



Did Eustathius the Philosopher Become Eustathius of Sebastea? A Contribution to Federico Fatti's Hypothesis¹

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Abstract: In 2009, Federico Fatti published a hypothesis that Eustathius the Philosopher, described by Eunapius, converted to Christianity and became bishop of Sebastea and master to Basil the Great. In my article, I present Fatti's hypothesis and solve three important problems that he left unclear: the place of birth of two Eustathiuses, the problem of Letter 35 by Julian and the mystery of the year 358, when Eustathius of Sebastea was already bishop and Eustathius the Philosopher is believed to have been sent by the emperor to Persia despite his Hellenic faith. When those issues that could challenge Fatti's thesis have been clarified, his claim, I think, gains plausibility close to certainty. The identification of two Eustathiuses helps explain certain mysteries in the life of Eustathius the Philosopher and some peculiar features of the ascetic movement initiated by Eustathius of Sebastea. It is also a milestone in understanding the teaching of the Cappadocian Fathers as it provides us with a direct link between them and Neoplatonism and more specifically its Syrian branch initiated by Iamblichus.

Keywords: Eustathius the Philosopher; Eustathius of Sebastea; Basil of Caesarea; Eunapius; Neoplatonism; asceticism

The scope of the present paper is to contribute to Federico Fatti's recently published hypothesis³. According to Fatti, Eustathius the Philosopher, described by Eunapius in Book VI of the *Lives of the Sophists*, converted to Christianity and became bishop of Sebastea and master to

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³ F. Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo: un'ipotesi sul destinatario di Bas. ep. 1 e sull'identità di Eunap. VS VI, 5, 1-6; 5; 8, 3-9*, in: *Church, Society and Monasticism. Acts of the International Symposium, Rome, May 31–June 3, 2006*, ed. E. López-Tello García – B. Selene Zorzi, Sankt Ottilien 2009, p. 443-473.

Basil the Great. In his article, Fatti focused on the importance of identification of two Eustathiuses leaving aside certain incoherencies he was aware of.

I shall start my contribution with a short presentation of the two characters (although in fact one) of this story.

1. Eustathius the Philosopher

Eustathius the Philosopher was a Neoplatonic philosopher, a disciple of Iamblichus and Aedesius. The main source for his life comes from Book 6 of Eunapius' *Vitae sophistarum*, which must be treated with due caution as "the lives constitute a highly subjective plea for the pagan lifestyle (...) without paying much attention to the historicity of the accounts"⁴. The writing has been even called the pagan hagiography⁵.

According to Eunapius, Eustathius was married to Sosipatra and they had three sons, of whom Antonius who "attained a ripe old age free from sickness"⁶ died soon before Serapion was destroyed (391)⁷. Depending on the definition of old age scholars date his birth to around 320⁸ or around 330⁹. The only date we know with certainty is 358, when Eustathius was sent by Constantius as a legate to the Persian king Sapor, the fact confirmed by Ammianus Marcellinus¹⁰.

⁴ H. Baltussen, *Eunapius' Lives of Philosophers and Sophists: Was He Constructing "Pagan Saints" in the Age of Christianity?*, in: *Eastern Christianity and Late Antique Philosophy*, ed. E. Anagnostou-Laoutides – K. Parry, Leiden – Boston 2020, p. 257.

⁵ M. Becker summarized the studies on the topic in *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten. Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar*, Stuttgart 2013, p. 51-57.

⁶ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 11, 12, ed. Giangrande, p. 40, 17-18, tr. Wright, p. 134.

⁷ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 11, 1, ed. Giangrande, p. 38, 10-14.

⁸ O. Seek, *Die Briefe des Libanius zeitlich geordnet*, Leipzig 1906, p. 147.

⁹ R.J. Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D. Studies in Eunapius of Sardis*, Leeds 1990, p. 54.

¹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17,5,15 and 17,14,1-2, v. 1, ed. Rolfe, p. 338 and 401-403.

It is possible that Eustathius wrote a commentary to Aristotle's *Categories* and *On legal issues* (Περὶ στάσεων) by Hermogenes of Tarsus¹¹, but the only preserved writing of him is one letter to Emperor Julian published among Julian's letters¹². The letter itself contains no information about Eustathius himself. It is a description of a pleasant journey to the court upon Julian's invitation. This letter together with two letters by Julian to Eustathius are dated to late 361 or early 362¹³. We also have one letter by Libanius to Eustathius. According to Otto Seek, this letter is dated to winter 359-360¹⁴. These are actually the last traces of Eustathius the Philosopher in the sources.

Before Jean Gribomont published his famous article in 1959, it was commonly agreed that Letter 1 by Basil the Great was addressed to the same Eustathius the Philosopher¹⁵ in accordance with its title: Εὐσταθίου φιλοσόφου¹⁶. Gribomont, however, argued that it was Eustathius of Sebastea and dated this letter to 357 on the basis of the events that Eustathius of Sebastea was involved in¹⁷. According to Federico Fatti, Eustathius of Sebastea and Eustathius the Philosopher could have been one and the same person.

¹¹ R. Goulet, *Eustathe de Cappadoce*, in: *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques*, v. 3, ed. R. Goulet, Paris 2000, p. 372-377.

¹² Julianus, *Ep.* 36, ed. Bidez, in: *L'empereur Julien, Oeuvres complètes*, v. 1/2, Paris 1960, p. 63.

¹³ G. Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society: with special reference to Iamblichus and his followers*, Oxford 1979, p. 105-106 (diss.).

¹⁴ Seek, *Die Briefe des Libanius zeitlich geordnet*, p. 364.

