cappadocian work and thought stands in direct contrast to the perspectives offered by the Emperors Julian and Valens, respectively. In turn, they construct a moral imagination and subsequently offer moral judgments that represent a contrast-cultural to that operative in Roman ideology. Yet, as mentioned, this contrast-culture was not merely an exercise in polemics or theological speculation. Instead, it was a contrast-culture not only envisioned but also created in the form of the monastic city of the *Basileias*.

The Basileias

While the vast majority of this thesis will focus on *how* and *why* the Cappadocians integrated cosmology and social ethics, it important to briefly discuss *where* the Cappadocians integrated this vision. It is the argument here that this vision was most fully expressed in the community of the *Basileias* and this community stood in direct contrast to the Roman ideology described above.

As mentioned, the importance of the famine begun in 368 cannot be overemphasized. To this point, virtually every text under scrutiny in this thesis was penned and, in the case of homilies, delivered either in the midst of or in the aftermath of

this catastrophe. To put a finer point on it, it was in the midst of this famine that the Cappadocians' works made an overt turn towards social ethics. This is evident in Basil's three "famine homilies" given during the height of the famine. It is also evident in Gregory of Nyssa's and Gregory of Nazianzus' homilies on the poor. Furthermore, their discussion on slavery and usury were written in relation to this crisis. This is also the case for their cosmological works, which, as will be argued, describe the cosmos in decidedly moral terms. Simply put, their extended treatments of creation, humanity, or community did not receive extended treatment prior to this drought and ensuing famine. This is not to say that these themes and motifs were not operative in Cappadocian thought prior to this catastrophe. Moreover, it is not the argument here that these themes and motifs were absent in the Christian moral imagination until treated by the Cappadocians. It is merely the point here that the Cappadocians' extended treatments of these issues all stand in direct relation to the events begun in 368.

It is important to make a few points relevant to Roman ideology. The works antecedent to the famine, in a sense, reflect the Roman ideology. While the poor were not necessarily 'invisible' to the Cappadocians, neither were the poor a central concern in their works prior to the famine. Much of their works antecedent to the famine related to the polemics and struggles with the Arians and Julian. In turn, as will be discussed, the cosmological issue was also operative in Cappadocian thought especially as it relates to Julian's theological allegiances to Hesiod and Plato. While there is insufficient evidence concerning their engagement prior to this period, after 368 the poor became a central concern for the Cappadocians.

To begin, the famine of 368 prompted the Cappadocians', especially Basil's, much lauded efforts towards social justice and care for the impoverished.¹⁰¹ This included Basil's well-documented efforts to distribute food to the needy and aid the sick.¹⁰² In this regard, the term "second Joseph" is not entirely inappropriate.¹⁰³ Basil not only coordinated efforts to encourage, even cajole, the wealthy to contribute to famine relief¹⁰⁴ but also as C. Paul Schroeder describes it, "Basil distributed much of what remained of his paternal inheritance in order to help provide for the starving people of Caesarea."¹⁰⁵ There are two points relevant here. First, Basil considered the poor worthy of aid. While in a contemporary sense this might not seem remarkable (although perhaps it actually is), in direct relation to Roman ideology such a notion would be virtually incomprehensible. Although the Roman state did at time distribute food to the poor, it was consistently from a negative assessment of the poor. They were fed to curb social unrest. As will be discussed, the Cappadocians' perspective on the poor was far from this negative assessment. What is important here is that the visibility of the poor for the Cappadocians was a central aspect of their social ethics.¹⁰⁶ Unlike the Roman ideology where the unpropertied poor were less than citizen and thus not "human", the affirmation of the humanity of the poor was a central theme in Cappadocian thought and practice. Second, Basil distributed his own inheritance to the poor. In an ideological context where paternal inheritance ensured membership in the social body, to renounce

¹⁰¹ Schroeder, 33.

¹⁰² Rousseau, 136, 141-142; Holman 64-66, Siecienski, 212.

¹⁰³ Holman, 65; See also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Panegyric On Saint Basil, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. VII* ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1978), Oration 43.34 406-307.

¹⁰⁴ "He was able to prevail upon the consciences of many wealthy people to open their storehouses and share with the poor." Schroeder, 33.

¹⁰⁵ Schroeder, 33; see also Gonzalez, 183-184.

¹⁰⁶ Susan Holman's work *The Hungry Are Dying* illustrates this point in remarkable detail. See especially, Holman, 99-109.

that inheritance would be to court Basil's own form of 'social death'. Basil's efforts, in this sense, had the political effect of denying the norms of membership in the Roman social body. It was the assertion of a different understanding of community and the criteria for participation in the community than that operative in the Roman Empire. The socially dead poor and the voluntary death of Basil converge in a space incomprehensible to Roman ideology. As will be argued, this is fundamentally tied to Basil's understanding of *koinonia* as the natural and normative social condition.

Beyond this, there is the construction of the *Basileias*. The construction of *Basileias* occurred during the years 369-372, which coincides with the famine begun in 368.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, this construction almost perfectly coincides with the economic reforms of Valens. Thus, while the reforms of Valens expose a privileging of the wealthy elites, the *Basileias* represents the privileging of the impoverished. The *Basileias* drew the poor into the community. According to Timothy Patitas, "as the *Basileias* grew, it attracted poor immigrants from many other places, some quite distant."¹⁰⁸ In fact, one of the criticisms leveled at the *Basileias* was that it was too successful at drawing in the poor from distant locations to the detriment of local relief efforts.¹⁰⁹ Regardless of this mild critique, it is important to note that the community of the *Basileias* did not merely accept the poor within its boundaries. Instead it was build around concern for the poor entering into the community. This is evident in the physical layout of the *Basileias* was specifically oriented towards caring for the poor. This layout included hospitals, an

¹⁰⁷ Holman, 73-74; Rousseau, 140-141.

¹⁰⁸ Timothy Patitas, "St. Basil's Philanthropic Program and Modern Microlending Strategies for Economic Self-Actualization," *Wealth and Poverty In Early Church and Society* ed. Susan Holman, 269.

¹⁰⁹ Holman, 147.

orphanage, housing and "soup kitchens" for "guests, needy travelers, and the poor."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the *Basileias* enacted programs for training the poor in trades who were then given work in "small factories" within the community.¹¹¹ Examples of this are evident in Basil's *Hexaemeron*, where he specifically addresses silk spinners, farmers, and day laborers amongst his congregation.¹¹² Thus, the poor were not merely passive recipients of charity, but also active participants and contributors to the vibrancy of the community. Not only were they "human" and the subject of concern but they were also, as will be discussed, "human" in the sense that they affirmed their nature through work.

This leads to the other aspect of the physical layout of the *Basileias*. In the community of the *Basileias*, the physical center was literally the Church.¹¹³ It was the point from which the community emanated. As Holman puts it here was "where courtyard met the cosmos".¹¹⁴ It was where the mystery of the Eucharist was the literal center of the community. In turn, it was where the Creed and its marriage of politics and cosmology were affirmed. In conjunction with this, it is important to note that the *Basileias* did not build walled enclosures until the sixth century.¹¹⁵ In this sense, the community emanating from the Church was not physically limited to a defined space. The boundary of the community was porous and indefinite. In fact, William Ramsay argues that the "New City seems to have caused the gradual concentration of the entire population of Caesarea round the ecclesiastical center, and the abandonment of the old

¹¹⁰ Holman, 74; Gonzalez, 183.

¹¹¹ W.M. Ramsay *The Church In The Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House 1979), 461; Patitas, 269.

¹¹² Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron, Saint Basil: Exegetical Homilies* trans. Agnes Claire Way, homily 3.1, 37; homily 8.7, 130, 132

¹¹³ Patitas, 269; Rousseau, 140-141.

¹¹⁴ Holman, 169.

¹¹⁵ Patitas, 270.

city.”¹¹⁶ Ramsay goes on to speculate that the modern city of Kayseri is actually built on the remains of the *Basileias* and not the old city of Caesarea.¹¹⁷ Thus, if one measures success by size and longevity, then the community of *Basileias* was an unqualified achievement.

The point here is not to simply lionize the efforts of Basil and the Cappadocians. Instead, the point here is that Julian’s fears were not unfounded. The *Basileias* did encroach on the political space of the Empire. As Schroeder argues, “The Basiliad is not primarily a new kind of charitable institution, but rather a new set of relationships, a new social order.”¹¹⁸ In this sense, the *Basileias* as a polis, as a political entity, infiltrated the space of hostile Roman Empire. But, this infiltration did not represent a crass grab for power and influence. Though certainly ambitious and audacious, the *Basileias* was foremost, as Holman puts it, “the ideal *koinonia* of the Christian *polis*.”¹¹⁹ It was a community, a monastic city, where its literal center was where the social body affirmed a cosmology and practiced a form of life within a social vision that contrasted to the their corresponding analogues in Roman ideology. In the terms employed in this thesis it was where *kalon* and *koinonia* became unified. While the remainder of this thesis will unpack what this unity entails and its implications within a hostile Roman ideology, it ought not be forgotten that it was within the community of the *Basileias* that the Cappadocians’ moral imagination came to full fruition.

¹¹⁶ Ramsay, 464.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 464.

¹¹⁸ Schroeder, 38.

¹¹⁹ Holman, 101.

Part I: Bearing the Weight of Becoming

The first part of this thesis will focus on the Cappadocians' cosmological perspective, specifically as it pertains to creation *ex nihilo* and the *imago Dei*. It will be argued that the Cappadocians interpret creation *ex nihilo* in terms of *kalon* or beauty as the harmonious unfolding of creation toward its eschatological fulfillment. In turn, within the cosmic *kalon*, humanity the *imago Dei* is the collective representation of the material and spiritual aspects of the cosmos in its fullness. Thus, as the diverse but unified *Imago Dei*, humanity serves a mediating role within creation that brings the entirety of the cosmos into concert. Ultimately, it will be argued that the integration of the cosmic *kalon* and the *imago Dei* serve as the frame within which the Cappadocians' social vision operates. It is their moral imagination expressed in cosmological terms.

Chapter 1: God as Cause and the Good

The Cappadocians' cosmological vision is represented, in its most comprehensive form, in Basil of Caesarea's exegetical homilies on the six days of creation, or the *Hexaemeron*. This is not to say that Basil's homilies represent the entirety of Cappadocian cosmological thought or that this cosmology is absent from their antecedent works. At the same time, it is the case that the *Hexaemeron* is the comprehensive expression of the Cappadocians' cosmological perspective. On this point, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa were both in explicit agreement.¹²⁰ Thus, the *Hexaemeron* can be understood as the authoritative expression of Cappadocian cosmology.

That being said, this initial discussion will focus on how Basil articulates this cosmology from within the Scriptural tradition. The first point of discussion entails Basil's articulation of the premise from which his account of creation unfolds. This premise is simply that God is the sole, eternal, and good Creator of the cosmos. To illustrate this point, Basil's work will be discussed through its critical engagement with prominent cosmological accounts within Hellenism that contradict this premise. Most notably, Basil rejects the notions that the cosmos is eternal, that God is co-eternal with matter, and that God can be morally qualified as evil represented in the works of

¹²⁰Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Creation of Humanity", *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. V* ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1979), §1, 387; Nazianzus, *Panegyric*, 43.67, 417.

Aristotle, Plato, and Hesiod, respectively.¹²¹ Ultimately, creation *ex nihilo* serves as the grounds of Basil's cosmology as well as his critique of prominent Hellenistic cosmological thought.

Mosaic Authorship, "Worldly Wisdom", and Scriptural Authority

Before moving into to specifics of Basil's cosmological vision and its relationship to prominent philosophical-theological cosmologies within Hellenism, it is important to understand how Basil's understanding of scriptural authority affected his stance towards other cosmological accounts. Most important to this discussion is the priority of scripture over all 'worldly wisdom'. This priority is dependent on Basil's understanding of the Mosaic authorship of Genesis.

Basil begins his Hexaemeron with a discussion on the Mosaic authorship of Genesis. For example, Basil initiates his first homily with the statement, "Moses is the author of this narrative."¹²² Insofar as the Mosaic authorship is central to Basil's understanding of Scriptural authority, he is here asserting that the biblical narrative of creation *ex nihilo* is ultimately authoritative. In this regard Basil asserts that Moses was "equal to the angels, being worthy of the sight of God face to face."¹²³ This face-to-face encounter with God at Sinai was an entrance into the apophatic mystery and entailed entrance into a vision not attainable through the efforts of empirical investigation but

¹²¹ Now, it is not possible in this thesis to discuss in detail every cosmology within Hellenism. The cosmologies active during this time are staggering in both diversity and depth. Not only were there the philosophical cosmologies of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics but also the theological/literary cosmologies of Hesiod and Aeschylus. To do any of them justice would be an entire work unto itself. Instead, insofar as this thesis is focused on the cosmological vision offered by Basil in his hexaemeral homilies, this chapter will begin with Basil's concepts and assertions and fold in references, arguments against, and appropriations as necessary to explain not only what concepts he is articulating but why it was important for him to do so.

¹²² Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 1.2, 5.

¹²³ While in modern scholarship the claim of Mosaic authorship of Genesis is a problem unto itself, for the purposes of this discussion the Mosaic authorship was not the point of controversy. The controversy revolved around how it was interpreted. *Ibid.*, 1.1, 4.

only by grace of the Most High.¹²⁴ Thus, for Basil, Moses was found to be “acceptable to God.”¹²⁵ As this pertains to the discussion at hand, for Basil the account of Genesis is privileged because it was authored by one who experienced theophany, which elevates it above accounts offered by those not so privileged. For Basil, the accounts from ‘worldly wisdom’ all represent “very laborious vanity” insofar as they are mutually invalidating.¹²⁶ Thus, Basil draws a distinction between the scriptural account of creation and ‘worldly wisdom’ of empirically derived scientific and philosophic cosmologies. Basil’s critique of cosmologies derived from “geometry and arithmetical investigations” as well as “the much-discussed astronomy” is that none are definitive and often contradictory.¹²⁷ At the same time, Basil understands scripture’s relationship to these perspectives as foremost corrective. For Basil the over-emphasis on empiricism or the “recourse to material origins” is rooted in an “initial ignorance.”¹²⁸ This initial ignorance is the ignorance of those who do not benefit from divine revelation.

In contrast, Moses is the exemplar of how revelation corrects ‘worldly wisdom’. Basil argues that although Moses was educated by “the wise men of Egypt” during his

¹²⁴ There is not the space here for a detailed discussion of the difference between apophatic and negative theology. But, according to the eminent Orthodox theologian Dimitru Staniloae, while negative theology is a part of apophatic theology, it is not sufficient to encompass the apophatic “vision” or “experience”. Negative theology, according to Staniloae, entails a “simple intellectual renunciation” that remains essentially a “rational operation”. Apophaticism is a pure encounter with God that by way of God’s ineffability cannot be expressed in positive terms. Therefore, in Staniloae’s understanding, the apophatic vision is the positive experience inexpressible in positive terms. As this bears on the experience of God by Moses, Staniloae states, “the ascent on Mt. Sinai toward the darkness of incomprehensibility is considered as the way of contemplation, preferable to Moses’ first encounter with God, when He appeared to him in the burning bush. Moses knows God because he realizes that he can’t know Him.” Simply put, in Staniloae’s understanding, an apophatic vision is a positive encounter; negative theology is the inability to express that encounter in rational terms. It is this sense that “apophatic” is used here and anywhere else in this thesis. Dimitru Staniloae *Orthodox Spirituality* (South Canaan, PA: St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Seminary Press 2002), 230-234.

¹²⁵ Basil, *Hexameron* 1.1, 4; see also Acts 7.20 NRSV.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1.3, 7.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 1.3, 7.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1.2, 5.

youth at the court of Pharaoh, his status as one “acknowledged to be acceptable to God” placed Moses above the teachings of the wise.¹²⁹ It was the “teachings of the Spirit” that elevated Moses above “the persuasive language of human wisdom.”¹³⁰ At the same time, elevation does not entail absolute negation. He does not argue that the scriptural account invalidates worldly wisdom but instead orders it properly. In his “Letter to Young Men” Basil argues “even Moses, that illustrious man whose name for wisdom is the greatest among all humankind, first trained his mind in the learning of the Egyptians.”¹³¹ In turn, it was not the case for Basil that this instruction served only to refute their errors. Instead he states, “This pagan learning is not without usefulness for the soul that has been sufficiently affirmed.”¹³² For Basil the elevation of Moses and, in turn, Genesis is not an outright rejection of perspectives from “pagan learning”, instead it is that which properly orders that learning by one who encountered the ‘most high God’ directly. This point is especially relevant to the argument from Julian. Whereas Julian’s perspective is absolute separation, Basil in a qualified way is willing to constructively engage with Hellenistic cosmology.

For a Christian bishop interpreting the cosmos for a Christian congregation, to assert the primacy of scripture is not all that remarkable. Instead, what is important for Basil is how this frames the subsequent cosmological discussion. Once framed by the primacy of scripture, Basil opens a conceptual space in which he is able to simultaneously engage and critique the cosmologies operative in Hellenistic thought.

¹²⁹ Basil *Hexameron* 1.1, 4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.1, 4-5.

¹³¹ Basil of Caesarea, “St. Basil’s Address To Young Men On How They Might Derive Benefit From Greek Literature”, *St. Basil: The Letters vol. IV* trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1961), § III, 387.

¹³² *Ibid.*, § III, 387.

Basil here stands in for Moses, not merely as an interpreter but as one whose own narrative parallels that of Moses. For as discussed, Basil's intellectual formation in Athens entailed a considerable breadth of worldly knowledge. In turn, it has often been pointed out that Basil's work is heavily influenced by Plato's *Timaeus* and, as will be discussed, there are clear affinities between Basil and Plato.¹³³ In addition, there are elements of Philo, Plotinus, Origen, Aristotle, and the Stoics among a host of others that if not directly referred to are representative of the concepts that Basil displays familiarity with in his homilies.¹³⁴ At the same time, these influences ought not be understood as standing parallel with scriptural authority for Basil, as if his cosmology were a pastiche of multiple sources with equal authority. For Basil, it is always-already the authority of scripture that is decisive. Just as Moses surpassed pagan thought through his theophany, so too does scripture supersede Hellenistic thought. Thus, where they conflict, there is no question for Basil which perspective is authoritative. As theologian M.A. Orphanos argues Basil's cosmology is "basically Biblical, theological, and moral."¹³⁵ Ultimately, Basil's work is foremost a scriptural account that holds itself above any other cosmological perspectives. Nothing is more vital in this regard than Basil's assertion of creation *ex nihilo* and its cosmological implications.

God Created *Ex Nihilo*

The implications of creation *ex nihilo* are of such vital importance to Basil's cosmology that he devotes the entire first hexaemeral homily to the implications of

¹³³ Andrew Louth asserts this as the "universe of discourse" with which Basil both draws and contends. Louth, 294; Rousseau, 28, 320; Way pg xi;

¹³⁴ M.A. Orphanos *Creation And Salvation According To St. Basil Of Caesarea* (Athens, Greece: Gregorios Parisianos 1975), 42-42, Way pg xi.

¹³⁵ Orphanos, 40.

Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."¹³⁶ This first line of Scripture contains the foundational concepts from which Basil's cosmology unfolds. In the simplest terms, the cosmos was created and God created it. In turn, cosmos was caused rationally and with purpose. In order to understand why these foundational concepts were of such vital importance to Basil, it is necessary to attend to two alternative causal theories prominent in Hellenistic thought. The first is the notion that the cosmos is itself eternal and that God operates within this eternal cosmos. The second is that matter is co-eternal with God and that the cosmos is a product of these co-eternal principles. These notions are represented in the cosmologies of Aristotle and Plato respectively. In turn, Basil holds these two theories in contrast to Genesis 1:1. For Basil God is necessary for creation but creation was not necessary for God.

The first theory Basil dismisses is that of an eternal cosmos. The eternal cosmos has two features: the eternal world and the eternal heavens. Basil attends to both of these aspects in Homily I. In the first case of an eternal world, Basil refers to the "recourse to material origins" that refer the "the beginning of the universe to the elements of the world."¹³⁷ In the second case of an eternal heaven, Basil refers to the notion "heaven" as being uncreated from "eternity."¹³⁸ Both of these concepts are represented in the works of Aristotle.¹³⁹ The first notion of the eternal world comes from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where he states, "the first philosophers, then, most thought the principles which were of the nature of matter were the only principles of all things."¹⁴⁰ The second notion of the

¹³⁶ Gen 1.1 NRSV

¹³⁷ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.2, 5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1.3, 7.

¹³⁹ Isaac Miller, "Idolatry and the Polemics of World Formation from Philo to Augustine", *The Journal of Religious History* 28 no. 2 (June 2004), 134; Way fn8 homily 1.2, 5 and fn13 1.3, 7.

¹⁴⁰ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.3.983b, 693

eternal heaven is from Aristotle's *On the Heavens*, where he states, "That the heaven as a whole neither came into being nor admit of destruction, as some assert, but is one and eternal, with no end or beginning."¹⁴¹ Within Aristotle's eternal cosmos, neither the material world nor the heavens are created. The cosmos in its entirety is eternal.

This is not to say that Aristotle had no sense of "God". Aristotle postulated the logical necessity of the Unmoved or Prime Mover. He states, "If there is something of this nature, a movement that is itself unmoved and eternal, then that which is first moved by it must be eternal."¹⁴² At the same time, this often referred to principle does not locate the "unmoved mover" from eternity distinct from the cosmos. It is a principle that acts *within* the eternal cosmos.¹⁴³ Furthermore, the "unmoved mover" is for Aristotle a logical necessity within the cosmos, not a moral entity, as it will be for Plato, much less the God of creation *ex nihilo*. Thus, even with Aristotle's unmoved mover, the cosmos remains eternal, without end or beginning. The unmoved mover is an impersonal logical necessity for movement within the eternal cosmos.

Basil found Aristotle's theory untenable. First, Basil believes this argument collapses on its own empirical foundations. He argues that the "whole of anything whatsoever, whose parts are subject to corruption and change, must also at some time submit to the same changes as its parts."¹⁴⁴ If "corruption and change" are necessary to each part of the cosmos in particular, then the cosmos as a whole must also abide by this principle.¹⁴⁵ Thus, to affirm the eternal cosmos is to assert a notion of the whole, an

¹⁴¹ Aristotle, *On the Heavens* I.1.283b, 427.

¹⁴² Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.6.260a, 376.

¹⁴³ "If the first principle is permanent, the universe must also be permanent, since it is continuous with the first principle." Aristotle, *Physics* VIII.6.259b, 376.

¹⁴⁴ Basil, *Hexameron* 1.3, 7.

¹⁴⁵ Christopher Kaiser points out that this argument against Aristotle fundamental to the development of scientific thought through the 17th century originated with Basil though has "not always been properly

eternal cosmos, that is incongruent with its constituent parts, transience. Second, and most importantly, if God as the “unmoved mover” or first principle is contained within the eternal cosmos, the eternal cosmos itself cannot have a rational cause. God as an “unmoved mover” is only a rational cause within a pre-existing and eternal cosmos. Thus Basil infers that the “universe was without guide and without rule, as if borne around by chance.”¹⁴⁶ For Basil this is an unacceptable conclusion precisely because the principle of transience is evidence of God’s rational plan unfolding within the cosmos. As will be discussed, Basil’s cosmology is eschatologically purposed. To affirm the eternal cosmos is to deny the Creator. To deny a Creator is to deny that there is a fundamental purpose to the creation. Thus, Basil argues those “who could not recognize God, did not concede that a rational cause was the author of the creation of the universe.”¹⁴⁷ In Basil’s view without God and creation *ex nihilo* the cosmos cannot have rational origins. Without rational origins the cosmos cannot be purposed. In short, aside from pointing out the logical inconsistency of the eternal cosmos, Basil rejects this notion insofar as it contradicts *creation ex nihilo* and the rational origin and purpose of creation.

These two arguments against the notion of an eternal cosmos are indicative of two interconnected aspects fundamental to Basil’s cosmology. First, the cosmos must amount to a unified whole that is consistent with the transience within the cosmos. Second, in order for that transience to amount to a unified whole, the cosmos must be “rationally authored.” In turn, it is not acceptable for Basil that only the transience within the cosmos has rational cause, but the whole of the cosmos must also have a rational cause.

credited.” Christopher Kaiser *Creational Theology and The History of Physical Science: From Basil to Bohr* (New York, NY: Brill 1997), 18.

¹⁴⁶ Basil, *Hexameron* 1.3, 6.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.2, 5.

If, the cosmos is a product of chance, then it is not a necessary conclusion that the transience within the cosmos follows a rational course. Basil corrects, rather than dismissing, the idea of an eternal cosmos, as produced from a tradition without creation *ex nihilo*.¹⁴⁸ In turn, for Basil creation *ex nihilo* corrects the fundamental error within the notion of an eternal cosmos insofar as creation *ex nihilo* is able to account for both the rational cause of the cosmos and the relationship of transience to the cosmos as a unified whole. This corrective has two implications for this discussion going forward. First, the Cappadocians are willing to accept certain aspects of Aristotelian logic constructively so long as it remains consistent with their scriptural premise. As will be discussed, a similar dynamic is at work in their moral judgments on usury (*tokos*). Second is how Basil's cosmology reconciles transience with the unity of the cosmos. In this sense, this reconciliation of transience with unity is best understood in light of the Cappadocians' challenge to Plato's moral qualification on material existence.

The second theory that Basil dismisses is that of the co-eternality of matter with God. Between the two, this Platonic theory is the more crucial challenge to Basil's cosmology. Much of this difficulty arises in relation to the qualitative assessments that Plato imposes on the co-eternal matter in relation to God. For Plato, God imposes order on eternally pre-existing matter. The moral implications of this will be discussed subsequently. For now, its relevance concerns the causal implications of co-eternal matter in contrast to creation *ex nihilo*. For Plato the formation of the cosmos was necessary. For Basil, it was gratuitous.

In Plato's view the cosmos was fashioned by God from eternally pre-existing matter. In the *Timaeus* Plato states of God, "Wherefore also finding the whole visible

¹⁴⁸ Basil, *Hexameron* 1.2, 5.

sphere not at rest, but moving in an irregular and disorderly fashion, out of disorder he brought order, considering that this was in every way better than the other.”¹⁴⁹ In Plato’s cosmos, God happens upon the co-eternal matter, sees it as disordered, and imposes order upon it. Therefore, God was the creator of order out of disorder, form out of unformed matter, not the creator of matter itself.¹⁵⁰ In turn, Plato’s God is quite literally the “good artificer”, fashioning the cosmos from pre-existing material like a sculptor with marble or a potter with clay.¹⁵¹ From this, Plato concludes, the “creation of the world is the combined work of necessity and mind.”¹⁵² It was a necessity of God, seeing disorder, to order matter.

In the words of biographer Phillip Rousseau, Basil found the notion of co-eternal matter from Plato “abhorrent.”¹⁵³ Unlike the notion of an eternal cosmos via Aristotle, which Basil attributed to “initial ignorance,” Plato’s cosmology affirms God’s eternal stance relative to the cosmos and also implies a rational activity. In this sense, Plato’s cosmology shares key affinities with creation *ex nihilo*. At the same time, there were three interrelated implications of Plato’s co-eternal matter that Basil objected to. First, Basil rejected the implication that eternal matter eclipsed the supremacy of God. For Basil, to assert “matter itself is uncreated” is to place matter in “equal rank with God.”¹⁵⁴ This would diminish God relative to the material existence. Second, Plato’s theory made God subject to necessity, the implication being that God had diminished God’s self by

¹⁴⁹ Plato, *Timaeus*, *Collected Dialogues* ed. Edith Hamilton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1961), 30e, 1162. All subsequent references to Plato’s works are from the Hamilton collection.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30a, 1162.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 29a, 1162.

¹⁵² Plato, *Timaeus*, 47e-48a, 1175.

¹⁵³ According to Rousseau, while this idea was “entirely respectable within the classical tradition, the Cappadocians found it abhorrent.” Rousseau, 335.

¹⁵⁴ Basil, *Hexameron* 2.2, 23.

necessity in the formation of the cosmos.¹⁵⁵ Finally, the co-eternality of matter would imply that God was lacking, “the one providing substance without form, and the other possessing an understanding of shapes but without matter, so that what was lacking to each might come from the other.”¹⁵⁶ Therefore, God was unable to create the cosmos and needed the eternal matter to present the opportunity to express God’s “art.”¹⁵⁷ The cosmos then was evidence that God was not absolute, was subject, and thus lacking in power. For Basil, all three fundamentally opposed creation *ex nihilo*.

Basil attacks the notion of co-eternal matter by asserting the absolute creative power of God. For Basil, God is the “Creator and Producer of all things.”¹⁵⁸ God created matter and eternity is exclusive to God. Thus, for Basil, God cannot be the “Inventor of the shapes but the Creator of the very nature of all that exists.”¹⁵⁹ The creation of the cosmos was not an act of necessity from a “good artificer” but a gratuitous act that “by the weight of his will alone brought the mighty creations of the visible world into existence.”¹⁶⁰ In turn, the act of creation affirmed not God’s insufficiency but God’s absolute sufficiency. Basil, in turning Plato’s “artificer” on its head, likens God to a potter who in forming a single vase “has exhausted neither his art nor his power.”¹⁶¹ In fact, the creation of the entire cosmos required very little effort or a “very small part of the power of the Creator” that is not “commensurate with one world, but infinitely greater.”¹⁶² Now it must be noted that Basil is here making a theological argument and

¹⁵⁵ “His own work would be keeping God unsuccessful and inefficacious because of the deficiency of matter.” Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.2, 23.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.3, 25.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.3, 25.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1.5, 9.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 1.2, 6.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 1.2, 6.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 1.2, 6.

¹⁶² Ibid., 1.2, 6.

not a philosophical one. Unlike his refutation of Aristotle's eternal cosmos, Basil does not point out the logical inconsistency of Plato's cosmological theory. Yet, neither does he simply dismiss it as "ignorance" as he does with the eternal cosmos. For Basil this is a cosmology to be taken seriously because it shares certain affinities with the biblical narrative. At the same time, the biblical narrative precludes his accepting aspects of Plato's cosmology on principle. Most importantly, the creation of the cosmos was not necessary for God. Creation was an utterly gratuitous activity.

In Basil's first two hexaemeral homilies he contends with two prominent cosmological theories of the eternal cosmos and the co-eternality of matter. By challenging these two cosmologies from creation *ex nihilo*, he argues that God was necessary for creation but that the creation of the cosmos was not necessary for God. Furthermore, he affirms the supremacy and absolute power of God and the utter gratuitousness of creation. These are two fundamental principles of Basil's cosmological framework. Specifically, for Basil the implications of creation *ex nihilo* are that the cosmos is derived from a rational cause and that this rational cause was not a product of necessity but gratuity from an absolute and uncompromised God. Now, these principles, though essential, do not provide the entirety of Basil's framework. The essential component yet to be addressed is the moral qualification on creation *ex nihilo*. For it is not merely the case that for Basil the cosmos was created rationally or from an absolute power but also that a God of absolute goodness created the cosmos. In order to address this, the conversation will turn from the philosophical accounts of Aristotle and Plato to the narrative cosmological account of Hesiod.

God is Good

Thus far, this chapter has focused on Basil's critique of causal arguments concerning cosmic origins. According to Basil God was necessary for creation but creation of the cosmos was not necessary for God. Yet there has not been thus far any explicit moral qualification. This means that God as cause and God being Good do not necessarily follow.¹⁶³ It is the argument here that Basil had a profound stake in describing God as the "bounteous Goodness"¹⁶⁴ and God's will towards creation as reflected in this Goodness. This stake is exposed in the cosmology portrayed by the poet Hesiod in his theogenies and its inheritor, the dramatic playwright Aeschylus, and their effect on the moral imagination of classical Hellenism.¹⁶⁵

To begin, the Cappadocians were engaged with the literature of Hesiod and Aeschylus and in a qualified way willing to engage with them positively.¹⁶⁶ In his

¹⁶³ The distinction here is not within Basil's thought but with the differing cosmological perspectives with which he is engaged. Put another way, Aristotle and Hesiod offer differing cosmological accounts. To reject or refute Aristotle's cosmology does not necessarily refute Hesiod's. The distinction then is based on who Basil is opposing, not a distinction within his cosmology. For Basil there is one creation from one God.

¹⁶⁴ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.2, 6.

¹⁶⁵ This is a generally non-controversial connection. For an explicit and thorough discussion of the connection between the two see Friedrich Solmsen's work *Hesiod and Aeschylus*. Specifically, Solmsen describes how Aeschylus' tragic plays were inseparably dependent on Hesiod's cosmology. Obviously there are differences between the two but Solmsen convincingly argues that the cosmology Aeschylus inhabits is derived from Hesiod's. Now, it is not possible to articulate with due depth the content or implications of Hesiod's cosmos, much less an in depth analysis of Aeschylus. To accomplish that would be a work unto itself. It is not the purpose of this discussion to offer such a treatment. At the same time, Basil does not make *explicit* references to either Plato or Aristotle. For example, Basil does not state in his homilies, "The co-eternality of matter with God *according to Plato* is incorrect." Instead, it is by reading the *Hexaemeron* in a context where Platonic and Aristotelian thought were operative that certain arguments by Basil are understood in reference to Plato or Aristotle. As Rousseau points out, notions of an eternal cosmos or the co-eternality of matter were "entirely respectable within the classical tradition." So while Plato and Aristotle are articulations of this principle, it is not the case that Basil can be unequivocally understood as referring to their works, though evidence suggests it. To read the *Hexaemeron* in light of Hesiod's cosmology shows a similar level of engagement. Friedrich Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1949), *passim*, especially Chapter II, 124-177; Rousseau, 176.

