The Late Antique Christian-Pagan Synthesis within Basil the Great's *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*[1]

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I. Introduction

This paper will consider Basil the Great's *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* both in its place within the history of theological development and in its literary form. The Church's assimilation of pagan culture during Christianity's political ascendency under Constantine was a pivotal aspect of the maturation of early Christian theology. The Cappadocians played a prominent role in this process. While Gregory Nazianzus is arguably better remembered as a product of this amalgamation[2], Basil the Great, especially with this treatise, would be remembered by posterity for his sensible contribution to the educational facet of the overall synthesis[3]. Their embodiment of pagan classical learning leavened with Christian ascetical piety, made the Cappadocians the ideal mouthpieces for the Church's attitude toward inherited

[1] ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ ΌΠΩΣ ΄ΑΝ ᾽ΕΞ ῾ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΩΝ ᾽ΩΦΕΛΟΙΝΤΟ ΛΟΓΩΝ. John A. L. Lee, "Why Didn't St Basil Write in New Testament Greek?" *Cappadocian Legacy: A Critical Appraisal*. Eds. Doru Costache and Philip Kariatlis, (Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2013), points out that the full title is uncertain. The *TLG* Latin title is *De Legendis Gentilium Libris* while Philip Rousseau, *Basil of Caesarea*, (Berkely: University of California Press, 1994), uses *Ad adulescentes* on page 49.

[2] Mainly in regard to the high quality of his style, and thus his sermonic synthesis of the polished stylistic elements of paganism with the Christian message. See Anthony Meredith, "The Cappadocians." (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 42, for Gregory of Nazianzus' renown as crafting the best answer to Apollinarianism. Andrew Louth, "The Cappadocians." *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*. Eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 295-296, claims that Gregory the Theologian's sermons "probably received more and closer attention than the sermons of any other in the Byzantine period..." and "they [the sermons of Gregory] became models of Byzantine eloquence, and were frequently commented on.

[3] Basil the Great, *Basil IV: Letters 249-368, On Greek Literature*, Trans. Roy J. Deferrari, Loeb Classical Library vol. 270, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1934) 371-376, sketches out the extensive impact *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* has had on posterity.

pre-Christian Greek literature. An intellectual-historical and rhetorical construal of *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* will contribute to the comprehensive understanding of how late antique Roman society synthesized Christianity and classical culture.

Our own cultures mimic traits of the Cappadocians'. While in late antiquity a pre-Christian heritage was overtaken by Christian customs, today post-Christian values have overtaken Christian culture. By learning how Basil reconciled the conflict between his Christian faith and his pagan cultural inheritance we too, as 21st century Christians, can better understand our relationship to the post-Christian culture that surrounds us. Specifically, in our pious attempts to revive classical Christian education from within communities that lack unbroken links to their Christian traditions. For example, well-meaning Christian parents who have only ever been educated in secular institutions, yet have read widely in their free time, could discover the paideia. Having discovered the paideia and having realized its extreme usefulness in the upbringing of their children, they begin scrapping together the best classical education they can muster for their progeny. They begin stumbling into natural dilemmas over curriculum development, with respect to both technical skills and content. And then quite frequently authors such as Basil are turned to for guidance, yet he is often taken out of context. With this paper, I hope to contribute to the ongoing curriculum dialogues raging within the classical Christian education movement in America by providing a correction to any possible common misunderstandings of the Caesarean Bishop's famous treatise, so that his wisdom may bear its full fruit. St. Basil of Caesarea, in *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ*, reinforces the patristic consensus of early Christianity that prescribed a sober use of non-Christian authors by young Christian students, while evincing sound rhetorical execution.

II. The Christianization of Hellenism

The boundaries and nature of the incorporation of pre-Christian, primarily Hellenic, culture by the Church is a tendentious matter. Four critical episodes draw this historical process, what Florovsky describes as the Christianisation of Hellenism[4]. Arguably the first phase began when the apostles left the Hebraic community for the purpose of evangelising the Gentiles and it ended with the close of the lives of the major apologetic figures of early Christianity. The second phase commenced with the founding of Constantinople and ended around the middle of the fifth century. The third phase in this operation occurred in the sixth century during the reign of Justinian[5] and in the writings of pseudo-Dionysius. The fourth phase began with the initiation of the Iconoclastic Controversy and ended with the death of St. Photius[6]. The fifth episode encompassed the life and work of St. Gregory Palamas[7]. This entire process was essentially a baptism of Hellenism, and a careful sorting out of what in Hellenism was compatible with Orthodoxy from what was not. In many ways this process is still going on.