¹⁵ Already Tillemont was convinced that the Eustathius whom Basil followed was the famous Eustathius the Philosopher, cf. L.-S. Le Nain de Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*, v. 9, Paris 1703, p. 810.

¹⁶ Basilius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 1, v. 1, ed. Courtonne, p. 3, 1-5, 48.

¹⁷ J. Gribomont, *Eustathe le philosophe et les voyages du jeune Basile de Césarée*, RHE 54 (1959) p. 115-124.

2. Eustathius of Sebastea

There are hardly any studies on Eustathius of Sebastea¹⁸, so what I am going to present here is my own dating¹⁹. The main sources for his life are four *Ecclesiastical Histories* – by Sozomen, Socrates Scholasticus, Theodoret, and Philostorgius – and the letters of Basil the Great. Out of four *Ecclesiastical Histories* it is Sozomen who left the most detailed information on Eustathius. According to Sozomen, Eustathius was the founder of Anatolian monasticism²⁰.

According to Basil, Eustathius was ordained priest by Hermogenes of Caesarea and immediately (εὐθὺς) after Hermogenes had died he ran to Constantinople to Eusebius of Nicomedia²¹. Eusebius was bishop of Constantinople between 338 and 341, so I assume Eustathius was ordained priest in the late 330s. When listing the causes why Eustathius was deposed by the Council of Constantinople (359/360) both Socrates and Sozomen give as the first reason that he was deposed by his own father²². Socrates adds that Eustathius was deposed “for dressing in a style unbecoming the sacerdotal office”²³. The deposition by Eulalius seems to be the first deposition of Eustathius based on the charges connected to his

¹⁸ He appears in many studies about Basil the Great, but as far as I know there is only one monograph dedicated to Eustathius himself – W.A. Jurgens, *Eustathius of Sebaste*, Romae 1959. In my opinion, the best study of Eustathius’ asceticism is the book by T.Z. Tenšek, *L’ascetismo nel Concilio di Gangra. Eustazio di Sebaste nell’ambiente ascetico siriano dell’Asia Minore nel IV° secolo. Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum in Facultate Theologiae Pontificiae Universitatis Gregoriana*, Romae 1991. Recently, Federico Fatti wrote some articles on Eustathius; his research is deeply rooted in the sources, providing brilliant and innovative ideas, cf. F. Fatti, *Nei panni del vescovo. Gregorio, Basilio e il filosofo Eustazio*, in: *Le trasformazioni delle élites in età tardoantica. Atti del Convegno Internazionale (Perugia, 15-16 marzo 2004)*, ed. R. Lizzi Testa, Roma 2006, p. 177-238; F. Fatti, *Monachesimo anatolico. Eustazio di Sebastia e Basilio di Cesarea*, in: *Monachesimo orientale. Un’introduzione*, ed. G. Filoramo, Brescia 2010, pp. 53-91; “*Fu casta senza superbia*”. *Ascesi e dinastia in Cappadocia nella Tarda Antichità*, “*Rivista di storia del cristianesimo*” 8 (2011) p. 279-304.

¹⁹ M. Przyszychowska, *Macrina the Younger as a Substitute for Eustathius the Philosopher/Eustathius of Sebastea. Establishing Peter at the See of Sebastea*, Warsaw 2022, p. 110-154.

²⁰ Sozomenus, *HE* 3, 14, 31, GCS 50, p. 123, 10-13.

²¹ Basilii Caesariensis, *Ep.* 263, 3, v. 3, ed. Courtonne, p. 123, 7-12.

²² Socrates Scholasticus, *HE* 2, 43, 1, GCS NF 1, p. 180, 2-3; Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 4, 24, 9, GCS 50, p. 180, 5-7.

²³ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE* 2, 43, 1, GCS NF 1, p. 180, 3.

way of practicing asceticism, so the most possible date would be in the early 340s.

It is not certain when exactly Eustathius was ordained bishop of Sebastea, but it must have been shortly before the Council of Ancyra (358), which according to Basil he attended immediately (εὐθύς) after he had been ordained bishop²⁴. In the same 358, there were three more councils that condemned Eustathius: of Melitene, Neocaesarea, and Gangra. All three gatherings of bishops examined disciplinary issues, fortunately both the synodical letter and the canons of the Council of Gangra have been preserved and constitute the main source for Eustathian asceticism²⁵.

Eustathius took part in the Council of Seleucia (359) and was deposed by the Council of Constantinople (359/360) on the basis of disciplinary issues. Although in Letters 244 and 263 Basil claims that Eustathius changed his beliefs and as a proof he listed the confessions signed by Eustathius: Ancyra (358), Seleucia (359), Constantinople (359/360), Zela (?), Lamp-sacus (364), Rome (366), Cyzicus (between 366 and 376), all those confessions were Homoiousian except for the one of Constantinople which was Homoian and the one from Rome which was Nicæan. The Homoian creed signed in Constantinople was regarded as heretical by Homoiousians and Homoiousians as well as by Anomeans, although all bishops signed it under pressure of Constantius present during the Council.

Probably in 358, Eustathius of Sebastea became the spiritual guide of Basil the Great. The letters by Basil confirm that Basil and Eustathius had a long-lasting and close relationship from the very childhood of Basil²⁶ until the conflict started around 372. There is no proof that Eustathius ever wrote anything, though some people claimed that Eustathius was the actual author of the ascetical book attributed to Basil²⁷.

3. Identifying Eustathiuses

There are two main problems with the proper dating of Eustathius the Philosopher's life on the basis of *Vitae Sophistarum* by Eunapius.

²⁴ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 263, 3, v. 3, ed. Courtonne, p. 123, 16-19.

²⁵ For the year 358 as a date of the Council of Gangra see M. Przyszychowska, *The date of the Council of Gangra – reconsidered (358)*, JECS 30/2 (2022) p. 217-237.

