

BASIL AND APOKATASTASIS: NEW FINDINGS

Ilaria L.E. Ramelli

Catholic University Milan; Angelicum University; Erfurt University

ABSTRACT

Unlike his brother Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea is not regarded as a supporter of the Origenian doctrine of apokatastasis or universal restoration. However, I have suggested elsewhere that Basil too had a penchant for this doctrine, even though he did not preach it overtly. Now I have found further indirect but substantial evidence, which strongly confirms my previous suggestion and which I am going to analyse here. It is important to assess this remarkable issue on the basis of all the elements that are at our disposal.

Keywords: Basil of Caesarea, Orosius, Apokatastasis, Augustine of Hippo, Ps. Basil, Origenism

1 OROSIUS ON BASIL AS SUPPORTER OF APOKATASTASIS

Basil of Caesarea is not generally considered to have been a supporter of the Origenian doctrine of apokatastasis, unlike his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa, who upheld this doctrine in an even stronger form than Origen did, including the salvation of the devil, without much hesitation. However, I have suggested elsewhere that Basil too had a penchant for this doctrine, even though he did not preach it overtly, at least not to those who were not morally, intellectually, and spiritually advanced.¹ Now I have found further indirect but substantial evidence, which I am going to analyse here. It is important to assess this remarkable issue based on all the elements that are at our disposal.

1 In *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), the section on the Cappadocians.

Let me start with a testimony that I discovered only recently and that at first sight is puzzling, but in the light of the whole analysis, I am proposing becomes much less so. It is found in Paulus Orosius' *Commonitorium de errore Priscillianistarum et Origenistarum*,² prepared for Augustine around the year 414, to which Augustine replied in his *Ad Orosium contra Priscillianistas et Origenistas*, drawing many elements from Orosius' work. In section 3 of his *Commonitorium*, pp. 160-162, Orosius reports that two men, both named Avitus, travelled one to Jerusalem and the other to Rome, and brought back from there 'one Origen, and the other Marius Victorinus' (*unus rettulit Origenem, alius Victorinum*). Both, however, concentrated more on Origen (*Victorini sectator cessit Origeni*) and began to propose many ideas from Origen as wonderful (*coeperunt ergo ex Origene magnifica plura proponi*).³ At this point Orosius begins to expound these Origenian doctrines, first those, which he deems orthodox, and then those, which he regards critically. The good Origenian doctrines spread by the two Aviti, according to Orosius, concern the Trinity, the creation of everything by God *de nihilo*, the goodness of all creatures, and the exegesis of Scriptures.⁴

Then comes the most interesting part of Orosius' exposition, and the most relevant to Basil's theology and its relation to Origen's, particularly to Origen's doctrine of apokatastasis. For Orosius states, that not only the two aforementioned Aviti, but also Basil taught some Origenian doctrines that Orosius deems debatable, among which that of apokatastasis. It is worth analysing the whole passage more closely (pp. 161–162). There is no doubt that Orosius means Basil of Caesarea, the Cappadocian, since he describes him as 'St. Basil the Greek':

Isti uero Auiti duo et cum his sanctus Basilius Graecus, qui haec beatissime docebant, quaedam ex libris ipsius Origenis non recta, ut nunc perintellego, tradiderunt.

The first of these doctrines that for Orosius are not correct, but that Basil taught on the basis of Origen is the eternal pre-existence of creatures in God's Wisdom, which would make them coeternal with God (*Primum: omnia, antequam facta apparerent, semper in dei sapientia facta mansisse dicentes hoc uerbo: Deus enim quaecumque fecit faciendo non coepit*). Of course, this is a misunderstanding of Origen's doctrine of the eternal pre-existence of the ideas or *logoi* or paradigmatic models of all creatures in God, before their creation as substances (*Princ. 1.4.4-5*).⁵ Orosius passed on this misunderstanding

2 Ed. Carl Zangmeister, CSEL 18 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1889). Pages and line numbers will refer to this edition.

3 See later Augustine, *C. Priscill. et Orig.* 3.3, based on this passage of Orosius.

4 *Didicimus enim de Trinitate doctrinam satis sanam, omnia, quae facta essent, a deo facta esse, et omnia bona ualde et facta de nihilo, tunc deinde scripturarum solutiones satis sobrias* (p. 160).