In setting the stage for St. Basil's period, we will look at the first phase of the Christianisation of Hellenism more closely. From the middle of the second century, leading into

[4] See Paul L. Gavrilyuk, "Harnack's Hellenized Christianity or Florovsky's 'Sacred Hellenism': Questioning Two Metanarratives of Early Christian Engagement with Late Antique Culture." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*. 54.3-4 (2010), 323-344., for a critique of this concept.

[5] See J.A.S.Evans, *The Age of Justinian: The Circumstances of Imperial Power*. (London: Routledge, 1996), 65-71; Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Persecution and Response in Late Paganism." *Journal of Hellenic Studies*. 113 (1993), 1-29; and Michael Maas, *John Lydus and the Roman Past: Antiquarianism and Politics in the age of Justinian*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), 67-82; for the legal actions taken against pagan social institutions by the Byzantine government under Justinian's reign. See Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita*. Ed. Bogdan Bucur. Trappist, (Kentucky: Cistercian Publications, 2013), 370, for the philosophical aspect of this period of the Christian-pagan synthesis: the reception of Neoplatonism in the writings of Dionysius the Areopagite.

[6] Generally speaking the fourth and fifth phases were more subtly concerned with details of pagan philosophy that still lingered in the consciousness of the Church and had to be clarified.

[7] Florovsky, Again, these periods are laid down generally, and only influenced by Florovsky's concept, not taken verbatim.

the third century, the early Christian apologists laid down the foundational principles of etiquette in this regard.

Justin Martyr calculates prominently into this conversation. Writing in the second century, he took a hard stance against Greek philosophy. He sought to expose the absurdity and ignorance of the wisest pagan authors in order to show, in relation, Christianity's divine origin. In the 36th Chapter of his *Hortatory Address to the Greeks* he grants only Socrates a modicum of true knowledge due to his humility. Justin even goes so far, rather ungenerously, to ascribe any of Plato's insights to thievery. To illustrate, in Chapter 60 of his *First Apology* Justin claims that statements regarding the Trinity and Logos made in the *Timaeus* are misunderstood readings of the Pentateuch. Elsewhere Justin lauds Socrates for casting Homer out of Athenian society[8]. How should Justin's views toward the paideia authors be read in relation to Basil's affinity for Homer and Plato? Justin's opinions should be tempered by the context in which he was writing[9]. The Church as a whole needed to take a strong stance against anything pagan, in order to build up a buffer against it. Justin embodies this movement. This attitude toward Greek philosophy established by Justin will lay the groundwork for later authors to begin to bridge the gap between pagan and Christian culture but with the ability to cleave off the adverse aspects of it. His tributary but disloyal opinion of Greek culture is seconded by figures such as Athenagoras[10].

[8] Justin Martyr, "Hortatory Address to the Greeks," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 1, (Peabody Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 191.

[9] Richard A Norris, "The Apologists," *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37, points out that Justin also presented Christianity as "siding with the cause of reason and philosophy against the immoral and implausible 'myths' of the (classical) poets".

[10] Norris, 43.

Tertullian, born 5 years before Justin's death, expressed more extreme views towards pagan philosophy and Greek literature in general. Tertullian's most famous quote on this subject comes in Chapter Seven of his *On Prescription Against Heretics*[11]. In this work the great North African writer attempts to describe the cause and nature of heresies. After explaining why heresies exist, and how Christians spiritually fall into them of their own will, Tertullian uses Chapter Seven to frame pagan philosophy as the parent of heretical views. In no uncertain terms he writes: "These are the 'doctrines' of men and 'of demons' produced for itching ears of the spirit of this world's wisdom: the Lord called this 'foolishness,' and 'chose the foolish things of the world' to confound even philosophy itself'". Tertullian, unlike Justin, allows no redeeming merit to be found within non-Christian philosophy. He proceeds in this chapter to attack Plato, the Epicureans, and Zeno. Finally, claiming that St. Paul exhorts us to guard against philosophy, the Carthaginian concludes: "What indeed has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What concord is there between the Academy and the Church?"[12]. Here we see the most radical view taken towards secular learning. Tertullian, who died outside of Orthodoxy, here exudes the opinion toward learning eventually to be rejected by the Church. While Justin granted that Plato and Homer had found sparing amounts of insight, Tertullian saw no redeeming qualities in non-Christian writers. Basil's opinion, coming a century after Tertullian, are much more favorable towards the pagan corpus but also do not lack a healthy amount of Christian spiritual vigilance.

