

# Neo-Arian Controversy: *The Trinitarian Theology of Eunomius*

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A major problem for theologians at the time of the late Arian controversy in the second half of the fourth century was to explain how the three persons of the Trinity could be regarded as one God and co-substantial to the Godhead. Another Trinitarian problem was the articulation of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. The rise of the neo-Arian controversy represented by Aetius and his disciple Eunomius mostly dealt with the first issue. The solution to this dilemma was the orthodox response to the neo-Arians found in the definition of the divine *ousia* with its three *hypostases*. Basil of Caesarea concerns himself with this in *Adversus Eunomium* and Basil's work is carried on by his brother Gregory of Nyssa in his *Contra Eunomium* and *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*. These Cappadocian brothers were not the only ones who addressed their writings against Eunomius. If we mention only those who wrote full-scale treatises against him, in addition to Basil and Gregory there would be Apollinarius, Didymus the Blind, Diodore of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret of Cyrus, and Sophronius. Unfortunately, today we have only the works of Basil and Gregory extant in full. However, all the attention that was given to the activity of Eunomius in antiquity shows the danger of the consequences his influence could have had for the early church. Theological tensions in the fourth century regarding the Arian controversy had an indelible impact on the further development of Christian theology. As Milton Anastos characterizes the significance of what was happening at this time:

[Arius'] insistence that Jesus Christ was created and not consubstantial with God the Father destroyed the unity of

the Trinity, made Christ a creature, and, as such, the orthodox argued, nothing more than a pagan idol. Worst of all, perhaps, by undermining the consubstantiality of the Trinity, Arius in effect eliminated monotheism and fell back into pagan polytheism. It was undoubtedly for this reason that they were attacked by all seven oecumenical councils and by leading Byzantine theologians in every age down to the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Eunomius represents the second generation of Arian theologians. Together with his teacher Aetius, Eunomius carried on the theological work of Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia and developed this tradition in its most extreme and philosophical form. "In his [Eunomius'] view," Richard Vaggione says, "any assertion of a similarity of essence between Father and Son must lead to an assertion of their identity in essence and hence to a denial of the reality of the persons."<sup>2</sup>

Eunomius experienced great popularity in his time.<sup>3</sup> The impact of his writings, which reflect about thirty-five years of literary activity, and of his personality was significant. We can see indications of the prevalence of Eunomian and late Arian teaching in Basil, *Eun.* 1 (PG 29: 505ab). In spite of his lisp, Eunomius was a great speaker who could liken "the words of his mouth to pearls."<sup>4</sup> The great number of polemical works against him is the necessary result of Eunomius' influence.

Eunomius' surviving works that come to us in whole or in part contain his earliest treatise *Liber Apologeticus*<sup>5</sup>; *Apologia Apologiae*,<sup>6</sup> portions of which survived because they are quoted by Gregory of Nyssa; and *Expositio Fidei*, also preserved by Gregory. Other quotations or paraphrases from these three works may be gathered from writings of contemporary literature.<sup>7</sup> A reply to his first work was published by Basil of Caesarea, the *Adversus Eunomium*.<sup>8</sup> To the second and third of Eunomius' works, Gregory of Nyssa wrote his own refutation, *Contra Eunomium* and *Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii*. "These, together with fragments which include a scholion on the *Syntagmation* of Aetius and part of a work entitled *De Filio*, constitute the entire known surviving corpus of Eunomius' literary output, a theological corpus almost entirely dogmatic in character."<sup>9</sup> An enormous amount of Eunomius' correspondence has been entirely lost due to the vicissitudes of time and decrees against his works.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Milton Anastos, "Basil's *Katav Eujnomivou*: A Critical Analysis," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic*, ed. Paul Fedwick (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 69.

<sup>2</sup> EW: XIV.

<sup>3</sup> About Eunomius' life see EW: XIV-XV; Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 611-17; and in more detail his life and career in Kopecek, *History of Neo-Arianism*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, Ltd., 1979).

<sup>4</sup> Philost., *HE*, 10. 6 (GCS 128.10-20).

<sup>5</sup> In some critical sources this work is referred as *Apologia*, or Hanson calls it *First Apology* (see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318-381*, 617). In this article I will follow the more traditional title of this work, the name given to it in the manuscripts and in Basil's *Adversus Eunomium*.

<sup>6</sup> Hanson's *Second Apology*.

<sup>7</sup> Basil's *Epistles*, Gregory of Nazianzus' *Theological Orations*, *De Trinitate* of Pseudo-Didymus and others.