5 *Deum quidem Patrem semper fuisse, semper habentem unigenitum Filium, qui simul et Sapientia [...] appellatur: [...] In hac igitur Sapientia, quae semper erat cum Patre, descripta semper inerat ac formata conditio et numquam erat quando eorum, quae futura erant, praefiguratio apud Sapientiam non erat. [...] ut neque ingenitas neque coaeternas Deo creaturas dicamus, neque rursus, cum nihil boni prius egerit Deus, in id ut ageret esse conversum [...] Si utique in Sapientia omnia facta sunt, cum Sapientia semper fuerit, secundum praefigurationem et praeformationem semper erant in Sapientia ea, quae protinus etiam substantialiter facta sunt.*

to Augustine (*C. Priscill. et Orig.* 8.9). The second Origenian doctrine taught by Basil is that all rational creatures had one and the same origin and nature, and got differentiated at a certain point according to their different moral choices (*Deinde dixerunt angelorum, principatum, potestatum, animarum ac daemonum unum principium et unam esse substantiam et uel archangelo uel animae uel daimoni locum pro meritorum qualitate datum esse, utentes hoc uerbo: Maiorem locum minor culpa promeruit*). This doctrine is correctly ascribed to both Origen and his followers, including the Cappadocians.⁶

Another Origenian doctrine attributed to Basil is the creation of the world — without further specification whether the sense-perceptible world or the intelligible world or the intellectual creation, but the reference seems to be to the sense-perceptible world — only after the fall of the souls, for their purification (*Mundum nouissime ideo esse factum ut in eo animae purgarentur*).⁷ This is not entirely correct,⁸ but is the way Origen's doctrine was often represented. But the Origenian doctrine of Basil on which Orosius concentrates most of all is precisely that of apokatastasis:

Ignem sane aeternum, quo peccatores puniantur, neque esse ignem uerum neque aeternum praedicauerunt, dicentes dictum esse ignem propriae conscientiae punitionem. Aeternum autem iuxta etymologiam Graecam non esse perpetuum, etiam Latino testimonio adiecto, quia dictum sit, "in aeternum et in saeculum saeculi"⁹ postposuerit aeterno, ac sic omnes peccatorum animas post purgationem conscientiae in unitatem corporis Christi esse redituras. Voluerunt etiam de diabolo asserere, sed non praeualuerunt, eo quod, cum substantia in eo bona facta perire non possit, exusta in totum malitia diaboli aliquando saluandam esse substantiam.

This point, too, will appear again in Augustine, *C. Priscill. et Orig.* 5.5 and 8.10. Jerome's Letter 124 to Avitus is likely to have inspired Orosius' Origenistic dossier, but interestingly enough there is no trace of Basil in Jerome's letter; therefore, the reference to Basil as a supporter of apokatastasis must have come to Orosius through another source. Basil's teachings concerning apokatastasis, as reported by Orosius in the block quotation, are the following four:

1) The fire of hell is not a true fire, i.e. not a sense-perceptible or material fire, but rather the punishment of one's conscience. This is indeed a doctrine that Origen and his followers, down to John the Scot Eriugena, did express; being a fire that 'cannot be extinguished', it cannot be the material fire we experience in this world, which can be quenched by means of water or else.

2) The fire of hell is not eternal, because it is called in Greek, in the New Testament, πῦρ αἰώνιον (and not πῦρ ἀίδιον), and αἰώνιος does not mean 'eternal'. Indeed, in the Bible αἰώνιος conveys the meaning of eternity only when it refers to God, because of God and not of its intrinsic semantic value. For αἰώνιος in Scripture means remote,

6 This too appears again in Augustine, *C. Priscill. et Orig.* 8.9; 9.12; 11.14.

7 Augustine, *C. Priscill. et Orig.* 8.10.

8 See my 'Preexistence of Souls'? The ἀρχή and τέλος of Rational Creatures in Origen and Some Origenians', in Markus Vinzent (ed.), *Studia Patristica LVI*, vol. 4 (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 167–226.