[11] Tertullian, "On Prescription Against Heretics," *Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Vol. 3. Ed, Alexander Roberts, Peabody, (Massachusets: Hendrickson Publishing, 2012).

[12] Ibid.

Clement of Alexandria, a contemporary of Tertullian, offers more systematic and immensely more positive appraisal of the ongoing cultural synthesis in works such as his *Protrepticus*, *Paedagogus*, and *Stromateis*[13]. Two properties characterize this first chapter in the Christianisation of Hellenism. First, a need to describe the Gospel to the Gentile community who are not familiar with the Hebrew messianic prophecies yet are familiar with the natural law principles contained in Greco-Roman philosophy. Second, a necessity for spirited proclamations of the social superiority of Christian ethical standards and thus lend legitimacy to the persecuted Church militant. These needs led the writers to often draw a hard line against paganism to initially create a boundary between the Church and the non-Christian culture that surrounded Her. However, once this buffer zone had been created, figures such as Clement and Origen would begin to bridge the gap from a position of safety.

III. The Late Antique Christian-Pagan Synthesis

Having investigated the intellectual climate prior to Basil's life, now we will elaborate upon the second phase of the Christianization of Hellenism, the period in which *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* was written. The political ascendancy of the Church under Constantine's patronage ushered in a new dynamic for Christian-pagan relations during the lives of the Cappadocians. Now the Church had to adjust Her established patterns of views towards pagan culture to account for the new circumstances of political tolerance. She was not required to draw such a hard-line against the formerly politically but still culturally dominant pagan traditions from fear of persecution or forced conversion. She was able to more readily

[13] Ronald E. Heine, The Alexandrians," *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008),118-119.

admit the beneficial aspects of pagan culture for the benefit of Her body, the members of Christ.

Education, a nexus of ecclesiastical, cultural, and political interests, was an important area in this new attitude. The Cappadocians would grow up in this new empire where they would receive excellent intellectual training at traditional pagan institutions, yet receive the reinforcement of their piety by a state-sponsored Church. Jaroslav Pelikan[14] points out that the bond between Hellenism and the Church was so strong by the reign of Julian the Apostate that the emperor tried to separate the two by forbidding Christian teachers from teaching pagan works. Julian reasoned that Christian educators should not profess the works of authors who adhere to a religious system that Christians ridicule. St. Gregory Nazianzus refuted this argument in his Fourth Oration[15] by refusing to accept the claim that writing in Greek[16] and being culturally Greek[17] was limited to those who worship the Hellenic pantheon.

St. Basil also furnished a salvo in this intellectual discourse. *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* is a defense of the use of pre-Christian, primarily Greek letters, by school-aged members of the Church. Given the published status of the work, Basil must have intended it for a wider Christian audience[18]. The organized structure and comprehensive nature of the document betray its careful construction, thus emphasizing the claim that Basil intended it for a public readership. This quality of the work emphasizes its intention to be entered among the greater cultural-intellectual conversation occurring during the 4th century. *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ*

[14] Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 11-12.

[15] First Invective Against Julian.

[16] λόγοι

[17] ἑλληνίζειν

[18] Deferrari, 366.

NEOΥΣ contributes to the broader late antique pagan-Christian cultural synthesis by promoting the education of young Christian men in virtuous pagan literature, while zealously watching against examples of wickedness, for the purpose of preparing them for more advanced ethical studies within the Holy Scriptures. The Cappadocians were not the only ones to debate Christian schooling in the second period of the Christianisation of Hellenism.

Augustine, writing within this same time period, is in many ways a contemporary to Basil, although he was more versed in the Roman tradition[19]. Augustine does pose a slightly different opinion of the paideia. He seems overall more concerned with the technical skills to be acquired and less interested than Basil in the content effecting an ethical improvement in the students. Especially in Book I of the *Confessions* Augustine seems to denounce the moral value of studying the Trojan War, both with regard to the *Aeneid* and the Homeric epics. Yet elsewhere, such as Book IV of *On Christian Doctrine* he eagerly promotes the utility of rhetorical training for Christian intellectuals. Of course, Augustine also famously drew the concept of Christian's plundering Egyptian gold in pagan learning in Chapters 40-42 of Book II of *On Christian Doctrine*. And in this section he mimics many of the sentiments Basil expresses in *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*.

