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BASIL THE GREAT'S REFERENCES TO EUNOMIUS

In case of many ancient heretics, their opinions and concepts are known only through or thanks to the accounts of orthodox writers, who were pointing out all mistakes (real or merely imagined) of their adversaries. It is quite often that we come across deliberate exaggeration of negative elements. In my paper, I would like to analyse one of the most interesting discussions in ancient Christianity, and to be more precise, a part of it, which is the discussion between Basil the Great and Eunomius. The list of Eunomius' adversaries was of course much longer: Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, Didymus the Blind, Diodor of Tarsus, and Cyril of Alexandria. But only treatises by Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa remained in their entirety. But, as *Apologia Apologiae*, which is the starting point and basis for Gregory's *Contra Eunomium*, is missing, we have only one pair of complete accounts, namely *Liber Apologeticus* by Eunomius and *Adversus Eunomium* by Basil the Great. I will try to give some remarks considering the faithfulness of Basil's account. What does he quote from Eunomius' work, how precise is he, what does he omit? I am perfectly conscious of the fundamental difference in understanding of the rules of citations and copyrights in ancient times, and of course I have not expected Basil to respect modern standards, but the results were surprising. I would like to start with some introductory information about the context of the discussion and its sources. Then, I will systematically analyse all references to *Liber Apologeticus* in *Adversus Eunomium* with particular interest in misinterpreted or missing parts.

1. The sources and their context. The main participants in the polemic were Eunomius on one side, and Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa on the other¹. That is why we base most of all on their teaching. We can become acquainted with Eunomius' thought from his preserved work *Liber Apologeticus*, published in 1987 by Richard Vaggione in the book entitled *Eunomius, The extant works*. The complete text of his *Apologia Apologiae*, which was

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¹ The context of the discussion was carefully referred by M. Cassin in his recent book *L'écriture de la controverse chez Grégoire de Nysse. Polémique littéraire et exégèse dans le Contre Eunome*, Série Antiquité 193, Paris 2012, 9-48.

Eunomius' response to Basil's book *Adversus Eunomium* (which on the other hand was his response to Eunomius' *Liber Apologeticus*), has not been preserved; however, we do have its numerous fragments in the *Contra Eunomium* by Gregory of Nyssa².

There is no evidence that Basil the Great and Eunomius ever met. But it is highly probable because when Eunomius accused Basil of cowardice and pointed out that he had left the Council of Constantinople (360) earlier, even Gregory of Nyssa in his defence of Basil did not deny that³. We do not exactly know when Eunomius presented his *Apology*; if it was presented, it must have been during the Council of Constantinople or directly afterwards. It was certainly written shortly after the Council (360-361). Basil claims that Eunomius' apology wasn't really the speech delivered in order to defend himself but it was a declaration of one's ideas only written in the form of an apology⁴. According to Basil, Eunomius used this trick to gain better reception. It was a psychological trick.

There are two critical editions of *Liber Apologeticus* available. These two books were published practically simultaneously⁵. I have compared them and they are really almost identical. If not, we can find the alternative version in the critical apparatus. The main differences between both editions, which are totally negligible, are in punctuation and use of capital and small letters. *Liber Apologeticus* is one of the remained texts by Eunomius (with *Apologia Apologiae* and *Expositio fidei*) that were preserved with orthodox treatises devoted to *refutatio* of Eunomian ideas⁶. R. Vaggione suggests that although it seems that we can rely on the remained versions, we should remember that Eunomius' text could have been modified by orthodox writers and copyists.

Structure of *Liber Apologeticus* is strongly connected with the problem discussed:

- I. Introduction 1, 1 - 6, 23
- II. Argument
 - A. The Father 7, 1 - 11, 14
 - B. The Son 11, 15 - 24, 28
 - C. The Spirit 25, 1-26
- III. Summary 25, 27 - 27, 15

² Cf. K. Kochańczyk-Bonińska – M. Przyszychowska, *Incomprehensibility of God and the Trinitarian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, VoxP 34 (2014) vol. 61, 241.

³ Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 79-90, ed. W. Jaeger, GNO 1, Leiden 1960, 49.16-53.10.

⁴ Cf. Basilius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 2, ed. B. Sesboüé – G.M. du Durand – L. Doutreleau, vol. 1, SCh 299, Paris 1982, 148-152.