<sup>8</sup> Basil's treatise *Adversus Eunomium*, or in some critical editions *Contra Eunomium*, is one

of his most important dogmatic works that, up to 1982, was never published in either a critical edition or translated into any modern language except Russian (Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomium*, books 1-3, vol. 1 of *Works* [St. Petersburg, 1911], 455-530), and therefore was never critically discussed widely. In this article, in order to distinguish Basil's treatise from the treatise of his brother Gregory of Nyssa, which in critical sources is unanimously called *Contra Eunomium*, we will use the first title *Adversus Eunomium*.

<sup>9</sup> EW: XV-XVI.

<sup>10</sup> On March 4, 398 the emperor Arcadius ordered all Eunomius' works to be burnt.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Barmann, "The Cappadocian Triumph Over Arianism" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1966), 13-14.

<sup>12</sup> Basil, *Eun.* 1.1 (PG, 29: 500c).

<sup>13</sup> Wickham in his article "The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean" (*JTS* 19 [1968]: 532-569) provides very useful and well documented information on the history and interpretation of Aetius' surviving work, as well as the critical edition of the Greek text with an English translation.

<sup>14</sup> Aetius, *Synt.* 18.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 10.

The works of Eunomius, in spite of their logically developed and accurately stated language, raise several obstacles to understanding. Bernard Barmann highlights three reasons for this difficulty:

First, he [Eunomius] never discloses fully at any one time the principles and presuppositions of his system... Second, some significant features of his system are unusual, such as his theory on the origin and meaning of language... And third, his system is complex, both his metaphysics and epistemology.<sup>11</sup>

Our acquaintance with the theology of Eunomius should be preceded with a few references to the surviving work of his teacher Aetius. We do not have any historical evidence that Eunomius differs from his teacher in doctrinal aspects. Basil in *Adversus Eunomium* presents Eunomius as a faithful disciple of Aetius who perfected the teaching of his instructor.<sup>12</sup> Aetius' *Syntagmation* is essential for an understanding of neo-Arian theology as a basis for further argumentation developed in Eunomius' writing.<sup>13</sup> Aetius' treatise is, relatively speaking, very concise and could not be considered a complete handbook of the neo-Arian doctrine. However, Aetius lays the basis on which Eunomius builds his theology. Aetius' work, in very philosophical language, outlines the key points of a neo-Arian system. For Aetius, the Ingenerate Deity transcends cause, and therefore does not derive its essence. As Aetius says, "If the ingenerate essence is superior to origination, owing its superiority in itself, it is per se ingenerate essence. For it is not superior to origination because it wills to be, but because it is naturally so."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it follows that the Son, who was begotten by the Father, cannot be exactly like the Unbegotten, because his essence in regard to begetting has origination. If we ascribe two properties, "unbegotten" and "begotten," to the same essence, we will fall into great inconsistency, because these predicates are mutually exclusive and could not be attributed to the same essence.<sup>15</sup> As Wickham summarizes this main argument:

The train of argument is this: if 'ingenerate' indicates a property that is not there, then the Ingenerate does not exist and the word 'ingenerate' cannot be applied privatively because there is nothing to apply it to. If, on the other hand, it indicates what is there, then it indicates what God is, namely himself, from which he cannot be separated. The argument assumes that 'ingeneracy' is

the sole defining characteristic and ‘The Ingenerate’ the sole true name of God. It can be expressed in another form: ‘ingeneracy’ cannot be a negative property if it is the sole property of God; it cannot, either, negate a positive property, i.e. God cannot lack what he *is*.<sup>16</sup>

This argument for Aetius presupposes that the hierarchies of being and value are identical in membership. If God (the Father) and the Son constitute two top places in the cosmic hierarchy, then their natures could not be identical.<sup>17</sup> The ingenerate nature has to exist; otherwise, what is the cause of everything? The causal dependence of the Son upon the Unbegotten is an implication of his name and his essence as well,<sup>18</sup> and it is also true for the rest of creation, which becomes obvious from Eunomius’ works. However Aetius, and later Eunomius, do not give an analysis of the nature of this causal dependence of begotten entities upon unbegotten essence.

The main point of Aetius’ work as it is stated in the summary of Wickham’s article “The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean” is the following:

Aetius has attempted to prove the impossibility of a derived-ultimate being—a generate-ingenerate. The proof involves the detailed inspection of the terms ‘generate’ and ‘ingenerate.’ From this it emerges, for Aetius, that the Ingenerate is uncaused, absolute, metaphysically simple, and incapable of division, and that it is so by virtue of its nature. The Son is generate and in his whole being caused and relative, on the other hand. The final arguments show that there cannot be more than one ingenerate being who is sole true God and whose created offspring is ‘god’ in a relative and subordinate sense. A derived-ultimate is thus not only a metaphysical impossibility, it is a theologically unnecessary notion.<sup>19</sup>

Eunomius’ theology is a logical continuation of the theology of his teacher. In Eunomius’ works, Aetius’ teaching receives a more detailed and broader exposition.