9 Ps. 9:6; 10:16.

ancient, mundane, long lasting, and otherworldly or pertaining to the future aeon. That $\pi\tilde{\nu}\rho$ αἰώνιον means ‘fire in the next world’ and not ‘eternal fire’ was indeed well clear to Origen and to most Greek Patristic authors, as I have demonstrated elsewhere,¹⁰ including Basil himself. Indeed, a special investigation into Basil’s terminology of eternity exactly confirms this awareness of his. Basil uses ἀίδιος, meaning ‘absolutely eternal’, in reference to the absolute eternity of God, of the Son who is eternally generated, — especially in his polemic against the ‘neo-Arian’ Eunomius —, of the Spirit, of divine attributes, or in reference to eternal and intelligible realities, and to the future life, which is described in this case as eternal proper.¹¹ The same is the case with ‘eternal victory’ (ἀίδιος νίκη).¹² In the case of angels, the state that existed before the creation of the world (κόσμος), and is apt to the powers that are beyond the world, not only is beyond time in the present world (ὑπέρχρονος), but it even lasts through the aeons (αἰωνία), and is absolutely eternal (ἀίδιος), that is, beyond all aeons.¹³ Here Basil clearly distinguishes the meanings of ἀίδιος and αἰώνιος, reserving the sense of absolute eternity for the former. He observes that ‘some people attach to the aeons [αἰῶνες], too, the name of ‘eternal’ [τοῦ ἀίδιου],¹⁴ but he keeps the two distinct, thus showing that he was well aware of the semantic difference between αἰώνιος and ἀίδιος.

Basil uses αἰώνιος in scriptural citations, for instance in the sense — frequent in the Septuagint — of ‘remote, ancient’ (so, for example, he glosses the Biblical ὄρια αἰώνια with ὄρια πατέρων) or ‘enduring through generations’, again in the contrasting couple πρόσκαιρα and αἰώνια, ‘ephemeral’ and ‘long lasting’. However, he does not use it in the sense of ‘eternal’ apart from scriptural quotations concerning God. Most often, Basil uses the Gospel phrase ζωὴ αἰώνιος, ‘life in the world to come’. He paraphrases Jesus’s words that one who hates one’s own ψυχή in this world (ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ) will preserve it for life in the other world (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).¹⁵ Drawing on John, Basil describes ζωὴ αἰώνιος as ζωὴ tout court, in that it is the true life, and is Christ.¹⁶ Opposed to this and similar positive ideas, such as αἰώνιος glory etc., which are also widely attested in Basil, is, among Basil’s expressions, αἰσχύνη αἰώνιος, ‘shame in the other world’, this too a quotation from the Bible, and αἰώνιος καταφθορά, ‘ruin/perdition in the next world’, and, above all, $\pi\tilde{\nu}\rho$ αἰώνιον, ‘otherworldly fire’, another Biblical expression, e.g. in *Prol.* 7 PG 31.673, where Basil cites Jesus’s words about people who have not done works of mercy and are sent to fire in the other world. *Ibid.* 8 PG 31.685, Basil paraphrases Scripture when he says that the just will go to ζωὴ αἰώνιος and the Kingdom of heavens, while sinners will be sent to κόλασις αἰώνιος, where, as

10 Ilaria Ramelli & David Konstan, *Terms for Eternity. Αἰώνιος and ἀίδιος in Classical and Christian Authors* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2007; new edition 2011).

11 *C. Eun.* 769.9; *De Spir. S.* 28.27.

12 *Cons. ad aegr.* PG 31.1713.33.

13 *Serm. in Hex.* 1.5.

14 *C. Eun.* 608.45.

15 *Reg. brev.* PG 31.1120.

16 *De Bapt.* PG 31.1148.

per Scripture, the worm does not die and the fire cannot be put out. The same opposition, ζωή αἰώνιος vs. κόλασις αἰώνιος, is found again *ibid.* 892, in which punishment in the other world is exemplified by the σκότος αἰώνιον, ‘otherworldly darkness’. Parallel is the phrase ‘αἰώνιος death’, death in the world to come: in *Hom. in Ps.* 61,4 this expression does not indicate an eternal damnation (and indeed it is not ἀίδιος), but death in the sense of separation from God in the next world for those who have chosen delights in this world, instead of electing virtue and the suffering that virtue always brings about in this world:

to choose a temporary pleasure and because of it to receive death in the other world [θάνατος αἰώνιος], or to choose suffering in the exercise of virtue and use it to receive delight in the other world.