²⁶ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 102, 1, v. 2, ed. Courtonne, p. 3, 8-9; *Ep.* 244, 1, v. 3, ed. Courtonne, p. 74, 7-8.

²⁷ Sozomenus, *HE* 3, 14, 31, GCS 50, p. 123, 14-16.

First, in *Vitae Sophistarum* 6, 8, 3 Sosipatra foresaw the death of her spouse five years (τὸ πέμπτον) after the wedding, which would be then around 325-335, though not only Eunapius, but also Ammianus Marcellinus confirm that Eustathius took part in the embassy to the Persian king Sapor dated to 358²⁸. Among other possible solutions based on conjectures²⁹, David F. Buck claimed that the expression τὸ πέμπτον does not have a temporal meaning, but it means the fifth essence or aether where Eustathius would be transferred to³⁰; Ariel Lewin suggested that the phrase οὐκέτι λατρεύσεις καὶ φιλοσοφήσεις τὸ πέμπτον does not refer to his passing, but indicates a change in the life of the philosopher. He compares it with an exemplary parallel passage of *Vitae Sophistarum* regarding Apollonius of Tyana³¹, where the transformation during his life is mentioned³².

Second, in *Vitae Sophistarum* 6, 9, 1 Eunapius says: “After the passing of Eustathius (μετὰ τὴν ἀποχώρησιν Εὐσταθίου), Sosipatra returned to her own estate, and dwelt in Asia in the ancient city of Pergamon, and famous Aedesius loved and cared for her and educated her sons”³³.

The problem is that Aedesius had died before Julian (363) was made Caesar (November 355)³⁴, so he could not have taken care of Eustathius’ children after his death as we know Eustathius was still alive in 358 (embassy to Persia) and even 362 (correspondence with Julian). Apparently, the ἀποχώρησις of Eustathius the Philosopher was mistranslated by Wilmer Cave Wright as “passing”, but it really meant “going away”, a point already noticed by David F. Buck³⁵ and since then generally ac-

²⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17, 5, 15, ed. Rolfe, p. 338.

²⁹ G. Giangrande, *Osservazioni sopra il testo delle Vitae sophistarum di Eunapio*, “Bollettino dei classici greci e latini” 3 (1954) p. 83-84; Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D.*, p. 54, n. 34; Goulet, *Eustathe de Cappadoce*, p. 371; M. Civiletti, in: Eunapio, *Vite di filosofi e sofisti*, Milano 2007, p. 395-399, n. 230; Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten*, p. 308-310.

³⁰ D.F. Buck, *Eunapius of Sardis*, Oxford, 1977, p. 142 (diss.), see Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society*, p. 106, n. 5.

³¹ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 2, 1, 3-4, ed. Giangrande, p. 3,4-5: “Ἀπολλωνίος τε ὁ ἐκ Τυάνων, οὐκέτι φιλόσοφος· ἀλλ’ ἦν τι θεῶν τι καὶ ἀνθρώπου μέσον”.

³² A. Lewin, *Il filosofo Eustazio nelle Vitae Sophistarum di Eunapio di Sardi*, “Scripta Classica Israelica” 7 (1983) p. 96.

³³ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 9, 1, ed. Giangrande, p. 33, 8-12, tr. Wright, p. 411.

³⁴ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 7, 1, 11-14, ed. Giangrande, p. 42, 12-43,4.

³⁵ Buck, *Eunapius of Sardis*, p. 142-143.

cepted³⁶. Garth Fowden noticed that *terminus ante quem* Eustathius abandoned his family is 351: Eunapius attests that the famous philosopher and theurgist Maximus – Emperor Julian’s master of esotericism – was in Pergamon where he helped Sosipatra after she had been abandoned by her husband³⁷. The episode must have happened before the arrival of Julian in Pergamon late in 351, by which time we know Maximus had left for Ephesus³⁸.

What is crucial for identifying two Eustathiuses is that in Eunapius’ story on Eustathius the Philosopher there are two facts that need special interpretation in order to combine them with Eunapius’ very account and/or with the facts from other sources. Both these facts might be interpreted in such a way so that they speak about a change in Eustathius’ life, and Ariel Lewin even insists that “the ἀποχώρησις of Eustathius must be related to a separation from the world and from his wife, intended as a spiritual retreat”³⁹. This “spiritual retreat” could have signified converting to Christianity, as Fatti interprets it.

This interpretation is supported by a definitely negative attitude of Eunapius towards the direction of the change taken by Eustathius, so it could have been conversion to Christianity as the religion most hated by Eunapius. Eunapius apparently felt obliged not to pass Eustathius completely over in his account on Neoplatonic philosophers in order not to disturb the “intellectual genealogy” he constructed in the *Lives*⁴⁰, but he left in his text clear marks of his disdain.

Let’s have a look at the weird beginning of the history of Eustathius in Eunapius:

With regard to Eustathius, it would be sacrilegious to leave out what would convey the truth. All men were agreed that he was not only observed to be

³⁶ Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society*, p. 107; Penella, *Greek Philosophers and Sophists in the Fourth Century A.D.*, p. 54-55; Lewin, *Il filosofo Eustazio nelle Vitae Sophistarum di Eunapio di Sardi*, p. 97; Goulet, *Eustathe de Cappadoce*, p. 371; Civiletti, in: Eunapio, *Vite di filosofi e sofisti*, p. 399-401, n. 232; Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 451-452; Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten*, p. 310-312.

³⁷ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 9, 3, ed. Giangrande, p. 33, 18-34, 6.

³⁸ Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society*, p. 107.

³⁹ Lewin, *Il filosofo Eustazio nelle Vitae Sophistarum di Eunapio di Sardi*, p. 97.