Eunomius starts his theological disclosure in *Liber Apologeticus* with the presentation of a short creed, which he considers to be “a kind of rule or norm, that pious and governing tradition which has come down from the fathers.”<sup>20</sup>

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, from whom are all things; and in one only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things; and in one Holy Spirit, the Counselor, in whom is given to

<sup>16</sup> Wickham, “The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean,” 562.

<sup>17</sup> Aetius, *Synt.* 21.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> Wickham, “The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean,” 569.

<sup>20</sup> Eun., *Apol* 4 (EW: 36-38).

each of the saints an apportionment of every grace according to measure for the common good.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 5 (EW: 38-39).

It is apparent that the ultimate basis of this creed is 1Co 8:6, and, as Basil indicates in *Eun.* 1 (PG, 29: 509b), this creed was used by some fathers; it was also presented by Arius to Alexander of Alexandria in his desire to deceive him and show Arius' agreement with orthodox thought. The creed itself is composed in "simple and indefinite (or general) words," as Basil says. Basil claims that Eunomius, in his turn, intends to deceive the hearts of simple Christians by showing his agreement with ancient church tradition, while the real content of his theology is entirely unorthodox. This creed employs Scriptural terms: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and implies that Eunomius' treatise will be divided accordingly. However, even though this division is maintained, it is a very loose framework for a highly philosophical inquiry.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> See Barmann, 14.

One way or another, this creed in Eunomius' theology plays a very strategic role. By presenting his agreement with the old tradition, Eunomius goes on to propose his major Trinitarian thesis, which could be reached by two methodologies. Regardless of the way chosen, one should arrive at the same conclusion, which will be in agreement with the stated creed. As he makes clear at the end of *Liber Apologeticus*:

There are two roads marked out to us for the discovery of what we seek—one is that by which we examine the actual essences and with clear and unadulterated reasoning about them make judgement on each; the other is an enquiry by means of the actions, whereby we distinguish the essence on the basis of its products and completed works—and neither of the ways mentioned is able to bring out any apparent similarity of essence.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Eun.*, *Apol.*, 20 (EW: 58-59).

Eunomius uses this twofold methodology in his *Liber Apologeticus* to prove his major theological tenet, allowing one to see the plausibility of his theology both a priori and/or a posteriori, or deductively and/or inductively. In all these ways, one will still necessarily reach the conclusion that the Father and the Son are different in their essences.

Eunomius begins with the analysis of the essences as they are revealed in divine names, accordingly (ἀγέννητος) and (γέννημα), such that we come to an understanding of the things they signify. From ch. 20 of his *Liber Apologeticus*, he goes to the second method and analyzes

the effects by which we are able to discern the essence that caused them.

Based on the innate knowledge and teaching of the Fathers, Eunomius confirms that God is one.<sup>24</sup> God is simple, uncompounded, without parts, and, moreover, unbegotten. By attributing to God the title “Unbegotten” we acknowledge him for what he is. Before anything was created, God was and is unbegotten; birth has never been an inherent property of God. His unbegottenness, according to Eunomius, must be his own unbegotten essence (οὐσία).<sup>25</sup> Being unbegotten, God “could never undergo a generation which involved the sharing of his own distinctive nature with the offspring of that generation, and could never admit of any comparison or association with the thing begotten.”<sup>26</sup> For Eunomius the ontological begetting for unbegotten God necessarily would involve separation or division of divine essence. And any division is destructive of the whole principle of incorruption. Eunomius also ridicules the possibility of comparison between essence of God and other essences. How could we compare things that have nothing in common? However, if they have something in common their names will be common as well, and if their names are common, then they should have the same or a similar designation, while unbegotten and begotten could not have the same designation.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, everything else that comes into existence by the action of another should be placed among created things, and must be properly ranked among things which have come into existence by the action of God.<sup>28</sup> Unbegotten God, as the cause of everything begotten, should be superior and pre-eminent. But if the essence is common to both, how one could be first and another second? “Neither time nor age nor order have ever joined to the essence of God. Order is secondary to the one who orders, but nothing which pertains to God has ever been ordered by another.”<sup>29</sup> Eunomius expresses, similar to Plato’s *Timaeus*, an understanding of time (χρόνος) as a certain motion of stars.<sup>30</sup> God also has nothing to do with ages (αἰώνων), because he exists before them.