Finally, still within in this second phase, writing in the fourth century, monastics such as St. Jerome will take on a seemingly opposing view. But Basil does not expound, in this instance

[19] Augustine, *Confessions*. Trans. Edward Pusey, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1989), I.20.

[the treatise], the more demanding monastic attitudes towards non-Christian reading that Jerome promoted[20].

IV. The Rhetorical Structure of "Address to Young Men on Reading Greek Literature"

Basil's treatise will be examined with regard to the traditional categories of rhetoric. First, with respect to the three canons of rhetoric that apply to composition: invention, arrangement, and style[21]. Then the monograph will be analysed with respect to the three modes of persuasion: ethos, logos and pathos[22]. Special attention will be given to how Basil's use of the canons influence his various appeals.

In his invention[23], Basil chooses to center *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* on a deliberative discussion of the advantageous. Any other *τόποι* he gathers into his composition serve this primary end. More specifically his monograph expounds upon the ethical-psychological advantage young Christ-followers are to gain by studying pagan Greek literature in a discerning manner. The main premise of *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* is that pagan learning morally prepares the young baptized soul for loftier ethical studies. Basil is not concerned with the technical skills of grammar, logic, and rhetoric that form the trivial stage of the paideia. He instead takes interest in the character-forming effect of the paideia's content.

[20] Jerome, "Letter XXII to Eustochium," *Post Nicene Fathers 2nd Series*, Trans. W.H. Fremantle, Vol. VI. (Peabody, Massachusets: Hendrickson Publishers, 2012), 35. Frances Young, "Classical Genres and Christian Genres," *The Cambridge History of Early Christian Literature*, Eds. Frances Young, Lewis Ayres and Andrew Louth, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 252-253, sees this aspect of Jerome more as a paradox, and less as a differing stage of spiritual life. He also includes the other desert monastics and even the Cappadocians to certain extent.

[21] Edward Corbett and Robert Connors, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17.

[22] Corbett, 31.

[23] "Invention" refers to *εὕρεσις* in Greek or *inventio* in Latin, the first stage of ancient rhetorical practice in which arguments are discovered. See Aristotle's *Rhetoric* or Cicero's *De Inventione*.

The topic of the advantageous appears in the opening sentence of the address, standing as Basil's prominent motif. Basil writes at the beginning of section I: "Many considerations, young men, prompt me to recommend to you the principles which I deem most desirable, and which I believe will be of use to you if you will adopt them"[24]. The word 'desirable,' and the phrase 'of use to you' indicate something from which advantage is to be gained. Basil uses the Greek word *βέλτιστα*–the superlative form of "good"–to describe these principles. This word choice indicates that he sees this educational plan as optimal, but not necessary. Basil delves more thoroughly into the topic of the advantageous in the final paragraph of section two when he writes: "Consequently we must be conversant with poets, with historians, with orators, indeed with all men who may further our soul's salvation"[25]. The phrase 'who may further' indicates advantage in the sense that this pagan education for which Basil is advocating, will bring Christian men closer to their goal of attaining spiritual purity, and by extension, eternal life. This topic is additionally elaborated upon in sections three and seven.

Basil advances several other topics with the effect that they support and amplify his treatment of what is beneficial. First, the discussing of the good necessarily accompanies the advantageous. In advocating for the benefit to be gained by the pursuit of pagan learning, Basil sets up Greek literature as a good object. This first occurs in earnest in section V as a confirmation of what he stated in section IV. Basil alludes to several examples in the Greek corpus where virtue is esteemed the most worthy of possessions. The topics authority, difference, cause and effect, and injustice also make appearances. Authority opens the speech in

[24] Frederick M Padelford, *Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great*, (Yale Studies in English 15 1902) pp 99-120. Addressed to young men on the right use of Greek literature.

[25] Ibid.

section one as Basil establishes his credentials. Difference aids the division of edifying examples from corrupting examples in section IV. Cause and effect supports the reasoning for avoiding corrupting examples in the same section. Injustice surfaces in section VI as a negative example of virtue. The saintly bishop accompanies his sensible *inventio* with a comparatively pragmatic rationale and organization.