¹⁶⁶ Now, there is potentially an objection here that deserves attention. For it is entirely possible that Basil, in a meditation on Genesis, is contending directly with certain Gnostic ideas, especially those of Marcionites. It is not the aim of this argument to refute this claim but it is the argument here that this claim and that are not mutually exclusive. It was the influence of Hellenistic religion that the Cappadocians

previously discussed *Letter to Young Men*, a letter intended to guide young students in the necessary discernment for reading Greek literature, Basil's view on engaging classical literature can be best described as qualified enthusiasm. The aim of Basil's letter was not to discourage the reading of classics but to instruct students on how to read the classics with Christian discernment. In this work, he makes direct references to Hesiod, Homer, and the tragedian Euripides. Just as with the philosophical and scientific cosmologies of "the wise Greeks", Moses and scripture are the standard against which engagement with Classical literature was to be measured.¹⁶⁷ Thus, classical literature was not condemned *tout court* but only in the aspects that contradicted Scripture.

At the same time, the areas that Basil and his fellow Cappadocians objected to, they objected to vehemently. In the same letter Basil warns of classic poets, "least of all shall we give attention to them when they narrate anything about the gods."¹⁶⁸ On one hand, this can and should be understood as a rejection of Hellenistic polytheism. On the other hand, it was also a rejection of the content of these narratives that portrayed the divine and the cosmos in anything but "good" terms. According to eminent Christian historian Jaroslav Pelikan, the Cappadocians "knew and despised the theogonies of Hesiod as unworthy depictions of the sublimity of the divine nature."¹⁶⁹ For example, Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On Virginity* states, "if you want to learn how human life is

abhorred in the Gnostic theology and, especially in the case of the Marcionites, it is interpreting the Old Testament as involving a tragic "God" that was the foundation of the heresy. The point is that there is a link between Gnosticism and the tragic cosmos of Hesiod and Aeschylus. The cosmos of Hesiod and Aeschylus subsumes the Christian narrative in the Gnostics. For a discussion on the link between Gnostics and "heathens", see Pelikan, 74-89. For an outright claim in this regard Rousseau states, "Gnostics were dismissed, largely because their taste for mythology was at odds with a strict interpretation of the Bible". Rousseau, 336. He makes this claim in reference to the *Hexaemeron* homilies 1 and 4.

¹⁶⁷ "Now it is said that even Moses, that illustrious man whose name for wisdom is the greatest among all humanity, first trained his mind in the learning of the Egyptians, and then proceeded to the contemplation of Him who is." Basil, *To Young Men*, §3, 387

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., §3, 387.

¹⁶⁹ Pelikan, 17.

filled with such evils, do not go to the old stories which the poets use for the plots of their dramas.”¹⁷⁰ In the works of Hesiod and Aeschylus, evil and suffering are the natural condition within the cosmos. It is this notion that the Cappadocians, from a Scriptural view, reject.

But how pervasive was Hesiod’s cosmology? In this regard, it was not merely the content that the Cappadocians were wary of but the pervasiveness of this narrative in the Hellenistic imagination. As Pelikan points out, the Cappadocians were wary of the “powerful language and dramatic force” of classical literature and its subsequent articulation of the “shocking stories of ancient Greek mythology.”¹⁷¹ It was not only on principle that the Cappadocians were wary of the cosmologies of Hesiod but also on the effects. In order to understand this concern it is important to note how prevalent Hesiod’s work was in Hellenistic culture. According to most accounts, Hesiod’s two major works, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, were written somewhere between the seventh and eighth century B.C. and, more than likely, these works were written contemporary with or shortly after Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.¹⁷² While Hesiod is considered the first to articulate this particular cosmology in literary form, it is generally agreed that he did not “invent” it but drew it from pre-existing, probably oral, material.¹⁷³ Thus, Hesiod’s cosmology was working on the Hellenistic imagination beyond the millennium between him and the Cappadocians.

¹⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity, Ascetical Works* trans. Virginia Woods Callahan (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 1967), 20.

¹⁷¹ Pelikan, 11, 24.

¹⁷² Solmsen, 5-7.

¹⁷³ “In the case of the *Theogony*, then it is quite safe to say that much, perhaps even most, of Hesiod’s material is traditional, especially his recounting of the myth of the succession in heaven and his genealogies of the familiar gods of cult.” Jenny Strauss Clay *Hesiod’s Cosmos* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 2003), 4; Solmsen, 6.

According to historian Michael Grant, in spite of this chronological distance, this tradition, through the Promethean narrative, “remained popular” through Roman times, and though “not worshipped by the Greeks,” Prometheus was considered “the patron saint of the proletariat, handed down in folk memory.”¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, as classicist Edith Hamilton points out, Aeschylus’ plays, derived from Hesiod’s theogonies, were hugely popular among the Greeks and they “felt the appeal of the tragic to such a degree that they would gather thirty thousand strong to see performances.”¹⁷⁵ This is not an insignificant fact. For a largely uneducated and illiterate population,¹⁷⁶ theater worked to form the imagination of the population by reinforcing the aforementioned folk narratives. Just as the Cappadocians espoused the primacy of the common “simple Christian”, the Promethean narrative had a populist appeal that Aristotle and Plato, perhaps, did not.

The Cappadocians did not underestimate the formative effects of theater and the narratives they espoused. As Pelikan points out, “For all their knowledge of Classical Greek literature and their readiness to cite it with familiarity and affection, they followed the widespread practice of early Christians in using the word ‘theater’ primarily as a term of contempt.”¹⁷⁷ For example, Gregory of Nazianzus offers a negative portrayal of Greek theater in relation to the great drama of the Eucharist. He states:

Come stand at my side near the holy objects and this Eucharistic table . . . Come, I shall proclaim you with our laurels and with joyous voice proclaim you victor, not in the center of Olympia or some small Greek theater, but in the presence of God and angels and the full complement of the Church.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ Michael Grant, *Myths Of The Greeks And Romans* (Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company 1961), 123.

¹⁷⁵ Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company Inc. 1930), 138.

¹⁷⁶ Holman, 27.

¹⁷⁷ Pelikan, 24.

¹⁷⁸ Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Praise of Hero the Philosopher, St. Gregory of Nazianzus Selected Orations* trans. Martha Vinson. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003) 25.2, 158.

In turn, he goes on to warn that the Eucharist is not celebrated for "those heroes or daimones whose catastrophes are celebrated in myth, but in honor of the living God."¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the Cappadocians' fear was more than intellectual; it was rooted in the fear that these portrayals would be "turned to" by the common people.¹⁸⁰

At the same time, this cosmology had particular ideological implications. The Roman orator Cicero relies on Hesiod not only in his theological work *On the Nature of the Gods*,¹⁸¹ but also in his political treatises *On the Commonwealth*¹⁸² and *On the Republic*.¹⁸³ Furthermore, it is important to recall that for Julian the cosmology of Hesiod was directly tied to the ideological aspects of his policies and understanding of the proper theological allegiances of the Roman citizen. Finally, and not incidentally, Plato considered Aeschylus' portrayal of Hesiod's cosmos in his tragic drama so insidious he had it banned from the *Republic*. Referring to Aeschylus, Plato states, "When anyone says that sort of thing about the gods, we shall be wroth with him, we will refuse him chorus. Neither will we allow teachers to use him for the education of the young."¹⁸⁴ Ironically, as will be shown, Plato's anthropology remains dependent on Hesiod's themes

¹⁷⁹ Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Praise of Hero* 25.2, 159.

¹⁸⁰ Hesiod and his cosmology were also relevant to the Gnostic controversies. For example, in the case of the Gnostics it was the assertion of parallel or even primary importance of pagan theology to scriptural authoritative that was challenged from the "orthodox" perspective. As Rousseau states of the Cappadocians, "Gnostics were dismissed, largely because their taste for mythology was at odds with a strict interpretation of the Bible." This is evident in Basil's second hexaemeral homily where he denounces the Marcionites and the Valentinians as coming from "the same source" of "myths" and "fabrications" that "pervert the words (of Moses) according to their own notions." Thus, one of the primary issues between the Cappadocians and the Gnostics was not whether there was any room for engagement with Hellenistic thought. As mentioned, Basil's letter was written as a guide for *discernment* while reading Hellenistic thought, not outright rejection. It was, instead, whether scripture and the vision it described would stand as the primary grounds for that engagement. See Rousseau, 335; Grant, 209-212; Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.4, 26-27.

¹⁸¹ Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods* trans. P.G. Walsh (New York, NY: Oxford Press 1997), I.36, 16.

¹⁸² Cicero, *On the Commonwealth* trans George Sabine and Stanley Smith (Columbus OH: The Ohio State University Press 1929), 163.

¹⁸³ Solmsen convincingly argues that Cicero's assertion that the Roman Empire was the "embodiment and sole upholder of Peace Justice and Order" was derived directly from Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Solmsen, 118-119.

¹⁸⁴ Plato, *Republic*, 383b, 630.

and motifs. Thus, the implications of Hesiod's cosmology were not merely sequestered into a circumscribed "religious space" or the space of the literate elite; it affected and formed prominent Hellenistic political theory and Roman ideology. In an important sense, the culture and ideology operative within the Roman Empire was saturated with Hesiod's themes and motifs.

In light of this, the substance of Hesiod's work is a portrayal of the cosmos as saturated by tragedy. This cosmology offered by Hesiod imbued the cosmos with suffering at the hands of a capricious and often pernicious divinity. In the words of Kearney, the vision that Hesiod's cosmology represented was one where "the whole of the cosmos is saturated with the guiltiness of being" or the fact that the tragic aspects of human existence are inescapably natural to that existence.¹⁸⁵ Furthermore, as Pelikan points out, Hesiod's cosmology describes the "network of evils that human life is."¹⁸⁶ In reference to Aeschylus and his subsequent development of Hesiod's themes, philosopher Paul Ricoeur states that "if there is a tragic vision of humanity in Aeschylus, that is because it is the other face of a tragic vision of the divine."¹⁸⁷ In sum, these analyses conclude that tragedy and evil were ingrained in the cosmology of Hesiod and in turn Aeschylus. The evidence of this in their respective works is ample, but as it pertains to this discussion a few have striking relevance, especially the notion that human evil is of divine origin and that the divine plan for humanity is ultimately destructive.

In Hesiod's theogonies he describes the entrance of evil into the world as a product of divine wrath from Zeus, the most powerful of the pantheistic gods. The

¹⁸⁵ Patrick Kearney, *The Wake Of Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press 1988), 86.

¹⁸⁶ This is in reference to Gregory of Nyssa's dismissal of the "old stories which the poets use for the plots of their dramas". Pelikan, 24; Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity*, 20.

¹⁸⁷ Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism Of Evil* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press 1967), 212.

narrative of Prometheus, Pandora and the entrance of evil into the world is one familiar to Western ears. The plot of the narrative generally follows that Zeus “hid fire” from humanity.¹⁸⁸ Prometheus stole the fire and gave it to humans. Zeus, upon discovering the theft, punished not only Prometheus but also humanity. His punishment for humanity entailed the creation of Pandora and Pandora’s box. Once Pandora’s box was opened, Zeus’ divine wrath filled the earth with “evil things” such as the “sickness that come to men by day” and evils that “in the night/moving of themselves they haunt us/bringing sorrow to mortals.”¹⁸⁹ In turn, the affliction of humanity was utterly unavoidable insofar as “there is no way to avoid what Zeus has intended.”¹⁹⁰ What this describes is a cosmos in which the most powerful divinity, Zeus, terrorizes humanity for the crimes of another, Prometheus.¹⁹¹ Furthermore, these terrors, because they are of divine origin, are unavoidable.

Yet, this ought not be construed as directly analogous to the Biblical Eden narrative. What this means is that it was not the case in these cosmologies that humanity existed in a state of happiness or even sufficiency before Prometheus’ “fall”. At best, as Clay points out, human life was a mixture of “good things and evil” even though it was thoroughly saturated with “misery and suffering.”¹⁹² Thus, it was Prometheus’ attempt to rescue humanity from their natural suffering that caused him to act in the first place. For example, in *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus boasts, “hear what troubles there were

¹⁸⁸ Hesiod, *Works and Days* in *Hesiod* trans. Richard Lattimore (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 1973) lines 50-105, 23.

¹⁸⁹ Hesiod, *Works and Days* lines 100-105, 30-31.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* line 105, 31.

¹⁹¹ The character of Prometheus is an entirely different though important matter. Paul Ricoeur considers Prometheus and the narrative he represents as one of the primary narratives undergirding all of Western culture, the other being Adam and Genesis. Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*, especially chapter II “The Wicked God and the ‘tragic’ vision of existence”, 211-231.

¹⁹² Clay, 83; Hesiod, *Works and Days* line 179, 39.

among men, how I found them witless and gave them the use of their wits and made them masters of their mind.”¹⁹³ Prometheus found humanity in a state of suffering and his crime was in response to this suffering from humanity. It was, in the words of theologian Demetrios Constantelos, an act of “great *philanthropia* for the future of humanity.”¹⁹⁴ Ironically, this charity compounded the tragedy of the human condition instead of alleviating it. Therefore, in this cosmology, the “natural” state of humanity was not happiness or sufficiency but always-already tragic. In Hesiod’s cosmos, suffering was natural and evil was, in a cosmological sense, a natural consequence of attempts to avoid that natural condition. In either case, both suffering and evil were conditions imposed on a passive humanity. Thus, in an important sense evil was natural to the cosmos, or at least a natural consequence of the cosmos within which humanity was a passive agent. Ultimately, the Promethean narrative takes the mixture of good and evil in a world of suffering and ensures, through the wrath of Zeus, that the tragic saturation of the cosmos is absolute.

Beyond the introduction of evil, Zeus is understood as willing the destruction of humanity. In the tragic drama *Prometheus Bound*, Aeschylus describes the intention of Zeus as intent on the annihilation of humanity. Prometheus describes the relationship of the gods to humanity, “to the unhappy breed/of mankind he gave no heed/intending to blot the race out and create a new.”¹⁹⁵ This refers to Hesiod’s *Works and Days*: “Zeus will destroy this generation of mortals/also.”¹⁹⁶ According to Clay, the unfolding of

¹⁹³ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* in *Aeschylus* ed. David Greene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1953), line 440, 327.

¹⁹⁴ Demetrios Constantelos, “The Hellenic Background and Nature of Patristic Philanthropy in the Early Byzantine Era”, *Wealth And Poverty In Early Church And Society*, 191.

¹⁹⁵ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* line 230, 319.

¹⁹⁶ Hesiod, *Works and Days* line 180, 39.

Zeus's plan for humanity was a "succession and evolution" that "follow a negative direction."¹⁹⁷ In turn, just as evil and suffering were natural to the cosmos, so too was the divine inclined toward humanity's "annihilation."¹⁹⁸ Zeus's plan for humanity was destruction.

These examples indicate the tragic cosmos alluded to by Ricouer, Kearney, and Pelikan. Tragedy is the *a priori* condition of the cosmos insofar as tragedy is the result of disrupting the natural condition of suffering.¹⁹⁹ This cosmology is not a causal philosophical cosmology but a moral theological cosmology. Specifically, the moral "nature" of the cosmos was suffering, evil, and destruction at the behest of a capricious and pernicious divinity. If nothing else, the influence of Hesiod's cosmology, woven into Roman ideology, points to the fact that the goodness of God was not a given. Christianity's assertion of a Good and Absolute God defied the theological underpinnings of the Empire.

It is against this tragic notion of the cosmos and the pernicious divinity within it that Basil has a vested interest in offering that God is in fact "good". Directly after dismissing Aristotle's eternal cosmos in Homily I, Basil proclaims:

The blessed Nature, the bounteous Goodness, the Beloved of all who are endowed with reason, the much desired Beauty, the Origin of all things created, the Fount of Life, the spiritual Light, the inaccessible Wisdom, He is the One who 'in the beginning created the heavens and the earth.'²⁰⁰

Here Basil moves beyond a description of the absolute and incomprehensible power of God to create. Basil asserts that God is not only the "blessed Nature" and "the Origin of

¹⁹⁷ Clay, 127.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 127.

¹⁹⁹ The classic example of Tragedy in this sense is Oedipus, who was fated to suffer incest and patricide. His "foreknowledge" of this fate caused him to attempt to avoid this fate, which ultimately failed and compounded his misery.

²⁰⁰ Basil, *Hexameron* 1.2, 6.

all things created” but also “the bounteous Goodness.” As will be discussed shortly the “bounteous Goodness” is evident in the cosmos for Basil in explicit ways that contrast to the notion of a tragic cosmos. What is important here is that this Goodness is directly linked to the “Nature” and “Origin” of the cosmos. Thus Basil integrates God as the Creator and God as Good. God is beyond a principle that explains the causal origin of the cosmos, much less representative of a hostile or capricious divinity. God is the Good and in turn the origin in the cosmos is derived from this absolute and ineffable Goodness.

Thus, in his second homily on the *Hexaemeron*, Basil attends to the untenable notion that evil is natural and a product of God. He states, “It is impious to say that evil has its origin from God, because naught contrary is produced by the contrary.”²⁰¹ Thus, because God is Good and God is the sole Creator of the cosmos in its entirety, evil cannot be the product of God. Furthermore, Basil warns, “Do not contemplate evil from without; and do not imagine some original nature of wickedness.”²⁰² In turn, evil cannot be the product of God, but neither is it possible for evil to be imposed “from without” on the cosmos. It is neither woven into the fabric of the cosmos nor is it a stance that God takes towards creation. God neither produces nor wills evil. Therefore, there cannot be for Basil a natural evil. Evil is entirely unnatural.

In sum, affirming God as the “bounteous Goodness” and “Origin of all things created” serve as the fundamental premises upon which Basil articulates his vision of an eschatological cosmos. God’s stance towards the cosmos is not destruction but for a good purpose. Furthermore, his rejection of a “natural evil” defies the notion that the cosmos is saturated with tragedy. In contrast, this good purpose entails the eschatological

²⁰¹ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.4, 28.

²⁰² Ibid., 2.5, 28.

becoming of the cosmos, the harmonious convergence of all creation toward its eschatological destiny.

Chapter 2: Eschatological Cosmos

Whereas the previous discussion focused on the centrality of creation *ex nihilo* and its subsequent challenges to prominent cosmological premises in Hellenistic thought, the focus of this discussion is how, from this premise, Basil constructs his vision of the cosmos. For Basil the cosmos is the product of God's continual creative power, oriented eschatologically, and saturated with the absolute goodness of the Creator. In turn, it is fundamentally unified, dynamic, and harmonious. This understanding of the cosmos is reflected in his interpretation of the eschatological implication of created time, the moral goodness of material transience, and the tendency towards community within creation. In short, it will be concluded that the cosmos for Basil is a place of beauty or *kalon*, a harmonious unfolding of God's ultimate purpose for creation.

Created Time, Eternity, and Eschatology

For Basil, time is an eschatological concept.²⁰³ Thus, time is created, time is finite, and time serves an eschatological purpose. According to Basil, time is a created aspect of the cosmos that carries it towards its eschatological destiny. In other words, for Basil time is an aspect of a cosmos created *ex nihilo*. It is not eternal. Basil states,

²⁰³ It is important to note that in Basil's cosmology time and matter are closely related. In fact, in many cases they are integrated concepts. Often when Basil speaks of time it will directly refer to transience and change in the material cosmos, but there is a distinction between time and material that is particularly relevant to the discussion at hand. Time, for Basil, is a created gift from God in which the cosmos progresses towards its eschatological destiny. Matter or the material cosmos, on the other hand, is that which becomes within time. The becoming of the cosmos is good or biblically "very good" but not yet perfected. Time is what carries this becoming towards its eschatological fulfillment. For Basil, neither exists without the other. For the purposes of this discussion, the distinction will be maintained to begin with to explain what each concept represents in Basil's cosmology. Ultimately the two will be rejoined in the discussion of *kalon*.

“And, if anyone should say contentiously that the beginning is time, let him know that he will be dividing it into parts of time. And these parts are beginning, middle, and end. But, it is entirely ridiculous to think of the beginning of a beginning.”²⁰⁴

In this statement, Basil affirms that time is created. The beginning cannot exist in time.

Instead, time is a product of the beginning. Thus, “As the beginning of the road is not yet the road . . . so also, the beginning of time is not yet time.”²⁰⁵ Time, as an act of creation *ex nihilo*, proceeds from eternity, which is timeless, immeasurable, and indivisible. Time is created and functions within creation. As Basil states: “Adapted by nature to the world and to the animals and plants in it, the passage of time began, always pressing on and flowing past, and nowhere checking its course.”²⁰⁶ Thus, as an aspect of creation, time, in a word, began.

In contrast, eternity is not a thing either created or uncreated. It is not a measurement of time even to infinity. Instead Basil states that eternity is “a certain condition older than the birth of the world and proper to the supramundane powers, one beyond time, everlasting, without beginning or end.”²⁰⁷ Thus, God does not act *in* eternity but *from* eternity. Eternity is a stance, the *nunc stans* of God toward creation. Just as time is created, eternity is uncreated. Thus, the relationship of the two is not representative of a quantitative but qualitative difference. As M.A. Orphanos describes it, for Basil time and eternity operate “as two different modes of existence, they differ essentially in quality not in measure of length.”²⁰⁸ Eternity is the stance of God; time is an aspect of creation.

²⁰⁴ Basil *Hexameron* 1.6, 11.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.6, 11

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.5, 9.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.5, 9.

²⁰⁸ Orphanos, 54.

In order to clarify this point and its contextual importance, it is necessary to hold this distinction in contrast to another operative theory within Hellenistic thought concerning the nature of time. This is best represented in the notion of eternal return. Briefly put, eternal return is the stoic notion that the nature of time is cyclical. In the words of Mircea Eliade, within this understanding of time "all moments and all situations in the cosmos are repeated *ad infinitum*."²⁰⁹ For example, one typing at a keyboard is the repetition of an act occurring infinitely and an act that will repeat infinitely in an "eternal present".²¹⁰ According to Eliade, the underlying purpose of this notion was "a supreme attempt toward the 'staticization' of becoming, toward annulling the irreversibility of time."²¹¹ Thus, within this notion time through infinite repetition attempts to "staticize" or contextualize change in an eternal present.

As this bears on the discussion at hand, it is important to recall the tragic cosmos of Hesiod. According to Eliade, eternal return is grounded in the notion that "the existence of humanity in the cosmos is regarded as a fall."²¹² It is not the actions of humanity that have a causal relationship to a fall but humanity's mere existence that is tragic or fallen. In turn, eternal return is a mechanism for grounding this condition as morally acceptable. As Eliade continues, in the case of eternal return "suffering becomes intelligible and hence tolerable . . . He {sic} tolerates it morally because *it is not absurd*."²¹³ The reason it is not absurd is because it is woven into the fabric of the cosmos and is "fated" to occur infinitely. The subject here has no moral agency regarding suffering and thus is neither the cause nor the remedy of that suffering.

²⁰⁹ Mircea Eliade, *The Myth Of Eternal Return* (New York, NY: Bollingen Foundation Inc. 1954), 123.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 75.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 98.

Beyond this, as this bears on the discussion going forward, the notion of eternal return was employed by the Roman Empire as an affirmation of the Roman State. As Eliade argues, the notion of eternal return was employed “through the myth of the eternal renewal of Rome” which, in turn, was “above all an attempt to give value to history on the cosmic plane.”²¹⁴ Thus, the notion of eternal return had not only cosmological but ideological importance within the Roman Empire.²¹⁵ It both justified suffering and the “eternal renewal” of the State. Both aspects relied and perhaps exploited the notion that time was an eternal aspect of the cosmos. In turn, the assertion that time was created would challenge both the moral imagination and ideological claims within the Empire.

For the Cappadocians, if time is uncreated, then it existed before the moment of creation. In turn, God is placed within a thing. Subsequently, God would become subject, measurable, and divisible by that thing. Just as Basil could not accept a God contained within an eternal cosmos, neither did Basil accept that God be contained in time. In turn, if time pre-existed creation, it would have sovereignty over the cosmos. In short, Basil’s insistence on time as created was a necessary consequence of creation with both cosmological and ideological implications.

Furthermore, for Basil time is finite and thus interpreted eschatologically. Basil argues anything “begun in time” will also “end in time.”²¹⁶ This means that, for Basil, to accept a beginning is to accept an end. God’s creation *ex nihilo* from eternity implies that the cosmos itself is not eternal from beginning. Thus it must also end. As Basil states,

²¹⁴ Eliade, 136.

²¹⁵ Paul Ricouer discusses the relationship of cosmology, time, and ideology at length in his essay on Clifford Geertz. Specifically, he states, “The memory of the group’s founding events is extremely significant; reenactment of the founding events is a fundamental ideological act. There is an element of a repetition of the origin. With this repetition begin all the ideological processes in the pathological sense, because a second celebration already has the character of reification.” Paul Ricouer, “Geertz”, *Lectures On Ideology And Utopia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press 1986), 261.

²¹⁶ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.3, 7.

implicit in the creation of time are the “parts of beginning, middle, and end.”²¹⁷ As Pelikan states, it was “on the presupposition of the divine created time that eschatology was based.”²¹⁸ Now this statement from Pelikan, though in a sense correct, requires some nuance. On one hand, Pelikan’s argument is logically correct, meaning that creation *ex nihilo* is the logical antecedent to the eschaton. On the other hand, this ought not be considered as a causal extrapolation, first from creation *ex nihilo* then to the logical conclusion of Christian eschatology. Put another way, it ought not be construed that Basil begins from a theologically neutral stance and extrapolates an eschatological necessity from creation *ex nihilo*. On the contrary, this understanding is always-already saturated by Basil’s eschatological commitment. For example, Basil’s interpretation of creation *ex nihilo* is thoroughly Trinitarian.²¹⁹ Both the “Only-Begotten” and the Holy Spirit are operative in Basil’s interpretation of creation.²²⁰ In turn, for Basil, the initially created day is overtly understood in relation to the Resurrection. He states:

In order therefore, to lead our thoughts to a future life, God called that day ‘one,’ which is an image of eternity, the beginning of days, the contemporary of light, the holy Lord’s day, the day honored by the Resurrection of the Lord.²²¹

Thus, the Christian framework within which time operates is between creation *ex nihilo* and eschaton. At the same time, Basil’s Trinitarian commitments, especially in regard to Christ, already assume the connection between the initial day of creation and the eschaton insofar as the “one day” and the “day honored by the Resurrection of the Lord” occupy the same narrative space. This overlapping space is essential for understanding how Basil interprets the eschatological unfolding of time from creation.

²¹⁷ Basil, *Hexaameron* 1.6, 11.

²¹⁸ Pelikan, 119.

²¹⁹ Basil, *Hexaameron* 2.6, 30-31.

²²⁰ Ibid., 2.6 30-31; 3.2 38-39.

²²¹ Ibid, 2.8, 35.

To begin, it is important to note a vital difference between contemporary translations and the Septuagint. While most contemporary interpretations read Genesis 1:5 as "and there was evening and there was morning, the first day," according to the Septuagint the precise term for the initial day of creation is *hemera mia* or "one day."²²² The importance of this difference cannot be overemphasized insofar as Basil's eschatological interpretation of time revolves around the difference between "first" and "one." For Basil, "first day" implies the problem of pre-existent time. He states, "it is more consistent for him who intends to introduce a second and a third and fourth day, to call the one which begins the series 'First'."²²³ Thus, by calling the initial day of creation the "First" implies a predetermined sequence that necessitates the "second". In turn, the second day would not be discrete or gratuitous but an inevitable consequence of the "first". For Basil, the initial "one day" was itself an act of creation and in its particularity complete.²²⁴ The second day then is also "one day" and in its particularity a complete act of creation. Hence there was no first day until it was constituted by the second as "first" in light of the "second". As Basil states, "He orders that one day be recurring seven times to complete a week; and this, beginning from itself and ending on itself, is the form of a circle."²²⁵ The seventh day completed the creation as a reoccurrence of particular "one day's" seven times in a circle. Thus, the week became itself a complete whole. In turn, the next "one day" would be a particularity and so on until the complete week.

²²² Furthermore, the Septuagint's interpretation is a more literally accurate interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures. Beyond this, the use of "first day" in modern English translations is an innovation from ancient sources. Thus, in order to understand Basil's cosmology and its eschatological implications, it is necessary to read Genesis 1:5 as "one day" not "first day". Thanks to Silviu Bunta for explaining this point.

²²³ Basil, *Hexameron* 2.8, 34

²²⁴ "It is as if one would say that the measure of twenty-four hours is the length of one day, or that the return of the heavens from one point to the same point once more occurs in one day; so that, as often as through the revolution of the sun evening and morning traverse the world, the circle is completed, not in a longer period of time of time." Ibid., 2.8, 34.

²²⁵ Ibid., 28, 34.

Now, this might seem similar to the aforementioned notion of eternal return. The difference is that in this notion each day is repeated infinitely as an expression woven into the pattern of the cosmos whereas, for Basil, each "one" day is itself an act of creation. This distinction is dependent on the distinction between time and eternity. As Basil states, "Consider the word of God moving through all creation, having begun at that time, active up to the present."²²⁶ Here Basil affirms that God's creative power is continually active. Furthermore, it remains, "efficacious until the end, even to the consummation of the world."²²⁷ For Basil, each day is not an infinite recurrence but its own particularity. The "circular" pattern of the week is not an eternal present but a gratuitous act of creation from eternity.

It is in this emphasis on the contingency and gratuity of each "day" that Basil's interpretation of time is eschatological. What this means is that for Basil each "one day" carries eschatological anticipation. He states, "For Scripture knows as a day without evening, without succession, and without end, that day which the psalmist called the eighth, because it lies outside the week of time."²²⁸ For it is not that the "eighth day" is the last day. The day before, the day that has just passed, would be the last day, constituted as the last by the new "one day" of the eschaton. It is both origin and end of time, the "one day" unchanging and eternal.

Yet, Basil's description of time does not deny linear progression. It is not a condition of eternal reoccurrence. At the same time, it does not project a linear progression *ad infinitum*. The linear progression begins from and ends in eternity.

²²⁶ Basil, *Hexameron* 9.2, 136.

²²⁷ Ibid., 9.2, 136.

²²⁸ Ibid., 2. 8, 35.

Contrary to Pelikan, the eschaton is not the “negation of both an *arche* and *telos*”²²⁹. It is, instead, both *arche* and *telos*, beginning and end, yet still entirely dependent on the creative act of God from eternity. Thus, in the same way that the initial “one day” was constituted as the “first” by the “second”, so too would all time be fulfilled by the “eighth day” of creation. As Basil states:

In fact, it is also characteristic of eternity to turn back upon itself and never to be brought to an end. Therefore, God called the beginning of time not a ‘first day,’ but ‘one day,’ in order that from the name it might have kinship with eternity. For, the day which shows the character of uniqueness and nonparticipation with the rest is properly and naturally called one.²³⁰

Thus for Basil, the eschatological importance of the initial “one day” of creation and the subsequent “one days” of creation is that each in its uniqueness as a gratuitous act of creation shares a kinship, though not interchangeable relationship, with eternity. Each day is created in eschatological anticipation of the eighth day. Therefore, Basil’s interpretation of the creation of time is interpreted in light of eschatological anticipation. Ultimately, this rests on Basil’s reliance on Genesis 1:5 as *hemera mia* as interpreted through the eschatological implications of the resurrection.

The Moral Implications of the Material Cosmos

The second piece under discussion in this chapter concerns, literally, the substance of the cosmos. For Basil, the material cosmos or natural world is created by a God of unqualified goodness *ex nihilo* and is continually “created” by God through time and sustained by God in time. It is, in biblical language, “very good”. Now what this very goodness looks like, how all of the cosmos bespeak of this goodness, will be addressed in the later section on *kalon*. This section is focused on something more

²²⁹ Pelikan, 115

²³⁰ Basil, *Hexameron* 2.8, 33.

fundamental than that, more primordial. Specifically, this section is concerned with the nature of matter and the moral qualification of that nature. In order to understand the importance of this, this chapter will bring Basil's *Hexaemeron* into direct conversation with Plato's work the *Timaeus* and the moral problem of the co-eternality of matter with God.

As discussed, the co-eternality of matter with God was abhorrent to Basil insofar as it made God a subject of necessity and in turn lacking in power. This piece will take that same issue from a slightly different but related angle. Specifically, for Plato, the substance of the cosmos, matter, is morally qualified as the source of evil. In contrast, for Basil matter is morally good. This is a fundamental difference in their cosmologies. Therefore, it will be argued that Basil necessarily affirms the goodness of matter in light of Christian eschatology. In turn, eschatology is woven into the substance of the cosmos itself. The cosmos in the material sense is in the process of eschatological becoming.

To begin it is necessary to offer a brief sketch of Plato's cosmology as it pertains to this discussion on the moral qualification of matter. First, for Plato, God is the first principle of the cosmos and that principle is the absolute Good. Plato's construal of God begins with the familiar argument from the "first cause" of the cosmos. In the *Timaeus* Plato states that "Now everything that becomes or is created must of necessity be created by some cause, for without a cause nothing can be created."²³¹ Here Plato extrapolates a cosmological argument for the existence of God. In other words, because of the existence of the cosmos, and due to the necessity of causes for existence, God necessarily exists.²³² Beyond the argument from cosmological causation, Plato makes a qualitative

²³¹ Plāto, *Timaeus* 28a, 1161.

²³² Ibid., 28b-c, 1161

argument that God is the perfect Good. Plato states, “the world is the fairest of creations and He is the best of causes.”²³³ Here, Plato moves beyond causation and asserts that God is good and the cosmos exists as a reflection of the goodness of God. Furthermore, this is more than even a logical conclusion based on the Goodness of God. It is not merely that because the cosmos comes from a Good God that the cosmos is good. The creation of the cosmos bears *intention* from God toward the cosmos. Thus Plato argues that God in God’s goodness desires that “all things should be as like himself as they could be” and that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable.”²³⁴ Therefore, principally God is the absolute Good, God is a creator of the cosmos, and God has good intentions toward that cosmos. The reason this is important to Plato is related to his theory of forms or universal ideas. While it is not in the interest of this discussion to engaging a protracted explanation of this theory, certain aspects are salient to the discussion at hand. Therefore a brief explanation is in order.