After establishing unbegottenness as the essence of God, Eunomius concludes that if something did exist before the Unbegotten, this entity should be called unbegotten; if something coexists with the Unbegotten, then the Unbegotten is not one and unique, and it will bring partition in divine essence—“this in its turn would

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7 (EW: 40-41). When Eunomius speaks about God in most cases he means God the Father. At some point he affirms God as the one and only Unbegotten, “for the Unbegotten is one, and only he is God” *Apol*, 28 (EW: 74-75). However, in *Apol*. *Apol*. iii Eunomius affirms that the Son *is* (truly exists) and he is the Lord, Creator, and God. Several times in *Exp. Fidei* Eunomius addresses the Son directly as God; however, he never addresses him as he does the Father, “the one and only true God” *Exp. Fidei* 1 (EW: 150-51). God the Father is God and Father of and for Christ. Eunomius’ strong and almost anti-Trinitarian monotheism leaves a lot of ambiguity about the divine status of the Son, and it seems that sometimes it prevails over Christian traditional understanding of the Son and the Father as both fully divine persons.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 (EW: 40-43).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 (EW: 42-43).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.* In the *Liber Apologeticus* Eunomius several times condemns the formula “similar in essence” (*Eun.*, *Apol*. 9, 11, 18, 20, 24) adopted at the Council of Ancyra in 358. See also, Aetius, *Synt.* 4, “If the Deity remains everlastingly in ingenerate nature, and the offspring is everlastingly offspring, then the perverse doctrine of the ‘homousion’ and the

'homoiousion' will be demolished; incomparability in essence is established when each nature abides unceasingly in the proper rank of its nature," and *Synt.* 11.

<sup>28</sup> *Eun., Apol.*, 7 (EW: 40-41).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 (EW: 44-45).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Cf. Basil, *Eun.* 2.24 (PG, 29: 628c) and Plato, *Timaeus* 37c-39e.

<sup>31</sup> *Eun., Apol.* 10 (EW: 46-47).

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 11 (EW: 46-47).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Wickham, "The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean," 554.

<sup>35</sup> *Eun., Apol.* 12 (EW: 48-49). *Prov.* 8:22, cf. 1 Cor. 1:24.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 (EW: 52-53).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 17 (EW: 54-55).

introduce composition along with the cause of the composition."<sup>31</sup> None of this could be said about the essence of God, and here Eunomius clearly states his understanding of the distinction in essences between the Father (God) and the Son. "After all, there is no one so ignorant," he says, "or so zealous for impiety as to say that the Son is *equal* to the Father!"<sup>32</sup> He refers to Jn 14:28 "the Father is greater than I," and continues, "Each name pulls in its own direction and the other has no common meaning with it at all: if the one name is 'Unbegotten' it cannot be 'Son,' and if 'Son' it cannot be 'Unbegotten'."<sup>33</sup>

Wickham makes an excellent observation. He says, "Hence, salvation cannot be divinization for Eunomius. Eunomius seems to exclude definitely any real participation between essences. The Son can be a formal pattern (of generatedness, sonship) without being a participable essence."<sup>34</sup>

As the God of all things is unbegotten and incomparable, so is the Son begotten and incomparable with the Father. He is one Only-begotten. He is "to be both 'offspring' and 'thing made,' since by distinguishing the names they show the difference in essence as well."<sup>35</sup> The name of the Son, "begotten," signifies his designation and properly applies to his essence. The Son did not exist "prior to its own coming to be — and that it exists, having been begotten before all things by the will of its God and the Father."<sup>36</sup> Otherwise, how can he be begotten if he was already in existence? Developing his generation of the Son, Eunomius continues, "We do not, however, include the essence of Only-begotten among things brought into existence *out* of nothing, for 'no-thing' is not an essence. Rather, on the basis of the will of one who made him, we establish a distinction between Only-begotten and other things."<sup>37</sup> All creative power was given to the Son from above and all other things came into existence after him and through him. The Son "became the perfect minister of the whole creative activity and purpose of the Father."<sup>38</sup> All the rest are "things made by this 'thing made,' 'made through him' at the command of the Father."<sup>39</sup> Eunomius finds support for the ministering function of the Son in the Old Testament theology of the Son as Angel of the Lord. Why would Scripture call the Son (Word/*Logos*) "angel" if not to show through whom the message of God was proclaimed? It points to the superiority of God, who is "I AM," the always existing and directing principle.<sup>40</sup>

The begetting of the Son should not be understood in a human, passionate manner. A human being uses matter to beget from his own essence, and this was not the case with the begetting of the Son.<sup>41</sup> At the same time, the begetting of the Son by God does not point to any similarity of essence, “the names are different, the essences are different. ... [T]he designations in fact indicate the very essences.”<sup>42</sup> Also, we cannot speak about any similarities between the Father and the Son even though we can find terms such as “light,” “life,” “power,” and others that have been applied both to the Father and the Son. These terms were used for both the Son and the Father; however they did not mean a sharing of or a likeness in essence, because one light is unbegotten and the other is begotten. The same light could not signify two entities, both Begotten and Unbegotten, for if the same light equally belongs to two, it will be composite in nature and a composite could not be characteristic of the simple nature.