With regards to arrangement, Basil's treatise has been handed down to posterity having been divided into ten sections. The first three sections outline Basil's treatise and explain the role of pagan education in Christian moral development. The following three sections explain how a follower of Christ should discriminate the useful from the injurious while studying the authors of the paideia. The final four sections connect the study of noble Greek writings back into the theme of Christian spiritual praxis and the overcoming of the passions. This division of *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* is effective, but more appropriate for patient ancient audiences rather than agog modern ones.

Basil's arrangement is both judicious and strong. He adequately addresses common objections and amply supports his points. Basil also skillfully relates his body topic to the theme of Christian spiritual struggle. Evidence of this sound ordering of his argument is found in sections V through VII, where Basil progresses smoothly to his point. He begins in the fifth section by exhorting his audience to study the words of pagan authors who laud righteousness. Then, in section VI the Cappadocian exhorts his readers to imitate these same words with deeds. Finally, in the seventh section, he narrows his exhortation by telling his audience to imitate the noble deeds of the non-Christian Greek writers that accord with Christian teaching.

Basil's style is a product of his social and ecclesiastical position as well as his relationship to the disciples for whom he is writing. Basil writes with command and conviction. He fully believes what he has written, and he is eager to teach his wisdom to his audience.

Basil makes ample use of cases to illustrate his points. He especially likes similes and metaphors. He uses examples from literary, rural, and military life–thus making his views accessible to readers from all social classes. The bishop also tends to reinforce his points with multiple instances, strengthening his argument through repetition.

With respect to the three traditional modes of persuasion, Basil makes the most use of the ethical appeal. First, he establishes himself as a benevolent fatherly figure. Second, he reveals himself to be a trustworthy moral guide by showing his disdain for pagan immorality. Third, he proves, by the end, through his copious examples of pagan sources, that he is learned and worthy of the audience's trust in reference to educational concerns.

In preparation for treating the ethos of Basil's treatise, we will look at the make-up of Basil's audience, whose identity is disputed. Deferrari[26] posits that the audience consisted of "young men who made up a kind of seminary of his, either those who had just entered upon their studies for the priesthood or who had already received minor orders and were living in close contact with him." Based on what we know from writings such as St. John Chrysostom's *On the Priesthood*, St. Gregory the Theologian's *Apology for Avoiding the Priesthood*, and St. John Climacus' concluding remarks to the shepherd in his *Ladder of Divine Ascent*, which all speak very little of formal intellectual training and are almost completely concerned with the spiritual

[26]Deferrari, 365.

make up of a priest, the idea that there existed a type of seminary to whom Basil spoke seems implausible. Young, 252, claims that the recipients of *Address To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature* were Basil's nephews. Whoever precisely made up Basil's audience, they seem to be young men, in some ecclesiastical relationship of inferiority to Basil, who lived closely with him, and possibly were preparing to serve the Church in some formal capacity. These young men faced a dilemma. On the one hand they were Christians who were rightfully skeptical of the immoral aspects of pre-Christian antique culture. On the other hand they intrinsically recognized the benefits to be accrued from the educational method they inherited, which involved a thorough grounding in pagan authors.

Knowing the background to this work, we can see why Basil adopted an authoritative and didactic tone for its composition. Basil sought to shepherd his flock through the instrument of this treatise. He endeavored to teach them how to discern the useful within pagan Greek literature. He also exhorted them to gather the virtuous examples of their forebears as a preparation for deeper Christian ethical practices.

Basil's establishment of himself as a loving mentor begins with his use of the vocative case to describe his audience as "my children"[27]. The Greek phrase is "ὦ παῖδες." The noun is related to the verb meaning to educate or instruct, yet "παῖδες" also refers to young people (e.g. children) in general. The word paideia, the common method of ancient Greek pre-Christian education, now known as instruction in the liberal arts, is also related to "παῖδες". Paideia almost has the sense of "the thing young people do." Here we see how Basil's diction

[27] Ibid., 378-379.

immediately, in the beginning of the first section, lays the foundation for the didactic relationship to follow. This phrase is also repeated at the beginning of section II. For English speakers, a comparison might be a bishop speaking to young men, defending a form of education known literally as "the rearing of young men," who begins his speech by addressing his audience as "young men."