⁴⁰ E. Watts, *Orality and Communal Identity in Eunapius; Lives of Philosophers and Sophists*, “Byzantion” 75 (2005) p. 339. For the same reason he could not omit Christian Prohaeresius.

a most noble character, but also most gifted with eloquence when put to the test, while the charm that sat on his tongue and lips seemed to be nothing less than witchcraft⁴¹.

Fatti points out that among all the *Lives* this is the only presentation that leaves so much room for suspicion. Only here Eunapius allows the reader to doubt the exemplarity of the hero from the very beginning. He allusively says that others, unlike him, would have preferred not to mention such a hero at all. If, despite those perplexities, Eunapius had decided to do so, it was because his intellectual honesty prevented him from ignoring what had been good in Eustathius (it would be impious not to tell the truth). What was good lasted until the moment of Eustathius' ἀποχώρησις, until the moment of his "death"; everything that happened afterwards – on this Eunapius agreed with the philosopher's detractors – could easily be forgotten⁴².

Eunapius uses irony, I think, when he describes the embassy of the Greeks who came to Eustathius claiming that there had been omens that foretold his visit. Eunapius quotes his reply with a following comment: "Then he said something that in my judgement was too high for a mere mortal, for this was his reply: 'The omens revealed were too trivial and too tardy for such dignity as mine'"⁴³.

And immediately in the next sentence he humiliates him with the comparison to Sosipatra: "After this the renowned Eustathius married Sosipatra, who by her surpassing wisdom made her own husband seem inferior and insignificant"⁴⁴. According to Ariel Lewin, *Vitae Sophistarum* are marked by a controversy among the disciples of Aedesius: Eunapius was a pupil of Chrysantius, and *Vitae* were conceived precisely to honour them⁴⁵. Nevertheless, it does not explain the deep contempt of Eunapius for Eustathius. But the conversion of the latter to Christianity would explain it perfectly.

⁴¹ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 1, ed. Giangrande, p. 25, 5-13, tr. Wright, p. 393-395.

⁴² Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 456-457.

⁴³ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 6, 4, ed. Giangrande, p. 27, 5-28, 3, tr. Wright, p. 399.

⁴⁴ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 6, 5, ed. Giangrande, p. 28, 4-6, tr. Wright, p. 399-401.

⁴⁵ Lewin, *Il filosofo Eustazio nelle Vitae Sophistarum di Eunapio di Sardi*, p. 94.

4. Solving the problems

4.1. The place of origin of Eustathius of Sebastea

Up to this point, the identification of two Eustathiuses seems to be coherent. I would like to add my solutions to some issues that Fatti left unclear. First, Fatti had a problem with the place of origin of two Eustathiuses. We deduce that Eustathius the Philosopher was from Cappadocia from the fact that he was a relative of Aedesius, who when leaving Cappadocia to Asia handed over to Eustathius the charge of his property there⁴⁶. But Fatti thought that Eustathius of Sebastea came from Sebastea and his father Eulalius was bishop of Sebastea⁴⁷. However, I shall show that Eustathius of Sebastea came from Cappadocia and his father was bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. So, the place of origin of both Eustathiuses was the same.

Both Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen confirm that Eustathius of Sebastea's father was called Eulalius and was bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia⁴⁸. Nevertheless, in 1703, Tillemont stated that there was no place in the hierarchy of Caesarea for any bishop named Eulalius and that Eustathius' father was from Antioch⁴⁹. Following Friedrich Loofs a number of scholars claim that Eulalius was bishop of Sebastea⁵⁰. The conclusive evidence that Eustathius came from Cappadocia and his father was bishop

⁴⁶ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 4, 6-7, ed. Giangrande, p. 24, 22-25, 2.

⁴⁷ Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 455, n. 40.

⁴⁸ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE* 2, 43, 1, GCS NF 1, p. 180, 2-3: "ὑπὸ Εὐλαλίου τοῦ ἰδίου πατρὸς καὶ ἐπισκόπου Καισαρείας τῆς ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ ἥδη πρότερον καθήρητο"; Sozomen, *HE* 4, 24, 9, GCS 50, p. 180, 5-7: "Εὐλάλιος ὁ πατὴρ καὶ τῶν εὐχῶν ἀφώρισεν, ἐπίσκοπος ὢν τῆς ἐν Καππαδοκίᾳ ἐκκλησίας Καισαρείας".

⁴⁹ Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles*, p. 79.

⁵⁰ F. Loofs, *Eustathius von Sebaste und die chronologie der Basilius-Briefe. Eine patristische Studie*, Halle 1898, p. 95; K. Suso Frank, *Monastische Reform im Altertum. Eustathius von Sebaste und Basilius von Caesarea*, in: *Reformatio Ecclesiae. Beiträge zu kirchlichen Reformbemühungen von der Alten Kirche bis zur Neuzeit. Festgabe für Erwin Iserloh*, ed. R. Bäumer, Paderborn 1980, p. 38; C.A. Frazee, *Anatolian Asceticism in the Fourth Century: Eustathios of Sebastea and Basil of Caesarea*, "Catholic Historical Review" 66 (1980) p. 17; J. Gribomont, *Saint Basile, Évangile et Église. Mélanges*, Bégrolles-en Mauges 1984, p. 95-96; W.-D. Hauschild, *Eustathius von Sebaste*, in: *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, v. 10, Berlin – New York 1982, p. 547.

of Caesarea in Cappadocia is based on Basil's accounts. In Letter 263 Basil states that Eustathius returned from Alexandria to his hometown (εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ) and was ordained by Hermogenes⁵¹. In two letters Basil says that Eustathius was ordained by Hermogenes, bishop of Caesarea, then went to Constantinople and returned to his homeland: ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος⁵², εἰς τὴν πατρίδα⁵³. In both letters ἡ πατρίς means Cappadocia. The textual analysis of Basil's writings confirms that understanding. Except for two quotations from the Bible, references to paradise/heaven and four cases where the meaning of ἡ πατρίς is uncertain, Basil always and with no exception attributes ἡ πατρίς (in singular with an article) to Cappadocia and never to any other country/homeland of anybody. Twenty-six times it is ἡ πατρίς itself with an article and no possessive and sixteen times ἡ πατρίς ἡμῶν/ἑαυτῶν (with an article and a possessive)⁵⁴. As Yves Courtonne explains, the custom of avoiding proper names and replacing them with a periphrasis is one of the characteristics of the rhetoric of that era⁵⁵.