“Then,” Eunomius continues, “every word used to signify the essence of the Father is equivalent in force of meaning to ‘the Unbegotten’ because the Father is without parts and uncomposed, by the same token that the same word used on the Only-begotten is equivalent to ‘offspring’.”<sup>43</sup> A little bit earlier Eunomius said, “For the natures of objects are not naturally consequent on the verbal expressions; rather the force of the words is accommodated to the objects in accordance with their proper status.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, unbegotten light is completely different from begotten light as unbegottenness is different from begottenness. For Eunomius, any affirmation of similarity between the Father and the Son necessarily will lead to two Unbegottens.<sup>45</sup> If Eunomius rejects any similarity in essence, he acknowledges “the similarity in accordance with the Scriptures.”<sup>46</sup> It is a very dubious formula that was adopted in 359 by the Councils of Ariminum and Sirmium, and in 360 by the Council of Constantinople.

Later in his treatise Eunomius talks more about the similarity of the Son to the Father. He draws a strong distinction between essence and activity and develops a whole theory of causal language, thus “with respect to the action... that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father.”<sup>47</sup> Quoting from Col 1:15-16, Eunomius finds support for his assertion. Because the Son, the image of the invisible God, is the main agent of creation that came into

<sup>40</sup> Eun. *Apol. Apol.* iii (EW:124-25). in Gr. Nyss., *Eun. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1892 (reprinted 1983), vol. 5), 233b.57-234a.6. He who sent Moses was I AM; He through whom he was sent was the angel of the I AM, the God of all other things (Ibid., 234b.34-7).

<sup>41</sup> Eun., *Apol.*, 16 (EW:52-53).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 18 (EW:56-57).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 19 (EW:58-59).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 18 (EW:54-57).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 21 (EW:60-61).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 22, his precise words are “the similarity of the Son to the Father in accordance with his own words” (EW:62-63).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 24 (EW:64-65).

existence “through him,” he is similar to the Father in action, not in essence. Eunomius tends to use the word “God” when he speaks about the divine essence and its origination which is Unbegotten, and the word “Offspring” about the Only-begotten. In *Apol. Apol.* Eunomius indicates that “Father” is more recent than God’s other names, because he became Father from begetting the Son.<sup>48</sup> When Eunomius talks about the function of action, which he separates from essence, he prefers the terms “the Father” and “the Son” as an indication of their activity, and here we have similarity between these two.<sup>49</sup>

Another argument for the distinction between the action of God and his essence can be seen in a fragment of Eunomius’ *Scholia*, which came to us in the pseudo-Athanasian *Dialogus de Sancta Trinitate* 2.6.<sup>50</sup> There Eunomius says:

Because the will and the purpose of God are not identical with his essence: the act of willing has both a beginning and an ending, while the divine essence neither begins nor ends, and it is impossible that that which begins and ends should be identical with that which has neither beginning nor ending. Besides, if the purpose of God were identical with his essence, then, since there is only one essence, there would have to be only one act of willing. But we find in fact that according to the divine Scriptures, there is not just one act of willing but many such acts.<sup>51</sup>

Speaking about the salvific work of Christ, Eunomius acknowledges the incarnation of Christ, his death, resurrection, and his second coming to judge the living and the dead.<sup>52</sup> However his Christology has an evident element of Apollinarian teaching. In *Exp. Fidei* he says, Christ “was born in the flesh (γενόμενον ἐν σαρκί), “born of woman,” born a man for the freedom and salvation of our race, yet not taking upon him ‘the man’ made up of body and soul (ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος ἀνθρώπων).”<sup>53</sup> Eunomius does not go into further detail to explain what the incarnate Christ’s nature is.

About the Holy Spirit or the Counselor, Eunomius follows the same line of argumentation. “Holding to the teaching of the saints,” he affirms that the Holy Spirit is:

...Third in both dignity and order, we believe that he is third in nature as well. ... [H]e was brought into existence at the command of the Father by the action of the Son. He is honored in third place as the first and greatest

<sup>48</sup> Reference to *Apol. Apol.* ii in Gr. Nyss., *Conf. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (vol. 5), 299b. 33-39.

<sup>49</sup> See the whole discussion of this matter in Eun., *Apol.* 22-24, especially 24.

<sup>50</sup> PG 28: 1165a-b.

<sup>51</sup> Eun. *Fr.* 1 (EW: 176-77).

<sup>52</sup> See, Eun. *Exp. Fidei.* 3 (EW: 152-57).