The title of the work also displays this master-pupil relationship straightaway. By saying "*young* men" Basil also plays on the fact that he is older and wiser, thus setting himself up over them.

Basil further bolsters his ethical appeal in section IV of the tract, where he shifts the focus of his writing. He moves from proving the utility of the study of pagan authors to showing his audience how to properly study the same authors. Discernment of the injurious and advantageous is the essence of Basil's concern until section IX. Basil passionately urges his audience to sincerely accept the virtuous examples found in Greek literature, but to diligently reject the examples of wickedness found in the same corpus. The Cappadocian so thoroughly stresses this point, that he succeeds in convincing his audience that he is worthy of their trust in him as a moral guide.

Basil uses one other phrase early on to ingratiate himself with his audience. Still within section I, Basil writes: "Moreover, I come immediately after your parents in natural relationship to you, so that I myself entertain for you no less good-will than do your fathers; and I am sure, unless I am somewhat wrong in my judgment of you, that you do not long for your parents when your eyes rest upon me"[28]. Basil sets himself up as a concerned relative in the first part of

[28] Ibid., 379.

the sentence. In the second part of the sentence, the Cappadocian equates his concern with the fervency of care with which a parent naturally attends to a child.

With regards to logos, Basil accomplishes a strong logical appeal through the simple but sound reasoning he exudes in the treatise as well as the arrangement of his composition,[29] which is of an equal standard to his argumentation. The text as a whole reads more like a rational argument than an impassioned speech. Basil often considers both sides of an issue, answers predicted counter claims, and uses hypothetical syllogisms to reason his point. In *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* he reasons thusly: because the end of this life is to attain eternal salvation by means of exercising divine commandments here on earth, the goal of Christian education is to teach young men the moral principles of the Holy Scriptures. Young men cannot readily comprehend the lofty ethical rules of Christianity. These immature students more readily apprehend the natural behavioral tenets contained in pre-Christian literature. However, once these pupils have apprehended the dimmer social code found in pagan texts, they are capable of moving on to the fuller moral truths found in the Holy Scriptures. Because young Christian men must come into contact with the pagan authors, and because these same students also have a duty to guard themselves against evil, they must discerningly use the Greek authors. This idea of preparation is similar in nature to Hesychios of Sinai's concept of the Old Testament as the outward preparation for the inward change affected by the New Testament[30].

The composition makes the least use of the emotional appeal. When it does, the pathos entreaty is often tied to discussions of morality. For example, in section IV, regarding pagan

[29] Arrangement in the classical rhetorical sense–τάξις–or–dispositio.

[30] St. Hesychios the Priest, "On Watchfulness and Holiness," *The Philokalia*, Trans. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard and Kallistos Ware, Vol. 1 (London: Faber and Faber, 1979), 181.

poets, Basil writes: "When they recount the words and deeds of good men, you should both love and imitate them, earnestly emulating such conduct. But when they portray base conduct, you must flee from them and stop up your ears, as Odysseus is said to have fled past the song of the sirens, for familiarity with evil writings paves the way for evil deeds. Therefore the soul must be guarded with great care, lest through our love for letters it receive some contamination unawares, as men drink in poison with honey"[31]. This passage is indicative of many others. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, where he arouses tender affection in the former and prudent caution in the later, this passage and others like it are the closest Basil comes to evoking strong emotions. He does so by re-establishing the original function of the parts of his audiences' souls. This theme, the proper ordering of a soul as being one whose anger is directed against evil while its desiring aspect longs for righteousness, occurs among some other Orthodox ascetical literature[32].

This selection also exemplifies the simple yet pious logic of the treatise, as well as the copious support used for his points. Here he poetically compares a young Christ follower being educated in the paideia and guarding his soul from wickedness to the Ithacan hero during his greatest moment of watchfulness. He ties the spiritual realm to the literary world of Greek mythology, while ending his advice with a simple comparison to honey and poison. This simpler image would ring true to the uneducated members of his audience who could vividly imagine the contrast between poison and honey. It is interesting to note that Basil uses a Homeric image as a metaphor, but by doing so also reinforces his overall rhetorical goal–

[31] Padelford.

[32] Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers*, Trans. Esther Williams, (Levadia: Birth of the Theotokos Monastery, 2006), 268.

proving the usefulness of the pagan corpus for Christians. Here he seems to follow the ancient rhetorical custom of ending his composition with a passionate arousal, which he does successfully.