We do not know a lot about bishops of Caesarea in Cappadocia until Eusebius, the predecessor of Basil, who died in 370. Older studies placed Eulalius after Leontius and before Hermogenes⁵⁶, but it is hardly possible as according to Basil it was Hermogenes who ordained Eustathius and according to Sozomen and Socrates Eulalius excommunicated him when he was a priest⁵⁷. And we know from Basil that immediately (εὐθύς) after Hermogenes had died Eustathius ran to Constantinople to Eusebius of Nicomedia. There are two possibilities for locating Eulalius. First, he could have been bishop of Caesarea after Hermogenes and before Dianius, but it must have been before the Council of Antioch (341) in which Dianius took part as bishop of Caesarea⁵⁸. Second possibility: at some point after 343, when Dianius participated in the Council of Ser-

⁵¹ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 263, 3, ed. Courtonne, v. 3, p. 123, 7-9.

⁵² Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 263, 3, ed. Courtonne, v. 3, p. 123, 14.

⁵³ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 244, 9, ed. Courtonne, v. 3, p. 82, 15.

⁵⁴ M. Przyszychowska, *Fatherland (πατρίς) in Basil of Caesarea*, "Polish Journal of Political Science" 5/3 (2019) p. 7-27.

⁵⁵ Y. Courtonne, in: Basil, *Lettres*, v. 3, ed. Courtonne, p. 3, n. 2.

⁵⁶ P.B. Gams, *Series episcoporum Ecclesiae catholicae*, Graz 1873, p. 440; M. Le Quien, *Oriens christianus, in quatuor patriarchatus digestus*, v. 1, Parisiis 1740, p. 370-372.

⁵⁷ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE* 2, 43, 1, GCS NF 1, p. 180, 2-4; Sozomenus, *HE* 4, 24, 9, GCS 50, p. 180, 5-7.

⁵⁸ Sozomenus, *HE* 3, 5, 10, GCS 50, p. 107, 11.

dica as bishop of Caesarea⁵⁹. It is accepted that the very same Dianius is mentioned by Basil in Letter 51⁶⁰ as the one who signed the formula of faith approved at the Council of Constantinople (359/360)⁶¹. However, it is hardly possible that the person mentioned in the letter was bishop of Caesarea before Eusebius, the predecessor of Basil. Basil could have not anathematized anyone being a deacon as excommunication was a prerogative of a bishop⁶² and the letter indicates that Basil was reconciled with that Dianius before he died so he could not have anathematized him posthumously. Dianius from Letter 51 was someone who signed the confession of faith brought from Constantinople by the associates of George (τῆς ὑπὸ τῶν περὶ Γεώργιον ἀπὸ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κοιμισθείσης)⁶³ when Basil was already bishop (since 370). It is significant that in 353 Nerses was ordained bishop of Armenia by the bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia and *P'awstos Buzandac'i's* (the source written in the 5th century) claims that the bishop's name was Eusebius not Dianius⁶⁴.

4.2. The problem of the year 358

Fatti also left unsolved the problem of the year 358. In the very same 358 Eustathius, bishop of Sebastea, was sent by bishops gathered in Ancyra as one of four deputies to Constantius⁶⁵, who at that time was in Sirmium. But in the same 358 Eustathius the Philosopher was sent by the Christian emperor to Persia and Eunapius apparently claims that it happened despite his Hellenic faith. Although Eunapius is far from describing the events in the chronological order and he often mixes up facts it seems that it was regarding this embassy that he writes:

⁵⁹ Hilarius, *Collectanea antiariana parisina*, CSEL 65, p. 75, 5.

⁶⁰ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 51, 1-2, v. 1, ed. Courtonne, p. 132, 17-133, 21.

⁶¹ R. van Dam, *Families and Friends in Late Roman Cappadocia*, Philadelphia 2003, p. 35.

⁶² P. Norton, *Episcopal elections 250-600. Hierarchy and popular will in Late Antiquity*, New York 2007, p. 3.

⁶³ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Ep.* 51, 2, v. 1, ed. Courtonne, p. 132, 4-5.

⁶⁴ Fatti is convinced that Letter 51 by Basil concerns Dianius, bishop of Caesarea, so he suggests that the source confused the name, see F. Fatti, *Giuliano a Cesarea. La politica ecclesiastica del principe apostate*, Roma 2009, p. 65, n. 69.

⁶⁵ Sozomenus, *HE* 4, 13, 5, GCS 50, p. 156, 10-14.

In this similar crisis all men were so held captive and enchanted by Eustathius, that they did not hesitate to commend a man of the Hellenic faith (τινα Ἑλληνα ἄνθρωπον) to the ears of the emperor; although the earlier emperors had been accustomed to elect for embassies men who had won distinction in the army, or military prefects, or men who were next in rank to these and had been selected for office. But at that time, at the imperious call of necessity, Eustathius was sought out and admitted by general consent to be the most prudent of all men⁶⁶.