<sup>53</sup> *Exp. Fidei* 3 (EW: 154-57).

work of all, the only such ‘thing made’ of the Only-begotten, lacking indeed godhead and the power of creation, but filled with the power of sanctification and inspiration.<sup>54</sup>

As is apparent from this quotation, the Counselor for Eunomius lacks any divinity and represents the first level of creaturely order. The Son, even though he is not of the same essence with the Father, is still in some not very clear way a divine Person.<sup>55</sup> He was placed by Eunomius above all creation, time, and ages; he was Offspring of the Father, but not a creature, and all creation came to be through him.<sup>56</sup> The hierarchy of creation, based on the creative action that produced them and their essences, differs according to their origin.<sup>57</sup>

Eunomius’ theology presents a very interesting blend of neoplatonic ontology expressed in terms of Aristotelian philosophy. He accurately follows Aristotelian methodology and falls into the same problems as Plotinus’ thinking. Vanderbusche sees the Plotinian influence on Eunomius in the natural order of the first three essences.<sup>58</sup> Dams finds in the Eunomian concept of “unbegotten” the notion of One in Plotinus’ system.<sup>59</sup> Daniñlou thinks that Eunomius was devoted to theurgic neoplatonism.<sup>60</sup> “Although,” as Barmann emphasizes, “the Eunomian hierarchical order of beings resembles, in a general way, that of Plotinus, there is no reason to suppose that Eunomius has been directly or significantly influenced by this Neo-platonist.”<sup>61</sup> Barmann thinks that similarities between the two systems, Eunomian and Plotinian, do not indicate Plotinus’ influence on Eunomius, but “that both were struggling to solve the same metaphysical problem, namely, the origin of the multiple from the one, accounting in part for a similar notion of the absolute first being and the subordinate hierarchy of beings.”<sup>62</sup>

There are several essential differences between Eunomius and Plotinus. First, the One of Plotinus is unknown and totally inaccessible, except for some possibilities of mystical ascents, after which the person who experienced them still could not say anything cognitive about the experience. For Eunomius, the Unbegotten is known, and by knowing him we can explain the whole creation. In this respect, Eunomius also differs from the early Arians. Second, Eunomius accepts the Christian concept of free creation; he rejects any form of emanation, while for Plotinus the idea of free creation is

<sup>54</sup> Eun., *Apol.* 25 (EW: 66-69).

<sup>55</sup> In *Apol. Apol.* iii Eunomius (EW: 125) affirms that the Son *is* (truly exists) and he is the Lord, Creator, and God of every sensible and intelligible essence (in Gr. Nyss., *Eun. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, vol. 5, 237a.15-19).

<sup>56</sup> Eun., *Apol.*, 28 (EW: 74-75).

<sup>57</sup> Eun., *Apol. Apol.* iii (EW: 125) in Gr. Nyss., *Eun. A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (vol. 5), 238a.1-6.

<sup>58</sup> See Vanderbusche, “La part de la dialectique dans la thologie d’Eunomius ‘le technologue’,” *Revue d’Histoire Ecclésiastique* 40 (1944-45): 47-72.

<sup>59</sup> See Dams, “La Controverse Eunomienne,” Ph.D. diss., Institut Catholique de Paris, 1951, 119ff.

<sup>60</sup> See Daniñlou, “Eunome l’Arien et l’exigence nño-platonicienne du Cratyle,” *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 69 (1956): 412-32.

<sup>61</sup> Barmann, 237.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> The first image of emanation is like light proceeding from its source; the second is of a stream flowing; then snow and cold; flower and scent; and the last illustrates emanation like a multilevel fountain. It is important to remember that the One, which is transcendent and unchangeable, does not do anything to cause this emanation. It happens uncaused and naturally.

<sup>64</sup> Basil in *Eun.* 1.5 (PG, 29: 516b) critiques Eunomius' logical style as owing to Aristotle and Chrysippus.

<sup>65</sup> Gr. Nyss., *Eun.* 1.6.

<sup>66</sup> Basil *Eun.* 1.9 (PG, 29: 532a), Gr. Nyss., *Eun.* 12.5

<sup>67</sup> Wickham, "The *Syntagmation* of Aetius, the Anomoean," 561.

<sup>68</sup> Graham Keith, "Our Knowledge of God: The Relevance of the Debate Between Eunomius and the Cappadocians," *Tyndale Bulletin* 41 (1990): 74.

foreign and there are several images of emanation in his system.<sup>63</sup> The imagery of emanation in the Plotinian system is successful to the degree that it expresses the relationship of dependence that exists between source and product. In Eunomius we have independent *energeia* between the first and the second essences, which functions as revelation of God the Father and therefore guarantees free creation, and at the same time points to the total independence and transcendence of the Unbegotten. This *energeia* becomes the source of the natural multiple hierarchy in the created order and it is an act of free will of God the Father.