⁵ Eunomius, *Liber apologeticus*, in: Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, text and transl. R.P. Vaggione, Oxford 1987, 34-74; Eunomius, *Apologie*, in: Basil de Césarée, *Contre Eunome*, ed. B. Sesboüé – G.M. du Durand – L. Doutreleau, vol. 2, SCh 305, Paris 1983, 234-298.

⁶ Cf. R.P. Vaggione, *Introduction*, in: Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, p. XVI-XVII.

IV. Conclusion 27, 16-42

V. Appendix⁷

It seems that Basil read *Apology* shortly after it had been written⁸. According to all the hypotheses about the time when *Adversus Eunomium* was written we can place it between 360 and 366, and what is even more probable – between 363 and 364⁹. We should underline that Basil was then a young man, a young priest, and although he was very well educated, he had no or very little experience in theological polemics. After years, he was judging his treatise very severely. In his letter to Leontius the Sophist he wrote:

“I have sent you my writings against Eunomius. Whether they are to be called child’s play, or something a little more serious, I leave you to judge. So far as concerns yourself, I do not think you stand any longer in need of them; but I hope they will be no unworthy weapon against any perverse men with whom you may fall in. I do not say this so much because I have confidence in the force of my treatise, as because I know well that you are a man likely to make a little go a long way. If anything strikes you as weaker than it ought to be, pray have no hesitation in showing me the error. The chief difference between a friend and a flatterer is this; the flatterer speaks to please, the friend will not leave out even what is disagreeable”¹⁰.

The main aim of *Adversus Eunomium* is preparation for the Council of Lampsacus (364)¹¹. The critical edition of *Adversus Eunomium* presented in “Sources Chrétiennes” consists of three books. Some researchers suggest that the last, third book, could have been written somewhat later. There are even some doubts about its authenticity¹². They point out, for example, the differences in the usage of certain terms¹³. It is much shorter than the previous two, but this can be related to the fact that also the commented text of Eunomius is much shorter. Nevertheless, it lacks the conclusions as if it was written in a great hurry. That is why scholars suggest that Basil had already returned to Caesarea and started his pastoral activity.

2. The faithfulness of Basil’s account. According to R. Vaggione: “Basil’s *Against Eunomius* is a polemical treatise, a point-by-point refutation of the

⁷ Eunomius, *Liber apologeticus*, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 11.

⁸ Cf. B. Sesboüé, *Introduction*, in: SCh 299, 40.

⁹ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 45.

¹⁰ Basilius Caesariensis, *Epistula* 20, PG 32, 285B-C, transl. B. Jackson, NPNF, Series II, vol. 8, Buffalo 1895, 127 (revised and edited K. Knight: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3202020.htm> [access: 01.10.2016]).

¹¹ Cf. *idem*, *Epistula* 223, 5. See M. DelCogliano – A. Radde-Gallwitz, *Introduction*, in: St. Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, Washington D.C. 2011, 33.

¹² Cf. Sesboüé, *Introduction*, p. 60-61.

¹³ Cf. *ibidem*, p. 44.

methodology and main tenets of Eunomius's heteroousian theology as presented in his *Apology*. Basil proceeds by citing a few lines of Eunomius, then arguing at length against the suppositions or ideas expressed in the quotation. [...] for such a methodology in both Christian and philosophical sources include Origen's *Against Celsus*, Marcellus of Ancyra's *Asterius*, Eusebius of Caesarea's *Against Marcellus*, and Iamblichus's *On the Mysteries*. Each author conducts his refutations in the same way as Basil, alternating citation and refutation"¹⁴. In fact, we can find in *Adversus Eunomium* at least two types of quotations. Longer parts, that are marked in the critical edition, and which are the subject of Basil's *refutatio*. These are quoted generally in chronological order. In Basil's treatise we can also find certain fragments of Eunomius' words repeated, as well as other fragments of *Apologia* which Basil evokes without indicating the author. Those longer quotations, being a part of a stylistic convention, allow us to follow the argumentation of both sides of the discussion. In Basil's opinion, they also emphasise the critique as they let the readers better understand the impiety of Eunomius' ideas:

“Why have I cited all this text of his? To expose the garrulity of the man throughout the entirety of his discourse. After claiming that on account of the common notions of all people it is self-evident that God is unbegotten, he makes an attempt to supply us with the proofs for this”¹⁵.