Ammianus Marcellinus does not mention his confession; it is only Eunapius who states that surprisingly “a man of the Hellenic faith”⁶⁷ (in Wilmer Cave Wright’s translation) was commended to the emperor. But, the direct context does not imply religious meaning; τις Ἑλληνα ἄνθρωπος is not contrasted with the Christians⁶⁸, but with “men who had won distinction in the army, or military prefects, or men who were next in rank to these and had been selected for office”⁶⁹. “Greek” did not mean a nationality but education, so “any Greek” means “any educated/learned man”⁷⁰. Ἑλληνα meant Pagan for Christians, but Eunapius was no Christian to use that noun in the “Christian” meaning. This understanding is confirmed by the use of the noun Ἑλληνα in other places of *Vitae sophistarum*. Maximus calls himself and his interlocutor “genuine Greeks” (ἄκροισι Ἑλληνέσι) when talking to Chrysanthius⁷¹, although they were both from Asia Minor: Chrysanthius from Sardes in Lidia and Maximus from Ephesus. When describing Anatolius Azutrium, a praetorian prefect of Illyricum, Eunapius calls him Ἑλληνα although he was originally from Beirut⁷².

⁶⁶ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 3-4, ed. Giangrande, p. 25, 21-26, 3, tr. Wright, p. 395.

⁶⁷ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 3, ed. Giangrande, p. 25, 23, tr. Wright, p. 395.

⁶⁸ In opposition to Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten*, p. 280-281.

⁶⁹ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 3, ed. Giangrande, p. 25, 24-26, 2, tr. Wright, p. 393-395.

⁷⁰ Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten*, p. 281; A. Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium. The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition*, New York 2008, p. 31-40.

⁷¹ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 7, 3, 12, ed. Giangrande, p. 47, 19-25, tr. Wright, p. 441.

⁷² Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 10, 6, 3, ed. Giangrande, p. 74, 5-15.

If we assume that it was Eustathius of Sebastea who was sent to Persia as (according to Eunapius and Ammianus Marcellinus) Eustathius the Philosopher the following sequence of events could have happened:

Bishops gathered in Ancyra just before Easter 358⁷³. Eustathius was sent by the bishops as one of the delegates to Constantius and the Homoiousians managed to win the Caesar over⁷⁴. My speculation is: Constantius or rather his counsellor Musonianus was impressed by the rhetorical skills of Eustathius and he was sent as a member of the delegation to Persia. Eustathius had enough time to go there, spend some time there⁷⁵ and come back. The next time we meet him in person he takes part in the Council of Seleucia in summer 359⁷⁶. Ammianus Marcellinus could have called him Eustathius the Philosopher as he was wearing tribon⁷⁷ and was chosen for a legate “as a master of persuasion”⁷⁸. As Ammianus was neither Christian nor interested in ecclesiastical issues he could have ignored the fact that Eustathius was a bishop. Eunapius stated that Eustathius the Philosopher was “most gifted with eloquence” so it “seemed to be nothing less than witchcraft”⁷⁹. Sozomen confirms that Eustathius of Sebastea also “was as renowned for his discourses as for the purity of his life” and had a “high capacity of persuasion”, though he claims that “he was not eloquent, nor had he ever studied the art of eloquence”⁸⁰. Sozomen’s reservations might have referred to the fact that Eustathius of Sebastea was not a professional rhetor, but Eustathius the Philosopher neither was one – he is described by Eunapius in the section of philosophers rather than sophists.

If both Eustathiuses are to be identified, Eustathius the Philosopher must have converted to Christianity in the late 330s as according to my

⁷³ D. Fairbairn, *The Synod of Ancyra (358) and the Question of the Son’s Creaturehood*, JTS 64 (2013) p. 111.

⁷⁴ Sozomenus, *HE* 6, 13, 6, GCS 50, p. 156, 13-16; Philostorgius, *HE* 4, 8, GCS 21, p. 62, 20-24.

⁷⁵ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17, 14, 2, ed. Rolfe, p. 402: “*Diu igitur ibi morati*”.

⁷⁶ Fairbairn, *The Synod of Ancyra (358) and the Question of the Son’s Creaturehood*, p. 125.

⁷⁷ Eunapius confirms that at his embassy to Persia Eustathius was wearing a philosopher’s cloak (τὸ τριβώνιον), *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 8, ed. Giangrande, p. 27, 2 and wearing a tribon was one of the characteristics of Eustathius of Sebastea as well.

⁷⁸ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae* 17, 5, 15, ed. Rolfe, p. 339.

⁷⁹ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 6, 5, 1, ed. Giangrande, p. 25, 7-9, tr. Wright, p. 393-395.

⁸⁰ Sozomen, *HE* 3, 14, 36, GCS 50, p. 124, 8-11, tr. NPNF 2/2, p. 294.

dating Eustathius of Sebastea was ordained priest at that time. Fowden dates the departure of Eustathius from his family for the late 340s⁸¹, but Fatti for 329-334⁸². Anyway these are mere speculations as the only certain date is the *terminus ante quem*, which is 351. For the dating of the life of Eustathius of Sebastea identification with Eustathius the Philosopher does not change anything. We only need to change the traditional dating of Basil's Letter 1 from 357 to (at least) 358, just as Fowden did⁸³, because it mentions Eustathius' travel to Persia⁸⁴.