The theory of forms is developed in Plato’s *Republic* in his “allegory of the cave”. The Forms are the universal Goods.²³⁵ They are patterned from the Mind of God from which the world and all its aspects are derived. Insofar as the universal Goods are formed by a Good source, Plato’s God cannot be evil. Additionally, the Forms though derived from the Mind of God, are inaccessible outside of mind (and even within the mind in a qualified way). What we experience of the Forms are their shadows or “pale reflections.”²³⁶ For example, the tree out the window is not the Form of the tree. It is not essentially “tree-ness”. It is only a material instantiation of the Form of tree that remains

²³³ “Everyone will see that he must have looked to the eternal, for the world is the fairest of creations and he is the best of causes.” Ibid., 29a, 1162.

²³⁴ Plato, *Timaeus* 29e-30a, 1162.

²³⁵ Plato, *Republic* VII 514a-520a, 747-753.

²³⁶ Ibid., 515c, 748.

largely inaccessible. It is not, therefore, and cannot ever be the pure good of Form, only a reflection of God's eternal pattern. The Forms and the God from whom they derive are "pure being" and thus "immutable and timeless."²³⁷ In the timeless realm of Platonic forms, the material cosmos, the tree out the window is unable to embody the eternal good. Therefore, eternity, or the realm of the forms, always stands contemporary with though not subject to the "flow of history."²³⁸ Simply put, for Plato the material cosmos, though "framed after the pattern of eternal nature,"²³⁹ is qualified by its relationship to eternity. The best that the material cosmos can achieve is "that it might resemble this so far as possible," with particular emphasis on "as far as possible."²⁴⁰ For Plato, the Good is not implicated in material existence. The reason for this is that Plato considers the transience of material existence to be the source of evil in the cosmos.

For Plato the source of evil is quite literally substantive insofar as the substance of material existence, matter, is transient. For Plato the Good is timeless and unchangeable. In contrast, the fact that material existence is subject to change, decay, even transformation necessitates that it is not unchangeable and therefore not good. It is the source of evil. This is exemplified in Plato's metaphysical assertion in the *Timaeus*: "As being is to becoming, so it truth to belief."²⁴¹ For Plato, being and truth exist in an eternal, unchanged realm of Good. In contrast, becoming and belief exist in the transient realm of material existence. Patrick Kearney clarifies this point by arguing:

These Ideas of pure being are immutable and timeless. They comprise a hierarchy crowned by the highest form of all the Good. Thus sealed off from the lower

²³⁷ Kearney, 88.

²³⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 2007), 97.

²³⁹ Plato, *Timaeus* 38b-c, 1167.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 38b-c, 1167.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29b-c 1162.

order of material becoming, the Ideas remain untainted by the human order of transience, which is now identified as the source of evil.²⁴²

Now, as this bears on the discussion at hand, this would be a difficulty even if God were the creator of matter, because then God would be the creator of evil. But Plato's God is not Hesiod's Zeus. Plato's God did not conceive of evil. But Plato certainly assents to the notion that evil is a part of the cosmos and he considers it to be inseparably material. The way he maintains God as the Good, while accounting for evil, is based on the aforementioned principle of the co-eternality of matter with God.

In Plato's view matter is co-eternal with God and thus evil is co-eternal with good. As discussed, Plato's God happens upon eternal matter in its disorder and chaos. By necessity, God orders that which was disordered. Therefore, God was the creator of order out of disorder, Form out of unformed matter, and God imposed the Good on Matter.²⁴³ At the same time, by way of matter being eternal, the Good imposed on Matter was not a permanent condition. Matter is eternal transience that tends toward change, becoming, and decay. While the Good may be eternal and unchanged, the source of evil is likewise eternal. In turn, the Good and the source of evil remain locked in an eternal dualism of Mind and Matter, being and becoming, that is reflected in the cosmos. While Plato insulates God from implication in the evil of material existence, he does so by weaving evil into the fabric of the cosmos. Thus, insofar as material existence is torn between the eternal principles of Matter and Mind, regardless of God's good intentions, evil undergirds all of material existence. In fact, the co-eternality of evil ensures that God's intention toward creation is never fully realized. The Forms and the Good cannot be embodied within the cosmos.

²⁴² Kearney, 88.

²⁴³ Plato, *Timaeus* 30a, 1162.

Basil challenges this cosmology on its fundamental points. But before attending to those problems, it is important to show the affinities that Basil's *Hexaemeron* share with Plato's *Timaeus* and the cosmological concepts therein. First of all, Basil unequivocally agrees with Plato that God is the Absolute Good and pure Being. As discussed Basil describes God as "the bounteous Goodness, the Beloved of all who are endowed with reason."²⁴⁴ Furthermore, he would also agree that God qua God is incomprehensible. He states, "let us conceive of Him who is infinite and immense and who surpasses all understanding in the plentitude of His power."²⁴⁵ Finally, Basil agrees that God as Creator bears good intentions towards God's creation. He states, "Let us glorify the Master Craftsman for all that has been done wisely and skillfully."²⁴⁶ In short, Basil would agree with Plato that God is not only good; God is *the* Good. Beyond this, Basil also agrees that the nature of material existence is change, becoming, even decay. He states, "Such also is the nature of all that has been made, either clearly growing or decaying, but possessing no evident settled state or stability."²⁴⁷ In conjunction with this, God could not be the origin of evil, although, as will be discussed, the direct connection between transience and evil is unacceptable to Basil. But, at least in these basic elements, Basil is in agreement with Plato. God is Good and thus not the origin of evil. God is ineffable. God created the cosmos with good intention. The cosmos changes. But it is here that the affinities end, for Plato's notion of the co-eternality of matter was a notion that Basil could not accept.

²⁴⁴ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.2, 6.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, 1.11, 19.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, 1.11, 19.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.5, 9.

As discussed, Basil rejects Plato's notion of the co-eternality of matter and, in turn, rejects Plato's moral qualification on matter. For Basil matter is not eternal, becoming is neither morally insufficient nor evil, and, in turn, evil is not an eternal aspect of the cosmos. Matter is created, becoming is morally good insofar as it is the material unfolding of God's eschatological promise, and evil is a privation of the cosmos, not natural to the cosmos.

To begin, matter is created and not eternal. In turn, any moral qualification placed on God must proceed from that stance. Basil states:

God, however, before any of the objects now seen existed, having cast about in His mind and resolved to bring into being things that did not exist, at one and the same time devised what sort of world it should be and created the appropriate matter together with its form.²⁴⁸

Thus, contra Plato, it was not the case that God happened upon matter and imposed form upon it but brought into existence the form and matter simultaneously. The importance of this point ought not to be overlooked insofar as this is a move away from the idea of Forms as universals to the realization of Form in the particularity of creation. Matter and form are created "together" in the particularity of each created "object". Thus, Forms for Basil are not eternally sequestered from actual material existence but contained within that existence at the moments of its creation. In turn, any and all pieces of the created cosmos already realize form insofar as they are perpetually and gratuitously created *ex nihilo*. Therefore, Plato's paradigm of Form imposed on Matter is rejected by the application of creation *ex nihilo*.

The second point is that transience, or becoming, while not perfected, is not insufficient, much less evil. For Basil, material becoming is eschatologically necessary.

²⁴⁸ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.2, 24.

As discussed, Basil fundamentally agrees that transience is an unavoidable condition of material existence. To exist materially is to change. But, where Plato considers this the source of evil, for Basil this is a necessary eschatological condition. He states, "It is necessary for the world to be changed if truly the state of the souls is to change to another form of life."²⁴⁹ Transience is evidence of creation's eschatological anticipation. As will be clarified by Gregory of Nyssa, this is not a disembodied soul's ascent to the kingdom. It is, instead, humanity's material transience that is, in part, "becoming" eschatologically.²⁵⁰ The transience of the cosmos, created from the Good, perpetually speaks to and anticipates the fulfillment of God's purpose for creation.

This is not to say that, for Basil, this is achieved through material becoming. The eschaton is not merely the fulfillment of material form; it is an infinite step beyond that. It is, though, a necessary condition of that promise. For just "as this present life has a nature akin to this world, so also the future existence of our souls will receive a lot consistent with its state."²⁵¹ In turn, this means that "this world" is implicated in eschatologically. While certainly it will be "consummated", the material creation will be transformed in this consummation. Thus Basil states, "we explain about the end of the world and the regeneration of life."²⁵² Therefore, in Basil's cosmology, becoming is an eschatological necessity. It is not, therefore the source of evil but the promise of its own fulfillment.

²⁴⁹ Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 1.4, 8.

²⁵⁰ As Rousseau states of Basil in this regard, "His own solutions to the philosophical problems involved was based on the belief that the cosmos was on the move, anticipating and guaranteeing change." Rousseau, 333.

²⁵¹ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.4, 8.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.4, 8

Finally, one might ask what, then, is the source of evil for Basil? Clearly, Basil accepts that evil exists, as will be evident in the discussions of social ethics. Yet it is neither, as per Hesiod, the will of God, nor is it a principle that exists from eternity with God. Basil is explicit that evil is “not a living and animated substance.”²⁵³ For Basil, matter is neither evil nor eternal. God is eternal but not evil. Thus, evil is a privation within the cosmos. It is a “falling away from the good.”²⁵⁴ It is a product of free will. He states, “Do not, therefore, contemplate evil from without; and do not imagine some original nature of wickedness, but let each one recognize oneself as the first author of the vice that is in him.”²⁵⁵ Evil is not either external to humanity, as in Hesiod’s cosmos, or natural to the cosmos, as in Plato. Evil is the product of “our voluntary falls.”²⁵⁶ What this means and its implications for the Cappadocian social ethics will be explained subsequently. For now what is important is that the cosmos itself was conceived of, created in, and is sustained in the good. Evil is a disruption and privation of this natural good.

In sum, this vision of the cosmos presented by Basil in his Hexaemeral homilies is one created *ex nihilo*, oriented eschatologically, and, in turn, naturally good. In light of this, this discussion is prepared to engage with particular features Basil draws on in describing this naturally good cosmos. For Basil the cosmos is harmonious and moral, created and sustained by God towards its eschatological fulfillment. In other words it is *kalon*, a harmonious beauty. It is a description of this concept and how it serves the moral imagination that is the subject of this final piece of this chapter.

²⁵³ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.4, 28.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.4, 28.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.5, 28.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 2.5, 29.

Kalon

The purpose of the final piece on Basil's cosmology is to show how these principles come together in Basil's description of the material cosmos or the natural world. Basil unifies all these aspects in the concept of *kalon* or beauty insofar as *kalon* serves as the unifying principle within which the cosmos operates and unfolds towards its eschatological consummation.

For Basil, the unifying principle of the cosmos is *kalon*. Now, beauty in this sense ought to not be construed as merely an aesthetic qualification, though it certainly entailed that. Instead, for Basil, *kalon*, the natural (*ontos*) goodness of creation, is not *only* in its aesthetic quality but in the process of its becoming and its subsequent status as a moral entity in its entirety. As will be discussed, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa describe charity and virtue in terms of *kalos*. Thus, as Pelikan states, "In the Cappadocian understanding of the *kalon*, the ethical and the aesthetic were closely connected, though not quite identified."²⁵⁷ Put another way, just as moral acts can be described as beautiful, so too is aesthetic appreciation of creation implicitly moral. Though "not quite identified", within *kalon* the two are integrally intertwined.

This is foremost dependent on God's continuous and gratuitous creative activity from eternity and within creation. The (moral) good and the (aesthetic) beauty of creation are reflections of God's perpetual creation. For example, in Homily IV, Basil refers to the "pleasant sight" of the sea and describes it aesthetically and how it "reflects a purple or bluish color to the spectators."²⁵⁸ Yet, directly after this aesthetic description, he states, "Surely, we must not think that the meaning of the Scripture is that the sea

²⁵⁷ Pelikan, 286.

²⁵⁸ Basil, *Hexameron* 4.6, 64.

appeared good and pleasant to God in this way, but here the goodness is determined by the *purpose of the creative activity*.²⁵⁹ Here Basil, in describing the “creation of the waters” and God’s seeing it as good,²⁶⁰ makes the point that God seeing it as good is not akin to a sculptor gazing upon her finished work as an object of beauty. Instead, it is God’s “creative activity” that determines its beauty and goodness. In regard to this, Basil states, “the Creator of all creation does not look at beauty with eyes, but He contemplates in His ineffable wisdom the things made.”²⁶¹ Ultimately, these distinctions are foreign from eternity. In human terms, the beauty of the cosmos includes but is also more than an aesthetic quality; it is also the good of creation.

Now it is not the purpose here to negate Basil’s aesthetic appreciation for creation. In the words of theologian Jame Schaeffer, his homilies insist, “our senses witness the abundance of (aesthetic) beauty observable in animals, plants, landscapes, and the sky.”²⁶² For example, Basil describes the gift of light as “a condition of nature” of which “it is not possible for human reasoning to conceive anything more delightfully enjoyable.”²⁶³ He goes on to describe how, because of light, the beauty of gold is not based on “the symmetry of its parts, but from the beauty of its color alone.”²⁶⁴ These examples point to the fact that, for Basil, aesthetic appreciation of the natural world was important and not exclusively “ethical”, though one might argue that aesthetic reflection

²⁵⁹ My emphasis on “Purpose of the creative activity.” Basil, *Hexaemeron* 4.6, 64.

²⁶⁰ Gen 1:9 NRSV

²⁶¹ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 4.6, 63-64.

²⁶² In reference to the sky Basil proclaims: “And the evening star is the most beautiful of the stars, not because the parts of which it was formed are proportionate, but because from it there falls upon our eyes a certain joyous and delightful brightness.” Schaeffer pg 26 “Appreciating the Beauty of the Earth.” Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.7, 33; see also Jame Schaeffer “Appreciating the Beauty of the Earth,” *Theological Studies* 62 (2001), 26.

²⁶³ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 2.7, 32.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.7, 33.

on creation carries an implicit ethical weight.²⁶⁵ At the same time, as this thesis is ultimately about how Basil's cosmology relates to social ethics, it is the ethical implications of *kalon* distinct though not separable from the aesthetic that is the focus of this discussion.²⁶⁶ Therefore, the term *kalon* will be used as a description of the cosmos in moral terms as it relates to the perpetual expression of God's creative activity. In other words, in terms of both aesthetics and morality, the *kalon* is creation in the grips of God's perpetual creative activity. Ultimately, the beauty of the cosmos represents a unified whole and a moral location that is eschatologically oriented.

The first aspect of *kalon* discussed here is how the cosmos represents a unified whole. This is what theologian Colin Gunton refers to as the shared "ontological status" of creation, meaning that as "creation" all aspects of the cosmos share the ontological status of being not God but also being objects of God's "creating will and love."²⁶⁷ This unified whole of the cosmos does not dissolve difference into a monist conception of "oneness". Instead, it is God's harmonizing of cosmic diversity that gives creation its unity. As Basil states, God is "a Craftsman all but pervading the substance of the universe, harmonizing the individual parts with each other, and bringing to perfection the whole, consistent with itself, consonant, and harmonious."²⁶⁸ Thus, God brings the cosmos into harmony as a whole. But this ought not be construed as God harmonizing already created parts, as a chef brings ingredients into a harmonious dish. Instead, because God's "creative activity" is persistent in the cosmos, God is perpetually

²⁶⁵ For an example of this endeavor see Jame Schaeffer's "Appreciating the Beauty of the Earth" passim.

²⁶⁶ Basil will often use aesthetic examples to make an ethical point. For example, "the thorn was added to the beauty of the flower so that we might keep pain closely associated with the enjoyment of pleasure and remind ourselves of the sin for which the earth was condemned to bring forth thorns and thistles for us." Basil, *Hexaemeron* 5.6, 75.

²⁶⁷ Gunton, 71-72.

²⁶⁸ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.7, 12-13.

saturating the cosmos with goodness and purpose. Thus the whole cosmos, actively becoming and sustained by God, is bound in an "unbroken bond of attraction" in which even the "objects which are farthest apart from each other in position seem to have been made one through affinity."²⁶⁹ For example, Basil's Fifth Homily focuses exclusively on plant life. He states, "Each plant produced realizes a certain peculiar reason in its creation."²⁷⁰ He describes how plants poisonous to humans are part of the regular diet of birds or other animals.²⁷¹ In turn, he argues that with the right application of reason, that which appears "naturally" harmful to humanity becomes beneficial.²⁷² This example shows how parts of the natural world that humanity does not perceive as good become good when one perceives the goodness of creation as a whole. Furthermore, the cosmos does not merely speak to God's goodness and purpose; the cosmos perpetually serves God. In Homily IX, Basil states, "This command remains in the earth and the earth does not cease serving the Creator."²⁷³ As will be discussed, this point is vital for his brother Gregory of Nyssa's interpretation of human creation from "dust". Furthermore, the whole creation continues to participate in the *kalon* until "the consummation of the world." Ultimately, Basil encourages his congregation to "recognize the grandeur in the tiniest things."²⁷⁴ Even the things of the natural world that humanity not only cannot make use of but also consider hostile serve a purpose to God's creation, and they are

²⁶⁹ Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 2.2, 24.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 5.4, 71.

²⁷¹ "In fact, starlings eat hemlock, escaping harm from the poison because of the constitution of their bodies." Ibid., 5.4, 72.

²⁷² In Homily V he describes how plants that are generally poisonous can be employed by doctors to relieve ailments. Thus, "the charge which you thought you had against the Creator has proved to be for you an additional cause for thankfulness." Ibid., 5.4, 72.

²⁷³ Ibid., 9.2, 137.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 5.9, 81.

created for the benefit of the harmonious whole. Thus the seemingly insignificant or even hostile aspects of the cosmos serve God's creative purpose.

It is important to recall that this stands in direct contrast to the cosmologies of Hesiod, Plato and, as will be discussed, in some sense Aristotle insofar as suffering "at the hands" of the cosmos is not an *a priori* condition of existence. It is a lack of discernment that is fundamental to Basil's argument, an inability to see and, perhaps, respect the integrity of a good creation. While this point of the relationship of humanity and creation will be discussed in greater detail through Gregory of Nyssa, it is important to note that Basil asserts that co-operation and harmony are natural to creation. All creation participates in Basil's moral vision, including humanity. Simply put, the entire cosmos, by nature of it being created, participates in the harmony of the cosmic *kalon*.

In conjunction with this, the cosmos is also eschatologically oriented. Just as the tiniest aspects of the cosmos are perpetually created and sustained by God's love and goodness, each aspect of creation bespeaks the eschatological promise. For example, Basil describes the generation of plants in eschatological terms. He states, "For, as tops, from the first impulse given to them, produce successive whirls when they are spun, so also the order of nature, having received its beginning from that first command continues to all time thereafter, until it shall reach the common consummation of all things."²⁷⁵ Thus, the growth, flourishing, decay, and perpetuation through seed are eschatologically interpreted. Beyond this, they are participants in eschatological becoming. Like the "one day" of time, the process of plant life is always an act of creation that anticipates the ultimate act of creation, the eschaton. Furthermore, Basil uses the example of the butterfly to display how the transience of material life bespeaks the eschatological

²⁷⁵ Basil, *Hexameron* 5.10, 82

promise of creation. He states, in regard to the transition from caterpillar to butterfly, “however, it does not remain in this shape, but clothes itself with light, wide metallic wings.”²⁷⁶ He then encourages some silk spinners to contemplate this transformation while attending their thread as it pertains to the eschatological orientation of creation.²⁷⁷ Thus, just as the entire natural world participates in the harmony of the *kalon*, each aspect participates in the eschatological becoming of the cosmos. In the words of Orphanos, each aspect of the cosmos “contributes to the completion of universal beauty” or *kalon*.²⁷⁸ Thus, for Basil, the natural world participates in the eschatological becoming of the cosmos through its harmonized diversity, its whole, its *kalon*.

In light of this, the material cosmos serves as a moral location. This means that, for Basil, the cosmos, by way of its being saturated by God’s creative power and goodness and its participation in the cosmic *kalon* and its eschatological orientation, is reflective of a morality natural to creation. In other words, for Basil, humanity acts within a moral cosmos and it is in accordance with or against this moral cosmos that practices are construed as either positively moral, in harmony with *kalon*, or negatively immoral, dissonance against *kalon*.

In the positive sense, for Basil, the natural world in accordance with *kalon* displays a tendency towards community. For example, Basil points to the “extraordinary” familial relationships of animals and how “among the irrational animals the love of the offspring and of the parents of each other” speak to the goodness of God.²⁷⁹ For it is even without the gift of reason that creatures share familial bonds.²⁸⁰ In

²⁷⁶ Basil, *Hexaemeron*, 8.8, 132.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 8.8, 132.

²⁷⁸ Orphanos, 60.

²⁷⁹ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.4, 142.

turn, he points out that even among the “irrational” creatures “the voice of nature indicates many of the dispositions of the spirit.”²⁸¹ These creatures experience something like “joy and grief” that is manifest in hunger and “separation from companions.”²⁸² Thus, the irrational creatures hunger. They express behavior analogous to human emotion. Most importantly, they partake in a sense of community and suffer from its absence. Furthermore, the natural world displays evidence of virtue, be it the courageous lion, the steadfast ox, the industrious ant, or the dog that is “grateful and constant in friendship.”²⁸³ Basil points to the loyal dogs who “have died beside their masters” as evidence of not only virtue but also natural affinities within the cosmos.²⁸⁴ All of these examples undergird Basil’s claim that humans “possess natural virtues towards which there is an attraction of the soul not from the teaching of [sic] men, but from nature itself.”²⁸⁵ Thus, for Basil, nature is imbued with moral inclinations in which humanity is inclined to participate. Furthermore, community is a natural good within creation. In turn, the cosmos itself is a moral community. As will be discussed, this is a central point in the social ethics of the Cappadocian brothers. For now it is sufficient to say that the harmony of the whole includes evidence of morality and a tendency towards community that is not merely a human construct but is woven into the fabric of creation.

Now this may seem odd or perhaps, scandalous, to contemporary ear, insofar as reason, deliberation, and morality are closely linked. Thus, if something lacks the ability to deliberate it lacks morality. It entails a moral life and a vision of that moral life that

²⁸⁰ As will be discussed, Basil describes the moral superiority of these “unreasoning creatures” within creation to the human moral frailty.

²⁸¹ Basil, *Hexameron* 8.1, 118.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 8.1, 118.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 9.3, 138.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.4, 143.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.3, 141.

perpetually envelops human choice. For Basil, this extends to all of creation. The cosmos was conceived in and created within a moral vision. For Basil, the fact that an ineffably good God rationally created the cosmos is what imparts the cosmos with its moral nature. The natural world for Basil serves as a “training place for rational souls and a school for attaining knowledge of God” precisely because it is saturated with God’s goodness.²⁸⁶ The human gift of reason, though perhaps the greatest gift, is not the exclusive location for morality in the cosmos. The cosmos, as created, is moral. Humanity is an aspect of creation. For example, a consistent theme in Basil’s work, both cosmologically and in social ethics, is that the “unreasoning creatures” act in harmony with the moral harmony of the cosmos, while humanity with reason acts dissonantly against this harmony. Put another way, just as the natural world acts morally without reason, so too does humanity act immorally with reason.

This leads to the negative sense, “the distorted vision”, sin as privation and dissonance. Frequently, Basil utilizes the natural world as way of addressing sin. He often describes how the irrational natural world participates in the *kalon* in ways that rational humanity does not. For example, he speaks of fish who follow the “law of God” while humanity does not “endure the precepts of salvation.”²⁸⁷ He states, “Do not despise the fish because they are absolutely unable to speak or to reason, but fear lest you may be even more unreasonable than they by resisting the command of the Creator.”²⁸⁸ Furthermore, he utilizes this analogy to describe how “natural reason” provides humanity with an “attraction to the good and an aversion to the harmful,” yet “we through

²⁸⁶ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.6, 11.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.4, 112.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 7.4, 112.

hopelessness for future, waste our lives in brutish pleasure.”²⁸⁹ For Basil, the natural gift of reason is thwarted by sin. He chastises his congregation on the basis that humanity with reason ought to be elevated above the irrational fish, yet fails in the pursuit of vice. Simply put, humanity with reason acts with less moral rationality than the irrational fish. Reason here is not merely human deliberation. It is the reason imparted to all creation through God’s creative activity. The difference, which will be clarified in the discussion on the *imago Dei*, is that creation represents the good and rational cause of the cosmos, God. Humanity bears this reason but also the gift of reason imparted by ensoulment. In terms of family, Basil describes in Homily IX, how the “lioness loves her offspring and the wolf fights for her whelps” in contrast to the “man who debases his nature” and the son “who dishonors the old age of his father.”²⁹⁰ Therefore, where the animal acts with a sense of community and familial love, humanity acts in opposition to God’s commandments.²⁹¹ Ultimately, Basil perceives human sin as a counter-example to what occurs naturally. The natural world provides evidence of natural morality that human vice disrupts. Thus, sin is a privation, a dissonance, within the cosmic *kalon*.

Whereas the previous discussion focused on the centrality of creation *ex nihilo* and its subsequent challenges to prominent cosmological premises in Hellenistic thought, the focus here was how, from this premise, Basil constructs his vision of the cosmos. For Basil the cosmos is oriented eschatologically and saturated with the absolute goodness of the Creator. In turn, it is fundamentally unified, dynamic, and harmonious. This understanding of the cosmos is reflected in his interpretation of the eschatological implication of created time, the moral goodness of material transience, and the tendency

²⁸⁹ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 7.5, 113.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 9.4, 142.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 9.4, 142.

towards community within creation. In short, the cosmos, for Basil, is a place of moral beauty or *kalon*, a harmonious unfolding of God's ultimate purpose for creation.

Chapter 3: Humanity and *Imago Dei*

Whereas this thesis has thus far focused on Basil of Caesarea's cosmology as it is represented in his *Hexaemeron*, the focus of this discussion will be on the anthropology of Gregory of Nyssa as described in his treatise *On the Creation of Humanity*. It will be shown how Gregory's anthropological perspective both functionally and conceptually inhabits the cosmological framework of his elder brother. In turn, it will be shown how Gregory's theological definition of humanity as the *imago Dei* functions within this cosmology. Additionally, it will be argued that, for Gregory, humanity as the collective representation of the *imago Dei* serves as the mediator and harmonizing agent within the cosmic *kalon*. Ultimately it will be argued that the relationship of cosmology and anthropology in the works of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa push towards a communitarian social vision that is both normative and natural to creation.

Gregory of Nyssa's Anthropology Within Basil's Cosmology

To begin, it is important to note that Basil does not engage in an extended examination of either the creation of humanity or humanity's role within the cosmos. Generally speaking, while he describes the cosmos within which humans act, he does not in any detail describe where humanity lies within the cosmos or what it means for humanity to act within this cosmos. This is not to say that Basil does not refer to humanity or human nature at all in these homilies. As discussed, much of the latter *Hexaemeron* utilized the cosmos as both a guide and commentary on human behavior. Furthermore, towards the end of the ninth and last homily Basil begins to hint at an

anthropological discussion. As Rousseau points out, "As one comes to the end of the first nine sermons, therefore, one can sense the approach both of human dignity as a free collaborator with God and of human weakness as an earthly creature enfolded in the processes of change and decay."²⁹² While Basil approaches these issues, they are only treated in a general sense. For example, in the ninth homily he states, "We shall tell later, if God permits, in what respect humanity is in the image of God and how it shares in his likeness."²⁹³ Furthermore, in the same homily he briefly discusses Genesis 1:26: "God said, Let us make humankind in our image."²⁹⁴ He continues by mentioning the implications of the *imago Dei* for humanity. He asserts, "Humanity, when perfected, is lifted up to the dignity of angels. But what creature can be equal to the Creator?"²⁹⁵ It is important to note that here Basil maintains the ontological distinction between humanity and the Creator while also addressing the potential within humanity. To this point, Basil mentions the "perfection" of humanity in relation to angelic dignity. Yet, even here Basil is careful to note that even the "dignity of angels" does not cross the divide between Creator and created. Thus, the angels as spiritual entities remain within the created cosmos, though not in a material sense.²⁹⁶ In turn, the spiritual or "supernatural" remained on this side of eternity with the created material cosmos. Therefore, even Basil's cursory descriptions of the *imago Dei* are consistent with his cosmological

²⁹² Rousseau, 340.

²⁹³ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.6, 149.

²⁹⁴ Gen 1:26 NRSV

²⁹⁵ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.6, 148.

²⁹⁶ The first chapter of M.A. Orphanos' work on Basil's cosmology is devoted exclusively to the created nature of the "supernatural world" and the spiritual entities that inhabit it. Most interestingly Orphanos claims that Basil did not consider angels to be "perfect and holy by virtue of their nature" (pg 20). Instead, it was through participation in the "holiness of God" and sanctification through the Holy Spirit that made them thus. The importance of this for the discussion at hand is that the angels were a) created, b) sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and c) perfected through sanctification. In this sense, angels shared the same ontological status and eschatological orientation as all other aspects of reality, spiritual or material. Orphanos, 17-27.

premise. While Basil does not extensively treat humanity in his *Hexaameron*, it ought not be concluded that Basil was silent on humanity in his other works. As will be discussed, his understanding of humanity found in other works as "*koinonikos anthropos*" or humanity in communion is a central feature of his social ethics and congruent with the anthropological vision offered by his brother Gregory of Nyssa. That being said, due to Basil's death, the anticipated discussion on humanity, its creation, and its role in the cosmic *kalon* was never completed, and perhaps never begun.²⁹⁷ To complete this vision it was Basil's brother, Gregory of Nyssa, in his treatise *On the Creation of Humanity*, who ultimately took up this description of the nature and role of humanity within the cosmic *kalon*.

It is unequivocally agreed that Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On the Creation of Humanity* is an "appendix" or supplement to Basil's *Hexaameron*.²⁹⁸ This was not an unusual occurrence for the Cappadocian brothers.²⁹⁹ Specifically, this work from Gregory intended to address that which the nine homilies leave unattended, namely the role of humanity within the created cosmos. Gregory explicitly asserts as much in the

²⁹⁷ While it is generally agreed upon that Basil authored these nine homilies, the two additional homilies on the *Hexaameron* specifically attending humanity are less certainly Basil's. Phillip Rousseau in his work *Basil of Caesarea* accepts these as Basil's. Generally speaking though, the *Hexaameron* is considered to be the nine discussed here. For instance, Agnes Claire Way excludes the other two from her collection of Basil's *Hexaameron* as does M.A. Orphanos and amongst others. While respecting Rousseau's incorporation of these homilies, this thesis will defer to the accepted view that the nine homilies of which Basil's authorship is certain are the sum total of Basil's contribution. See Rousseau, 341-363.

²⁹⁸ There is another supplemental work from Gregory of Nyssa, the *Apology on the Hexaameron*. This though was intended to defend the *Hexaameron* against critics, not to explicate humanity in the detail of *On the Creation of Humanity*. Thus, for reasons of expediency, it will not be addressed in this thesis. For a discussion on the *Apology on the Hexaameron* see Johannes Zachhuber's *Human Nature in Gregory of Nyssa* (Boston, MA: Brill 2000), 147; Wilken pg 143-146. For the supplemental nature of *On the Creation of Humanity* see Wilken, 147; Louth, 299.

²⁹⁹ For example, Gregory of Nyssa's *Against Eunomius* was inserted into a polemic between Basil and Eunomius. On *Against Eunomius*: "The first two were written close together in 380 and constitute a defense of Basil against Eunomius' attack on his *Against Eunomius* – Eunomius' *Defense of his defense*. The third, longer treatise (soon divided into ten books) is a later (381-383) refutation of a fresh attack by Eunomius on Basil." Louth, 298.

preamble to his treatise, which was addressed to their brother Peter, himself a Cappadocian bishop. Gregory states, “we who fall short even of worthily admiring him, yet intend to add to the great writer’s speculations.”³⁰⁰ Furthermore, he specifically claims that his work is intended to explicate that, “which is lacking in them (Basil’s homilies).”³⁰¹ Here, Gregory is careful to note that by “lacking” he is not implying a deficiency to be fixed. He does not wish to “interpolate his work by insertion.”³⁰² Instead, he asserts that the purpose is “that the glory of the teacher may not seem to be failing among his disciples.”³⁰³ Therefore, it is the overt intention of Gregory’s treatise to respectfully supplement the work of Basil.

The reason this point is relevant is that, in contemporary treatments of Gregory’s anthropology, his work is often engaged as a discrete or “stand alone” work concerning the human person.³⁰⁴ While it is not precisely the argument here that such appropriation of Gregory’s work is inappropriate, it is the point here that to best understand Gregory’s anthropology it ought to be read in the context that Gregory intended. Simply put, Gregory’s perspective on humanity is embedded in Basil’s cosmological vision. In turn, Gregory’s anthropological vision as a cosmological claim has particular relevance to the social ethics of the Cappadocians. This is especially the case for Gregory’s interpretation of the *imago Dei* as a communal condition that mediates between the material and spiritual aspects of creation. For Gregory, humanity represents the fullness of the cosmos. The nature of humanity is to orchestrate the cosmic *kalon*.

³⁰⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Creation of Humanity*, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. V* ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1979), intro.1, 388.

³⁰¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity*, intro.1, 388.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, intro.1, 388.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, intro.1, 388.

³⁰⁴ See for example, Hart’s “*The Whole Family*”, an otherwise remarkable treatment of Gregory’s anthropology applied to social ethics.

Imago Dei

For Gregory the role of humanity within the cosmos is collective mediation between the created and spiritual realities. It is through the gift of reason that humanity brings the created and spiritual realities into harmony. In turn, sin and vice disharmonize the cosmos. They turn the role of humanity from that which mediates and harmonizes the spiritual and material aspects of the cosmos into that which disrupts the intended harmony of the cosmos in its entirety. Thus, sin is not merely of personal consequence but is truly of cosmic proportion.