The appearance of obvious quotations is following:

<i>Liber Apologeticus</i>	<i>Adversus Eunomium</i>	Method of quotation
1, 1-6	I 2	exact quotation
2, 1-7	I 3	minor change
3, 1-7	I 3	exact quotation
4, 7-10	I 4	minor change
5, 1-6	I 4	minor change
6, 1-3	I 4	exact quotation
7, 1-8	I 5	exact quotation
7, 11-14	I 5	minor change
8, 1-6	I 5	minor change
8, 9-10	I 9	exact quotation
8, 18-22	I 11	important change that can potentially influence the meaning

¹⁴ Cf. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, *Introduction*, p. 39.

¹⁵ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 5, SCh 299, 170-172, transl. M. DelCogliano – A. Radde-Gallwitz: St. Basil of Caesarea, *Against Eunomius*, p. 92.

9, 1-4	I 16	exact quotation
10, 1-11	I 19	minor change
11, 1-13. 17-19	I 22	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
12, 1-7	II 1	exact quotation
12, 8-12	II 6	exact quotation
12, 14	II 11	minor change
13, 1-8	II 14	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
13, 16-17	II 17	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
14, 18	II 17	minor change
15, 4-9	II 18	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
15, 9-14	II 19	important change that can potentially influence the meaning.
15, 18-20	II 20	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
15, 18-21	II 21	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
16, 1-4	II 22	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
17, 8-10	II 24	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
18, 16-18	II 24	minor change
19, 11-18	II 25	minor change
20, 14-17	II 30	minor change
20, 1-5	II 31	minor change
20, 16-19	II 31	important change that can potentially influence the meaning.
20, 19-24	II 32	exact quotation
24, 26-28	I 24	important change that can potentially influence the meaning
25, 1-6	III 1	exact quotation
25, 28-32	III 5	minor change
25-26	III 6	Basil's summary

We can see that Basil quoted about 1/3 of the whole text. Usually, Basil quoted the beginning of each chapter but there are some deviations from this rule and they are particularly interesting. Two chapters (5 and 12) are quoted in their entirety; other four (8, 11, 15 and 20) almost entirely, and the majority are rewritten partially, but some chapters are totally omitted. There are also some troublesome parts where Basil not only referred Eunomius' words quite freely but even attributed to Eunomius the words that he had not written at all. Let's have a quick look at some of those passages.

On the following examples, we can see what changes were introduced by Basil:

“ΕΥΝ. Ἡμεῖς δὲ, τοῖς τε ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων καὶ πάλαι καὶ νῦν ἐφ’ ἡμῶν ἀποδεικνυμένοις ἐμμένοντες, μήτε τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ προσιεμένης γέννησιν, μήτε μὴν ἑτέρας τινὸς ὑποκειμένης εἰς Υἱοῦ γέννησιν, μὴ ὄντα φαμὲν τὸν Υἱὸν γεγεννηῆσθαι.

For our part, clinging to that which has been demonstrated by the saints of old and even now by us, since the substance of God does not admit begetting and since there is no other substance existing which serves as the substrate for the begetting of the Son, we assert that the Son was begotten when he did not exist”¹⁶.

“Ἡμεῖς δὲ, τοῖς τε ὑπὸ τῶν ἁγίων πάλαι καὶ νῦν ἐφ’ ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἀποδεικνυμένοις ἐμμένοντες, μήτε τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ Θεοῦ προσιεμένης γέννησιν (ὡς ἀγεννήτου), μήτε διάστασιν ἢ μερισμὸν (ὡς ἀφθάρτου), μήτε μὴν ἑτέρας τινὸς ὑποκειμένης εἰς Υἱοῦ γέννησιν, μὴ ὄντα φαμὲν γεγεννηῆσθαι τὸν Υἱὸν.

Our practice has been to keep to the arguments used in times past by the saints and now again by us: we have not ascribed begetting to the essence of God (it is unbegotten); we have not ascribed separation or partition (it is incorruptible); we have not postulated some other underlying material for the begetting of the Son; rather, we assert that the Son was begotten when as yet he was not”¹⁷.

Below, I present most important changes to the meaning that occurred in *Adversus Eunomium*, but even such changes did not really influence the main discussion.

“ΕΥΝ. Οὐ χρῆ, φησὶ, τῇ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ προσέχοντας προσηγορίᾳ ἀνθρωπικῆν αὐτοῦ τὴν γέννησιν ἐννοεῖν, κὰκ τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις γενέσεων ἀναγομένους, τοῖς τῆς μετουσίας ὀνόμασι καὶ πάθεσιν ὑπάγειν τὸν Θεόν.

¹⁶ Ibidem II 18, Sch 305, 70, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, p. 155.