4.3. "Our pious devotion to the gods"

The last problem that must be clarified is Julian's Letter 35 to Eustathius the Philosopher where he states: "The friendship that exists between us two is stronger than that between guest and host, because it is inspired by the best education attainable and by our pious devotion to the gods"⁸⁵. According to Wright, the letter was written by Julian in 362 in Antioch. At that time according to my dating, Eustathius had been a Christian for more than 20 years and bishop for 5 years. At first glance, the expression "our pious devotion to the gods" excludes the possibility that the addressee was Christian, but the case is not so simple. Again, Wright's translation is misleading: in the Greek original there is no "our". It would be better to translate the passage as follows: "We do have mutual friendship better than hospitality, friendship through the received education and devotion to gods (διὰ τῆς ἐνδεχομένης παιδείας καὶ τῆς περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς εὐσεβείας)".

Michael Schramm analysed in detail the Neoplatonic concept of friendship and noted that Iamblichus (master to Maximus of Ephesus, who in turn was master to Julian) considers friendship the highest virtue, a culmination of piety and the cardinal virtues (wisdom, justice, prudence and bravery)⁸⁶. Iamblichus' Pythagorean-Platonic definition of friendship

⁸¹ Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society*, p. 107.

⁸² Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 452-453.

⁸³ Fowden, *Pagan philosophers in late antique society*, p. 105.

⁸⁴ Basilus Caesariensis, *Ep.* 1, v. 1, ed. Courtonne, p. 4, 25-28: "οὕτω δύσεως ἦν ὥστε τὴν ἐπὶ Πέρσας βαδίζειν ἔδει καὶ συμπροϊέναι εἰς ὅτι μήκιστον τῆς βαρβάρων (ἤλθε γὰρ κακέϊσε, τοσαύτη τις ἦν φιλονεικία τοῦ δαίμονος)".

⁸⁵ Julianus, *Ep.* 35 (Wright 44), ed. Bidez, p. 63, tr. Wright, p. 138.

⁸⁶ M. Schramm, *Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus: Politisches Denken und Sozialphilosophie von Plotin bis Kaiser Julian*, Berlin – Boston 2013, p. 69.

expresses not only the togetherness of all beings across genres and levels of being, but also the integral togetherness of all virtues⁸⁷. What Julian states in his letter says more about him or rather about how he wanted to be perceived than about the relationship between him and Eustathius and even less about Eustathius himself. Julian had to possess friendship (the highest virtue) in order to be a perfect philosopher. It is significant that he uses here *dativus possessivus*⁸⁸ that describes his own characteristic rather than a relationship with somebody else. It was Julian who was involved in the piety as it constituted an important part of Iamblichian concept of virtue. For him, Hellenic paideia, philosophy and religion concurred and were the basis for virtuous friendship⁸⁹.

Eustathius, even still Pagan, was a distinguished rhetorician and politician, not a philosopher, even though he was a member of a philosophic school. It is known that Iamblichus accepted students who were more interested in learning rhetorical techniques and a certain general education that would enable them to have a political career rather than in actual philosophy. Eustathius was not the only one; other examples of such students were Sopater of Apamea and Aedesius (Eustathius' relative and master)⁹⁰.

It is not impossible that the addressee of Julian's Letters 35 and 36 was Christian. Although Julian generally showed a hostile attitude to Christians and Christianity, at the same time he favoured some Christians and counted them among his friends and officials⁹¹. In the corpus of Julian's letters, Letter 31 (Wright 14) is addressed to the Christian Prohaeresius and there are two cordial invitations to the court for people whom Julian had known for a long time and kept considering friends though they were Christians: Letter 46 (Wright 15) to Aetius and Letter 32 (Wright 26) to Basil of Caesarea. Moysés Marcos listed some more cases of Julian's favourable attitude towards Christians though no letters to them were preserved: Eunomius, bishops Meletius and Paulinus. In early 362, he made the Christian Caesarius, the younger brother of Gregory of Nazianzus, a chief physician at his court at Constantinople and retained and promoted the apparently Christian Jovian, the future emperor⁹².

⁸⁷ Schramm, *Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus*, p. 72.

⁸⁸ "We do have mutual friendship better than hospitality" (ἡμῖν ὑπάρχει πρὸς ἀλλήλους ξενικῆς φιλίας ἀμείνων).

⁸⁹ Schramm, *Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus*, p. 428.

⁹⁰ Schramm, *Freundschaft im Neuplatonismus*, p. 197, n. 55.

⁹¹ M. Marcos, *Julian, Aetius and 'the Galileans'*, CQ 70/2 (2020) p. 865.

⁹² Marcos, *Julian, Aetius and 'the Galileans'*, p. 867.

5. The benefits of identifying Eustathiuses

The identification of both Eustathiuses has this huge advantage that it explains the “going away” of Eustathius the Philosopher and Eunapius’ disdain for the way of his change on one hand, while on the other it gives a perfect explanation to some weird aspects of Eustathius of Sebastea’s asceticism condemned at the Council of Gangra (358). They are actually not so weird if it is assumed that Eustathian asceticism was rooted in Neoplatonism.

Abandoning family: Fatti sees an analogy between the fact that Eustathius the Philosopher left his wife Sosipatra and their three children and the habit of abandoning families by Eustathian ascetics under the pretext of asceticism condemned by Canon 1 of the Council of Gangra⁹³. Lewin interprets the ἀποχώρησις of Eustathius as a spiritual retreat popular among the Neoplatonists who permitted unions for reproduction only and considered chastity a supreme virtue⁹⁴.

Wearing the tribon: Wearing a tribon was one of the most characteristic features of Eustathian asceticism, not accepted by ecclesiastical hierarchy. Already in the early 340s Eustathius was deposed by his father Eulalius “for dressing in a style unbecoming the sacerdotal office”⁹⁵. The Synodical Letter of the Council of Gangra stated that Eustathians “wear strange dresses to the downfall of the common mode of dress”⁹⁶. Those strange dresses (ξένα ἀμφιάσματα) were tribons – the garment reserved for philosophers⁹⁷.