To begin, in the preamble to his treatise *On the Making of Humanity* Gregory concedes not only the difficulty of his inquiry but also affirms the particular status of humanity within creation. He states, "The scope of our proposed enquiry is not small: it is second to none of the wonders of the world, - perhaps even greater than any of those known to us, because no other existing thing, save the human creation, had been made like God."³⁰⁵ Sown into this are the fundamental principles from which Gregory's treatise unfolds. First, like Basil, Gregory affirms that humanity is an "existing thing" within a created cosmos. Second, humanity is created in the *imago Dei*, in the image and likeness of God. Thus, humanity within all the created cosmos is perhaps the greatest of the "wonders of the world" because humanity integrates material and spiritual creation. In turn, Gregory draws a picture of humanity as a participant in the created cosmos who, through reason, serves as mediator between spiritual and material reality.

Essential to this claim from Gregory is the *imago Dei*. For Gregory this elevates humanity within the created cosmos to the most "precious" of things in "all the visible

³⁰⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* intro.1, 387.

creation.”³⁰⁶ In turn, Gregory explains why humanity was the last of creation in relation to this elevated status or, in the words of historian Justo Gonzalez, “the crown of creation.”³⁰⁷ According to Gregory, humanity was “brought into the world last after the creation, not being rejected to the last as worthless, but as one whom it behooved to be king over his subjects at his very birth.”³⁰⁸ Thus, for Gregory, humanity being the last of creation was not due to human deficiency but due to the elevated intention for humanity of the Creator, a claim that directly contrasts to Plato’s account of humanity.

In his work the *Protagoras*, Plato describes the creation of humanity as deficient due to an error by the Titan Epimetheus or “hindsight”. Plato states, “Now Epimetheus was not a particularly clever person, and before he realized it he had used up all the available powers on the brute beasts, and being left with the human race on his hands unprovided for, did not know what to do with them.”³⁰⁹ From this can be extrapolated two points: humanity is ontologically deficient to survive in the cosmos, and this deficiency was due to humanity being the last of creation. As will be discussed, this premise sets up Plato’s account of Prometheus. While it is not expedient to reiterate the Cappadocians’ adversarial relationship to the cosmology this inhabits, it is vital to note that the Promethean narrative that Plato relies upon is tied into the tragic cosmology that he himself is so wary of in the *Timaeus*. While Plato’s cosmology does not envision a pernicious and capricious divinity, as do Hesiod and Aeschylus, it does maintain an element of tragedy in material existence that is reflected in his anthropology. Humanity

³⁰⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* II.1, 390.

³⁰⁷ Gonzalez, 180.

³⁰⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* II.2, 390.

³⁰⁹ Plato, *Protagoras* 321b-c, 319.

is subject to the evils of material becoming and woven into the very creation of its existence.

On the contrary, for Gregory, humanity being the last of creation is evidence of God's love, care, and intention for humanity. He describes humanity's late entrance into creation in relation to hospitality. He states that a "good host does not bring his guest to his house before the preparation of his feast."³¹⁰ Instead, humanity is the last of creation in order that "by blending the Divine and the earthly, that by means of both he may be naturally and properly disposed to each enjoyment, enjoying God by means of his more divine nature, and the good things of earth by the sense that is akin to them."³¹¹ Thus, according to Gregory, the fact of humanity being the last of creation is evidence that God had intended humanity in the very act of creation even prior to humanity's creation. Furthermore, it was with the intention of creating humanity as the *imago Dei* and the subsequent ability of humanity to simultaneously enjoy God and "the good things of the earth" through creation that humanity was placed last.

Moreover, Gregory espouses the glorious gift of *imago Dei* as that which makes humanity the most precious of all creation. He affirms the marvels of the sun and the heavens, the animals and the plants.³¹² Yet, all of these are oriented toward the creation of humanity. All of the creation was made as the "material for humanity's formation."³¹³ Here the fact that Gregory's anthropology inhabits Basil's cosmology takes on a particular significance, for the formation of humanity from the "earth" in Gen. 2.7 was not the creation of humanity from inert substance devoid of purpose until formed by

³¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* II.2, 390.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, II.2, 390.

³¹² *Ibid.*, III.2, 390.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, III.2, 390.

God.³¹⁴ Instead, referring to Basil's claim that all the earth ceaselessly serves God's purpose, Gregory argues that the material aspect of humanity is the culmination of a material creation already saturated with God's goodness.³¹⁵ Furthermore, the material from which humanity was formed perpetually and dynamically served God. Humanity, then, represents the fullness of the material cosmos. In turn, humanity is both drawn from and draws into itself all of material reality. Yet, humanity is more than the sum of its material parts, even if those material parts are qualitatively good.

For Gregory, humanity is the fullness of both the material and spiritual aspects of creation. In turn, according to Gregory, humanity is "likened to a certain archetypal beauty (*kalos*)," who is Christ.³¹⁶ Furthermore, it is vital to note that that *kalos* of humanity is the *kalos* of Christ. The fullness of creation in humanity is "likened" to the fullness, the *kalos*, of Christ from eternity. Thus, for Gregory, it was the "breath of life"³¹⁷ that imparted this form with the uniquely human characteristic of soul. It is the ensoulment of humanity that brings the material and spiritual into the cosmic *kalon*. Yet, Gregory's view on the relationship of the body and soul was not a sharp dualism. For Gregory, the "breath of life" was not a sequential proposition. An eternal soul did not enter into a material body nor did the material body pre-exist the soul. Gregory argues that to posit the soul as eternally pre-existing the body is to cause humanity to "be at strife against itself, by being divided by the difference in point of time."³¹⁸ In this case, the eternal soul would then be corrupted, compromised, or at cross-purposes with the transience of the material body. Instead, Gregory offers that "fullness of nature" requires

³¹⁴ Gen 2.7 NRSV

³¹⁵ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9.2, 137.

³¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* III.2, 390.

³¹⁷ Gen 2.7 NRSV

³¹⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity*, XXIX.1, 421.

that both be positively affirmed.³¹⁹ In turn, the soul and body are created simultaneously. He states, “But as humanity is one, the being consisting of soul and body, we are to suppose that the beginning of its existence is one common to both parts.”³²⁰ The reason for this is that God’s will encompasses all of the cosmos in both material and spiritual aspects.³²¹ God creating from eternity must then conceive of body and soul concurrently.³²² Therefore, Gregory states, “the seminal cause of our constitution is neither a soul without body, nor a body without soul.”³²³ This is consistent with Basil’s argument that form and matter are mutually realized in each particular aspect of creation. Thus the form of humanity created in the *Imago Dei* grants no chronological priority to body or soul. Both are embodied within humanity in its creation.

Furthermore, reason was for Gregory as well as Basil a particular aspect of the soul created *imago Dei*. According to Pelikan, among the qualities of the soul “three nevertheless stood out as comprising the essential content of the image: reason, free will, and immortality.”³²⁴ It is the first of these characteristics, reason, that this discussion will focus on. For example, in homily IV of the *Hexaemeron*, Basil describes reason as the “particular characteristic of humanity.”³²⁵ For Gregory, “the soul proper, in fact and

³¹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* XXII.4, 411.

³²⁰ Ibid., XXIX.4, 420.

³²¹ Ibid., XXIX.1, 420.

³²² “In the power of God’s foreknowledge, all the fullness of human nature had pre-existed, and in the creation of individuals not to place the one element before the other, neither the soul nor the body.” Ibid., XXIX.1, 420.

³²³ Ibid., XXX.29, 426.

³²⁴ While the focus of this discussion is on “reason” and not “free will”, it should be noted that Pelikan’s use of the term free will might be a bit misleading. If free will is interpreted as a choice between dialectic possibilities, then it is not congruent with Cappadocian thought. Free will, in this sense is a product of the fall and not a quality of human nature. Free will in the Cappadocian context has a different flavor more akin to the freedom of choice within *kalon*. For example, in the narrative of Genesis, Adam freely chose names for creation prior to the knowledge of good and evil. The former is the freedom of choice within humanity’s nature. The latter became the freedom of choice post-lapse. Pelikan, 127; Basil, *Hexaemeron* 4.5, 62.

³²⁵ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 4.5, 62.

name, is the rational soul.”³²⁶ Furthermore, according to Gregory, the soul is not sequestered into any particular part of the body but permeates and envelops the whole.³²⁷ In this permeation of the entirety of humanity’s material existence, reason is not that which separates humanity from creation but that which encourages humanity’s engagement with creation. Reason is that which properly orders the material.³²⁸ It is important to note, though, that this ordering of the material is not merely the ordering of a circumscribed human body. It is fundamentally the ordering of the material cosmos that comprises that material body, the dynamic “earth” from which humanity was formed. Thus, reason is not merely that which governs individual humans as physical beings but that which brings all of creation into harmony.

Before examining this claim from Gregory further, this discussion will return once again to the cosmology underlying the Promethean narrative in the works of Aeschylus and Plato, for it is in contrast to these works that Gregory’s argument takes on particular significance. As discussed, Aeschylus’ tragedy was rooted in Hesiod’s tragic cosmos. In turn, in Aeschylus’ tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, Prometheus found humanity “witless”, in a state of despair and suffering. Prometheus states, “I found them witless and gave them the use of their wits and made them masters of their minds. I will tell you this, not because I would blame humanity, but to explain the good will of my gift.”³²⁹ From this Prometheus boasts that he granted humanity the gifts that allowed humanity to survive in a natural world they were otherwise unequipped for: reason, technology, and

³²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity*, XV.1, 403.

³²⁷ Ibid., XIV.1, 402, XV.3

³²⁸ Ibid., XV.3, 403-404

³²⁹ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* line 440, 327.

culture by way of divine fire.³³⁰ Included in this was the mastery over the natural world they were once subject to. He states, it was “I who first yoked beasts for them in the yokes and made of those beasts the slaves of trace chain and pack saddle that they might be humanity’s substitute in the hardest task.”³³¹ Thus, it was through the gift of reason by Prometheus that humanity gained mastery of a natural world that once afflicted it.

In Plato’s interpretation of Prometheus, humanity was the subject of neglect. As discussed, in Plato’s view humanity was created lacking in natural endowments relative to the “brute” beasts due to an error. Furthermore, Plato claims that Prometheus stole culture and reason from the Gods. He states, “into the dwelling shared by Athena and Hephaestus, in which they practiced their arts, he penetrated by stealth, and carrying off Hephaestus’ art of working with fire, and the art of Athena as well.”³³² In turn, language, carpentry, weaving, and agriculture were developed based on this initial theft.³³³ Like Aeschylus, it was finding humanity in a state of destitution that caused Prometheus to steal for humanity reason, technology, and culture.

Of particular relevance in these accounts is that humanity is insufficient in the face of the natural world. In turn, reason, technology, and culture are not “natural” to humanity. Instead, these aspects of humanity were a gift stolen from the gods. In turn, these aspects are what separate and protect humanity from its original ontological deficiency. They are not that which bring the cosmos into harmony but, instead, are the unnaturally acquired means through which humanity imposes order (at least in terms of human needs) upon the cosmos. Thus, this account is consistent with Platonic

³³⁰ Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound* line 230, 320.

³³¹ Ibid, [460], 328.

³³² Plato, *Protagoras* 321d-e, 319.

³³³ Ibid., 322a, 319.

cosmology. Just as Plato's God imposes order on the eternal transience of matter, reason is imposed on natural human deficiency.

Gregory's understanding of reason stands in sharp contrast to this picture. For Gregory, reason is natural to humanity. It was embedded in humanity with the initial "breath of life," not granted to humanity from a state of natural insufficiency. In turn, reason is not that which protects humanity from the natural world but was a gift ensuring humanity's involvement with creation. In a chapter devoted entirely to the question of "*Why humanity is destitute of natural weapons and covering*", Gregory contends with the Promethean notion of human insufficiency. He argues that humanity lacks "prominent horns or sharp claws" not as evidence of divine neglect but instead to ensure humanity's involvement with the rest of the material cosmos.³³⁴ If humanity were perfectly capable of flourishing without "horns or claws," humanity, by nature, would not need to engage with the rest of creation. This being the case, he argues that humanity "would have neglected his rule over the other creatures if he had no need of the cooperation of his subjects."³³⁵ Now, while this may smack of anthropocentrism, what needs to be kept in mind is that, though humanity's participation in the material cosmos required human use of the various aspects of the natural world, it was the harmonizing of creation, the *kalon*, which was paradigmatic. Humanity had no absolute right over creation. As Pelikan points out, the Cappadocians always reserved the proper rule of "heaven and earth" for God.³³⁶ This point will become vital for the Cappadocians' economic critiques insofar as ownership of property is always-already provisional. That being said, reason was in Gregory's view as "natural" an endowment as fangs, horns, or claws.

³³⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* VII.2, 392.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, VII.2, 392.

³³⁶ Pelikan, 127.

Furthermore, it was not just reason that ensured humanity's engagement with creation, but the material constitution of the human body.³³⁷ For example, Gregory describes the relationship between the mind and body, reason and material, as expressed in the rational nature of human hands. For Gregory, the use of human hands is a "special property of the rational creature."³³⁸ It is the hands that are instruments of humanity's participation with the material cosmos. This participation is the stuff of technology and culture. Gregory points to the "natural employment of our hands in written characters" as the natural and rational basis for culture.³³⁹ In turn he refers to the "very many uses in daily life for which these skillfully contrived and helpful instruments," such as agriculture and music and the technologies, required of both.³⁴⁰ Thus, Gregory claims hands are that which "co-operate with the bidding of reason."³⁴¹ They are a gift from God. Unlike the Promethean accounts, this gift was not stolen but is "the property of the rational nature."³⁴² In turn, the function of hands and reason are not that which protects and divides humanity from creation but that, which ensures that humanity participates in the material cosmos.

In conjunction with this or, perhaps, fundamental to this understanding of *imago Dei* for Gregory is the doctrine of "two-natures". In this, Gregory posits the notion that humanity serves as a mediator between spiritual and material reality.³⁴³ The two natures

³³⁷ It is not inappropriate to refer to humanity in this sense as microcosm. At the same time, it ought not be construed as humanity as an analogy for the cosmos. Humanity as microcosm is the fullness of the cosmos, not a lesser instantiation.

³³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity*, VIII.2, 393.

³³⁹ Ibid., VIII.2, 393.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., VII.2, VIII.2, IX.2, 392-395.

³⁴¹ Ibid., VIII.2, 393.

³⁴² Ibid., VIII.8, 394.

³⁴³ The two-natures is not without controversy insofar as it is the foundation of Nyssen's argument for universal salvation. As J. Patout Burns states, "The assertion that salvation will be universally accomplished is based on Gregory's belief that the entire human race is the divine image in the creation."

doctrine explicates how humanity indivisibly contains the *imago Dei* and material creation.

Gregory interprets Gen. 1.27 as containing a distinction:

So God created humankind in his
image,
in the image of God he created
them;
*male and female he created them,*³⁴⁴

For Gregory, this implies a double creation of nature. He states, "Thus their creation of our nature is in a sense twofold: one made like to God, one divided according to this distinction."³⁴⁵ First, there is the "whole humanity" created in God's image, which is not male *or* female but encompasses all distinction. Second, there is humanity created male and female, which is divided into gender. For Gregory the *imago Dei* qua *imago Dei* is indivisible. Therefore, if humanity were created primarily as "man and woman" then the image of God would be divided between them and imply that God was divisible, which would be erroneous. He states, "I presume that everyone knows that this is a departure from the Prototype: for 'in Jesus Christ,' as the apostle says, 'there is neither male nor female.'"³⁴⁶ This is a reference to Galatians 3:28 which states, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Jesus Christ."³⁴⁷ This passage is especially relevant as it pertains to slavery, a

The controversy existed between the Cappadocians themselves. Basil rejected the notion outright. Macrina accepted it. Gregory of Nazianzus "hoped" for it. This does not include the obvious contrast to others such as Augustine. Ultimately, neither East nor West accepts universal salvation as a doctrine. For the internal controversy amongst the Cappadocians see Pelikan, 325-326. For the difference between Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine see J. Patout Burns, "The Economy of Salvation: Two Patristic Traditions" *Doctrines Of Human Nature, Sin, And Salvation In The Early Church* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc. 1993), 224-246.

³⁴⁴ My emphasis on "male and female he created them." Gen. 1.27 NRSV

³⁴⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* XVI.8, 405.

³⁴⁶ Ibid., XVI.9, 405.

³⁴⁷ Galatians 3:28 NRSV

rare point of disagreement between Basil and Gregory. For Gregory, it is not merely the case that human nature, as the *imago Dei*, is genderless. Instead, it is collective. The *imago Dei* is not merely a trait that marks individual humans with a genderless divine quality. Instead, it is the fullness of humanity that represents the *imago Dei*. Simply put, the *imago Dei* as described by Gregory of Nyssa does not level difference; it subsumes it into the collective unity of the *imago Dei*. The “whole humanity” is the “archetypal beauty”, the full expression of the cosmic *kalon* in material and spiritual form.

The importance of this interpretation of the *imago Dei* to the social ethics of the Cappadocians cannot be overemphasized. This understanding of human nature, coupled with Basil’s understanding of the harmonious orientation of the cosmos, pushes the Cappadocians’ ethics in a decidedly communitarian direction. It is a central concept in their critiques of abject poverty and slavery. At the same time, it is imperative to note that the *imago Dei* is in no way a social institution. It is not the law nor is it the foundation of law. For the Cappadocians law falls under the auspices of the ‘garments of skin’³⁴⁸ which are both a blessing from God and a consequence of the fall.³⁴⁹ While the relationship of the *imago Dei*, social ethics, and the normative social condition of *koinonia* will be treated subsequently, for now it is important to note that the framework within which the Cappadocians’ social ethics operates is bound to the relationship of

³⁴⁸ Genesis 3: 21

³⁴⁹Specifically, law is a blessing because it limits the power of sin. Yet, it is a consequence of the fall because, as Orthodox theologian Panayiotis Nellas puts it, “Perhaps the law constitutes the power of sin because in some way it has its roots in sin, because it is given to man {sic} when in a state of sin, and is related to this state precisely in order to be able to correct it.” Thus, while law is a blessing and limit on sin, it is constituted by sin. It can only limit, not overcome, sin. This theme is operative throughout not only Cappadocian, but also much of Patristic thought. For an equally moving and comprehensive discussion of this, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *The Second Easter Oration, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. VII* ed. Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co. 1979), passim. But especially XII, 427. Panayiotis Nellas, *Deification in Christ* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1987), 44-53, 69; see also Gregory of Nyssa, *On Virginity, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers vol. V* ed. Phillip Schaff and Henry Wace (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing co. 1979), XIII, 359-360.

cosmology and anthropology. Specifically, the cosmos tends towards harmony, which is reflected in the relationship within the “natural world”. Humanity is the fullness of material creation, and that human nature as the *imago Dei* is a collective unity within the cosmic *kalon*. As will be discussed, both of these claims are represented in the Cappadocians’ social vision of collective unity and harmony and their material implications. Yet, before moving on to that discussion, it is vital to attend to the other aspect of human nature for Gregory, the spiritual aspect of creation.

For Gregory, human nature is what mediates between the material and spiritual aspects of creation. As Gregory states, “While two natures - the Divine and incorporeal nature, and the irrational life of brutes - are separate from each other as extremes, human nature is the mean between them.”³⁵⁰ For the material cosmos is not privy to the spiritual and in turn is not able to apprehend the fullness of the cosmos but only in part.³⁵¹ This is equally true in reverse, insofar as the spiritual aspects of creation, such as angels, are not material; they cannot mediate between the two.³⁵² Now, it is vital to recall that for the Cappadocians the primary distinction is not between spirit and matter but Creator and creation. The spiritual aspects of creation, though not material, remain created. Thus, as Basil in his *Hexaemeron* describes the “Powers and Principalities”, the “Forces or hosts of Angels” as part of the “invisible world”, it is in the context of their being the product of “the Creator and Producer of all things.”³⁵³ In turn, the mediation between the material and spiritual aspects of creation cannot be exclusive to one side or the other. Ultimately, it is the unique configuration of humanity as material and spiritual that serves

³⁵⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* XVI.9, 405.

³⁵¹ Paulos Gregorios, *Cosmic Man: The Divine Presence* (New Dehli, India: Sophia Publications 1980), 82.

³⁵² Orphanos, 7-27.

³⁵³ Basil, *Hexaemeron* 1.5, 9.

this role in the cosmos. Thus, for Gregory, it is the created nature of humanity that allows it to harmonize the material cosmos with the spiritual.³⁵⁴ Therefore, what is natural to humanity for Gregory is the proper ordering of the material body by the rational soul. For as much as humanity is unable to separate its soul from its body, it is the soul that harmonizes the body. As Gregory states, "perfect bodily life is seen in the rational nature, which both is nourished and endowed with sense, and also partakes of reason and is ordered by mind."³⁵⁵ For Gregory, human nature is a synthesis between body and soul and it is reason that brings the material and spiritual aspects into harmony.

Beyond this, for Gregory, the human nature is that which mediates between the divine and the material in the entire cosmos, not merely within the human person. He states:

For in the compound nature of humanity we may behold a part of each of the natures I have mentioned, - of the Divine, the rational and intelligent elements, which does not admit the distinction between male and female; of the irrational, our bodily form and structure, divided into male and female: for each of these elements is certainly to be found in all that partakes of human life.³⁵⁶

Human nature, to be human, is the proper alignment of the spiritual and material. In turn, humanity as formed materially from the material cosmos and formed in the *imago Dei* is able to stand as a bridge between the divine and temporal, the spiritual and material. As Paulos Gregorios states, "it is through this being played out in history that the *pleroma* of humanity draws the whole creation into itself and becomes enabled to fulfill its mediating

³⁵⁴"By being born like animals and being nurtured with material food, the *pleroma* of mankind in history assimilates the rest of creation into itself and becomes integrally related to it, so that the redemption of the *pleroma* of mankind is also the redemption of the whole of creation." Gregorios, 188.

³⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* VIII.5, 394.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., XVI.9, 405.

role between Creator and creation.”³⁵⁷ Therefore, humanity does not just represent the fullness of creation to God but also is the drawing of creation towards God.

Ultimately, Gregory’s understanding of human nature is consistent with the eschatological unfolding of Basil’s cosmology.³⁵⁸ The perpetual unfolding of the material cosmos is fulfilled in the spiritual unfolding in humanity. Thus, what is transient in the material cosmos is indivisible from human nature. In turn, there is no “static state of perfection” original to humanity.³⁵⁹ Instead, through humanity, the entirety of the cosmos, in its material and spiritual aspects, is perpetually in the process of eschatological becoming. It is humanity that draws creation into harmonious *kalon* in preparation for the ultimate creative act of the *eschaton*.

It must be noted that the creative act of the *eschaton* is not a human possibility. Simply, humanity, even if it were to align the cosmos into harmonious *kalon*, cannot bring about the *eschaton*. The *kalon* is in this sense the *telos* of creation; it is the ultimate fruition of created reality.³⁶⁰ Humanity as mediator is central to the fulfillment of this *telos* in anticipation of the *eschaton*. Recalling the previous discussion on created time, it vital to note that the “eighth day” is a creative act, which is exclusive to the creative power and prerogative of God. Humanity, even in its proper mediation role within the cosmos, does not possess that creative power. Thus, as Hart contrasts the *eschaton* to Aristotelian cosmology, it is “not the fulfillment of the immanent design of ‘nature’, history, consciousness, or destiny, but from beyond the totality - the cosmos - they

³⁵⁷ Gregorios, 188.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 188.

³⁵⁹ Burns, 229.

³⁶⁰ Pelikan, 163.

describe.”³⁶¹ At the same time, it is the mediating role of humanity in its nature that guides the unfolding cosmos to *kalon* that in some way is a prerequisite of the *eschaton*.³⁶²

Thus the cosmic *kalon* and *eschaton* are connected through the particular nature and role of humanity created *imago Dei*. In Basil’s cosmology, eschatology is woven into the material becoming of the cosmos. The unfolding of the cosmos toward eschatological fulfillment is not imposed externally but imparted naturally. Yet this natural orientation toward eschatological fulfillment is for the Cappadocians neither ignorant of the effects of sin nor an idealized vision of the cosmos antecedent to sin. As discussed previously, evil is not for Basil a “natural” aspect of the cosmos. It is the product of our “voluntary falls”. In full, Basil’s statement in this regard reads: “You yourself are master of these actions; do not seek elsewhere their beginnings, but recognize that evil in its proper sense has taken its origin from our voluntary falls.”³⁶³ For Basil, sin is a voluntary practice of humanity and not reducible to an external power. It is not “a living or animated substance”. It is a “falling away from the good.”³⁶⁴ Gregory of Nyssa repeats this notion, more positively, in his work *On the Soul and Resurrection*, which states: “Abraham says that the life of those who live in the flesh is not deprived of providence, but the guidance of the law and the prophets is available

³⁶¹ Hart, 54.

³⁶² This can all begin to sound a bit Pelagian, and Gregory of Nyssa has been labeled a “semi-Pelagian” at times. For it seems that the final creative act of the *eschaton* though, ultimately, a product of divine grace, is somehow made necessary by human activity. Thus, the achievement of cosmic *kalon*, though not the *eschaton*, is really a human achievement and not one of grace. Yet, when interpreted within Basil’s cosmology, Gregory would have to be categorized as other than Pelagian for the simple reason that the Cappadocians do not operate from the same categories of nature and grace as the West. For a discussion of this see Ekkhard Muhlenberg’s “Synergism in Gregory of Nyssa,” *Doctrines Of Human Nature, Sin, and Salvation In The Early Church* (New York, NY: Garland Publishing Inc. 1993), 61.

³⁶³ Basil, *Hexameron* 2.5, 29.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.4, 28.

within the power of choice.”³⁶⁵ Like Basil, for Gregory sin is not an *a priori* condition of existence, even after the fall. Instead, humanity can choose to live in a righteous way as per Abraham. Furthermore, as Gregory continues, the inclinations towards “anger, fear, desire, pleasure and the like – we said that the good use of these is virtue, but through their defective use evil comes about.”³⁶⁶ Again, evil is not a necessity but a product of human failing. It is the defective use of the “irrational qualities”, not inherent to these qualities themselves. This understanding of sin is woven into Gregory’s account of the primordial sin, the initial cosmic dissonance, which he describes as a misapprehension of the good. He argues that the “desire which arises towards what is evil, as though towards good, is called by Scripture ‘the knowledge of good and evil’.”³⁶⁷ It was the misapprehension of the good by ordering his actions according to “that which gratifies the senses”³⁶⁸ that the fall occurred from Adam. In sum, while for Basil and Gregory sin exists and the primordial sin did occur, it did not change the fundamental nature of humanity. Humanity still has an active relationship to evil and sin. Thus, as Orphanos puts it, the fall, though real, was neither a “positive corruption” nor a “total catastrophe” for humanity.³⁶⁹ It was a privation and a distortion of the good. It distorted an originally clear path.

To better explain this, an analogy is in order. In this sense, the cosmos and humanity are analogous to an orchestra. First of all, an orchestra is full of musicians who play their instruments as virtuosi. In and of themselves they achieve a particular excellence. So too, do the particular aspects of creation achieve a certain excellence in

³⁶⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On The Soul And Resurrection*, 75.

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁶⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Humanity* XX.3, 410.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, XX.3, 410.

³⁶⁹ Orphanos, 90.

accord with their nature. Second, the purpose of the orchestra *qua* orchestra, for all its individual pieces and their excellence, is conceived as a whole. It is the nature of the orchestra to play together, in harmony and beauty. So too, is the cosmos in its nature is oriented toward harmony and beauty.

The conductor is the one who harmonizes the individual pieces of the orchestra. The conductor has a unique stance towards the rest of the orchestra and has a particularly deep knowledge and understanding of the music as a whole. So too does reason allow humanity a greater awareness of the cosmos than any other of its individual aspects. The conductor brings the orchestra into harmony. In the same way, humanity is created to bring the cosmos into *kalon*. At the same time, the conductor is ever a part of the orchestra. The conductor is not the composer. In this way, humanity is not God but ever created. Ultimately, the proper role, even in her unique position, of the conductor is to mediate the fullness of the composer's music to the instrumentalists. In the best sense, this is also the role of humanity in the cosmos.

Ultimately, just as blindfolds or earplugs on the composer will cause the orchestra to play out of harmony, so too does human sin distort the cosmic *kalon*. Now, the pieces still play, and in their way still achieve excellence, but the whole is distorted. So too does creation still *become* in anticipation of the eschaton, but this anticipation is thwarted by the disordering effect of human sin. At the same time, for the Cappadocians, this blindness or lack of hearing are not permanent conditions caused by a sin. Humanity is still capable of hearing and seeing, but through sin humanity sees and hears wrongly. Thus, the efficacy of the Incarnation is a clarification of moral vision natural to humanity.

For the Cappadocians the Incarnation was a fulfillment and restoration of humanity as mediator within the cosmos. In reference to this, Gregory of Nyssa states in another work that Christ Incarnate "through his own agency drew the human nature up once more to immortal life."³⁷⁰ Implicit in "once more" is that humanity, through the Incarnation, is reoriented towards its eschatological and natural destiny. Thus, as Muhlenberg argues, through the Incarnation "human will is not created anew."³⁷¹ Instead, Christ came to "reawaken nature to its destiny."³⁷² Through the Incarnation, humanity is "reawakened" to its natural status as the crown of creation. Participation in the cosmic *kalon*, fully realized in the archetypal beauty (*kalos*) of Christ, is restored. The unfolding of the cosmos towards its eschatological fulfillment is renewed.³⁷³ Through the Incarnation, it was made possible for humanity *and* in turn the cosmos to discern the music obscured by sin. The possibility of cosmic harmony is clarified.

In sum, the anthropology offered by Gregory of Nyssa is consistent with Basil's cosmology. It affirms the primary distinction of Creator and creation and subsequently describes humanity and its role within creation. For Gregory, the central component of his anthropology is his understanding of the *imago Dei*. For Gregory the *imago Dei* is a collective condition of the whole humanity. This collective unity dissolves human diversity into human unity. Fundamentally, for Gregory the *imago Dei* is the *kalos* of humanity. This understanding of humanity is consistent with Basil's cosmology insofar as it reflects Basil's understanding of the cosmos as existing in *kalon* and oriented toward

³⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius* III.3, 143.

³⁷¹ Muhlenberg, 69.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 69.

³⁷³ Thus, in the words of Gregorios, the "redemption of the *pleroma* of mankind is also the redemption of the whole creation." Gregorios, 188.

an eschatological end. In this regard, Gregory's understanding of human nature, as that which mediates between the spiritual and material, is fullness of the cosmic *kalon*. It is humanity that properly harmonizes the cosmos in its eschatological anticipation.

Ultimately, sins for both Gregory and Basil are voluntary privations from human nature and dissonance against the harmony of the cosmos.

Part II: Koinonia and the “Symphony of Lament”

The second part of this thesis will focus on the Cappadocians’ social ethics, specifically as it pertains to their constructive social vision of *koinonia* and their moral judgments on the process of enslavement. It will be argued that the Cappadocians understand the *koinonia* described in Acts as the normative and natural condition of human community. Simply put, *koinonia* is the condition of community that aligns with the cosmic *kalon*. In turn, it will be shown how the Cappadocians locate this interpretation in their discourse concerning poverty. For the Cappadocians poverty is a porous category that includes both positive (sufficiency) and negative (abjection) judgments. In turn, the latter form of poverty will be integrated with the practices of slavery and usury. Ultimately it will be argued that this integration represents the process of enslavement. It is a “symphony of lament” that serves as dissonance against the cosmic *kalon*.

Chapter 4: Koinonia and Poverty

The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the social vision of the Cappadocians and its integral relationship to their cosmology and anthropology. Specifically, this discussion will focus on how the previous discussions of the cosmic *kalon* and the *imago Dei* impact the Cappadocians' understanding of *koinonia* as representative of both the normative and natural community. Put another way, *koinonia* for the Cappadocians represents both the standard from which their social vision is expressed as well as the condition of a community that aligns with the harmonious unfolding of creation. In turn, this vision will be illustrated through the Cappadocians' discourse concerning poverty. It is the argument here that, for the Cappadocians, poverty was a porous category that included the poverty of sufficiency that aligns with *koinonia* and the abject poverty that is a product of moral failing within the natural *koinonia* of human community. The latter point will prove vital for the Cappadocians' judgment on the process of enslavement.

Before moving onto a discussion on the substantive aspect of the Cappadocians' social vision, it is necessary to clarify the chronological sequence of these homilies and sermons relative to the previously discussed works on cosmology and anthropology. The primary texts under discussion here do not fit neatly into a chronological sequence relative to the *Hexaemeron* or *On the Creation of Humanity*. It is universally agreed upon that the three "famine" homilies from Basil were preached in the midst of the famine begun in 368.³⁷⁴ In turn, it is generally agreed that the *Hexaemeron* was preached

³⁷⁴ Schroeder, 21; Holman, 68-69.

during the Lenten season of 378.³⁷⁵ Furthermore, the works from Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus are generally dated after 372.³⁷⁶ Thus, the three “famine” homilies that assert *koinonia* as normative are antecedent to the *Hexaemeron*. Basil did not comprehensively construct his cosmological account prior to this assertion. That being said, it is important to recall that though the *Hexaemeron* is the comprehensive representation of Cappadocian cosmology, it was not argued that the *Hexaemeron* was the initial expression of this cosmology. As will be shown, many salient elements of this cosmology and anthropology are expressed in the works on social ethics. Thus, while not antecedent to their works on social ethics, it will be shown that the cosmology expressed in the *Hexaemeron* is operative in these works. Therefore, while not chronologically prior, this does follow the progression of God, creation, humanity, and community, although the latter two, as will be shown, are essentially the same.³⁷⁷

In light of this, it is the argument here that *koinonia* as described in Acts is the interpretive key to the Cappadocians’ social ethics. As with their cosmology, their understanding of the normative social condition is essentially scriptural. On one hand, it is through the concept of *koinonia* that the Cappadocians integrate their cosmology and anthropology into their social vision. On the other hand, it is the understanding of *koinonia* as the normative and natural condition of human community that serves as the standard against which particular economic practices are critiqued. The Cappadocians’

³⁷⁵ There is some minor disagreement about this dating. Some date them as early 374. Others date them in 377. Though important in understanding the development of Basil’s thought, this disagreement has no bearing on the discussion at hand. Rousseau, 362-363.