The Aristotelian method of logical argumentation is explicitly present in Eunomius' works<sup>64</sup> as well as in Aetius' *Syntagmation*.<sup>65</sup> The influence of Aristotle on Eunomius in the eyes of his critics goes beyond Aristotle's logic. Both Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa see the influence of Aristotle's *Categories* in Eunomius' system.<sup>66</sup> However, we should be aware that at this time philosophical terminology and Hellenistic ideas were eclectically used by Christian theologians. This is in the same degree true for neo-Arians and Cappadocians, even though each party critiques the other on the ground of appealing to pagan philosophy. Nevertheless, as Wickham notes, "Even if the techniques and the terminology derive from the logicians, the problems which they were employed to solve were, for the Anomeans [neo-Arians], I believe, as for their opponents, biblical in origin."<sup>67</sup>

Language played an important role in the system of Eunomius. For him revelation was twofold: Scripture and the divinely implanted knowledge of names. At the same time, "He," as Keith thinks, "would not probably recognize that he was working with two authorities at all!"<sup>68</sup> It is important to understand the specific account of divine causality as a significant aspect in the Trinitarian controversy of the fourth century. The language of this causality was known and understood by both parties involved in the controversy and has some tradition in Christian theology prior to the Arian controversy. Basically, this language was employed by Eunomius as a main characteristic of his theological speculation on the divine productive capacity and the divine nature. Eunomius methodologically uses the triad of *ousia*, *energeia*, and *ergon* (essence, activity, and product) to distinguish stages in a causal sequence. The more common use of causal relationships can be seen in pagan philosophers

such as Galen, Iamblichius, Julian the Emperor, and in the Christian thinkers Clement of Alexandria and Origen. Origen usually includes the fourth term: *dunamis*, the productive power. Eunomius was not the first to use these terms to describe causal relationships. However, as Barnes says, “Eunomius’ causal hierarchy may fairly be characterized as his own distinctive development and application of traditional authoritative causal language.”<sup>69</sup>

Even though Eunomius frequently refers to God as having begotten Logos, and Logos as *gennema* or *gennetos*, he denies that the Father could have had anything to do with begetting as a process of ontological generation. Exploring the concept of *agennesia*, Eunomius derives from it all the familiar Arian assertions. The theology of Eunomius is definitely Arian in its content. Both Aetius and Eunomius argue against two ungenerated principles, and in this respect resemble the major argument of Arius and other early Arians. They, as Arius did before them, reject a materialistic or corporeal generation of the Son; they positively describe the Son’s generation from God by his will, before time, unique, and not from nothing. The Son apparently did not exist before his generation. Even though Eunomius presents the Unbegotten as the true God alone (alone wise, powerful, good, immortal, etc.) the Son is not deprived of divinity, but the Father has superiority. He is the only one who has substance and goodness without cause. Similar ideas could be found in Arius. Neo-Arians are faithful to all essential elements of Arius’ teaching. However, neo-Arians are much more elaborative and systematic in their approach. Also it should be noted that they differ from other Arians in two significant respects.

Concerning the first, Eunomius rejects the metaphysical adoptionism of some Arians, according to which the Son attains the high divine rank that places him just below God, being created before time by merit. As concerns the second, Eunomius thinks that it is possible to know the *ousia* of God, as it was mentioned above, while most of the Arians teach about the incomprehensibility of the Father in his *ousia*. Epiphanius witnesses that Aetius was saying that he knows God with perfect clarity, and knows and understands him to such an extent that he does not understand himself better than he knows God.<sup>70</sup> Eunomius goes further. In a fragment that has come down to us in Socrates, Eunomius says:

<sup>69</sup> Michel Barnes, “The Background and Use of Eunomius’ Causal Language,” in *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, eds. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 218. This essay provides interesting detailed, but concise analysis of the tradition of the causal language and its use in Eunomius’ theology.

<sup>70</sup> Epiph., *Haer.* 76.4.2 (GCS iii. 344. 18-21).

God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather, whatever we ourselves know about it is exactly what he knows, and, conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without change in us.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Eun., *Fr. 2* (EW: 179), in Socrates, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4.7 (PG 67: 473b-c).

For neo-Arians to say that God's essence is incomprehensible would imply that God is irrational. The terminology of neo-Arians indicates a sophisticated theory of language and its relation to reality. There are fictitious names like "centaur" that are nothing more than sounds. At the same time, genuine names reveal and indicate the essence; they are totally identical with what is indicated by them.<sup>72</sup> However, neither Aetius nor Eunomius explain how the names reveal the essence.

<sup>72</sup> Eun., *Apol. 12* (EW: 46-49).