Vegetarian diet: Fatti noticed that the Neoplatonic school of Iamblichus had a special devotion to Pythagoras as the fullest symbol of the ascetic function of philosophy that promised the experience of the divine on condition of following certain spiritual exercises and certain observances such as “never to eat any living creature”⁹⁸. In the school of Iamblichus, who even wrote *De vita Pythagorica*, these observances were scrupu-

⁹³ Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 452-453.

⁹⁴ Lewin, *Il filosofo Eustazio nelle Vitae Sophistarum di Eunapio di Sardi*, p. 97.

⁹⁵ Socrates Scholasticus, *HE* 2, 43, 1, GCS NF 1, p. 180, 3-4, tr. NPNF 2/2, p. 72.

⁹⁶ *Canones Synodi Gangrensis*, synodical letter, ed. Joannou, p. 87, 1-3, tr. Yarbrough, p. 450.

⁹⁷ Fatti, *Nei panni del vescovo. Gregorio, Basilio e il filosofo Eustazio*, p. 177-238.

⁹⁸ Iamblichus, *De vita Pythagorica* 24, 107, ed. Deubner – Klein, p. 62, 7-8, tr. Clark, p. 48.

lously adhered to⁹⁹. The Eustathians, even though they were Christians, adhered to the vegetarian style of life, the fact confirmed by Canon 2 of the Council of Gangra.

Avoiding shrines of the martyrs: Fatti sees the connection between the attitude of condemning “the assemblies in honour of the martyrs or the services held in martyria and in memory of the martyrs”¹⁰⁰, mentioned in Canon 20 of the Council of Gangra and the teaching of Pythagoras, for whom the deceased had something contaminating¹⁰¹. Matthias Becker, however, points out that the view that ritual impurity is caused by death was present in the Greek religion since ancient times. During public processions of the dead even the encounter with a group of mourners and a visual contact with the dead caused contamination¹⁰². The custom of avoiding shrines of the martyrs by Eustathians must have been a remnant of pagan/Neoplatonic roots of Eustathius. Otherwise, it is hardly understandable.

Fatti points out one more important issue that can be an argument in favour of identifying two Eustathiuses: the semantic shift of the notion of “philosophy”¹⁰³. It is significant that, as Malingrey claims, it was the three Cappadocian Fathers who integrated the term φιλοσοφία into the Christian language as a designation of the ascetic way of life¹⁰⁴. The conversion of Eustathius from a Neoplatonic philosopher to a Christian ascetic who kept the philosophical look and customs and integrated them into the ecclesiastical life explains why the above-mentioned semantical change occurred at that specific place (Cappadocia) and time (4th century).

Apart from the problems that have been mentioned above, I do not see any more unsolved incoherencies in Fatti’s theory of identification of Eustathius the Philosopher and Eustathius of Sebastea. Although

⁹⁹ Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 463-464.

¹⁰⁰ *Canones Synodi Gangrensis*, canon 20, ed. Joannou, p. 97,15-18, tr. Yarbrough, p. 454.

¹⁰¹ Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 465.

¹⁰² Becker, *Eunapios aus Sardes Biographien über Philosophen und Sophisten*, p. 227.

¹⁰³ Fatti, *Eustazio di Sebaste, Eustazio filosofo*, p. 456.

¹⁰⁴ A.M. Malingrey, *Philosophia. Étude d’un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IV^e siècle après J.-C.*, Paris 1961, p. 234.

there is no hard evidence to prove it, its plausibility seems to me very close to certainty. It is not strange that Eustathius' conversion to Christianity was not mentioned in any ancient source. Eunapius was likely to pass that fact over deliberately as it meant apostasy to him and if he had mentioned that he could have no longer regarded Eustathius as an eminent Neoplatonic philosopher. He used the same literary device in his life of Prohaeresius. Although it is rather certain that the latter was Christian¹⁰⁵, Eunapius avoids admitting that fact even when he mentions that he was excluded from teaching during the reign of the emperor Julian and instead he claims that he had an opinion of being Christian (ἐδόκει γὰρ εἶναι χριστιανός)¹⁰⁶ and he puts in his mouth evident pagan expressions¹⁰⁷.

It could be wondered why nobody mentioned Eustathius' conversion as a sign or a symbol of the victory of Christianity over Paganism. The authors of *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* written in the 5th century (above all Sozomen and Socrates Scholasticus) based mostly on ecclesiastical documents which did not need to mention Eustathius' past. It is obvious that neither Eustathius nor his follower Basil were eager to recall that fact as the ecclesiastical hierarchy disapproved of the Neoplatonic aspects of Eustathian asceticism. Besides, the image of Eustathius that has survived to our times was greatly distorted by Basil the Great – the same Basil who was Eustathius' disciple and follower, but stayed with him in a sharp conflict during the last few years of their lives. Basil spread out his propaganda and as no writings of Eustathius of Sebastea have been preserved we know only Basil's position in their disagreement. It is understandable that he did not evoke any positive facts from the opponent's life. On the other hand, he did not mention his Neoplatonic past even as a kind of accusation as he himself was following his way of practicing asceticism¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁵ Despite Richard Goulet's doubts, see *Prohérésius le païen et quelques remarques sur la chronologie d'Eunape de Sardes*, "An Tard" 8 (2000) p. 209-222.

¹⁰⁶ Eunapius, *Vitae sophistarum* 10, 8, 1, ed. G. Giangrande, p. 79, 6.

¹⁰⁷ K.S. Sacks, *The Meaning of Eunapius' History*, "History and Theory" 25/1 (1986) p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ Fatti, *Monachesimo anatolico. Eustazio di Sebastia e Basilio di Cesarea*, p. 53-91.

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