³⁷⁶ Holman, 68-69; Way, xv.

³⁷⁷ Not to belabor the point, but Gregory of Nyssa affirms the order of creation and humanity’s status as the last of creation. At no time (at least as far as I know) do the Cappadocians make an argument that frustrates the sequence of the Christian narrative from creation to eschaton, regardless of whether they addressed the former before the latter or any interval in between.

social vision is fundamentally communitarian, and *koinonia* is the conceptual foundation of that vision.

Koinonia in Acts

To begin, it is essential to articulate the aspects of *koinonia* relevant to the Cappadocians' social vision. They are spiritual and material communion, sufficiency as the operative economic principle, and the judgment of God on those who neglect to practice *koinonia*. It is the argument here that these aspects of *koinonia*, as described in Acts, have a normative shape drawn upon by the Cappadocians.

The first aspect under discussion is how, properly understood, the *koinonia* described in Acts is an integration of material and spiritual communion. To begin, the first instance of *koinonia* is found in the second chapter of Acts. In Acts 2:42, after the baptism of three thousand persons into the Christian faith, the converted "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship (*koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and prayer."³⁷⁸ Here the practice of *koinonia* encompasses the spiritual practice of prayer and the material practice of "breaking of bread." Furthermore, in Acts 4:32, *koinonia* is described in decidedly communal terms. It states: "Now, the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common."³⁷⁹ While this is essentially the same as the previously discussed verse, there are two developments here that tend towards a normative claim. The first is the explicit spiritual unity of the Christian community insofar as it is described as subsisting in one "heart" and one "soul". The second is the material or economic unity through the abolition of private

³⁷⁸ Acts 2:42 NRSV, Greek NT.

³⁷⁹ Acts 4:32 NRSV.

property in favor of communal sharing. Thus, within the account of Acts, *koinonia* is not merely a condition of spiritual fellowship or even communal identity. While it certainly entailed these aspects, in each example the spiritual fellowship is directly related to the material fellowship. Thus, as Justo Gonzalez points out, *koinonia* is "not simply a spiritual sharing. It is a total sharing that includes the material as well as the spiritual."³⁸⁰ Therefore, while *koinonia* can and, from the scriptural view, does imply a spiritual fellowship or communion, these aspects cannot be separated from the material aspect.

The second aspect of *koinonia* relevant to this discussion is the principle of sufficiency. Thus, Acts 2:44-45 states: "All who believed were together and had all things in common (*apanta koina*); they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need."³⁸¹ Thus, *koinonia* entails a gathering and redistribution of wealth. This distributive aspect is reiterated in Acts 4:33-35, which states:

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.³⁸²

Again, this is essentially the same as the previous description but there is one subtle yet important development. While both describe a community where the gathered wealth was redistributed, in the latter example it was not only the case that they practiced material sharing but also that the material was sufficient for the needs of that community. It is important to note that this description of eliminating need within the community was not described in terms of "miracle" or "sign". In fact, it is only after the discussion of *koinonia* as the normative practice of the community that the "signs and wonders" of the

³⁸⁰ Gonzalez, 83.

³⁸¹ Acts 2:44-45 NRSV, Greek NT.

³⁸² Acts 4:33-35 NRSV

apostles are mentioned.³⁸³ The point here is that *koinonia* in this context is not akin to manna from heaven or a “loaves and fishes” miracle. Instead it was immanently available practice within a spiritually and materially unified community. Thus, within the community described in Acts the commonly held property was distributed according to need and this distribution successfully provided for the needs of the community.

The tension between *koinonia* and private property is best understood within the Roman ideological context. For within the Roman Empire, the right to private property was absolute. As mentioned, Roman ideology asserted that the individual had the unlimited right to the use, enjoy, or abuse her/his property.³⁸⁴ Furthermore, as discussed, political and social participation by the Roman citizenry was directly dependent on one’s status as a property-owning citizen. Thus, the normative claim of *koinonia* functions in this text as a direct opposition to these Roman principles.³⁸⁵ The practice of a community that renounced private property would be tantamount to renouncing one’s status as a Roman citizen. Furthermore, this community would stand as a sharp contrast to the ideological status quo that espoused the absolute property rights of its citizenry. Therefore *koinonia* as described in Acts is the description of a community in contrast to the ideology of Imperial Rome. What was normative within the community stood in opposition to the ideological norms of the Empire.

Koinonia and Kalon

Having discussed the normative shape of *koinonia* as described in Acts, this discussion is prepared to articulate how this is integrated with the cosmological perspective of the Cappadocians. Specifically, the purpose here is to demonstrate how

³⁸³ Luke 5:12 NRSV

³⁸⁴ “jus utendi, jus, fuendi, jus abutendi” Gonzalez, 19.

³⁸⁵ Gonzalez, 84.

koinonia and *kalon* mutually inform the Cappadocians' social vision. It will be argued that for the Cappadocians *koinonia* is both normative and natural. This means that within Cappadocian thought *koinonia* as described above is both the standard for human community as well as the form of community that aligns with the cosmic *kalon*. In other words, *koinonia* is the form of human community proper to *kalon*.

Before moving forward, it is necessary to clarify that the connection made here between normative and natural is cognizant of the fact that these two aspects are not necessarily synonymous. It is entirely possible to understand *koinonia* as normative and not natural. For instance, it is possible to understand the community described in Acts as the product of a "new creation" instituted by Christ. Therefore, at least theoretically, it is possible to understand *koinonia* as normative of a "new creation", though not necessarily natural to the creation of Genesis. While it is acknowledged that this is a possible interpretation, it is precisely the argument here that, for the Cappadocians, this is not the case. In this regard, it is vital to recall the condition of sin and efficacy of the Incarnation in Cappadocian thought. For the Cappadocians, the Incarnation represented a *renewal* of creation, not an entirely "new creation". As discussed, for the Cappadocians the efficacy of the Incarnation was the possibility of returning to the natural orientation of the cosmos, to *kalon*. Thus, this discussion is prepared to examine how *koinonia* operates as the normative and natural condition of human community in the social vision of the Cappadocians.

To begin, it is necessary to draw the connection between *koinonia* as described in Acts and the social vision of the Cappadocians. In his homily *In a Time of Famine and*

Drought, Basil explicitly invokes the community described in Acts as the normative model for the Christian community. He states:

Let us zealously imitate the early Christian community, where everything was held in common – life, soul, concord, a common table, indivisible kinship – while unfeigned love constituted many bodies as one and joined many souls into a single harmonious whole.³⁸⁶

Here Basil describes the essential features of *koinonia* as a normative social model.³⁸⁷

First is the notion of unity through “unfeigned love” that draws the many into one social body. Furthermore, the unity of the social body is joined both spiritually, “many souls,” and materially, “everything was held in common.” It is the integral relationship between the material and spiritual that formed the “single harmonious whole” of the social body. Thus, for Basil the normative social body entails an integrated form of communion rooted in the integrated *koinonia* of Acts. In turn, normative community is not evident only in the common “soul” or even “indivisible kinship” but also the “common table” and common possessions. True *koinonia* envelops the entirety of human relationships in both its material and spiritual aspects.

While this statement asserts the normative status of *koinonia* as it pertains to the social body, in itself it can be interpreted as making no claim as a natural condition. As discussed, it is a reasonable argument to assert *koinonia* as distinct from nature and not necessarily integral to nature. To begin to understand *koinonia* as a natural condition, it is vital to attend to statements from Basil directly antecedent to his normative claim.

First, Basil describes the material aspects of *koinonia* as a natural condition of sharing

³⁸⁶ Basil of Caesarea, *In A Time of Famine and Drought, On Social Justice: St Basil The Great* trans. C. Paul Schoeder (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 2009) §8, 86.

³⁸⁷ It is tempting to qualify this statement with “ideally” normative. In the broader theological context, this is probably appropriate. At the same time, in the context of Basil’s work, he does not make this qualification. Much of this has to do with the context of famine but it also has to do with the community of the *Basileias*. Certainly, Basil did not condemn all who did not live up to this standard. At the same time, he does not give theological justification for other standards. He holds *koinonia* as the standard.

evident within creation. Basil argues that Christians “who are reasonable,” by neglecting the victims of the famine, are shown to be “more savage than the unreasoning animal.”³⁸⁸ In turn, he describes how sheep “graze together upon the same hillside” and horses “feed upon the same plain.”³⁸⁹ Furthermore, Basil argues that “all living creatures permit each other to satisfy their need for food.”³⁹⁰ He contrasts this to humans who “hoard what is common and keep for ourselves what belongs to many others.”³⁹¹ On one hand, just as in his *Hexaemeron*, Basil refers to the natural world as a contrast to human behavior. Specifically, he argues in similar fashion to the *Hexaemeron* that humanity, endowed with reason, is “more savage”, less moral than the animal not so endowed. On the other hand, in this contrast Basil again affirms the tendency of the natural world to act in a harmony. Not only do the sheep and horses share resources in common, but also all creatures “use in common the plants that grow naturally from the earth.”³⁹² Thus, the tendency of creation is to share what is common. For Basil, it is a particular practice of humanity to not only take more than is sufficient for survival but especially to the detriment of others. As will be discussed, this understanding is central to Basil’s argument for sufficiency as the operative economic principle within *koinonia*. What is important here is that, for Basil, material sharing is not a practice that exceeds nature but is one common to all creation.

The second aspect relevant to *koinonia* concerns the practice of material sharing within non-Christian communities. Basil refers to the “pagan Greeks” who practice material sharing. He states, “for some of them, a law of philanthropy dictated a single

³⁸⁸ Basil, *Famine and Drought*, §8, 86.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., §8, 86

³⁹⁰ Ibid., §8, 86.

³⁹¹ Ibid., §8, 86.

³⁹² Ibid., §8, 86.

table and common meals, so that many different people might also be regarded as one household.”³⁹³ Again, just as with the natural world, Basil argues that even the pagan Greeks practiced a form of common sharing. The primary difference between the material sharing of the “unreasoning animals” and “the pagan Greeks” is the assertion of the “household” (*oikos*) as the normative social body. Whereas the “unreasoning animal” practices material sharing instinctually, which is a reflection of the rational cause of the creation, the “pagan Greeks” practice material sharing within the particular social entity of the household. In this regard, it is important to note that the central economic entity for Aristotle was the household. His operative economic principle was *oikonomia* or household management, which was the natural economic practice within a natural entity.³⁹⁴ As will be discussed further, this natural *oikos* for Aristotle included slavery. Furthermore, for Aristotle, the poor were treated harshly in his work. For now, it is important to note that for Aristotle the household is the natural and normative social body.

While it is not the argument here that Basil is directly attending to Aristotle, it is important to note that for Basil the household itself is not the normative social body. For Basil, *koinonia* is normative, not the household. In fact, throughout his “famine” homilies Basil consistently argues against those who privilege their households over communal sharing. For example, in his homily *To the Rich* he addresses those who claim “wealth is necessary for rearing children.”³⁹⁵ He replies:

Was the command found in the Gospel, ‘If you wish to be perfect, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor,’ not written for the married? After

³⁹³ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §8, 86.

³⁹⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* I.10 1257b 15-25, 1139.

³⁹⁵ Basil of Caesarea, *To the Rich, On Social Justice: St. Basil The Great* trans. C. Paul Schroeder (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 2009) §7, 54.

seeking the blessing of children from the Lord, and being found worthy to become parents, did you at once add the following, 'Give me children, that I might disobey your commandments; give me children, that I might not attain the Kingdom of Heaven?'³⁹⁶

Of course, Basil is not arguing here that providing for one's children is not important.

There is space for the *oikos* within *koinonia*.³⁹⁷ While this may appear naïve, it is important to recall that, for the community of Acts, *koinonia* is sufficient for the needs of all. For now, it is important to note that for Basil the household is not an entity that trumps *koinonia*. While it may be natural, it is not normative.

That being said, Basil's assertion of *koinonia* in this text is the culmination of a sequence of description in which material sharing is a natural condition within creation. On one hand, aspects of creation lacking reason practice it. Furthermore, it is even practiced by those with an insufficient account of the normative social body. The point here is that, for Basil, the material aspects of *koinonia* are evident throughout creation. Thus, in a material sense, *koinonia* is natural. At the same time, *koinonia* is not exclusively a condition of material sharing. To refer back to Gonzales' statement with a slightly different emphasis, *koinonia* here is not merely material but also spiritual. In its fullest expression, *koinonia* draws the material and spiritual together into a "single harmonious whole."³⁹⁸ While *koinonia* is incomplete without material considerations, it is equally incomplete without the spiritual aspect as well. It entails more than what is represented in "unreasoning animals" or "pagan Greeks" insofar as neither is representative of *koinonia* in its fullest sense. The difference for Basil is the "common

³⁹⁶ Basil, *To the Rich* §7, 54.

³⁹⁷ He argues that ultimately, "God will provide what they need to live" and that Christian virtue exceeds the priority of the household. Basil, *To the Rich* §7, 54.

³⁹⁸ Basil, *Famine and Drought*, §8, 86.

soul” that gathers the many into the one. In its fullest sense, *koinonia* is the mutual condition of spiritual and material communion.

For Basil the fullness of *koinonia* is natural to humanity. As C. Paul Schroeder points out, the precise term that Basil uses to describe humanity in a social context is “*koinonikos anthropos*” or “human being in communion”.³⁹⁹ This understanding stands in relation to the previous discussion on the *imago Dei* and the “garments of skin”.

Where Gregory of Nyssa describes the *imago Dei* in the context of the cosmos, Basil describes *koinonia* as a socially normative condition. As discussed, the *imago Dei* is not a social institution. The “garments of skin” as social institutions, such as law, are a blessing and consequence of the fall. On the surface, these seem incommensurable. If one were to limit the discussion to pre and post lapse categories, this incommensurability would remain intact. Yet, once interpreted through the efficacy of the Incarnation, while not quite synonymous, they no longer exist in circumscribed categories. For example, in his *The Second Oration On Easter*, Gregory of Nazianzus states:

But that great, and if I may say so, in Its first nature unsacrificeable Victim, was intermingled with the Sacrifices of the Law, and was a purification, not for a part of the world, for a short time, but for the whole world and for all time. For this reason a Lamb was chosen for its innocence, and its clothing of the original nakedness. For such is the Victim, That was offered for us, Who is both in Name and fact the *Garment of incorruption*.⁴⁰⁰

Simply put, in Christ the “garments of skin” and the social institutions they represent were deified. This is not a rejection of social institutions. Instead, as Nellas puts it,

³⁹⁹ Schroeder, 32 See also Basil of Caesarea Basil, *I Will Tear Down My Barns, On Social Justice: St Basil The Great* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press 2009) §1, 60; *Famine And Drought* §5, 80.

⁴⁰⁰ As Nellas points out the agreement between the “Gregorys” on this point, “For Gregory of Nyssa, who has so much to say about the postlapsarian clothing of the ‘garments of skin,’ comes to the conclusion that in the new reality which Christ creates He Himself finally becomes and constitutes the new clothing of the human race.” Nellas, 101; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Second Oration on Easter*, 45.XIII, 427.

Christ "broadens the law with love, clarifying its limits and transforming it."⁴⁰¹ This transformation is the unbinding of the Law from sin. Through the Incarnation the 'garments of skin' are no longer relative goods, blessings bound to the condition of sin. Instead, they are transformed, purified, and serve humanity's true nature as *imago Dei* instead of limiting humanity's alienation from the *imago Dei*. It is the argument here that *koinonia*, for the Cappadocians, is the expression of this transformation. On one hand, *koinonia* is a social institution and thus a 'garment of skin'. On the other hand, it is a 'garment of skin' no longer bound to the alienation of humanity to itself as *imago Dei*. Instead, through Christ, they become intertwined though not entirely indistinguishable.

In light of this, the example of material sharing in 'nature' and Greek thought follows this pattern. There is first, the material *koinonia* evident within creation. Second, there is the material *koinonia* within, even pagan, human community. This is representative of the postlapsarian 'garments of skin'. Third is the fullness of *koinonia* in the post-Incarnation community of Acts. The *koinonia* represents the 'garments of skin' transformed through Christ into the full mediation of material and spiritual within human community. *Koinonia* is the form of community in harmony with the cosmic *kalon*.

Furthermore, this is evident in the primary aspects of the *imago Dei* and *koinonia*. First, for Gregory, the *imago Dei*, as the natural condition of humanity, entails the mediation of material and spiritual aspects of creation. In turn, the *imago Dei* is a collective condition that envelopes the whole of humanity. For Gregory, the role of humanity within the cosmos is to collectively mediate between the material and spiritual aspects of creation. Second, for Basil, *koinonia* entails the material and spiritual sharing within a community. In turn, *koinonia* is a condition of community that draws the many

⁴⁰¹ Nellas, 70

into a single harmonious whole. The proper community entails a unified and collective sharing of material and spiritual reality. Insofar as the *imago Dei* collectively serves as the mediator between the material and spiritual within the cosmic *kalon*, *koinonia* is this mediation within the human community. As a condition of spiritual and material sharing it is the natural orientation of human community as the *imago Dei*. Though a 'garment of skin', the fullness of *koinonia* is a post-Incarnation social institution that aligns with humanity's nature as *imago Dei*. It is a human community actively participating in the cosmic *kalon*. In turn, the beauty of the cosmos is reflected in *koinonia*. Therefore, as a normative social condition, *koinonia* is the assertion of humanity's true nature as mediator within the cosmic *kalon*.

Poverty: Sufficiency and Judgment

Just as the community described in Acts served as a contrast culture to the ideological status quo of the Roman Empire in the early Church, so too did the social vision of the Cappadocians contrast to the ideological status quo operative in the fourth century Roman Empire. At the same time, it is essential to state explicitly that from the Cappadocian perspective this contrast culture was an assertion of the natural community. Both of these aspects are evident in their perspectives on poverty, both positively and negatively, as they relate to sufficiency and judgment within *koinonia*.

To begin, it is necessary to clarify how the category of poverty functions in Cappadocian thought. Generally speaking, when engaging in the Cappadocians' perspective the term poverty is divided along the lines of voluntary and involuntary poverty.⁴⁰² On one hand, voluntary poverty describes those who come to a condition of

⁴⁰² For example, Susan Holman's extensive and impressive treatment of the Cappadocians and poverty relies on these categories almost exclusively.

poverty through a willful renunciation of possessions, such as ascetics and monastics like Basil's sister Macrina the Younger at Annisa.⁴⁰³ On the other hand, involuntary poverty describes those who come to a condition of poverty through external circumstances, such as the aforementioned taxation and drought. While it is not the argument here that these categories are not operative in either Cappadocian thought or practice, it is the argument here that neither term is sufficient to describe the Cappadocians' moral concerns. First, voluntary poverty does not comprehensively describe the Cappadocians' moral perspective on poverty. While voluntary poverty is positively construed both in their thought and their practices, it is not the exclusive location of moral agency. The involuntary poor for the Cappadocians are also moral agents. They are more than passive recipients of charity. Simply put, to make voluntary poverty the moral norm is to exclude those who come to the same condition involuntarily from moral agency. In this sense, voluntary poverty is too precise. Second, involuntary poverty is not precise enough. While it is certainly the case that abject poverty is a form of involuntary poverty, it is not categorically correct that all involuntary poverty is abject poverty. In fact, as will be discussed in regard to usury, the primary concern of the Cappadocians was that the involuntary poor not fall into abject poverty. Furthermore, the distinction between voluntary and involuntary poverty implies that these two forms occupy a different categorical space. It is the argument here that this is precisely what the Cappadocians are not affirming. Simply put, for the Cappadocians, poverty was a porous category. It encompassed a broad range of practices and conditions that in many ways defied the categorical distinctions.

⁴⁰³ Rousseau, 10; Holman, 76.

In order to understand the importance of this ambiguous or porous understanding of poverty, it is necessary to recall the conditions of membership or citizenship in the Roman State and how this contrasts to the Cappadocian perspective. As discussed, the Roman citizenship was closely tied to wealth and property. In turn, there were no criteria that defined the poor, much less the degrees of poverty, within the Roman State. Instead, there were citizens with property and virtually non-human, non-citizens. There was no category within the State that the poor occupied except as a potential threat to the status quo. They were no-ones, invisible, anonymous. This view is supported by Aristotle's perspective on poverty.

Aristotle's perspective on poverty is articulated in book IV of his *Politics*. In this section, Aristotle contrasts the poor to the middle-class. For Aristotle, the health of the *polis* depends on a large middle-class. The middle class balances between the "natural" hostility between the rich and the poor.⁴⁰⁴ He states, "This is the class of citizens which is most secure in a state (*polis*), for they do not, like the poor, covet their neighbors' goods; nor do others covet theirs, like the poor covet the goods of the rich."⁴⁰⁵ Furthermore, he describes the poor as "rogues and petty rascals" who ultimately "injure the state."⁴⁰⁶ Insofar as his primary concern is the maintenance of the balance, the poor are understood as threats to the health of the *polis*. In turn, his agenda is to minimize the conditions of "factions and dissensions" harmful to the state.⁴⁰⁷ Thus, the poor are exclusively described in negative terms. The primary concern of the state in relation to the poor is exclusively to minimize harm to the status quo.

⁴⁰⁴ Aristotle, *Politics* IV.11 1296a 25-39, 1221

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., IV.10 1295b 29-35, 1220

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., IV.10 1295b 10-15, 1220

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., IV.10 1296a 5-10, 1221

Thus, in a negative sense, the involuntary and voluntary poor occupied an indistinct space. Whether through renunciation or circumstance, both inhabited a space that risked exclusion from membership in the social body of the Roman Empire and/or Aristotle's *polis*. In a positive sense, this indistinct space became not an obstacle to membership but the grounds of membership in a community where *koinonia* was operative. For example, the Basileias as well as the community at Annisa were both inhabited by both voluntary and involuntary poor. On one hand, there were the Cappadocians, who born into considerable wealth, practiced voluntary poverty. On the other hand, there were those who came to these communities as the involuntary poor, seeking refuge and relief. It is the argument here that in Cappadocian thought this distinction is not categorical. Within their communities, they did not distinguish between the voluntary poor "over here" and the involuntary poor "over there". Both voluntary and involuntary poverty (that was not abject poverty) within their communities were positively construed. Thus, the poverty of the Basileias in its porous form was an incursion into the ideological space of the Roman Empire. It was a city where the grounds of membership, poverty, stood in direct contrast to the criteria operative in Roman ideology.

For the Cappadocians, the criterion for membership was the fullness of the *imago Dei*. Insofar as the *imago Dei* represents the fullness of humanity, the poor are drawn into the Cappadocians' social vision. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus, in his oration *On Love of The Poor*, argues that the poor "whose share in (material) nature is the same as ours" are equally members of the social body because they "have the same portion as

the image of God just as we do.”⁴⁰⁸ For Gregory of Nazianzus, the affirmation of the poor is through the *imago Dei*. In turn, the poor within the *imago Dei* have an equal share of material creation. More critically Basil argues of the “unrighteous” person, “He did not remember that he shared with others a common nature, nor did he think it necessary to distribute from his abundance to those in need.”⁴⁰⁹ For Basil the marks of the unrighteous person are neglecting to recognize the *imago Dei* in others and, subsequently, the material needs of the poor. In both Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil’s statements the poor, the *imago Dei*, and the material sharing of *koinonia* are integrally connected. It is the collective and shared nature of humanity as the *imago Dei* that draws the poor into the social body of *koinonia*. In this sense the poor are drawn from their invisibility and anonymity in Roman ideology into the social body.

While this is a vital factor in Cappadocian thought and practice, it is not the sum of their perspective. Just as the Cappadocians drew the poor into the social body, they equally drew the social body into the poor. As Gregory of Nazianzus begins Oration 14 he states, “My brothers and fellow paupers – for we are all poor and needy where divine grace is concerned, even though measured by our paltry standards one man may seem to have more than another – give ear to my sermon on loving the poor.”⁴¹⁰ What is important here to this discussion is the leveling effect of this statement. All are poor relative to grace, in spite of material differences. Now, from a contemporary vantage point, this could be interpreted as excusing material difference in favor of a spiritual

⁴⁰⁸ Now, it must be noted that for Gregory of Nazianzus the *imago Dei* does not function exclusively on a corporate level. He understands the *imago Dei* as something that exists “both as individuals and collectively.” At the same time, for Nazianzus, the former does not invalidate the other. They are both operative in his thought. Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor* 14.13, 48-49.

⁴⁰⁹ Basil, *I Will Tear Down*, §1, 60

⁴¹⁰ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor* 14.1, 39.

equality. While this is not an entirely inappropriate interpretation of this passage, it is important to understand it in context. To argue that all are poor locates the material wealthy and poor in the same conceptual space. In turn, in a context where poverty was detrimental to civic identity, to occupy the same conceptual space as the poor would be an implicit challenge to the criteria for civic identity within the status quo. Thus, arguing that all Christians are poor locates the social body in an invisible and socially dead space. In turn, Basil's perspective explicitly denies that personal piety or an emotive sense of "spiritual poverty" is sufficient. He states, "I know many who fast, pray, sigh and demonstrate every manner of piety, so long as it costs them nothing, yet would not part with a penny to help those in distress . . . The Kingdom of Heaven will not receive such people."⁴¹¹ Most critically, Basil seems to argue that without a material component piety is hollow and soteriologically ineffective. At the very least, for Basil material sharing and charity to the poor is an indivisible aspect of faith. As discussed, this integration of the material and spiritual is fundamental to the normative understanding of the social body as *koinonia* as well as the fullness of the *imago Dei*. In turn, this sharing is not merely among those within the community of equal economic stature but necessitates a care for the poor as visible members of the social body. Thus, it is through the *imago Dei* that the "involuntary poor" enter into the porous poverty of the social body. In turn, it is as members of this body that the poor enter into the *koinonia* of material sharing. Therefore, the poor are not merely elevated into the social body by the Cappadocians; they are also integral to the composition of that social body. By locating the social body within a porous category of poverty, the test of *koinonia* becomes the relationship of the

⁴¹¹ Basil, *To the Rich*, §3, 46.

social body to the poor. In turn, moral judgments are framed by either positive poverty or sufficiency and negative poverty or abject poverty.

Sufficiency: Koinonia and Kalon

First, for the Cappadocians, poverty of sufficiency aligns with *koinonia* and the *kalon*. As Basil asserts in the *Hexameron*, "Poverty with an honest sufficiency is preferred by the wise to all pleasure."⁴¹² Now, it is significant that this assertion from Basil is located in his cosmological vision. As discussed, Basil describes how sufficiency is an operative principle for the "unreasoning animals". Embedded in creation is the tendency to take what is sufficient for material need and leave sufficient resources for the material needs of other creatures. This principle is equally operative in Basil's understanding of *koinonia*. Just as "all living creatures permit each other to satisfy their need for food," in terms of human community he argues, "If we all took only what was necessary to satisfy our own needs, giving the rest to those who lack, no one would be rich, no one would be poor, no one would be in need."⁴¹³ Thus, from Basil's perspective, if humanity acted in harmony with the natural orientation of creation, there would be sufficient resources for all. Furthermore, recalling the community of Acts, through the material sharing of common resources the needs of the community were sufficiently provided. Thus, as *koinonia* aligns with the cosmic *kalon*, the principle of sufficiency aligns with *koinonia*. For Basil, sufficiency is the economic principle that aligns with the cosmic *kalon*.

In this regard, there are two aspects of sufficiency vital to Basil's perspective, both of which are related to creation *ex nihilo*. On one hand, Basil claims that God's

⁴¹² Basil, *Hexameron* 7.3, 110.

⁴¹³ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §7, 69.

creative activity provides sufficient resources to meet the needs of all creation. He states, "From God comes everything beneficial: fertile soil, temperate weather, plenty of seed, cooperation of the animals, and whatever else is required for successful cultivation."⁴¹⁴ In turn, he argues, "We have a God who is generous and lacks nothing."⁴¹⁵ Thus, for Basil, not only are there sufficient resources to provide for the needs of humanity, but also these resources are a direct result of God's goodness and creative power. In contemporary terms, this notion defies the Malthusian premise of resource scarcity. More contextually, it is important to note that this notion also defies the premise of the Promethean account.

As discussed, the Promethean cosmology locates humanity in a hostile world and in the grips of a hostile divinity. Suffering and tragedy in this cosmos is natural. Thus, the claim from Basil that God is generous and provides sufficiently for human needs stand in direct contrast to the claims underlying the Promethean narrative. While this claim from Basil contrasts to the claims of Hesiod, Aeschylus, and Plato, and thus would be challenging to prominent Hellenistic cosmology in the best of circumstances, it is even more striking to note that these claims were made in the midst of famine. In a time of agricultural and, in turn, economic stability, such a claim might be easily received, but to make this assertion in the midst of famine and drought would run counter to the apparent reality. In this regard, Basil is not unaware of the potential for "theodicy" in these circumstances. He argues that the "wax and wane" of the weather is not an occasion to question whether God is "perhaps deficient in goodness."⁴¹⁶ Instead, Basil argues that even these conditions serve God's purpose for humanity. He states, "He does not seek to

⁴¹⁴ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §1, 60.

⁴¹⁵ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §2, 76.

⁴¹⁶ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §5, 81.

destroy us, but rather endeavors to turn us back to the right way.”⁴¹⁷ For Basil, this right way entails a return to the sufficiency represented in *koinonia* and operative in all of creation. Even with the detrimental effects of drought, if humanity operates from the principle of sufficiency, God provides sufficiently for humanity’s material needs.

The second aspect of sufficiency as it relates to creation *ex nihilo* operative in Basil’s thought is how it bears on property. For Basil, those who benefit from God’s goodness do not have absolute claim over their property. Instead, they hold it in trust for the needs of the community. He states, “It befits those who possess sound judgment to recognize that they received wealth as a stewardship and not for their own enjoyment.”⁴¹⁸ Again, this understanding of wealth defies the Roman notion of absolute property rights. According to Basil, one’s claim to wealth is not absolute but provisional. Thus, he argues to the wealthy:

Consider yourself, who you are, what resources have been entrusted to you, from whom you received them, and why you received more than others. You have been made a minister of God’s goodness, a steward to your fellow servants. Do not suppose that all this was furnished for your own gullet! Resolve to treat the things in your possession as belonging to others.⁴¹⁹

Based on the provisional nature of property, for Basil the fact that one possesses greater wealth than another is always understood in relation to the community, and this relationship is understood relative to God’s creative power and goodness. Thus, those who benefit to the greatest degree from the “Benefactor”⁴²⁰ have a positive relationship to their wealth only as it benefits the community. As “stewards” of God’s goodness, those who possess wealth are only construed positively insofar as they facilitate and distribute

⁴¹⁷ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §2, 75.

⁴¹⁸ Basil, *To the Rich* §3, 46.

⁴¹⁹ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §2, 61.

⁴²⁰ *Ibid.*, §2, 61.

their wealth within the community. The property of the wealthy is foremost a possession of God, which the wealthy only serve as “ministers”.

While it is not the argument here that the “tragic” cosmology has a direct relationship to Roman property rights, it is reasonable to argue that such a cosmology that “naturalizes” suffering would play directly into the status quo. In a sense, such a cosmological view would placate the poor as their natural condition in a tragic cosmos. To suffer poverty is aligned with the tragic bent of the cosmos. Thus, Basil employs a cosmological argument against the status quo. It is because creation is the product of God that the provisional nature of wealth can be affirmed. To be in need, to lack the requirements for survival, is not natural to a cosmos created *ex nihilo*. Instead, what is natural within creation is the sufficiency of creation to provide for human material needs. Furthermore, it is natural to humanity to operate in accord with this sufficiency, by only taking what is necessary and leaving the rest for the needs of others.

That being said, the principle of sufficiency is not naïve to the conditions of the poor lacking the necessities of survival. Put another way, Basil is not merely arguing that if people suddenly only took what was necessary the needs of all humanity would instantly be provided for. Instead, for Basil providing for the needs of all requires an active and conscious practice of wealth redistribution. He states, “As a good and generous person, redistribute your surplus to the needy.”⁴²¹ What is important in this statement is that the precise term that Basil uses for redistribute is “*epanisoson*” which literally translates as “restore the balance” or “even the scale”.⁴²² On one hand, this balance can be understood in terms of leveling the social stratification between rich and

⁴²¹ Basil, *Famine and Drought*, §6, 83.

⁴²² See Schroeder, 27-28; Basil, *Famine and Drought*, fn7 pg 83.

poor. In turn, such a notion of “balance” was not normative in the Roman Empire. As discussed, the Imperial policies of Valens particularly favored the wealthy and did not entail a notion of balanced distribution of either taxes or property. Thus, on a purely social level, the argument for redistribution would not be implicit in the ideology of the Roman state. Instead, it was through the normative claims of *koinonia* that such an argument could be made. Furthermore, as discussed, such a notion required an understanding of the social body that could identify the poor as those who belonged on the metaphorical scale in the first place. Beyond this, the argument for *epanisoson* had a specifically cosmological and even soteriological effect. In this regard, Basil states:

Give but a little, and you will gain much: undo the primordial sin by sharing your food. Just as Adam transmitted sin by eating wrongfully, so we wipe away the treacherous food when we remedy the need and hunger of our brothers and sisters.⁴²³

Thus the mandate from Basil for wealth redistribution was not only an argument for leveling the social stratification; it was a realignment of humanity on the cosmological scale. To feed the poor was to actively restore humanity to its natural orientation.

It is through the principle of sufficiency that *koinonia* and *kalon* converge. As Gregory of Nyssa states, “it is beautiful (*kalos*) for the soul to provide mercy to others who have fallen on misfortune.” In turn, Gregory of Nazianzus makes a similar statement on the *kalos* of virtuous act to the poor.⁴²⁴ Furthermore, for Gregory of Nazianzus, like Basil, care for the poor has a soteriological effect. He argues that care for the poor combines with the other virtues to form a “single road to salvation.”⁴²⁵ To redistribute one’s wealth according to the sufficiency of *koinonia* aligns with human

⁴²³ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §7, 86.