An interesting observation was made by Wickham regarding the incomprehensibility of God's essence. God's essence is known for neo-Arians as transcendent and unique; therefore, there is not any knowledge of God by way of mystical ascent or communion with his essence, as would be argued by Plotinus and the Cappadocians.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> See Wickham, "The Syntagmation of Aetius, the Anomoean," 566.

One of the reasons for the temporary success experienced by the neo-Arians, despite a certain level of simplification and the very incisive, unorthodox character of their doctrine can be seen in the strict logical presentation of the current Trinitarian dilemma. Amidst the turmoil of theological controversy, the minds of theologians, and to a greater degree of laity, are sometimes confused in the difficult search for a proper and adequate explanation of such an important issue as an understanding of the Trinity. It was a doctrine that was discussed by all levels of society, from the high imperial court and church councils down to the marketplaces. The offer of a clear, simple, and coherent interpretation of this very complex doctrine at this time looked very appealing. As Graham Keith says, "The claim to a precise knowledge of God's essence would, after all, sound much more impressive to some ears than to say, as their opponents [Cappadocians] did, that true knowledge of God consisted in the recognition of his incomprehensibility."<sup>74</sup> Neo-Arians also claimed a biblical basis for the support of such understanding, referring particularly to Jn 17:3.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Keith, "Our Knowledge of God", 69.

<sup>75</sup> A summary of the use of this text during the Arian controversy can be found in Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The*

Other reasons for the temporary success of neo-Arianism could be seen in the pagan cultural background of the fourth century. It is natural for the human mind to make ideological parallels and find resemblance between

new ideas and issues that were already introduced to it earlier in life. Thus, a certain degree of eclecticism between paganism and pagan philosophy with Christian practice and the development of Christian theology would not be very unusual, especially in such doctrines as that of the Trinity. The early Church Fathers deserved great recognition for distilling Christian understanding from the pagan. At the same time, we do not have to judge them severely for their failure sometimes do so properly. It is not very uncommon to perceive Christianity and Christian values in the light of what was contemporary with the believer's culture.

The success of Eunomius' works is also explained by their eloquent and very elaborate style. According to the testimony of Philostorgius, one of the admirers of Eunomius already mentioned, Eunomius' letters "surpass the others by far."<sup>76</sup> He praises Eunomius' other works as well. As Meredith says:

Eunomius spends an undue length of time in making his style conform to the standards of Attic eloquence... Finally Eunomius subordinates sense to words, twisting it to fit the words and rhythm of the prose. He is like those who produce effects upon the stage, adapting his argument to the tune of his rhythmical phrases, as they their songs to their castanets, by means of parallel sentences of equal length, of similar sound and ending.<sup>77</sup>

Eunomius' system meets the general criteria for philosophical coherency, the development of his reasoning is consistent, rationalistic, and for the most part clear. This might be considered his greatest achievement. While searching for consistency, Eunomius prefers philosophical methodology over theological and church tradition, even though he does not admit it. In doing that, he does not hesitate to simplify and even ignore the whole complexity of the matter discussed. He sometimes ignores certain biblical and traditional data. His system more closely resembles that of a pagan philosopher than a Christian theologian.

*Arian Controversy* 318-381, 836-37. Also see *Eun. Exp. Fidei*. This text is the starting point of this Eunomius work. Vaggione collects eight allusions to this text in works of Eunomius.

<sup>76</sup> Philost., *HE*, 10. 6 (GCS 128.10-20).

<sup>77</sup> Anthony Meredith, "Traditional Apologetic in the *Contra Eunomium* of Gregory of Nyssa," *Studia Patristica* 14 (1976): 316-17.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Aetius, <i>Synt.</i>	Aetius, <i>Syntagmation</i>
Basil, <i>Eun.</i>	Basil of Caesarea, <i>Adversus Eunomium 1-3</i>
<i>Spir.</i>	<i>De Spiritu Sancto ad Amphiloichium</i>
Epiph., <i>Haer.</i>	Епифаний (Епифаний), <i>Adversus Haereses</i>
Eun., <i>Apol.</i>	Eunomius Cyzicenus, <i>Liber Apologeticus</i>
<i>Apol. Apol.</i>	<i>Apologia Apologiae</i>
<i>Exp. Fidei</i>	<i>Expositio Fidei</i>
<i>Fr.</i>	<i>Fragments</i>
Gr. Nyss., <i>Conf.</i>	Gregory of Nyssa, <i>Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii = Eun.</i> , vulg. ii.
<i>Eun.</i>	<i>Contra Eunomium</i>
Philost., <i>HE</i>	Philostorgius, <i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
EW	Eunomius: The Extant Works, ed. & tr. Vaggione
GCS	<i>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</i>
PG	<i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca</i> , ed. J. P. Migne

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