Basil's didactic, authoritative, and copious style aids his ethos appeal. Basil's tremendous intellect, from which he draws many sundry examples, also fortifies his ethos and thereby his ethical appeal. Throughout his tract, Basil makes around 40 citations of antique authors, ranging from Hesiod and Homer to Plato and Euripides. By displaying this breadth of scholarship, his audience must recognize his authority on the subject–pagan Greek literature. St. Gregory Nazianzen, among others, reinforces this reputation[33]. By presenting himself as a kind benefactor, Basil's addressees are persuaded to respect his ethos and thereby more readily consent to his logical appeal. In spite of the fact that the reasoning behind *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* is both valid and sensible, lending the work a strong logical appeal, the literary creation possesses an unexceptional pathetic appeal.

V. Conclusion

Basil grew up in a transformed society, distinct from the Roman Empire of Justin and Tertullian. Christianity had won out by Basil's school years. Constantine, having ended the persecutions, had begun a long-term commitment to promoting Christianity. Basil was the descendant of martyrs, yet grew up in a spiritually favorable existence. He was able to look at pagan culture from a position of objectivity because it did not pose the dire threat to him that it did to Tertullian and Justin. The Great Cappadocian was able to synthesize the useful elements

[33]Gregory Nazianzen, *Orations*, The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, Vol. vii, Trans. C.G. Browne and J.E. Swallow, Ed. P. Schaff, (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1974), *Oration XLIII*.

of pagan culture with the newfound Christian purpose of education within his treatise *To Young Men on Reading Greek Literature*. Though other famous fathers, such as Jerome, would go on to express negative views towards pagan authors[34]. The other Cappadocians would second Basil's positive view towards the paideia, and help establish the place of pagan writers within Byzantine society[35]. This accounts for the finding of Homeric references in such disparate figures as Hesychios of Sinai[36] and Anna Komnene.

Finally, the impact of Basil's treatise is still felt today, especially in America, where a resurgent interest in classical Christian schooling has sparked heated debates[37]. Given the pluralistic religious and ethnic climate, coupled with the broken link between the classical educators of the past and the current revivalists, many conflicts arise regarding which curriculum should be used and why. Some schools struggle to choose an appropriate amount and type of content: they debate over how many of the years they have their students should be devoted to classical Greek literature versus Elizabethan or Victorian. They also struggle over which language should be offered as a vehicle for teaching grammar: on one end of the spectrum some believe only English sentence diagramming is necessary and appropriate while the opposite end of the spectrum advocates Greek and Latin as core subjects from elementary

[34] The view that while non-Christian literature might be appropriate for a fledgling believer, strong ascetics needed to shun non-Christian reading altogether in order to advance spiritually. Even this practice was not codified or universally exhibited.

[35] And in some respects Augustine would do this with a more Roman tinge for western medieval society, though to a much lesser degree.

[36] Text 144, pg. 187.

[37] See Jack Trotter, "Conservative Education: Caveat Emptor!" *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture*, 1 August 2014, for one example of this.

school[38]. Some daring institutions have begun teaching the Quadrivium as a subject, complete with copies of Ptolemy, Kepler, and Euclid.

Frankly, all of this interest is good and well. Often the fledgling attempt of these classical schools to present an alternative to a failing local education center is sufficient in and of itself to produce healthy and capable graduates, regardless of what precise dose of subject combinations they received. I am simply calling for a more serious investigation of what figures such as St. Basil the Great saw classical Christian education to be. Various patristic authors expressed disdain for any knowledge of the Quadrivium past an ability to understand it and argue with material from it. Many early Church fathers saw no need to learn Latin, themselves already knowing Greek. While Basil advocates for the moral utility of studying Homer, his ascetic sister St. Macrina[39] is variously credited with pulling him from the luring career of a rhetorician and sending him on his monastic path, for which reason we all know Basil today.

Though many classical school educators claim affinity with Basil's *ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ* monograph, a greater understanding of Basil's purpose in writing it and a deeper look into his life to find his views on other aspects of classical education is a necessary step towards wielding his words wisely. Basil cannot be taken out of his context: the late antique Byzantine Empire. Neither can other authors cited in the ongoing classical Christian education debate. If they are to be cited, then they must be taken with proper qualifiers.

[38] I am amicably partial to this view.
[39] The Younger, who many claim was the most pious of her entire saintly family.