¹⁷ Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus* 15, 4-9, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 51-53.

When one attends to the designation «Father and Son», one must not think of his begetting as human, and one must not start from generation among human beings and subject God to the names and passions of partnership”¹⁸.

“Εἰ δ’ ὅτι Πατήρ καὶ Υἱός, διὰ τοῦτο ἀνθρωπίνη καὶ σωματικὴν χρῆσιν τὴν γέννησιν ἐννοεῖν, καὶ τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποις γενέσεων ἀναγομένους τοῖς τῆς μετουσίας ὀνόμασι καὶ πάθεσιν ὑπάγειν τὸν Θεόν...

But if, because of the names «Father» and «Son», it is necessary to understand this begetting as a human and bodily one, and on the analogy of begetting among human beings to God to the names and passions of communication of essence”¹⁹.

In other situations, we can observe how Basil summarized Eunomius’ text and formulated Eunomius’ general thoughts/ideas in his own words²⁰. Sometimes, Basil even used Eunomius’ words ironically²¹.

But what is most important are in fact a few chapters by Eunomius which are missing in Basil’s treatise. Chapters 21-24, which were “lost” between the 2nd and 3rd Book of *Adversus Eunomium*, and chapters 26-28 missing after Book Three. This is, in my opinion, the most important part of this analysis.

In order to explain why Basil omitted chapters 21-24, there were some suggestions that Basil read the incomplete version of *Apology*, the shorter one. It cannot be true with respect to those chapters because although Basil does not quote them directly he makes some allusions to them²², so he must have known

¹⁸ Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* II 22, SCh 305, 88, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, p. 162.

¹⁹ Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus* 16, 1-4, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 53.

²⁰ Cf. Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* III 6, SCh 305, 166, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, p. 192: “Once again, the following wisdom is not mine: If he is not a creature, therefore he is something begotten or unbegotten. But there is one God who is without a beginning and unbegotten. Nor again is he something begotten. So, then, it remains that he is to be named «creature» and «something made»”. Cf. Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus* 25-26, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 66-70; Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 23, SCh 299, 254, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, p. 124: „But Eunomius considers likeness to be a question of form, and equality a question of mass; as for size, whatever he thinks it is besides mass he will have to explain more properly. «For this reason», he says, «he is neither equal nor like, since he is both without quantity and without form»”. We cannot find such words in Eunomius’ *Apology* but it doesn’t stand in opposition with general Eunomius’ thesis.

²¹ Cf. Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* II 15, SCh 305, 56, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, p. 150: “Then I will use your own words against you in a more fitting manner: this account of yours is the pinnacle not only of blasphemy but also of insanity (εἰ δὲ, ὅπερ οὐδὲ θέμις εἰπεῖν, τοῖς σοῖς οἰκειότερον πρὸς σὲ χρῆσομαι ῥήμασιν, ὅτι οὐ βλασφημίας μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ παρανοίας ὑπερβολὴν ὁ λόγος ἔχει)”; Eunomius, *Liber Apologeticus* 13, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 49: “Now that would be not only the ultimate in absurdity or blasphemy, it would be completely ridiculous as well (ὅπερ οὐ οὐκ ἀτοπίας μόνον ἢ βλασφημίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάσης εὐθείας ὑπερβολὴν ἂν ἔχοι)”.

²² Basiliius Caesariensis, *Adversus Eunomium* I 24, SCh 299, 258, transl. DelCogliano – Radde-

them. Nonetheless, he finished Book Two with chapter 20 and announced that he would start to discuss the subject of the Holy Spirit²³. Then he started Book Three by quoting chapter 25.

The critical editor of *Adversus Eunomium* does not even try to explain the reasons why he did it. In the introduction to Eunomius' works, R. Vaggione suggests only that "the most probable reason for their omission is the demonstrable tendency of these authors to quote less fully as they proceed with their work"²⁴. I agree with Vaggione's general observation about the decrease of accuracy, but it cannot be the main reason of total omission. In my opinion there are two possible solutions to this problem. The first assumes some kind of unintentional omission. It should be remembered that it is possible that Basil was forced to pause the work for some time because of pastoral service and returned to *Book Three* sometime later. Or, what is even less probable, if we assume that *Book Three* is not genuine, he simply did not finish *Book Two*. But there is also another explanation, which is based rather on the content of those omitted chapters than on external circumstances. When we look at those missing chapters, they are entirely devoted to problems connected with substance and action. This is one of the crucial problems in this polemic. In my opinion Basil knew Eunomius' arguments and deliberately omitted them, perhaps because of the fact that he could not find counterarguments good enough to reject Eunomius' teaching. We do not know what was the exact text of *Apologia Apologiae* but we know that the issues presented in the missing chapters returned and were undertaken in Gregory's interpretation²⁵.