⁴²⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor* 14.2-4, 39-42.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 14.5, 42.

nature, creation's destiny, as the cosmic *kalon*. Redistribution of wealth does not transcend nature; for the Cappadocians it is the return to nature properly understood.

In sum, for the Cappadocians the principle of sufficiency is the operative economic principle within *koinonia*. In turn, the principle of sufficiency is the grounds for the Cappadocians' argument for wealth redistribution insofar as it is a return to the natural *koinonia* of human community. This community both draws the poor into the social body as well as draws the social body to the poor. Ultimately, for the Cappadocians, poverty positively construed is a poverty of sufficiency that aligns with the normative and natural condition of *koinonia*.

Divine Judgment: Moral Failing and Abject Poverty

Having discussed the positive construal of poverty and its relationship to *koinonia* in Cappadocian thought, the remainder of this chapter will focus on the negative construal of poverty as it contrasts to their social vision grounded in *koinonia*. This negative construal of poverty is the poverty of abject destitution. For the Cappadocians, especially Basil, this poverty is the product of moral failing. It is the argument here that this assessment of abject poverty is consistent with the cosmological interpretation of *koinonia*. Simply put, to withhold from those in need is an active privation from the natural condition of *koinonia*. In turn, it is the grounds for divine judgment.

To begin, it is important to articulate what abject poverty entailed in Cappadocian thought. Gregory of Nazianzus describes this poverty as "a symphony of lament."⁴²⁶ Just as *koinonia* represents the harmony of the cosmic *kalon*, abject poverty is concerted dissonance. In less poetic terms, Basil describes it as the "desperation arising from

⁴²⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor* 14.13, 48.

famine.”⁴²⁷ Basil’s description of the starving poor found in his homily *In a Time of Famine and Drought* is explicit and truthful. Here he claims that starvation is the worst form of death, worse than war, “roaring flames”, or even being torn apart by wild beasts.⁴²⁸ He argues how the starving poor exist in a state of “delayed death” where death is ever present but prolonged by starvation. He describes the effects of starvation where “skin clings to bone like a spider’s web” and “the body takes on a mottled hue, with yellow and black patches mingling in a manner terrible to see.”⁴²⁹ He continues with how the starving poor become blind from hunger with eyes “sunken in their sockets like fruits that shrivel in their skin.”⁴³⁰ His description concludes with the haunting image of how the starving person’s body has wasted away to the point where “the bones of the spine are visible from the front.”⁴³¹ In sum, with graphic detail, Basil paints a horrific picture of the effects of abject poverty.

Now, it is essential to understand that this description was offered in a homily within the city of Caesarea during the famine begun in 368. As discussed, the abject poor descended on the city and lined the streets as “living cadavers.”⁴³² In turn, this description of the poor from Basil would not be beyond the literal reach of the congregation. These poor would be inside and, literally, right outside the door of the Church, visible as the congregation entered and departed. Thus, on the rhetorical level, Basil’s description to his congregation would make these poor, perhaps morally invisible

⁴²⁷ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §4, 64.

⁴²⁸ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §7, 84.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, §7, 84.

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, §7, 84.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, §7, 84.

⁴³² While the exact number of people who immigrated to Caesarea cannot be precisely calculated, Holman argues that these numbers were substantial. It is also important to note that through Caesarea ran “all the major routes between Constantinople and Syria.” While it is only speculation, it is reasonable that because of its importance for trade, the surrounding poor would see Caesarea as an attractive destination for alleviating their needs. Holman, 68-71.

to congregants as they entered, a morally visible reality to confront and be confronted by as they traversed the streets of Caesarea.

From the positive construal of poverty, abject poverty contrasts to the sufficiency of *koinonia* to a body identified in unity with the poor. For Basil, this poverty was exclusively the product of moral failing within the community. This moral failing takes on two forms. First there is the failing of those who capitalize on the plight of the impoverished. As will be discussed further, this moral failing is represented in the Cappadocians' thoughts on slavery and usury. Second is the moral failing of those who have the means to alleviate the suffering of the poor yet withhold these resources from them. This includes those who withhold resources in the name of *oikos*. While it is not precisely the same form of moral failing as the former, the Cappadocians' perspective on it is no less pointed. Insofar as withholding from the poor is understood as having a direct causal relationship to abject poverty, it is a moral failing subject to divine judgment.

In this regard, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus' understanding of the relationship of redistribution and the poor is construed positively. On one hand, in his homily *On Love Of the Poor*, Gregory of Nazianzus almost exclusively understands the relationship of the social body to the poor in positive, encouraging terms. In simple terms, Nazianzus recommends that those with resources imitate Christ and give to the needy.⁴³³ On the other hand, Gregory of Nyssa's perspective is less optimistic and begins to broach the subject of divine judgment. In his second homily on the poor Gregory begins with a description of his fear of eternal judgment. He states, "Again I hold before

⁴³³ Nazianzus, *On Love of the Poor* 14.39-40, 70.

my eyes the dreadful vision of the return of the kingdom.”⁴³⁴ In turn, his understanding of the relationship of this fear to the poor is constructed positively. He argues, “And how do we elude this threat? By choosing the way, alive and fresh, indicated in scripture.”⁴³⁵ Subsequently, he paraphrases Matthew 25:35-40, stating, “I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was a stranger, naked sick, a prisoner. That which you have done to one single person, it is to me to whom you have done it. Come, then, blessed of my father.”⁴³⁶ For Gregory of Nyssa, it is relief of the suffering of needy that thwarts the threat of eternal judgment and affirms one’s place in the kingdom. While Gregory does frame his discussion on poverty in terms of judgment, he does not describe the relationship of the wealthy to the poor in negative terms. While giving to the poor has a positive effect, not giving to the poor is left unattended. Basil fills this absence, and his assessment is more critical and damning than that of his fellow Cappadocians.⁴³⁷

For Basil, to not share with the poor is the grounds for divine judgment. Directly after graphically describing the starving poor, Basil argues that to withhold from the poor “may properly be judged the equivalent of murder.”⁴³⁸ Basil does not merely describe withholding wealth from the poor in terms of neglect; instead, it is for Basil an active practice with a direct causal relationship to the aforementioned death by starvation. Thus, it is not merely the case that withholding wealth from the needy is less than ideal.

⁴³⁴ “Again I hold before my eyes the dreadful vision of the return of the kingdom.” Gregory of Nyssa, *On Love of the Poor* appendix, *The Hungry Are Dying* ed. Susan Holman (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2001), [427] 199.

⁴³⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *On Love of the Poor*, §473, 200.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., [473], 200; Matthew 25:40 NRSV.

⁴³⁷ A contributing factor in this shift in tone may have to do with the relationships of these works relative to the famine. Gregory of Nazianzus’ work was likely in celebration of the construction of the hospital at the *Basileias*. Gregory of Nyssa’s work was written later than either of these two, and probably after the works of the famine had passed. In contrast, Basil’s work was written during the height of the famine, which may explain the difference in emphasis between damnation and encouragement. Once understood in the context of *koinonia* and sufficiency, these views, though differently emphasized, are not contradictory.

⁴³⁸ Basil, *Famine and Drought*, §7, 85.

Distributing one's wealth to the poor is not an act of altruistic benevolence, a sublime morality that exceeds the immanent demands of justice. It is justice. In this regard, he argues:

The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that are rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy. You are thus guilty of injustice toward as many as you might have aided, and did not.⁴³⁹

In sum, to not act in such a manner is an active injustice. It is murder.

This judgment from Basil depends on an understanding of *koinonia* as not only normative but also natural. As normative, withholding from the poor can be seen as not living up to the standard of the *koinonia*. Yet, as natural, the failure is more damning. Insofar as *koinonia* is the natural inclination of the *koinonikos anthropos*, the *imago Dei*, then withholding wealth from those in need is a willful privation from natural orientation of humanity and the cosmos. To draw the explicit connection, starvation is not the result of conditions external to humanity. Even in times of drought and famine humanity has sufficient means to satisfy the basic needs of the poor. Human community is naturally inclined toward sufficiency. To withhold wealth from those in need runs counter to this natural orientation. In turn, it is an active practice. For Basil, this active practice, especially in a time of famine, is a zero-sum proposition. Everything withheld adversely affects those in need. Starvation is the ultimate example of the active practice of withholding. Thus, as the result of an active practice, to die from starvation is to be the victim of a willful and unnatural practice. It is evidence, perhaps the ultimate evidence, of humanity out of concert with itself and the cosmos.

⁴³⁹ Basil, *I Will Tear Down*, §7, 70.

Additionally, Basil argues that those who actively withhold from the needy will come under eternal judgment. In this regard he makes two statements in reference to Matthew 25: 41-45, which states:

You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink . . . Truly, I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.⁴⁴⁰

He states in *In a Time of Famine and Drought* that “unsociable and stingy will be the first to be given over to the eternal fire.”⁴⁴¹ In *I Will Tear Down My Barns*, his reference to this passage is more than evocative it is referred to explicitly.⁴⁴² After repeating the passage, he states, “Moreover, those accused in this passage have not stolen anything; these charges are leveled against those who have not shared with others.”⁴⁴³ Here the statement from Gregory of Nyssa is rounded out. The soteriological efficacy of wealth redistribution is countered by the damnation of those who *withhold*. Basil argues that claiming to not have committed theft does not place withholding resources in a morally unaccountable space. They share the same eternal consequences. Thus, for Basil those who withhold from those in need are subject to judgment. For both Basil and the community of Acts, *koinonia* is not merely a sentimental and utopian ideal of community. It is instead the norm of the social body. To act counter to this norm is to be subject to divine judgment.

In conclusion, for the Cappadocians *koinonia* as described in the community of Acts is the normative and natural condition of human community. In turn, *koinonia* is the interpretive key to understanding the Cappadocians’ perspective on poverty. Positively

⁴⁴⁰ Matthew 25:41-45 NRSV

⁴⁴¹ Basil, *Famine and Drought* §7, 85.

⁴⁴² Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §8, 70.

⁴⁴³ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §8, 70.

construed, the poverty of sufficiency is the natural condition of human community created in the *imago Dei*. To redistribute wealth to the poor is to realign the social body with the orientation of creation in harmony towards its eschatological fulfillment, *kalon*. Negatively construed, abject poverty is the product of moral failing of the wealthy towards the poor. To withhold from the poor is a privation from nature and is subject to divine judgment. This privation is counter to the operative principle of sufficiency and the natural orientation of the community and the cosmos. Thus, insofar as Basil understands *koinonia* as the normative and natural condition of the human community, it serves as the grounds of judgment against which those withholding from the needy are condemned. Furthermore, in both the positive and negative construal, the Cappadocians' perspective on poverty challenges Roman ideology. They affirm the membership of the poor within the social body. In fact, they make the poor central to that social body. Beyond this, the abject poor are considered victims of moral failing within the community. By drawing the poor into the social body, the Cappadocians make the initial condition of enslavement morally visible.

Chapter 5: Slavery and the *Imago Dei*

Before engaging with the Cappadocians' perspective on slavery it is important to recall the earlier discussion on the Roman economy and the integrated relationship of poverty, usury, and slavery. Abject poverty was a condition in which slavery becomes the preferred amongst tragic options. Thus, this chapter will focus on the end result of this process, slavery, and how the Cappadocians attend to this condition to greater and lesser degrees of consistency. Unlike virtually every other aspect, cosmological or ethical, discussed here, the Cappadocians' perspectives on slavery are considerably less unified. Basil's conclusions on slavery diverge greatly from his brother Gregory. As will be argued, Gregory's is the more sufficient, more consistent, more heroic of the two. At the same time, while insufficient on multiple levels, Basil's understanding of slavery as an unnatural condition produced from unnatural circumstances is essential to understanding how poverty, usury, and slavery intertwine in Cappadocian thought. Beyond this, while Gregory of Nyssa's perspective is the more satisfactory of the two, Gregory's view aligns with Basil's premise that slavery is unnatural. Thus, it will be argued that Gregory of Nyssa's perspective on slavery is a correction, not contradiction of Basil's. Ultimately, though Basil's conclusions concerning slavery are unsatisfactory, his premise, once corrected by Gregory of Nyssa, provides an essential framework for understanding poverty, usury, and slavery as an integrated and morally condemned process.

Basil on Slavery

The first piece of this discussion will engage with Basil's perspective on slavery. In generous terms, Basil's perspective is inconsistent. Unlike Gregory of Nyssa's condemnation of slavery in his *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes*, there is not one work where Basil treats slavery as a condition or economic institution extensively. In this regard, his most direct discussion of slavery is found in his influential work *On the Holy Spirit*. In this work, Basil articulates both the positive and negative aspects of his thought on slavery that will be engaged here.

To begin, Basil understands slavery as an unnatural condition produced from unnatural circumstances. He states, "Do they not realize that even among humanity, no one is a slave by nature? People are brought under the yoke of slavery either because they are captured in battle or else sell themselves into slavery due to poverty."⁴⁴⁴ Here Basil articulates two claims concerning slavery. On one hand, it is unnatural. On the other, it is the product of poverty. In both senses, the critique of slavery is consistent within the Cappadocians' social vision.

The argument that "no one is a slave by nature" contrasts sharply to the understanding of slavery both philosophically and economically in the context within which Basil was embedded. First, Basil's claim that slavery is unnatural directly contrasts to the operative philosophical understanding of slavery in Hellenistic thought, most especially that of Aristotle. In this regard, Pelikan argues that Basil's assertion is "an apparent criticism of Aristotle's teaching."⁴⁴⁵ For Aristotle, slavery was a natural

⁴⁴⁴ Basil of Caesarea, *St Basil The Great: On the Holy Spirit* trans. David Andersen (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1980) 20.51, 80.

⁴⁴⁵ This apparent criticism is represented in the striking similarities between Basil's assertion that "no one is a slave by nature" and Aristotle's opening query "But is there any one thus intended by nature to be a slave,

condition, determined by an immanent distribution of inclinations as it pertains to the body and the soul. He states:

Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (as in the case of those whose business is to use their body, and who can do nothing better), the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master.⁴⁴⁶

Slavery is therefore natural for Aristotle as part of the proper ordering of soul and body, humanity and beast. For those whose naturally endowed inclinations tended towards the bodily, beastly, even material aspects, slavery was a natural condition. Thus, as Hart argues, Aristotle's logic functions "according to a science of human essence."⁴⁴⁷ For example, Aristotle considers judgment and reason to be distributed according to a "ratio between the persons."⁴⁴⁸ Thus, some humans were "essentially" slaves by way of a natural distribution of goods, such as reason, among humans.

Now, this interpretation from Aristotle is intimately tied to his cosmology. As Hart argues of Aristotle's assessment of slavery, it is "a hierarchy erected in a totality, a closed order of immanence."⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore, he continues, "in such a world, nothing could be more obvious than the superiority of city over nature, reason over appetite, Greek over barbarian, man over woman, master over slave."⁴⁵⁰ As discussed, for Aristotle the cosmos is eternal and God is a logical necessity contained within that eternal cosmos. It was a closed order. Within this closed order, essences were distributed where some were inclined towards slavery and others not. Put another way, the fact that there

and for whom such a condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature." Contrary to Basil, for Aristotle, slavery is in accordance with nature. Aristotle, *Politics* I.5 1254a 15-20; Pelikan, 148.

⁴⁴⁶ Aristotle, *Politics* I.5 1254a 15-20, 1133.

⁴⁴⁷ Hart, 54.

⁴⁴⁸ Aristotle, *Politics* I.5 1280a 15-20, 1187; *Nicomachean Ethics* V.3 15-20, 1006.

⁴⁴⁹ Hart, 54.

⁴⁵⁰ Hart, 54.

was slavery, as empirical reality, was the grounds for its affirmation. Aristotle begins with the fact of slavery and then justifies it, hence a "hierarchy within a totality". For Aristotle, due to a distribution of essences, some humans were in fact "slaves by nature".

In contrast, Basil's cosmos is not a "closed order of immanence". It is creation *ex nihilo*, a product of the perpetual creative activity of God. Thus, while God is always-already active within creation, God is not contained within that creation. In turn, the cosmos is not eternal but oriented towards an eternity that stands at an ontological and epistemological distance from the Creator. This conceptual difference between Aristotle and Basil is decisive in the Cappadocians' interpretation of slavery. In contrast to Aristotle, the fact that there *was* slavery within the cosmos does not necessarily conclude that there *should* be slavery within the cosmos. For Basil and the cosmos distinct from eternity, there existed a possibility of nature beyond empirical reality or Aristotle's immanent totality. At the very least, it leaves open the opportunity to critique whether the empirical reality *should* be called natural. As will be discussed, it is precisely this cosmological interpretation that grounds Gregory of Nyssa's condemnation of slavery. For now, it is only important to note that Basil's claim that slavery is unnatural contrasts with Aristotle's justification of slavery as a naturally occurring condition.

In conjunction with this, Basil's claim that slavery is unnatural entails an implicit critique of the Roman economic ideology. It is vital to recall that the engine that drove the Roman economy was the latifundia and that the labor of the latifundia was almost exclusively slave labor. Thus, as Hart argues, "In an age when an economy sustained otherwise than by chattel slavery was all but unimaginable, the question of abolition was

simply never raised.”⁴⁵¹ Now, as will be discussed, it was Gregory of Nyssa, not Basil, who raised the question of abolition. At the same time, for Basil to assert that slavery is unnatural is to challenge the legitimacy of the Roman economic system. Just as the condition of slavery was not an ontological fact, neither was the economy dependent on slave labor an ontological necessity. As Pelikan states, instead of existing as a natural condition slavery was “rather a consequence of historical circumstances.”⁴⁵² These circumstances entailed the movement from poverty to slavery.

For Basil, slavery is the product of the unnatural condition of abject poverty. Thus, when coupled with his assertion that slavery is unnatural, the discussion of slavery and poverty becomes an integrated description. Slavery and poverty are not treated as distinct unrelated conditions. Instead they are described as a process that moves a person from one unnatural condition to another. What is important here and a constructive contribution from Basil is that this description has a moral shape not only in each condition but also as a process. The process is unnatural. It stands in contrast to the natural orientation of humanity in *koinonia*.

Basil directly draws the connection between poverty and slavery in his famine homily *I Will Tear Down My Barns*. Here he describes the plight of the impoverished that contemplate selling their children into slavery. He states, “They turn their gaze to their own children, think that perhaps by bringing them to the slave-market they might find some respite from death.”⁴⁵³ This respite occurs in two ways. First, the sold child would presumably be fed. As discussed previously, this child would also find respite from the social death by being subsumed into an *oikos*. Second, the money acquired

⁴⁵¹ Hart, 51.

⁴⁵² Pelikan, 148.

⁴⁵³ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §4, 65.

from selling one's child would, at least in the short term, provide for the rest of the family. At the same time, Basil understands this as a "violent struggle" between the "desperation arising from famine" and "a parent's fundamental instinct."⁴⁵⁴ Yet, as the desperation increases, the option to sell one's child into slavery becomes the viable choice. He states, "Time and again they vacillate, but in the end they succumb, driven by want and cruel necessity."⁴⁵⁵ Thus, for Basil, the condition of abject poverty prompts one to contradict natural inclinations and sell a child into slavery. In regard to this, Basil turns a critical eye to those who purchase these children. He states, "And while the parents come with tears streaming down their faces to sell the dearest of their children, you are not swayed by their sufferings; you take no account of nature."⁴⁵⁶ This neglect of nature ties directly into Basil's statement, earlier in the homily, that the unrighteous both neglect nature and withhold from the poor. In this case, the issue is more than withholding; it is the active purchase of another human being in a state of destitution. In both cases, it is the neglect of nature, the *imago Dei* and the demands of *koinonia* that have a directly negative and unnatural effect on the poor. In the case described here, it is the desperate condition of the poor that is exploited by the wealthy who "imagine everything as gold,"⁴⁵⁷ who profit from the poor by purchasing the children of the destitute and turning them into objectified property and labor, gold. Thus, for Basil slavery and poverty are interconnected aspects of the unnatural process of enslavement.

In this sense, Basil's contribution to the slavery discourse is not negligible, insofar as he identifies slavery as unnatural as well as provides a framework for engaging in the

⁴⁵⁴ Basil, *I Will Tear Down* §4, 64.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., §4, 64.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., §4, 65.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., §4, 64.

conditions of slavery and poverty as an interrelated process. That being said, Basil's perspective on slavery, in the words of Justo Gonzalez, "left much to be desired."⁴⁵⁸ Furthermore, Hart argues that theological thought on slavery during this time "ranged from – at best – resigned acceptance to – at worst – vigorous advocacy."⁴⁵⁹ For Hart, Basil's view on slavery falls into the "vigorous advocacy" side of the theological discussion, over and against "resigned acceptance."⁴⁶⁰ Basil's view is less than "vigorous advocacy". At the same time, Gonzalez is right. Ultimately, Basil's conclusions in this regard are insufficient relative to his social vision and cosmological perspective.

To begin, it is a consistent theme in Basil's work that slavery is a condition to be avoided. For example, in his usury homilies he argues that one who takes usurious loans "accepts a voluntary servitude for life."⁴⁶¹ Furthermore, he encourages the poor to avoid this condition at all costs. He states, "Do you have metal plates, clothing, beasts of burden, utensils of every kind? Sell them; permit all things to go except your liberty."⁴⁶² At the same time, Basil's perspective on those within that condition is inconsistent. On one hand, there is the situation described above, where such an unnatural act is prompted by unnatural circumstances. On the other hand, on at least one occasion Basil blames the slaves for their own condition. He states, "It is better for a person who lacks intelligence and self-control to become another's possession."⁴⁶³ In this sense, Basil considered slavery to be a product of the slave's own moral failure. Thus, while slavery remained unnatural, it was a consequence of vice and, perhaps, the enslaved was better off. The

⁴⁵⁸ Gonzalez, fn. 37, 185.

⁴⁵⁹ Hart, 52.

⁴⁶⁰ Hart, fn. 3, 52.

⁴⁶¹ Basil, *A Psalm of David Against Usurers 14[15]*, *Saint Basil Exegetical Homilies* trans. Agnes Claire Way (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press 1963) 12.1, 183.

⁴⁶² Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.2, 184.

⁴⁶³ Basil, *On The Holy Spirit* 20.51, 80.

deep irony here is that this statement is made in *On the Holy Spirit*, the precise text in which Basil calls slavery unnatural and describes it as a consequence of poverty. Now, on one hand, this perspective is understandable if not justifiable. If people come to slavery through vice, then they are responsible for their unfortunate lot. At the same time, this is inconsistent with his earlier assessment that poverty is a moral failing of *koinonia* insofar as he does not address how this affects his understanding of redistribution. If the abject poor are responsible for their own poverty, then on what grounds are those who are not responsible for their poverty obligated to their plight? If it is just for the unvirtuous to become slaves, how is it unjust that the unvirtuous are impoverished? Basil's claim frustrates the consistency of his overall argument concerning poverty and *koinonia*. In order to reconcile this inconsistency Basil would have to add a layer to his social vision concerning those who essentially "deserve what they get". This layer is absent. Hence his argument is inconsistent.

More damning for Basil is his affirmation of the institution of slavery. In this sense, Basil's view can be seen as nothing less that contradictory to his social vision. According to Basil, the institution of slavery was scripturally justified on the grounds that all are slaves to God. He states, "And even though one is called a master, and another a slave, we are all the possessions of our Creator; we all share the rank of slave."⁴⁶⁴ This argument is rooted in Psalm 118 verse 91, which states:

By your appointment they stand
today,
for all things are your slaves.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁶⁴ Basil, *On The Holy Spirit* 20.51, 80.

⁴⁶⁵ Psalm 118:19 NRSV

By this logic, because all are slaves to God from eternity, the temporal distinction between slave and master is ultimately invalid. Now, it is possible to argue that this is merely a poor application of analogy. Insofar as all analogy fails at some point, it was not Basil's purpose to affirm slavery in this work but to invalidate the comparison of the Spirit to slave.⁴⁶⁶ Though it was a crude analogy, it was not intended to advocate for the practice. Sadly though, this does seem to be the case. In *The Long Rules* of his monastic treatises, Basil explicitly states, "all bound slaves who flee to religious communities for refuge should be admonished and sent back to their masters in better dispositions."⁴⁶⁷ Here he refers to Philemon 1 verse 12, where Paul sends the slave Onesimus back to Philemon. Paul states, "I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you."⁴⁶⁸ For Basil, this is justification for the return of slaves to their owners. The lone exception to the return of slaves is that of the "wicked master who gives unlawful commands and forces the slave to transgress the command of the true Master."⁴⁶⁹ Thus, though Basil considered slavery to be unnatural, he did not condemn it as an institution. Abolition was contingent on mistreatment by the master in violation of divine command or blasphemy. Slavery itself is not a mistreatment of the human person for Basil, although it was unnatural. Put another way, for Basil the conditions of abolition are not a critique of slavery as an institution; rather, these conditions are contingent on the mismanagement of slaves within the household. It is internal to the *oikos*. In this sense, Basil's view is ironically similar to Aristotle's.

⁴⁶⁶ The title of the chapter in question is, "Against those who claim that the Spirit should not be ranked as a master or a slave, but as a freeman". Furthermore, the crux of Basil's concern is summarized in the chapter's conclusion. Basil states, "Either He is a creature, and therefore a slave, or else He is above creation, and shares the Kingship." Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 20.52, 79-81.

⁴⁶⁷ Basil of Caesarea, *The Long Rule, Saint Basil: Ascetical Works* trans Sister M. Monica Wagner C.S.C (New York, NY: Fathers of the Church, Inc. 1950) Q.11, 261.

⁴⁶⁸ Philemon 1.12 NRSV

⁴⁶⁹ Basil, *The Long Rule* Q.11, 262.

Even without modern sensibilities, Basil's argument fails on its own logic. It is sadly pragmatic, a "resigned acceptance", inconsistent with his cosmology and sense of social ethics. For Basil's cosmology is fundamentally concerned with the harmonious *kalon* of creation. If Basil asserts that slavery is unnatural, it cannot by definition contribute to the *kalon* and thus ought to be unacceptable on those grounds. Beyond this, Basil's understanding that slavery is unnatural is explicitly tied to unnatural social conditions, war and poverty. It is a condition that contradicts the natural and normative *koinonia* of human community. For one whose social vision is so intimately tied to his cosmology, Basil's justification fails on logic internal to his own argument. It is inconsistent for Basil to advocate, even in a qualified way, slavery as a product of poverty while condemning the conditions that produced poverty and in turn slavery. How, one might ask of Basil, can an unnatural condition be directly analogous to the "natural" servitude of creation to Creator? Either slavery was natural, which, Basil denies, or slavery was unnatural, and thus cannot be analogous to that which is natural. The servitude described in the Psalm, then, must be of an entirely different order, a different order that is consistent with Basil's own ontological distinction between Creator and created.

Thus this discussion turns to Gregory of Nyssa's heroic corrective. The same passage that Basil's employs to affirm the institution is the grounds from which Gregory condemns it. In the process, Gregory offers a corrective on Basil's view that is more consistent with Basil's premise than Basil's own argument.

Gregory Against Slavery

The second piece of this discussion will focus on Gregory of Nyssa's treatment of the practice of slavery. In this regard, Gregory's treatment of slavery differs from his brother's on multiple levels. First, Basil's perspective on slavery was articulated across a broad spectrum of works. In contrast, Gregory treats the practice of slavery extensively in his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes. Gregory offers a sustained argument whereas Basil does not. Second, Gregory's conclusion on the practice of slavery directly challenges that of Basil's. In this work, Gregory's condemnation of slavery is unequivocal.⁴⁷⁰ Third, and most relevant to this discussion, Gregory's argument is more consistent than Basil's. It is both more internally coherent and, more importantly, more consistent with the Cappadocians' social vision. At the same time, Gregory's perspective is not entirely divorced from that of his brother. Most importantly, the Cappadocian brothers agree that slavery is an unnatural condition. In this light, it is the argument here that Gregory's condemnation follows the logical trajectory of Cappadocian thought. Specifically, for Gregory the unnatural condition of slavery represents a privation within the *imago Dei* and a distortion of humanity's provisional dominion within creation.

Before attending to the substantive aspects of Gregory's condemnation of slavery, it is important to note a few contextually relevant points. First, in an economy largely driven by slave labor, Gregory's condemnation is a critique of that economy. Insofar Gregory condemns slavery as an institution, he challenges the institution that underpins the Roman economy. Thus, his condemnation entails more than a critique of the

⁴⁷⁰Hart, *passim*.; Gonzalez, 180; Pelikan, 148; Wilken, 153.

practices of particular persons, though this is certainly a vital aspect of his argument. Instead, his condemnation is a critique of a practice that is not only common but also essential to the Roman State. Therefore, his condemnation is as much an ideological challenge as it is a matter of "personal" morality.

Second, Gregory's condemnation of slavery was anomalous even within the Christian community. In the words of historian Robert Louis Wilken, "Gregory was one of the few Church Fathers to condemn slavery explicitly."⁴⁷¹ Thus, even within Christian thought, Gregory's perspective was unique. Now, as David Bentley Hart points out, the emancipation of slaves was a common custom amongst Christians during the Easter season.⁴⁷² In turn, more than likely this homily was given during the Lenten season of 379.⁴⁷³ Therefore, the occasion gives Gregory some precedent for his critique. At the same time, as Hart continues, Gregory "goes well beyond any mere exhortation to the exercise of charity" or "gesture of benevolence."⁴⁷⁴ In contrast to Basil, it was not merely the treatment of slaves that was in question. Gregory's condemnation was focused at the institution itself.⁴⁷⁵

In this critique, one essential statement concerning Psalm 119 evokes and challenges the claims made by Basil. First, Gregory's critique is built upon an ironic reading of Ecclesiastes 2:7, which states:

I got me some slaves and slave-girls,
and homebred slaves were born for me,
and much property in cattle and sheep became mine,
above all who had been

⁴⁷¹ Wilken, 153; see also Gonzalez, 180; Pelikan, 148; Hart, 52.

⁴⁷² Hart, 52.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁷⁵ As Hart puts it, "he leaves no quarter for pious slave-owners to console themselves that they, at any rate, are merciful masters, not tyrants but stewards of souls, generous enough to liberate the occasional worthy servant, but responsible enough to govern other justly." Hart, 52.

before me in Jerusalem.⁴⁷⁶

From this passage Gregory begins the homily by arguing that the practice of slavery is an act of hubris. He asserts that slavery claims ownership over that which rightfully belongs to God. For Gregory the “enormity of the boast” implicit in this verse is nothing less than an expression of human hubris “raised up as a challenge to God.”⁴⁷⁷ For Gregory, slavery entailed the assumption that humanity can claim ownership over that which rightfully belongs to God. He states, “For we hear from prophesy that *all things are the slaves* of the power that transcends all.”⁴⁷⁸ Here Gregory refers to Psalm 119, the same Psalms that Basil refers to as a justification of slavery. In contrast, Gregory evokes the Psalm as an argument against slavery. Insofar as all things are slaves to God, to practice slavery is a direct challenge to God’s absolute dominion over creation.

Aside from the fact that this argument directly contrasts to the claims made by Basil, Gregory’s argument is more consistent with the Cappadocians’ social vision than that of Basil. First, like Basil, Gregory understands Psalm 119 in the context of the shared ontological status of all creation in relation to God. Creation *qua* creation is not the Creator. In turn, the true ownership of all creation, including humanity, falls under the dominion of the Creator and not any aspect of creation, even humanity as its “crown”. Thus, Gregory’s understanding of the Psalm follows the cosmological premise of Basil. In turn, this interpretation is consistent with the social vision of *koinonia*. As discussed, for Basil ownership of property is provisional. It is a product of God’s creative power and is therefore only legitimately employed to address the needs of the community. Ownership of property exists for the purpose of redistribution to the needy. No one has

⁴⁷⁶ Ecclesiastes 2:7 NRSV

⁴⁷⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily On Ecclesiastes* 334.5, 73.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid., 334.5, 73.

absolute claim over property. In conjunction with this, Gregory argues of slavery that a person cannot turn "the property of God into [sic] one's own property and arrogate dominion to his own kind, so as to think himself the owner of men and women."⁴⁷⁹ For when one does this, one "is overstepping his own nature, through pride, regarding himself as something different from his subordinates."⁴⁸⁰ Thus, to enslave another human was to deny not only the implications of humanity as created but also entailed a neglect of God's true ownership of creation and the provisional nature of property.

Returning to the discussion of Aristotle and slavery, Gregory develops explicitly the possibility within Basil's perspective. Put another way, creation *ex nihilo* from a God not contained within the cosmos becomes the initial grounds for Gregory's argument. For Gregory, slavery can not only be called into question but also condemned as a practice that "oversteps one's nature" precisely because God is not a subject within the cosmos. God's absolute dominion over creation rests not on God's status as an Unmoved Mover but as the uncreated Creator. The cosmos is contingent on God's absolute goodness and creative activity. Thus, where Aristotle's interpretation of slavery is an explanation of a necessary condition within the eternal cosmos, Gregory, through creation *ex nihilo*, is able to call into question the necessity of slavery at all. Now, this argument is, thus far, incomplete. While Gregory has asserted that slavery is not necessary from creation *ex nihilo*, he has not yet argued why God's absolute goodness would prohibit slavery. This point will be addressed shortly.

This leads to the second point, the provisional nature of property. It is at least possible that slavery as property can still function provisionally. Insofar as the legitimate

⁴⁷⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* I.334.5, 73.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., I.334.5, 73.

ownership of property was contingent on its distribution and care for the needy, it is possible to construe slave owning *as* care for the needy. In a generous interpretation, this is Basil's argument. It is better to be a slave than to live a life of vice that leads to abject destitution. In turn, as discussed, slavery entailed an attractive condition relative to abject destitution on various levels. Thus, even from the provisional nature of property, one could potentially argue for the good of slavery.

That being said, these possibilities are exposed as insufficient in the argument that Gregory offers in support of his condemnation of slavery. Specifically, it is Gregory's interpretation of the *imago Dei* that necessitates that slavery be condemned as a privation within creation. In other words, for Gregory the effect of slavery as an act of human hubris was a division of the indivisible *imago Dei*. In this regard, Gregory first draws a direct connection between the ownership of slaves, the "homebred slaves", and the ownership of cattle, "much property in sheep and cattle became mine."⁴⁸¹ He argues that the latter ownership, though qualified by God's absolute dominion, was just because the "irrational beasts" and "green plants" were given to humanity for their benefit.⁴⁸² As the "crown of creation", it is not unnatural for humanity to assert a qualified dominion within the cosmos. Yet, for Gregory, the ownership of one human over another was a privation of human nature as the shared *imago Dei* properly represented by the fullness of humanity. He argues that "By dividing the human species in two with 'slavery' and 'ownership' you have caused it to be enslaved to itself, and to be the owner of itself."⁴⁸³ For Gregory, slavery did not represent the ownership of one person, with the trait of the *imago Dei*, over another with the same trait. Instead, slavery was the *imago Dei*

⁴⁸¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily On Ecclesiastes* 335.6, 74.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 335.6, 74.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 335.5, 74.

enslaving itself. It distorted the *imago Dei* by claiming ownership over that which was rightfully God's. Thus, the practice of slavery entails a neglect of Psalm 119, and the shared "slavery" of all creation to God at its most decisive level, at its "crown". In an important sense, for Gregory slavery is the penultimate privation within the cosmos. It is a distortion within that which brings the cosmos to *kalon*, the *imago Dei*.

For Gregory, slavery is not only a privation within humanity but also a privation that disrupts the *kalon* of the entire cosmos. Gregory asserts that though humanity has been "appointed to government by the Creator" within creation, creation itself, and humanity as its crown, is always-already the subject of God.⁴⁸⁴ Therefore, to enslave humanity is to enslave all of creation in a manner beyond the "specific terms that humanity should be owner of the earth."⁴⁸⁵ For Gregory, although humanity is provisionally the "owner" of the earth, this is explicitly qualified by God's ultimate dominion. Thus, the practice of slavery neglects that essential provision. In turn, he claims that while "the whole world is not worth giving in exchange for a human soul," to sell another human is to lead not only the "owner" but also all of creation "into the sale-room."⁴⁸⁶ To sell humanity is to sell that which mediates between creation and Creator. Instead of bringing creation to its fullness, slavery distorts humanity's relationship with creation. Here, humanity's relationship with creation is not that of harmony in deference to God but ownership in defiance of God.⁴⁸⁷ In turn, humanity's natural relationship to itself and the cosmos is distorted. Thus, if humanity could be bought and sold with "the scrap of paper, the written contract" then "that means the earth, the islands, the seas, and

⁴⁸⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 335.5, 73.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 335.5, 73.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 336.20, 74.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 337.13, 75.

all that is in them” is also subject to sale without qualification.⁴⁸⁸ For Gregory, to turn humanity into property, to enslave itself, is to make all of creation subject to a form of ownership beyond the confines of its legitimate authority and natural role.

Furthermore, once this claim is absolute it runs directly counter to the normative social condition of *koinonia*. As discussed, the redistribution of wealth for the Cappadocians was a practice fundamentally rooted in the provisional nature of property. Put another way, because property was provisional, because it was the product of God’s creative power, no one had absolute claim over property. Wealth existed for redistribution to the needy. To claim otherwise was counter to the normative and natural condition of the social body. Therefore, slavery represented a privation of the community within the unified *imago Dei*. It was a distortion of humanity’s relationship to itself as well as creation. Once it is understood in the context of the indivisible *imago Dei*, the provisional nature of property supports the condemnation of slavery. While it runs counter to the argument presented by Basil, it is more consistent with the social vision that he himself espoused.

In conclusion, Gregory of Nyssa offers a necessary corrective to Basil’s perspective on slavery. Gregory condemns slavery as a privation of the *imago Dei* rooted in a neglect of the provisional nature of human dominion as it relates to the absolute dominion of God over creation. Central to this is Gregory’s interpretation of Psalm 119 that contrasts sharply with that of Basil’s. At the same time, Gregory’s condemnation aligns with Basil’s premise that slavery is an unnatural condition. Thus, Gregory’s condemnation of slavery is more consistent than Basil’s, both cosmologically and in terms of the Cappadocians’ social vision.

⁴⁸⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 336.20, 74.

That being said, one might legitimately question why Basil's perspective on slavery is necessary for this discussion. While it is perhaps interesting to note that Gregory's work has a relationship, albeit corrective, to Basil's, Gregory's argument does not collapse without Basil's. Even where they agree concerning the unnatural condition of slavery, Gregory's argument is coherent without reference to his brother's perspective. This, as far as it goes, is correct. At the same time, the reason why Basil's perspective is vital to this discussion and, upon correction, ought to be retained, is that Basil attends to an aspect of slavery that Gregory does not. Whereas Gregory convincingly attacks the institution of slavery, it is Basil who attends to the process of enslavement. For Basil, slavery is the product of poverty. It involves a movement from one to another. In this regard, the final chapters will attend to the operative cause within that movement, usury.

Chapter 6: The Cappadocians Against Usury

Having discussed the Cappadocians' perspectives on the integrated relationship of poverty and slavery, the final chapter of this thesis will interrogate the Cappadocians' condemnation of usury. Specifically, there are three texts where usury is addressed in Cappadocian thought: Basil's homily on Psalms 14[15]⁴⁸⁹, Gregory of Nyssa's *Contra Usurious*, and the section in Gregory of Nyssa's fourth homily on Ecclesiastes that confronts the practice of usury. Unlike the texts on slavery, these three texts function as complementary works. Furthermore, the connection between the former two is explicit.⁴⁹⁰ Generally speaking, it is recognized that Gregory of Nyssa's homily was given during the Lenten season of 379.⁴⁹¹ Locating Basil's work on usury chronologically is more difficult. It is generally placed in the wide and imprecise range of 363-378.⁴⁹² Thus, the liturgical occasion for Basil's work is difficult to pinpoint. All that can be said with certainty is that this homily was given prior to Gregory's. In conjunction with this, the third piece essential to this discussion is Gregory's fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes. As discussed, this was also given during Lent of 379.

Therefore, while it makes no overt references to Basil's work, it ought to be understood

⁴⁸⁹ In the contemporary terms, the Psalm referred to is 15. In the Septuagint, it is Psalm 14. They are the same. Since Basil was working from the Septuagint, he refers to it as the "Fourteenth Psalm". For this discussion, it will be referred to in the contemporary classification of Psalm 15.

⁴⁹⁰ To conclude *Contra Usurious*, Gregory of Nyssa addresses the aspects of usury not articulated in the homily. He states: "I remain silent in this matter because our holy father Basil's advice is sufficient. He has wisely and abundantly furnished it in his homily to persons who are foolish enough to make loans out of greed." Gregory of Nyssa, "Against Those Who Practice Usury By Gregory of Nyssa (*Contra Usurious*)" translated by Casimir Mccambly. *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 36 no. 3-4 (1991), 302.

⁴⁹¹ See fn6 McCambly, 288.

⁴⁹² Ihssen, 406.

in relation to the other two. Ironically, though Gregory's homily on Ecclesiastes treats both slavery and usury, the direct connection between them is made through Basil. In short, the Cappadocians' works concerning usury ought to be understood as related and complementary, especially in light of their social vision.

In light of this, this discussion will focus on how the Cappadocians critique usury from within their social vision. As they do with poverty and slavery, the Cappadocians condemn usury as an unnatural practice. Central to this condemnation is the claim that usury is a practice of economic violence towards the poor. This claim inhabits a decidedly scriptural moral imagination. To illustrate this point, the Cappadocians' critique of usury will be discussed through its engagement with the Aristotelian critique, the most prominent critique in Hellenistic thought.⁴⁹³ Though at times constructive, the Cappadocians' engagement with Aristotle, even at their points of convergence, challenges and frustrates the social and cosmological vision offered by Aristotle. This difference had profound implications for not only the Cappadocians' relationship with Aristotelian thought but also for their relationship to Roman economic ideology.⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹³ As a point of fact, Plato also critiqued the practice of usury. Yet, as Thomas Moser points out, Plato's views on usury are inconsistent. Furthermore, unlike Aristotle, Plato does not offer an extended economic analysis. Regardless, as it pertains to this discussion, there is little evidence that Plato's critique was operative in Cappadocian thought or that it had nearly the influence of Aristotle in subsequent discourse on usury. See Thomas Moser, "The Idea of Usury in Patristic Literature", *The Canon In The History of Economics* (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 27-30.

⁴⁹⁴ It is vital to note that the argument here is neither equating Aristotle with Roman ideology nor claiming that Aristotle is foundational to Roman ideology. As discussed, the conditions of slavery and poverty pre-existed both. The argument here is that simply that the historical claim that the Cappadocians' critique of usury is essentially Aristotelian is inaccurate. To draw it out in explicit terms, due to certain aspects of Aristotle's political thought concerning slavery and poverty, the Cappadocians critical integration of usury, slavery, and poverty would be unintelligible as "Aristotelian". While, as will be discussed, the Cappadocians are engaged with Aristotle, the moral imagination from which they offer their critique is *essentially* biblical.

That being said, Roman ideology and Aristotelian political thought are not entirely distinct. This is evident in the works of, perhaps, Rome's greatest statesman, Cicero. As S. Scott Bartchy points out, within Hellenistic thought, slaves were considered "inferior in nature" (66). He goes on to list Herodotus, Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero as figures that espoused this perspective. It is the argument here that there is an

Ultimately, for the Cappadocians, usury is the operative cause in the process of enslavement. It is a privation from the natural *koinonia*. It is a “symphony of lament” and dissonance within the cosmic *kalon*.

The Cappadocians and Aristotle

The first piece of this discussion will focus on Aristotle’s critique of usury. The influence of Aristotle on the Cappadocians’ critique is considerable. In fact, the Cappadocians’ critique of usury has been traditionally considered essentially Aristotelian.⁴⁹⁵ While this chapter will challenge that assertion, it is true that, in vital ways, the Cappadocians’ perspective can and ought to be interpreted as a constructive engagement with Aristotle.

Central to this engagement is the claim that usury, *tokos*, is “unnatural offspring”.⁴⁹⁶ The Cappadocians consistently refer to usury as *tokos*. What is less certain is that the term exclusively derives from Aristotle. As Michael Hudson points out, the

overt relationship between Cicero and Aristotle. It is a generally non-controversial claim to argue that Aristotle heavily influenced Cicero’s understanding of the political body. For example, historian Neal Wood points out, Cicero’s defense of social inequality, including slavery, was based on Aristotle’s understanding of “proportionate equality”. He states of Cicero, “Proportionate equality occurs in a state when citizens are divided by worth (*dignitas*) from the lowest to the highest into a hierarchy of legal orders” (92). In turn, “superiors are entitled to rule their social inferiors” (92). As will be described in greater detail, Aristotle makes precisely the same claim. At least in the case of Cicero, Aristotle’s perspective on the poor and slaves is operative in his political vision.

Now, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine in detail a) the influence of Aristotle on Cicero, b) the influence of Cicero on Roman ideology, or c) the influence of Aristotle on Roman ideology. Simply put, overcoming Aristotelian political assumptions does not necessarily overcome Roman ideology. Because of this limitation, the connection between Roman ideology and Aristotle ought to be understood exclusively as an argument against the claim that the Cappadocians are essentially Aristotelian. At the same time, it is important to note that in, at least in the prominent case of Cicero, Aristotle was employed to justify Roman economic practice in ways the Cappadocians would not. On “natural slavery” see Bartchy, 66; On Aristotle and Cicero, see Neal Wood, *Cicero’s Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1988), 90-97; see also, P.A. Brunt, *Roman Imperial Themes* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press 1990), 316-322.

⁴⁹⁵ Holman, 121; Moser, 37

⁴⁹⁶ Whether this term originated with Aristotle or is part of an antecedent lexicon is debated. What is less debated is that Aristotle’s interpretation of usury as *tokos* becomes the standard interpretation of interest as *tokos*. If *tokos* is the common term for usury in Greek culture, then Aristotle was interpreting the common term, *tokos*, literally “offspring”, as unnatural. Thus, whether the term was always pejorative or not, it takes on that connotation after Aristotle.

term *tokos* was the standard Greek term for usury predating Aristotle.⁴⁹⁷ Furthermore, the Septuagint consistently uses *tokos* as the term for usury.⁴⁹⁸ That being said, the pejorative connotation of *tokos* as unnatural offspring is inarguably Aristotelian, at least in the manner it is employed by the Cappadocians. Both Basil and Gregory of Nyssa follow Aristotle in their pejorative description of *tokos* as unnatural. For example, in his usury homily, Basil warns his congregation, "Do not make trial of this unnatural beast."⁴⁹⁹ This statement goes beyond the literal interpretation of *tokos* as offspring and interprets usury as unnatural offspring. It is a pejorative and moral assessment of the practice that in connotation shares Aristotelian affinities. Before examining in greater depth these affinities between Aristotle and the Cappadocians, it is necessary to clarify Aristotle's critique of usury and its relationship to his ethical and political stance.

Historically, Aristotle's critique of usury is described as the argument from the "barrenness of money."⁵⁰⁰ Interest, *tokos*, is an unnatural offspring that begets money from money.⁵⁰¹ To make money produce money is an unnatural practice because money is not naturally fecund. This interpretation of the Aristotelian argument has been the subject of much historical use and abuse.⁵⁰² While it is not the purpose here to entirely

⁴⁹⁷ Hudson, 155

⁴⁹⁸ While it possible that the Septuagint was interpreting these texts through and Aristotelian influence, it is more likely that they were merely relying on *tokos* as the common Greek terminology. Hudson, 155.

⁴⁹⁹ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.3, 188.

⁵⁰⁰ Noonan, 39; Odd Langholm, *The Aristotelian Analysis Of Usury* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press 1984), 58; Thomas Moser, "The Idea of Usury in Patristic Literature," *The Canon In The History Of Economics* ed. Michalis Psalidopoulos (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 29.

⁵⁰¹ As economic historian Odd Langholm describes the argument, "usury is the form of wealth getting which makes money breed money, which is against nature because only natural organisms can breed." Langholm, 58.

⁵⁰² On one hand, as John T. Noonan convincingly argues, this was the operative understanding of *tokos* throughout the Scholastic usury debates. In turn, this interpretation was the standard against which usury was condemned throughout the Scholastic period. On the other hand, this interpretation has been the subject of ridicule by those who advocate the practice of usury. For example, John Calvin states, "Even children can see, that if you lock money in a chest, it will not increase." Here Calvin reduces the argument to a childish inanity. In turn, Jeremy Bentham mockingly describes that Aristotle "had never been able to

dismiss this interpretation, it is important to note that Aristotle's critique is embedded in a sophisticated analysis of exchange involving the natural community, *oikos*, and its relationship to the normative *polis*.

To begin, it is necessary to attend to what "natural" represents in Aristotelian economic thought. In economic terms, the "natural" foremost relates to the function of a household, *oikos*. In his *Politics*, he defines *oikonomia* as the natural economic form. He states, "For natural riches and the natural art of wealth-getting are a different thing (than *chrematistike*); in their true form they are part of the management of a household."⁵⁰³ In turn, according to Aristotle, *oikonomia* is "the necessary and honorable" method of obtaining wealth.⁵⁰⁴ As discussed, for Aristotle this description of *oikonomia* in terms of the natural *oikos* entails a positive relationship to slavery, and this represents a significant point of departure between Aristotle and the Cappadocians. What is important here is that, for Aristotle, there was a natural community within which economic practices, *oikonomia*, properly functioned.

Furthermore, wealth itself is not the issue for Aristotle. Wealth, gained properly, is encouraged as natural. He argues:

The business of nature is to furnish food to that which is born, and the food of the offspring is always what remains over of that from which is produced.

Wherefore, the art of getting wealth out of fruits and animals is always natural.⁵⁰⁵

Thus, wealth, per se, is not at stake for Aristotle. Aside from the obligations to one's household, Aristotle offers no account of the function of wealth in terms of obligation.

discover, in any one piece of money, any organs for generating any other such piece." Bentham here evokes an image of Aristotle carefully examining a coin in a futile search for reproductive organs. Noonan 39, 110-112; Calvin, *Letter*, 221; Jeremy Bentham, "Defense of Usury Letter X," *Jeremy Bentham's Economic Writings* ed. W. Stark (London, UK: George Allen & Unwin LTD 1952), 158.

⁵⁰³ Aristotle, *Politics* I.10 1257b 15-25, 1139.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., I.10 1258a 35-40, 1140-1141

⁵⁰⁵ Aristotle, *Politics* I.10 1258a 35-36, 1140-1141

This is especially the case for the poor, who for both Aristotle and Roman ideology were only “visible” in negative relation to the status quo. The poor were a threat, not a concern of the State. That being said, for Aristotle, the “nature” against which usury is interpreted as “unnatural” is directly related to his interpretation of the *oikos* and its proper function as the natural economic community.

There is considerable scholarship that makes the argument that Aristotle’s ethics are not personal or individualized but inseparably oriented towards the *polis* as the normative social body. As Stanford Cashdollar argues, “Aristotle not only speaks of moral matters as the province of politics, but never speaks of a subdivision of or branch of politics which treat these matters apart from matters of a state.”⁵⁰⁶ Thus, ethics is consistently a discussion concerning the *polis*. In turn, Aristotle’s ethical judgments concerning economic practices operate in relation to the normative *polis*. As Louis Baeck argues, it is the severing of communal ties that lies at the heart of Aristotle’s critique of *chrematistike*. He states:

For him, the development of a monied market economy that prospers on commercial exchange between *socially unrelated individuals* and that is moved by a chrematistic mentality, would adversely affect the traditional values of the community and gradually undermine the public spirit of the *polis* and of its citizenry.⁵⁰⁷

Therefore, according to Baeck, the fundamental issue that Aristotle has with *chrematistike* and usury is that it is a privation from what he considers the natural economic condition, *oikonomia*, and the normative social body, the *polis*. Aristotle considers economic exchange between socially unlocated individuals motivated by profit

⁵⁰⁶ Stanford Cashdollar, “Aristotle’s Politics of Morals,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 11 no. 2 (1973), 149.

⁵⁰⁷ Louis Baeck, “The Mediterranean Trajectory of Aristotle’s Economic Canon,” *The Canon In the History of Economics* ed. Michalis Psalidopoulos (New York, NY: Routledge 2000), 2.

to be unnatural. For Aristotle, exchange only properly functions in relation to the health of the *polis*. In the *Nichomachean Ethics* book V he describes the relationship of “just exchange” and the *polis*. He states, “this sort of justice does hold men together – reciprocity in accordance with a proportion and not on the basis of precisely equal return. For it is by proportionate requital that the city holds together.”⁵⁰⁸ Just exchange is not merely a feature of the *polis*; it is an integral aspect of its health and unity. Aristotle’s understanding of money and exchange is fundamentally communicative.⁵⁰⁹ The purpose of money is to communicate labor in just proportion. Thus, for Aristotle, economics connects politics and ethics through the relationship of the *oikos* and just exchange. Just exchange entails a proportionate reciprocity between households essential for the unity of the *polis*.

It is against this understanding that Aristotle levels his critique of *chrematistike*. It is a distortion within the *oikos* that misapprehends the just and natural orientation of exchange. He states of the chrematist that “the whole idea of their lives is that they ought to increase their money without limit.”⁵¹⁰ For the chrematist, the accumulation of wealth is the *telos* of exchange, not the just relationship between households within the *polis*.⁵¹¹ There is no ceiling for the accumulation of money; it is self-oriented. Thus, the distortion of exchange is exponential.

⁵⁰⁸ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* V.5 1132b 30-35, 1010.

⁵⁰⁹ In this regard it is important to note that Aristotle’s understanding of proportion is not a mathematical equation. In fact he argues that perfect reciprocity is impossible in economic exchange. Instead, for Aristotle money serves a pseudo-linguistic function. It communicates labor between households. This is exemplified in his description of the carpenter and the cobbler. The key element to understanding the communitarian bent of this description is that the carpenter and cobbler are representatives of households, not merely individuals who exchange labor. Thus money functions as an imperfect but more “sufficient” expression of *oikonomia*. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, V.5 1133a 5-30, 1010.

⁵¹⁰ Aristotle, *Politics*, I.9 1257b 35-40, 1139.

⁵¹¹ Thus as Noonan summarizes of the chrematist, “Exchanges are now made not to satisfy simple natural needs, but to make money. There is no natural limit to the desire from money, but as [sic] man’s desires are unlimited, so he seeks infinite wealth.” Noonan, 46.

This is not a misuse of wealth; it is a distorted orientation towards wealth.

Chrematistike is a vice because it misapprehends the good. It is more Scrooge than Falstaff. It is not merely a vicious life that excessively attains a good; it is a vicious life because it distorts the good to which it attains. It objectifies that which is contingent. Insofar as Aristotle understands the nature of exchange as fundamentally communal and communicative, chrematists give wealth an objective value. They distort the nature, even the grammar, of exchange.

It is on these grounds that Aristotle condemns the practice of usury. For Aristotle, usury is the ultimate expression of the chrematist's distorted orientation and misapprehended good. In the category of the "justly censured" chrematist, the practice of usury is "the most hated sort, and with greatest reason."⁵¹² It is the most unnatural form of exchange. Insofar as usury, *tokos*, "births money from money,"⁵¹³ it is the most unnatural practice of an unnaturally oriented life. Thus, usury is "unnatural" because it takes from the labor of a household without proportionate return. It is non-reciprocal. If just and natural exchanges are dependent on the reciprocity between households, then usury not only defies the purpose of exchange but also threatens that which binds the *polis* through just exchange between households.

Thus, for Aristotle, the argument against usury as *tokos* is fundamentally an argument from a developed understanding of the natural community, the normative social body, and the nature of exchange as that which binds the natural into the normative, the *oikos* to the *polis*. Usury runs counter to Aristotle's understanding of the natural good within the social body. It is "unnatural" because it distorts the nature of exchange and

⁵¹² Aristotle, *Politics*, I.10 1258b 1-5, 1141

⁵¹³ Ibid., I.10 1258b 5, 1141

misapprehends the good to which exchange aims. It is therefore the ultimate expression of the chrematist's distorted orientation, vice.

Returning to the initial statement from Basil, the Cappadocians share key affinities with Aristotle in their critique of usury. Foremost is the description of usury as an unnatural practice. For example, Gregory states that the usurer is "in labor with the evil 'child' (*tokon*) of desire for profit" which is that product of an "evil union, which nature knows not."⁵¹⁴ This statement from Gregory evokes two elements from Aristotelian thought: usury is oriented by profit and is unnatural. In turn, Basil states, "money which speedily begins to bear interest, takes on an endless increase which becomes greater and greater."⁵¹⁵ This statement reflects Aristotle's assessment concerning the exponential increase of money via usury. Usury has no natural end and, thus, has no ceiling. Beyond this, Gregory states, "would they choose to change, so as to be transformed from humanity into gold."⁵¹⁶ According to Gregory, the usurer distorts her nature. This parallels Aristotle's argument concerning usury insofar as usury is understood as the product of an unnaturally oriented life. The "father" of *tokos* for Aristotle is *chrematistics*. For the Cappadocians the origin of usury is avarice. The usurer has objectified money as the purpose of exchange and misapprehended the good towards which exchange aims. It is not only an unnatural act; it is evidence of an unnaturally oriented life. In these aspects the Cappadocians' perspective converges with Aristotle. Usury is inseparable from vice.

While this convergence is evident in even a cursory comparison of the texts, the affinities between Aristotle and the Cappadocians function on a broader, formal level.

⁵¹⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 344.16, 97.

⁵¹⁵ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.3, 187-188.

⁵¹⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 343.10, 97.

Specifically, both perspectives share a communitarian trajectory. For Aristotle, the question of usury is embedded in a discourse concerning the proper function of exchange within a natural community, *oikos*. For the Cappadocians, the question of usury is embedded in a similar formal scheme concerning sufficient distribution within a natural community, *koinonia*. Thus the affinities between them are not only a shared terminology nor even a similar discourse on virtue and vice; they share a communitarian social vision within which their critiques of usury operate. Specifically, it is the primacy of the natural and normative community that serves as the interpretive background for both of their critiques. Yet, it is on this formal level that the lines of incompatibility between the social visions of Aristotle and the Cappadocians are drawn.

This distinction begins to surface in their understanding of the unnatural effects of usury. In Aristotle, the effects of usury are only described against the “natural” function of a community, the just exchange between natural communities that binds these communities into a *polis*. Aristotle offers nothing explicit in terms of the effects of usury on the poor. This is not to say that Aristotle’s interpretation does not have room for such a discourse. As Louis Baeck points out, the inspiration for the *Politics* was Aristotle’s “research findings and lecture notes on the political regimes of the Aegean.”⁵¹⁷ In turn, Baeck argues that Aristotle’s primary focus was the transition from the “natural community” to the “market economy”. It is not, then, inconceivable that Aristotle was aware of and in some ways addressing the negative aspects of usury uncovered in his research.⁵¹⁸ At the same time, this possibility ought not be interpreted as a concern for the impoverished. For Aristotle the poor are negatively construed as a threat to the status

⁵¹⁷ Baeck, 6

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 6.

quo of the *polis*. Furthermore, Aristotle considers the poor deficient of virtue by their nature. As he describes in the *Politics*, the poor occupy the same space as the unvirtuous.⁵¹⁹ At the same time, where the latter are unvirtuous because of their character, the poor lack virtue because of a deficiency of their nature.⁵²⁰ Like slaves, the poor are poor because of natural distribution of essences within an "immanent totality". This connection for Aristotle is not only descriptive but also prescriptive. Thus, it is not Aristotle's concern to alleviate the suffering of the poor as an unnatural condition. They are visible only as a threat to the status quo.

In contrast, the Cappadocians are morally explicit in their description of usury's effects on the poor. For example, Basil states, "For, it is called *tokos*, as I think, because of the fecundity of evil."⁵²¹ More specifically, he states, "Or, perhaps, it is called *tokos* because of the anguish and distress which it is accustomed to produce in the souls of the borrowers."⁵²² For Basil, the term *tokos* as offspring is not merely the "reproduction of money" by the chrematist. Instead, the offspring of usury is anguish, distress, and fecund evil. Furthermore, Gregory describes the children of usury as the suffering of the poor that "disgorges all his hidden inner parts with the hook when it is pulled."⁵²³ There are two aspects of these statements that sharply contrast to Aristotle: first, that usury exploits and exacerbates the suffering of the poor, and second, Gregory's violent imagery. It is

⁵¹⁹ "But he who exceeds greatly in beauty, strength, birth, or wealth, or on the other hand who is very poor, or very weak, or very much disgraced, finds it difficult to follow rational principle." Aristotle, *Politics* IV.11 1295b 5-10, 1220.

⁵²⁰ "We have now to inquire what is the best constitution for most states, and the best life for most men, neither assuming a standard of virtue which is above ordinary persons, nor an education which is exceptionally favored by nature and circumstances, nor yet an ideal state which is an aspiration only, but having regard to the life in which the majority are able to share, and to the form of government which states in general can attain." Ibid., IV.11 1295b 5-10, 1220.

⁵²¹ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.3, 187.

⁵²² Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.3, 187.

⁵²³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 345.7, 80.

the argument here that both are representative of a moral imagination found in the Scriptural tradition without precedent in Aristotelian thought.

The Cappadocians and Scripture Part 1: Usury, Poverty, and the Tradition of Hebrew Scripture

The second piece of this discussion will focus on the first difference described above, poverty. For the Cappadocians, usury exploits the plight of the poor. This concern is embedded a moral imagination where care for the poor and usury are in conflict, an imagination that is primarily scriptural. For the Cappadocians the scriptural prohibitions against usury are not merely *ad hoc* additions to an Aristotelian theory.⁵²⁴

They are the central stance the Cappadocians take in their critique of usury.

To begin, the Cappadocians understand the scriptural prohibitions on usury as coherent and authoritative. They did not require an overarching theory to mold their condemnation into a coherent form. Most importantly, these prohibitions are asserted as “Law”.⁵²⁵ As Gregory of Nyssa states:

You will respond to the incorruptible Judge when he says to you, “You have the Law, prophets, and Gospels.” Have you heard them cry out in one voice about love and compassion saying, “To your brother you will not lend interest” (Dt. 23:20), “He has not given his money on usury” (Ps. 14.5), “If you loan to your brother, you will not be hard upon him” (Ex. 22:24)?⁵²⁶

⁵²⁴Traditionally the Cappadocians’ critique has been regarded as essentially Aristotelian. Implicit in this claim is the notion that the Scriptural tradition is either inadequate or inapplicable. First, the implication is that the Scriptural tradition does not present a coherent economic perspective. Thus, Aristotle offers a comprehensive economic vision that provides the ethical framework. In turn, the Scriptural references are *ad hoc* additions to a developed economic theory. Second, and most importantly, the implication is that the prohibitions on usury in the tradition of Hebrew Scriptures primarily fall under circumscribed lines of identity. For example, Casimir Mccambley in his introduction to Gregory’s *Contra Usurious* states, “This injunction (Exodus 22:25) does not condemn usury; rather, it is intended to protect the debtor within the context of tribal consciousness so important to the Israelites.” Thus, if there is a coherent perspective in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is exclusively internal to the Israelite identity. In other words, care for the poor and its relationship to usury is only applicable to those within those identity boundaries. It is the argument here that neither of these perspectives are an adequate account of the Scriptural tradition. Mccambley, 287; see also Calvin, “Letter on Usury”, 220; Noonan 11-15, esp. fn2 12.

⁵²⁵ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.1, 181.

⁵²⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 300

This passage and its juxtaposition of key passages in Hebrew Scripture under the heading of "Law" indicates that the Cappadocians understood the prohibitions in Hebrew Scripture as having coherence and authority. For the Cappadocians, Aristotle is not needed to make the scriptural tradition any more consistent. Second, the Cappadocians do not make any overt references to Aristotle in these homilies. This is not to claim that the Cappadocians were uninfluenced by Aristotle. Aristotle's influence on their usury homilies is akin to his, Plato's, and Hesiod's influence on their cosmology. It is evoked but not cited. This is not the case for scripture. The Cappadocian works on usury are saturated with Scriptural references, particularly the prohibitions in Hebrew Scripture mentioned above.⁵²⁷ Additionally, these works refer to Jeremiah, Isaiah, Judges, Amos, and, of course, Psalm 15, for which Basil's homily is entitled.⁵²⁸ Thus, it is less likely that the Cappadocians were adding scriptural concerns to the Aristotelian theory; rather, it is more likely that Aristotle was appropriated, with important qualification, into a tradition of discourse concerning usury, specifically as it pertains to the poor.

Of all the usury prohibitions within the Hebrew tradition, a few are particularly relevant to the Cappadocians condemnation. This is especially the case in the texts where usury is understood as a practice that conflicts with the obligations of the community towards the poor. One example is the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:19-20. It states:

You shall not charge interest on loans to another Israelite, interest on money, interest on provisions, interest on anything that is lent. On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest, but on loans to another Israelite you may not charge interest, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land that you are about to enter and possess.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 300; see also Basil, *Psalm of David*, 12.1, 181.

⁵²⁸ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.1, 181; 12.5, 191; Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 299.

⁵²⁹ Deuteronomy 23:19-20 NRSV

This passage prohibits exacting usury amongst Israelites, but it permits taking interest from “foreigners”.⁵³⁰ In regard to this, it is important to read this passage in the broader context of Deuteronomy, specifically in the distinction between “foreigners” and “resident aliens”. Deuteronomy 1:16 states, “Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien.”⁵³¹ This passage changes the trajectory of Deuteronomy 23:19-20. The “resident alien” is not the “foreigner”. The point here is not that this prohibition can be divorced from the Israelite identity; rather, it is to point out that the prohibition is not strictly based on that identity. A second example can be found in Exodus 22:25. God commands that those who lend money to “my people, the poor among you” are prohibited from lending to them “as creditors, you shall not exact interest from them.”⁵³² Of particular note is that, because the poor are “God’s people”, lending to them at interest is prohibited. This prohibition is embedded in a discussion on the proper treatment of resident aliens⁵³³ and the obligations of the Israelites to their neighbor.⁵³⁴ Finally, Proverbs describes usury in the larger network of community obligations. Proverbs 28:8 states, “One who augments

⁵³⁰ It is worth noting that historically this passage is considered the central text of the Hebrew prohibitions. Furthermore, this passage has been interpreted within Christian theology along strict lines of identity. Most tragically, perhaps, is the case of Medieval Christendom’s exploitation of the “foreigner”. Jews were economically coerced into the role of “money lenders” due to the absolute prohibition against the practice within Christianity. Through the loss of land and political status, the role of moneylender was in a significant way thrust upon Medieval Jews. In turn, the tragic stereotype of Jews as usurers, most (in)famously portrayed in the character of Shylock in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, was a product of Christian exploitation of the permissive aspect of Deuteronomy. For a treatment of this see Lester K. Little *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1978), 42-57; William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice, The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works* ed. Richard Proudfoot, Ann Thompson, and David Scott Kastan (Walton-On-Thames, UK: Thomas Nelson and Son LTD. 1998), 829-856.

⁵³¹ Deuteronomy 1:16 NRSV.

⁵³² Exodus 22:25 NRSV.

⁵³³ “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.” Exodus 22:21 NRSV.

⁵³⁴ “And if your neighbor cries out to me, I will listen, for I am compassionate.” Exodus 22:27 NRSV

wealth by exorbitant interest gathers it from another who is kind to the poor.”⁵³⁵ The usurer is taking money that the borrower would otherwise give to the poor. The prohibition on usury moves beyond the particular exchange between individuals; it describes the effects of usury in the larger context of the community. Even if the usurer does not directly exact interest from the impoverished, the practice of usury thwarts the community’s obligation to the poor. Ultimately, the prohibition on usury comprehensively extends to the poor who remain God’s people; they are “neighbors” central to the moral obligations within the community.