Basil does not quote also chapters 26-27, but the reason seems to be different. In this case the missing chapters summarize the already presented main thoughts and ideas and Eunomius' *Expositio fidei*. These issues were already commented by Basil so there was no need of further analysis²⁶. And, finally, chapter 28 of *Liber Apologeticus*, which was added after a very clear conclusion in chapter 27:

"The rewards of those contests are given by Christ, who both in ages past and in the present offers his rewards: to those who have laboured for the truth, the genuine liberty and kingship of heaven; to those who through ill-will have dis-

Gallwitz, p. 126: "Father does not indicate an activity but rather a substance. If this is the case, their contrived account of the likeness is destroyed. For it posits that the Son is like the Father, that is, like his activity. It claims that the Father did whatever he wanted. That's why they also named the Son the image of his will".

²³ Cf. *ibidem* II 34, SCh 305, 140-142.

²⁴ Vaggione, *Introduction*, p. 13.

²⁵ Cf. Gregorius Nyssenus, *Contra Eunomium* I 206, GNO 1, 86.22-87.2; III 6, 16-19, GNO 2, 191.11-193.5.

²⁶ Cf. Sesboüé, *Introduction*, p. 58.

honoured it, inexorable punishment. Let these two alternatives be mentioned before you but once, and may the outcome go to the better part"²⁷.

Researchers agree that this part was added later and Basil most likely did not know it.

Basil the Great, in most cases, quotes and interprets Eunomius with great precision but *Contra Eunomium* neither gives us knowledge about the whole text of *Liber Apologeticus* nor the certainty that the passages are quoted accurately. Basil wrote his treatise as a typical refutation. That is why, "when one considers the contentious and unsystematic character of this [Basil's] text, it is easy to assume that Basil simply talks past Eunomius, making counter-assertions rather than arguments"²⁸. But despite of this scheme of *Adversus Eunomium* we can observe that Basil omits important topics that he does not want to analyse (substance and action). After a comparative analysis, the only thing that should be excluded is deliberate manipulation. Although using a rhetorical style Basil accused Eunomius of fictitious connections with different philosophical schools or other faults he never changed Eunomius' own words to such an extent that it could be essential for the discussion.

(Summary)

This article presents a comparative analysis of Eunomius' *Liber Apologeticus* and Basil of Caesarea's *Adversus Eunomium*. As a result, we can discover that Basil wrote his treatise as a typical *refutation* and is quite precise when referring to Eunomius. Despite some omissions that can be explained basing on the structure of The Eunomian work or historical context, we can find one important omission which is strongly connected with one of the most important topics of the anti-Eunomian polemic. Although Basil pretends to comment Eunomius' *Liber Apologeticus* systematically, he deliberately skips one of the most important elements of his adversary's teaching.

JAK BAZYLI WIELKI CYTUJE EUNOMIUSZA

(Streszczenie)

W artykule porównano teksty *Apologii* Eunomiusza i traktatu *Adversus Eunomium* Bazylego Wielkiego. W rezultacie wykazano, że traktat Bazylego to ty-

²⁷ Eunomius, *Liber apologeticus* 27, text and transl. Vaggione, p. 73.

²⁸ Cf. DelCogliano – Radde-Gallwitz, *Introduction*, p. 46.

powe *refutatio*, w którym autor punkt po punkcie odpiera argumenty przeciwnika, a w swych odniesieniach jest, jak na zwyczaj antyczne, niezwykle dokładny. Bazyli systematycznie cytuje mniej więcej jedną trzecią tekstu *Apologii*, a fakt pominięcia niektórych rozdziałów da się uzasadnić poprzez strukturę dzieła Eunomiusza lub kontekst historyczny. Wyjątek stanowią rozdziały 21-24, w których Eunomiusz analizuje problematykę substancji i działania. Wydaje się, że Bazyli celowo omija trudny dla niego temat, z którym jeszcze nie jest w stanie się zmierzyć.

Key words: Basil the Great, Eunomius, *Contra Eunomium*, *refutation*.

Słowa kluczowe: Bazyli Wielki, Eunomiusz, *Contra Eunomium*, *refutatio*.

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