In a sense, this view has a formal affinity with the Aristotelian perspective. Insofar as both understand the practice of usury within a larger communitarian context, the practice of usury is considered detrimental to the health of the community. The salient difference between these views is that within the Hebrew tradition, the obligation to the poor is paramount. It is the standard against which usury is prohibited. More important than the formal affinities with Aristotle, this perspective shares substantive affinities with the Cappadocians’ social vision. Not only is it communitarian, but it also upholds care for the poor as a central feature of community obligations. Without reiterating the previous discussions on the Cappadocians’ concern for the poor, it is sufficient to say that the substance of the Cappadocians critique is decidedly more scriptural than Aristotelian.

That being said, it is important to attend to how the assertion of usury prohibitions as authoritative shapes the Cappadocians critique. Throughout their usury texts, the Cappadocians diagnose usury as a practice that not only exploits the poor but also

⁵³⁵ Proverbs 28:8 NRSV.

amplifies their condition. For example, in his usury homily, Basil offers his assessment of this relationship. He states:

Truly, the act involves the greatest inhumanity, that the one in need of necessities seeks a loan for the relief of his life, and the other, not satisfied with capital, contrives revenue for himself from the misfortunes of the poor man and gathers wealth.⁵³⁶

The poor seek loans out of need and the usurer exploits this need for profit. Furthermore, Basil argues that borrowing at interest does not relieve poverty but worsens it. He states, "If you do not borrow, you will be poor today and likewise for the future; but, if you borrow, you will be more cruelly tormented, since the interest has increased your poverty still more."⁵³⁷ In a sense, this statement from Basil can be seen as merely a bit of sound financial advice insofar as it says nothing of the usurer making the loan, only a warning to those who might seek such a loan. To complete this picture, Gregory describes the usurer as one who "holds out hope of a loan to the one in distress, he piles money on his misfortune like someone quenching a fire with oil."⁵³⁸ Therefore, it is not only that taking and giving usurious loans is primarily a practice of and towards the poor; rather, it is a practice that compounds the plight of the impoverished. As Gregory succinctly puts it, "whoever lends money to a destitute person intensifies his misery instead of relieving stress."⁵³⁹ Thus, for Basil, these are grounds for encouraging the poor to not seek loans. In turn, for Gregory, the usurer actively anticipates and participates in this process. For both Basil and Gregory, usury is fundamentally a practice oriented at the poor that actively exploits their desperation. Ultimately, the Cappadocians describe the effects of

⁵³⁶ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.1, 182.

⁵³⁷ Ibid., 12.2, 186.

⁵³⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 344.16, 79-80.

⁵³⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 295.

an economic practice that conflicts with the moral imagination and tradition within which they are embedded. Their description of usury is that which opposes the Law.

For the Cappadocians, the Law is authoritative and comprehensive in its prohibitions on usury. Furthermore, these prohibitions are consistent with the Cappadocians' social vision. Specifically, the prohibitions within Hebrew Scripture are primarily concerned with how usury conflicts with the community's obligation to the poor. Concern for the poor, whether Israelite or resident alien, trumps other considerations. This concern is inseparable from the prohibitions within Hebrew scripture. Thus, when the Cappadocians assert these prohibitions as authoritative, Law, they inhabit a coherent tradition of economic discourse without precedent in the Aristotelian critique. This is exposed in the emphasis on usury and the poor. Beyond locating the Cappadocians within the scriptural tradition, these texts partially describe the process of enslavement. Usury exacerbates the plight of the impoverished and drives the descent towards abject poverty. If withholding resources from those in need is the grounds for judgment, willful exploitation of those conditions for profit is exponentially worse. It is violence.

The Cappadocians and Scripture Part 2: Usury and Violence in Ezekiel and Luke

The third piece of this discussion will focus on the critique of usury as violence. Just as with poverty, the emphasis on usury as violence is absent from the Aristotelian critique. Again, this emphasis is fundamentally scriptural. In order to illustrate this emphasis, this discussion will focus on two texts of Ezekiel and the Gospel of Luke as the frame within which the usury homilies operate. While the previous discussion focused on the centrality of the poor in the usury discourse, this discussion will focus how Ezekiel

and Luke inform the Cappadocians' interpretation of usury as a practice of violence against the poor. Ultimately, the Cappadocians' interpretation of usury as violence against the poor is integrally tied to the role of usury in the process of enslavement.

The texts of Ezekiel and Luke frame the Cappadocians' homilies on usury. In the opening of his usury homily Basil states, "This sin has been censured in many places in scripture. Indeed, Ezekiel places it among the greatest of evils to take interest or any profit, and the law expressly forbids it."⁵⁴⁰ For Basil, the statements from Ezekiel concerning usury are both authoritative and in continuity with the previously discussed prohibitions. Similarly, Gregory also refers to Ezekiel early in his usury homily. In fact, Gregory asserts Ezekiel as the central voice in his critique. He states, "Hence we are assembled here today to hear God's commands and to pay close attention to the prophet (Ezekiel). He slew the evil of money lending whose child is usury and has banished from his life money gained through trade."⁵⁴¹ Like Basil, Gregory's statements hold Ezekiel as authoritative and in direct relation to the law, "God's commands". In both cases, Ezekiel is the initial authoritative voice in their critiques of usury.

Both Basil and Gregory refer to Luke 6:35 in the closing of their homilies. Basil states, "But, if you obey the Lord, what need is there of these words? What is the counsel of the Master? 'Lend to those from whom you do not hope to receive in return.'"⁵⁴² Here Basil argues that if one heeds Christ's commands in Luke 6:35, the previous arguments against usury are unnecessary. For Basil, Luke 6:35 subsumes the scriptural

⁵⁴⁰ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.1, 181.

⁵⁴¹ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 294.

⁵⁴² Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.5, 190.

prohibitions.⁵⁴³ This perspective is consistent with previous discussion on the ‘garments of skin.’ The Law intended to limit sin is fulfilled in Luke. In turn, the command to lend without expectation of compensation is normative. Likewise, Gregory concludes his homily by saying, “For my part, I loudly proclaim acts of charity. I first advocate making loans (in the second place loaning is a form of giving) without profit through moneylending as the divine word has decreed.”⁵⁴⁴ In contrast, he continues by describing usury: “this is indeed shameless behavior and an impudent challenge to justice which makes them (the usurer) contentious and hostile to God.”⁵⁴⁵ Like Basil, Gregory asserts Luke 6:35 as normative. In addition, Gregory describes lending without expectation of compensation in terms of charity. Furthermore, Gregory describes usurers as adversaries to both “justice” and “God.” For both Basil and Gregory, Luke 6:35 is held up as the normative command in relation to lending. As normative, it subsumes the prohibitions in the antecedent tradition.

It is not altogether remarkable that Basil and Gregory use parallel structures in their homilies. This relationship between their works is consistent with the works

⁵⁴³ It is possible to interpret this passage strictly in terms of the repayment of capital on the loan and not necessarily interest on loans. For example, Calvin makes this claim in his defense of usury. In turn, nothing argued here invalidates the interpretation of the passage as a repayment of capital. At the same time, it must be noted that nearly every instance of lending addressed in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially the examples given here, speak of lending in terms of usury and usury in terms of the poor. The command to lend without expectation of compensation evokes a tradition concerning the relationship of poverty and usury. In turn, this command cannot be easily divorced from that discourse. Simply put, it is highly implausible that the command to “lend, expecting nothing in return” would not include usury as subsumed in that statement. This is supported not only in the antecedent tradition but also the parable of the “ten pounds” within Luke, insofar as it was the expectation of return through interest that was positively commanded and connected to the noble’s slaughter. While it is not the purpose here to argue this point further, it is more than plausible that if the author of Luke was familiar and engaged with the antecedent tradition, this statement would be in continuity with that tradition. Furthermore, this plausible interpretation would be additionally supported, perhaps even proven, if Luke and Ezekiel have a direct textual relationship. Regardless, though interesting, this is an incidental point to this discussion. Insofar as the Cappadocians interpreted the text as such, any speculation beyond that is incidental to this thesis. See John Calvin, “Letter on Usury,” *A Reformation Reader* ed. Denis R. Janz (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 1999), 220.

⁵⁴⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurios*, 301.

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 301

discussed throughout this thesis. If anything, this parallel structure affirms the complementary nature of their works. What is salient to this discussion is the relationship between the texts used to frame their homilies. Both Luke and Ezekiel represent a discourse concerning usury, violence, and the poor.

To begin, the perspective found in Ezekiel revolves around a description of the righteous and unrighteous person. He describes the righteous person as one who “does not oppress anyone, but restores the debtor his pledge.”⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, the righteous person “gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not take advance or accrued interest, withholds his hands from iniquity.”⁵⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that here this statement from Ezekiel has a striking similarity to the statement made in Psalm 15, for which Basil’s homily is entitled, which also revolves around a description of the righteous. It states that the righteous are those “who do not lend money at interest, and do not take a bribe against the innocent.”⁵⁴⁸ Both of these statements are in continuity with the tradition in Hebrew Scriptures of treating usury in relation to the poor. The righteous forgive the “pledge” of the indebted. The righteous attend to the poor. The righteous do not take interest in any form. Put another way, the righteous in Ezekiel are merciful. Refraining from usury is a practice of mercy towards the poor.

In contrast to the righteous, the unrighteous are described in terms of violence. Ezekiel describes the unrighteous as a “shedder of blood, who does any of these things” including usury.⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, he continues this description in terms of violence, with

⁵⁴⁶ Ezekiel 18:7 NRSV.

⁵⁴⁷ Ezekiel 18:7-8 NRSV.

⁵⁴⁸ Psalm 15:5 NRSV.

⁵⁴⁹ Ezekiel 18:10-11 NRSV.

an interesting play on the term *neshek*, which literally translates as “to bite”.⁵⁵⁰ Ezekiel 22:12 states:

In you that take bribes to sell blood; you take interest (*neshek*) and accrued interest (*neshek*), and make gain from your neighbors by extortion; and you have forgotten me, says the Lord.⁵⁵¹

The description of the usurer is one who bites, *neshek*, and sheds blood. The object of this violence is the “neighbors”. This evokes the statements of Exodus that describe the poor as both “God’s people” and neighbor. Therefore, Ezekiel understands care for the poor through both debt forgiveness and refraining from the practice of usury as a sign of righteousness and mercy. He understands exploitation of the poor through usury as a sign of unrighteousness and violence. While Ezekiel’s understanding of usury is consistent with the tradition’s emphasis on care of the poor, the primary development of Ezekiel is the explicit understanding of usury, *neshek*, as a violent practice of the unrighteous towards the poor.

Similarly, Luke emphasizes the poor. Luke parallels the statements in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel the focus is on the righteous and unrighteous.⁵⁵² In Luke the focus is on the blessed and the wretched. These perspectives have striking similarities. For example,

⁵⁵⁰ It is tantalizing to note that the precise Hebrew term for interest is *neshek*, which literally translates as “to bite”. While it is not the argument here that this terminology is sufficient or even necessary to understand the connection of usury and violence, it is important to note that this is not an inappropriate use of the term. Michael Dahood argues in the Anchor Bible that it is appropriate to “subsume” *neshek* as interest into the term as it refers to “biting”. In turn, the violent implication of interest, though not necessarily overt, is not either inappropriate. Michael Dahood, *Neshek*, *Anchor Bible Dictionary* ed. David Noel Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday 1992), 84.

⁵⁵¹ Ezekiel 22:12 NRSV.

⁵⁵² The connection here between Ezekiel and Luke might be overt. This is supported by the “Son of Man” reference in Luke 6:22 that evokes the statements in Ezekiel 2:1 and 4:16. While it is not the purpose here to engage in a protracted exegetical discourse on the influence of Ezekiel on Luke, at the very least the statements in Luke are evocative of Ezekiel. Furthermore, it is not essential to this discussion that they have a direct relationship; rather, what is essential is that both texts thematically discuss usury in terms of violence

Luke 6:20 states, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."⁵⁵³ In turn, "the rich" are explicitly identified as the subject of "woe".⁵⁵⁴ In Ezekiel the righteous care for the poor and do not exact usury. The unrighteous are those that do "any of these things". Furthermore, in Luke the rich "will be hungry" and "will mourn and weep."⁵⁵⁵ In Ezekiel, the unrighteous will "surely die."⁵⁵⁶ Thus, at least on a formal level, Ezekiel and Luke make parallel, though not quite the same, arguments.

Beyond this, the closest relationship between the Luke and Ezekiel as it pertains to usury and violence is the parable of the "ten pounds" found in Luke 19:11-27. In terms of violence imagery, the parable evokes the statements of Ezekiel. First, the noble in this parable positively commands the servant to exact usury to increase the noble's wealth.⁵⁵⁷ Directly after chastising the servant for not exacting usury, the noble states, "I tell you, to those who have, more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."⁵⁵⁸ This statement from the noble directly contradicts the scheme of the blessed and wretched in Luke 6. In turn, the noble speaks for those who have rejected God's word prohibiting usury. It describes precisely what the blessed are not. In addition, it evokes the description of the unrighteous in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel, the unrighteous, the usurer, is a "shedder of blood". In Luke, the noble will take those who do not practice usury and "slaughter them in my presence."⁵⁵⁹ The connection within Luke between the blessed and the wretched and the parable of the ten pounds

⁵⁵³ Luke 6:20 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁴ "But woe to who you are rich, for you have received you consolation" Luke 6:24 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁵ Luke 6:25-26 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁶ Ezekiel 18:13 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁷ "You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest." Luke 19:22-23 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁸ Luke 19:26 NRSV.

⁵⁵⁹ Luke 19:27 NRSV.

further evokes imagery found in Ezekiel. Specifically, it affirms the connection of usury to violence.

This stands in relation to the statements concerning violence and lending in Luke 6:32-36. It reads:

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. *But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.* Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your father is merciful.⁵⁶⁰

This passage in Luke connects lending to the antecedent discussion on “love of one’s enemies”. It is the extension of non-violence to economic practices. Thus, the prohibition against retaliation, “if anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also,” the positive command to “give to everyone who begs from you,”⁵⁶¹ and the command to “lend, expecting nothing in return” all inhabit the same discourse concerning the love of enemies and non-violence.

Returning to the usury homilies, the texts that frame the Cappadocians’ critique are embedded in a discourse concerning the association of usury and violence as it pertains to the poor. This leads to the final reference to Luke in the Cappadocians’ usury homilies concerning the parable of the “ten pounds”. Basil states:

Without land you produce, *without sowing you reap*. It is not evident for whom you collect. *It is indeed apparent who he is who weeps because of interest*, but it is doubtful who he is who is to enjoy the abundance that comes from it. In fact, it is uncertain whether you will not leave to others the gift of wealth, but the evil of injustice you have treasured up for yourself.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ My emphasis. Luke 6:32-35 NRSV.

⁵⁶¹ Luke 6:30 NRSV.

⁵⁶² My emphasis. Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.5, 191.

This reference to the parable links the usurer to the violent noble, who “reaps what he does not sow”. It is an inverse of the blessed and the wretched, where the wretched will “weep” and “hunger” and the poor will inherit the Kingdom. The usurer, like the violent noble, preys upon the poor. The usurer demands that which is opposed to the kingdom, and in turn inherits evil. Furthermore, Basil’s argument tightens the Ezekiel-Lukan frame by contrasting the space of the violent usurer (the “shedder of blood”, the noble who “slaughters”) and those who practice economic non-violence (who “lend, expecting nothing in return”). This passage, within the Ezekiel-Lukan frame, locates the Cappadocians’ critique of usury in a scriptural discourse that associates usury with violence.

Within this frame, the Cappadocians consistently associate usury with violence in their critique of usury. First, the Cappadocians consistently interpret the relationship of the usurer and poor as adversarial. The usurer makes the poor an enemy. Basil warns the poor to “not come under the control of a hostile person” and become “like prey to be hunted and tracked down.”⁵⁶³ For Basil, to seek usurious loans is to make one subject to one’s enemies. Gregory describes the usurer as one who willfully makes an enemy of the poor. He states, “The destitute person is making supplication and is seated outside your door; in his need he seeks your wealth to bring relief. However, you do just the opposite and turn him into an adversary.”⁵⁶⁴ This adversarial relationship is not merely figurative; it directly involves violence. The Cappadocians understand usury as a condition for violence, for “shedding blood”. As Basil describes the usurer, he states, “You make profit from misfortune, you collect money from tears, you strangle the naked, you beat

⁵⁶³ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.2, 184.

⁵⁶⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 295.

the famished.”⁵⁶⁵ In this case, Basil is describing those who default on their loans, whose “securities” offered as collateral have been extinguished, who are “strangled in the market place.”⁵⁶⁶ In pursuit of profit, the usurer commits direct violence on the “naked” and “famished” whose securities the usurer has already consumed. These descriptions align with the slaughtering noble insofar as the demand for profit through usury, if unsatisfied, leads directly to violence. Both instances are evocative of Ezekiel. Just as in Ezekiel, the usurer is the unrighteous and shedder of blood. The theme of usury and violence is consistent within the Ezekiel-Lukan frame.

Second, usury as economic violence, even if not physical, is described as murder. For example, Gregory argues on “the pernicious idea of interest which one might call another kind of robbery or bloodshed without being far from the truth.”⁵⁶⁷ On one hand, this statement from Gregory has a striking similarity to the description from those who withhold wealth from the poor as “murderers”. Inasmuch as those who withhold from the poor are guilty of murder, so too are those who exploit the poor through usury. As discussed, this is not just a rhetorical use of the term “murder”. Basil is explicit in his description of how withholding wealth has a direct relationship to death by starvation. To exploit the poor through usury and willfully contribute to the condition of abject poverty is pernicious and violent. On the other hand, the statement from Gregory evokes the imagery in Ezekiel. In Ezekiel the unrighteous are “shedders” and “sellers” of blood. Gregory describes the usurer as a “murderous physician” and one who is “tasting his brother’s flesh and the blood of his relatives”⁵⁶⁸ while Basil describes usury in terms of

⁵⁶⁵ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.5, 190.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid., 12.1, 182; 12.2 185.

⁵⁶⁷ Gregory of Nyssa, *Fourth Homily on Ecclesiastes* 344.1, 79.

⁵⁶⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 295, 298.

bad medicine from a corrupt “physician” who “would take away even their little remnant of bodily strength.”⁵⁶⁹ Therefore, within the Cappadocians’ description, the usurer commits economic violence. The usurer is a murderer, even if not directly.

Finally, the Cappadocians understand usury in terms of social violence that directly connects with slavery. As discussed, those who lost their land and property through usury were in the Roman context “socially dead”. The loss of property and patrimony entailed a social death that spanned multiple generations. Gregory describes usury as a practice that will “leave your children penniless.”⁵⁷⁰ He describes usurers as those who “do not spare an abandoned home; instead they pursue the inheritors whose only possession may be a noose and seek gold which to them is food taken from a banquet.”⁵⁷¹ In a context where identity and membership in the community is tied to property, the usurer facilitates the social death of the impoverished. On a social level, the usurer murders the poor. In this sense, Basil argues to the borrower that, though usurious loans offer temporary relief, “you will later be giving up your patrimonial possessions. You are poor now, but free.”⁵⁷² This connection between loss of patrimonial possession, social death, and loss of freedom, closes the circle on the relationship of poverty, usury, and slavery. By exploiting the poor through economic violence, usury creates the conditions of slavery.

Throughout his homily, Basil refers to usury as slavery. For the most part he refers to “debt slavery”. Yet, near the end of the homily he makes a direct reference to slavery that is nearly verbatim of his description in his famine homilies. He states, “I

⁵⁶⁹ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.1, 183.

⁵⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Usurious*, 301.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 299.

⁵⁷² Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.2, 185.

have seen a piteous sight, free sons dragged to the market place to be sold because of paternal debt . . . Do not leave a bond, a paternal curse, as it were descending upon the sons and grandsons.”⁵⁷³ In the famine homilies, slavery is the result of abject poverty. Here it is the result of usury. Between the two, Basil describes the pernicious logic of usury. It exploits the poor and compounds their misery to the point of abject poverty and social death. In this condition, the impoverished turn to slavery as a viable option. Usury is more than a process of impoverishment; it is a process of enslavement.

Thus, through the scripturally consistent emphasis on poverty and violence, the Cappadocians connect abject poverty and slavery through usury. In these aspects the Cappadocians’ critique is fundamentally rooted in the scriptural tradition and its discourse concerning economic practices. At the same time, what has yet to be discussed is how the Cappadocians understand usury as unnatural. It is in this description that the Cappadocians both appropriate Aristotelian logic as well as expose their ultimately incompatible views on the normative and natural community against which usury is called unnatural *tokos*.

The Cappadocians Against Aristotle

As discussed, both the Cappadocians and Aristotle understand usury as unnatural. Furthermore, both of these claims are rooted in specific understanding of the natural community. It is the argument here that the Cappadocians’ appropriation of Aristotelian terminology ultimately serves to undermine Aristotle’s description of the natural community. Their point of convergence does not reconcile their differences; it exposes them. This difference is exposed through Aristotle’s *oikos* within an “immanent totality” is not the same as the Cappadocians’ *koinonia* within the cosmic *kalon*.

⁵⁷³ Basil, *Psalm of David* 12.4, 190.

First, to summarize Aristotle's view, the natural community is the *oikos* and the nature of economic activity is *oikonomia*, both of which are oriented towards the health of the *polis*. For Aristotle, the *oikos* and the *polis* inhabit an eternal cosmos of "immanent totality", a cosmos that contains even God. Their proper function is to maintain the status quo evident within that cosmos. Within the *oikos*, slavery is not only acceptable; it is natural. For Aristotle the poor are exclusively defined in negative terms. In this sense, Aristotle is explicit in his prescription for minimizing the threat the poor pose to the *polis*. He argues that the impoverished "know not how to command and must be ruled like slaves."⁵⁷⁴ Just as the slave is ruled within the natural community of the *oikos*, the poor must be ruled within the normative community of the *polis*. Like the Cappadocians, Aristotle draws the poor and slave into the same discourse to a decidedly different effect. Insofar as slavery and poverty operate within an "immanent totality", the question for Aristotle is how to best *manage* these conditions, not whether these conditions ought to exist at all. This is even the case concerning usury. For Aristotle, the critique of usury is that it unbalances the status quo *polis*. The ethical question is whether economic practices maintain that natural balance, and the central concern for Aristotle is the primacy of the *polis*. At no point does Aristotle confront the effects of usury on the poor or its logical relationship to slavery. Insofar as slavery and poverty are natural conditions, there is no need to confront them ethically. Both slaves and the poor must be ruled by the virtuous. Ultimately, while usury contrasts to Aristotle's social vision, neither the condition that prompts it, poverty, nor the *telos* of its process, slavery, are condemned, even condemnable, within his social vision.

⁵⁷⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, IV.11 1295b 20-21, 1220-1221.

Second, to summarize the Cappadocians' view, the natural community is *koinonia* and the nature of economic activity is sufficiency that includes the distributive mandate, *epanisoson*. Both the natural community and its economic practices are oriented towards the cosmic *kalon*. For the Cappadocians, *koinonia* and the cosmos are created *ex nihilo*, from the Creator's stance of eternity. Their proper function is the harmonious unfolding of creation towards its eschatological destiny. It is not the status quo but the eschatological end that orients community. Within the *koinonia* of the *imago Dei*, slavery is an unnatural privation. It is humanity's self-enslavement. In turn, the poor are positively construed as central to the community of *koinonia*. The poor are not deficient of virtue. The poor are blessed. The poor are God's people. The poor are the *imago Dei*. The ethical question for the Cappadocians is whether economic practices align with the cosmic *kalon*. For the Cappadocians, the State within an "immanent totality" is not primary. Instead, the community that inhabits a narrative between creation and eschaton is primary. In turn, usury, because it exploits the poor and creates the conditions of enslavement, is unnatural to the natural community and the cosmos. It is the operative cause in a movement of cosmic dissonance. Ultimately, the shared terminology of usury as unnatural *tokos* exposes these differences as incompatible vision of the cosmos and the community within it.

Finally, this critique of usury as the operative cause in the process of enslavement is not merely an exercise in philosophical musings. It is ultimately a referendum on the economic ideology within the Roman Empire. Once located within the Roman Empire and its ideology and policies, this assessment takes on a decidedly political shape. In vital ways, the Roman ideology parallels the social and economic vision of Aristotle,

specifically as it pertains to the poor and slavery. In both cases, the poor are invisible except as a threat to the status quo. In both cases, slavery is considered a necessary aspect of the proper function of the economy. Aristotle gives Roman ideology the language that makes these conditions and practices natural. Usury was a state sanctioned practice. Therefore, not only is it likely that this practice was understood as particularly oriented to the poor, it is entirely possible that, as a potential driver of the Roman economy through slavery and as a means of acquiring tax revenue, the practice was positively encouraged. At the very least, their policies of twelve percent interest on capital loans and up to fifty percent interest on food supplies did not discourage it. In terms of slavery, the policies of Valens were particularly oriented towards maintaining and protecting the labor pool of the *latifundia*. The policies of Valens privileged the wealthy over the anonymous and invisible poor. They supported the exploitation of the poor and generated the conditions of enslavement.

The Cappadocians, by employing Aristotelian language, expose the difference between their Christian moral imagination and Roman ideology. Specifically, the Cappadocians challenged the ideological norms within an Empire where the poor were invisible, slavery was a necessary and encouraged aspect of economic life, and usury drove the poor from one to the other. The Cappadocians' description of usury is neither a simple case of "personal" ethics nor an abstract analysis. Just as with the passages from Proverbs and Luke, it is the description of an economic process in relation to a morally visible and named entity, the poor. It critiques both the Roman policy supporting usury as well as the Roman ideology where the poor are invisible and anonymous. In Roman economic policy the positive practice of usury is directed at the negatively construed

impoverished, which ultimately fed the labor pool of the *latifundia*. Conversely, for the Cappadocians the negative practice of usury is directed at the positively construed poor, which led to the unnatural condition of slavery. Thus, the primacy of Scripture both ethically and cosmologically contrasts to the policies and ideology operative in the fourth century Empire. As a whole, the Cappadocians critique the foundations of the Roman economy as an unnatural process that cut against the grain of the cosmos. It was a “symphony of lament” when held against the moral imagination of *koinonia* within the cosmic *kalon*. In short, it was through the expression of a Christian moral imagination that the Cappadocians defied the ideology of a hostile Empire.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to examine a crucial moment in the development of the Christian moral imagination and tradition of moral discourse. Specifically, this thesis argued that the fourth century was a crucial moment in this development within the fourth century Roman Empire. The work and thought of Cappadocians was the model used to interrogate this development. It was the argument here that the Cappadocians constructed cosmological and ethical edifices that contrasted to the ideology of the Roman Empire. They also helped shape the moral and theological discourse for centuries to come.

The Cappadocians' cosmology described a cosmos created *ex nihilo* by an absolute and absolutely good God. This assertion and description defied the prominent cosmological theories operative within Hellenistic thought, specifically those of Plato, Aristotle, and Hesiod. The Cappadocians' articulation of the cosmos and humanity within the cosmos was fundamentally rooted in the notion that creation unfolded harmoniously towards its eschatological fulfillment, the cosmic *kalon*. The Cappadocians' understanding of *koinonia* as the normative and natural condition of human community entailed a social vision that inhabited this cosmological framework. Within the social vision, the Cappadocians interpreted the process of enslavement and its constituent parts of poverty, slavery, and usury as a unified movement of cosmic dissonance. This understanding of community and the moral judgments derived from it

stood in sharp contrast to the normative claims of Roman ideology as well as the philosophical perspective of Aristotle that supported these claims. Ultimately, the moral imagination of the Cappadocians represented a sharp contrast to the cosmological and ideological claims operative within the Roman Empire and it was this constructive vision that made such critiques possible. Consistent in Cappadocian thought was the notion that social ethics was set against the cosmological background. It was from the integration of *koinonia* and *kalon* that the moral judgments were made.

This integration was not merely an example of theological speculation but a lived community represented by the *Basileias*. The moral imagination of the Cappadocians was not merely envisioned and its critiques were not made against an unrealized utopian ideal. Instead, they were located within a community, a community of *koinonia* with the Church as its center. Ultimately, the Cappadocians did not merely describe the cosmos and community as a critique of Empire. They built that community within that Empire. They did not talk of *koinonia* as a utopian ideal. They practiced *koinonia* as an economic reality. They did not comfort the poor with images of the Kingdom. They brought to poor into the Kingdom. The *Basileias* bore witness to that Kingdom here on earth.

To conclude, one might legitimately ask how the work and thought of a handful of faithful sixteen hundred years ago relates to the contemporary Christian. One might conclude that the circumstances that the contemporary faithful are embedded in are vastly different than those of the fourth century. Thus, while perhaps an interesting case study in Christian practice and theology, the Cappadocians' articulation of a moral and cosmological vision might remain in the depths of an intriguing but ultimately inapplicable past. Though morality has a history, it is in the end just that: history.

It is not within the scope of this discussion to refute that perspective fully, but the conditions of contemporary slavery, both virtual and literal, are not that different than that distant past. Just as no one is a slave by nature, one might argue that no one participates in the modern form of slavery called, in its sanitized terminology, "human trafficking" from a place of wealth and privilege. While we are quick to condemn the practice, we are, perhaps, less willing to truthfully examine our complicity in the conditions that make this form of slavery the preferred amongst tragic options. Furthermore, one might respond that the conditions of "Third World" debt bear a striking resemblance to the process of impoverishment through usury operative in Cappadocian thought. The encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Sociales* describes this process in eerily similar terms.⁵⁷⁵ Again, while we are quick to bemoan the images that confront us of the starving poor in these "underdeveloped" nations, we are, perhaps, less willing to examine our complicity in a usurious economic system that generates the poverty we are so quick to lament.⁵⁷⁶ At the very least, the work and thought of the Cappadocians might contribute to a process of moral discernment concerning economic practices.

⁵⁷⁵"The reason which prompted the developing peoples to accept the offer of abundantly available capital was the hope of being able to invest it in development projects. Thus the availability of capital and the fact of accepting it as a loan can be considered a contribution to development, something desirable and legitimate in itself, even though perhaps imprudent and occasionally hasty. Circumstances have changed, both within the debtor nations and in the international financial market; the instrument chosen to make a contribution to development has turned into a *counterproductive mechanism*. This is because the debtor nations, in order to service their debt, find themselves obliged to export the capital needed for improving or at least maintaining their standard of living. It is also because, for the same reason, they are unable to obtain new and equally essential financing. Through this mechanism, the means intended for the development of peoples has turned into a *brake* upon development instead, and indeed in some cases has even *aggravated underdevelopment*." John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Sociales, Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*. Ed. O'Brien, David J. and Thomas A. Shannon (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis 1992). 3.19, 405-406.

⁵⁷⁶ As Jesuit Economist Heinrich Pesch put it, "So, in our time, we use the word capitalism to mean a social system where usury operates with more or less complete freedom." In turn, he describes capitalism as a system where "exchange borders on extortion." Heinrich Pesh S.J., *Ethics And The National Economy* (Norfolk, VA: HIS Press 2004), 82, 159.

Yet, the prescription, if there is a prescription for our contemporary situation, is broader. Returning to the discussion of the tragic cosmos, diagnosing the conditions of human existence in tragic terms does not require a particularly Christian imagination. To describe suffering and evil within humanity was operative in the works of Hesiod, Aeschylus, Plato, and even Aristotle. In each case, to suffer is merely the natural condition of humanity within the cosmos. Thus, what does require a Christian or, at least, a scriptural imagination, is the notion that suffering and evil are not natural to humanity or the cosmos. For Christians, it is precisely because we inhabit a community that witnesses to the “good news”, a narrative entailing both creation and eschaton, that the tragedy we recognize can be called “unnatural”. It is because the origin and end of creation is not tragic that suffering and evil can truly be identified as tragedy. Simply put, it is against a vision of the good that our moral judgments are made. To articulate our moral judgments is necessary; but equally necessary is the need to articulate the good against which these judgments are made.

As shown through the work and thought of the Cappadocians, this articulation does not require a hypocritical compromise with Empire. As Rowan Williams puts it, “A church which does not at least possess certain features of ‘sect’ cannot act as an agent of transformation.”⁵⁷⁷ At the same time, this distance from Empire does not entail a distinction that spins out into reified antagonism.⁵⁷⁸ Christianity does “judge the world”⁵⁷⁹ and the Empire that describes it. It does so not foremost in its criticism but in the audacity of its moral imagination. As Williams argues, “The true Church, in contrast,

⁵⁷⁷ Rowan Williams, *On Christian Theology* (Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishers 2000), 233.

⁵⁷⁸ “The communal enclave, if it is not to be a ghetto, must make certain claims on the possibility of a global community, and act accordingly.” Williams, 36.

⁵⁷⁹ Williams, 20.

is a community enabled to live in provisionality without apathy or resignation: 'where the Church really exists, God is assured of what is still future.' The Church is what, so to speak, promises the world to God."⁵⁸⁰ It is because of this promise that Christianity is neither apathetic nor resigned to a world of moral tragedy. Instead, for the Christian, moral judgments are inseparable from the constructive, "imaginative", descriptions of God's good creation, creation's eschatological end, and human community. Honing our moral judgments is a necessary facet of the Christian faith. At the same time, without a corresponding discourse on the moral imagination that frames these judgments, without attention to Christian narrative as Gospel, as "good news", our moral judgments are incomplete. Christianity, above all else, is an eschatological comedy. Forgetting this distorts our vision and our moral judgments suffer for it. The Cappadocians had the audacity to make these judgments and assert this comedic vision in thought and deed. The challenge for Christians today is to hone our judgment while living the comedy. The efforts of the Cappadocians can help us respond to this challenge.

⁵⁸⁰ Williams, 101.

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