Indeed, Basil’s thought is perfectly parallel to that of his brother Gregory of Nyssa in his reflections on the parable of Dives and Lazarus in *De anima et resurrectione*: Lazarus chose the true good, and therefore suffering, in this world, and has rest and comfort in ‘Abraham’s bosom’ in the other world, while Dives chose delight and vice in this world (apparent goods), and thus suffering in the next.¹⁷ However, this does not mean in the least that for Gregory the otherworldly suffering of the wicked will be eternal. Neither does it need to mean so for Basil. That αἰώνιος in all of these cases refers to the world to come, according to the Biblical use, is clear from *Cons. ad aegr.* PG 31,1720, where it is stated that a rich man, if rich in virtue, will be rich also in the next world, but if deprived of virtue, he will be ‘poor in the world to come’, πένης αἰώνιος. The same is also clear from Basil’s glossing αἰωνία ζημία, as opposed to αἰωνία ἐλπής, with τὴν ἐπερχομένην ζημίαν,¹⁸ thus equating αἰώνιος punishment and punishment ‘in the future world’, and not ‘eternal’. Again, Basil contrasts the present moment (πρόσκαιρον) with the future time (αἰών), and the use of ὕστερον confirms that αἰώνιος means ‘pertaining to the future ‘aeon’ and not ‘eternal’, and the worm αἰώνιος is that which pertains to the future aeon.¹⁹ Basil has martyr Gordius say: Should I reject Christ, ‘so that I may gain the reward of a few days? But I shall be punished for the entire aeon to come’, αἰῶνα ὅλον ζημωθήσομαι. The martyr adds: ‘It is obvious madness to die with art, and with evil and treachery to prepare for oneself punishment in the world to come’, αἰωνίαν κόλασιν.²⁰ The ‘entire aeon to come’ refers to the next aeon, which will last until the end of the aeon itself, or of all aeons.

17 See my commentary in *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione* (Milan: Bompiani–Catholic University, 2007) and the reviews by Panayiotis Tzamalikos, review of Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione*, *Vigiliae Christianae* 62 (2008), 515–523; Mark J. Edwards, review of Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione*, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 60 (2009), 764–765; Miguel Herrero de Háuregui, review of Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione*, *Ilu* 13 (2008), 334–336; Giulio Maspero, review of Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa sull’anima e la resurrezione*, *Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum* 15 (2011), 592–594.

18 *Or. in Lacis* PG 31.1448.31.

19 *Hom. exh. Bapt.* PG 31.436.11.

20 *Gord. Mart.* PG 31.505.14.

It is remarkable that Basil uses *ἀίδιος*, ‘eternal’, *only* in phrases that denote the future life and beatitude, and *never* in phrases that signify damnation. Like Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and other Patristic thinkers, he *never* speaks of *ἀίδιον* fire or *ἀίδιος* punishment. This choice, at least linguistically, rules out an otherworldly fire or punishment conceived as absolutely eternal, all the more so in that Basil clearly endows *αἰώνιος* with the sense of ‘pertaining to the world to come’. This strict linguistic consistency is well understandable in an author who was very familiar with Origen’s writings.

3) Basil’s third doctrine related to apokatastasis, according to Orosius, is that all the souls of sinners, after due purification, will be restored to the unity of Christ. This is exactly the doctrine of universal restoration and *ἔνωσις* that Origen taught, followed in this closely by Gregory of Nyssa.²¹ Now it is most interesting that, according to Orosius, this doctrine was also shared by Basil. While this may seem to be a gross mistake at first sight, the preceding notes on Basil’s terminology of eternity and the analysis that will follow reveal that Orosius’ claim was not so mistaken.

4) Basil’s fourth doctrine related to apokatastasis, according to Orosius, is that the devil, being a creature of God, is good in his substance, and his substance cannot be destroyed; therefore, after a full purification, with the total destruction of his evilness, he too will be saved in his substance. This is exactly Origen’s argument in *Princ.* 3,6,5,²² followed by Gregory Nyssen and later on by John Eriugena. As I will show now, Basil too, even though with many doubts, left the door open to this possibility.

2 THE COMMENTARY ON ISAIAH AND BASIL’S OTHER ‘OPENINGS’

One of the most important witnesses to this, and to Basil’s openness to the apokatastasis doctrine is his Commentary on Isaiah,²³ which only extends up to Isaiah 16 and is attested by a copious manuscript tradition, in which the attribution to Basil is unanimous. This work is recognised, as Basil’s by Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, Simeon Logothetes, Antony Melissa, Tarasius, and the Greek scholiast on the Letters of Paul, who is supposed to be Oecumenius. Basil’s paternity has been questioned,²⁴ but it has been convincingly defended by Nikolaj A. Lipatov on the basis of close methodological similarities between this commentary and Basil’s *Hexaëmeron* in theology, exegesis, Biblical textual discussion, expressions, and use of philosophical

21 See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the chapters on Origen and Nyssen.

22 See Gabriel Bunge, ‘Créé pour être’, *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique* 98 (1997): 21–29.

23 Editions: PG 30.117–668; Pietro Trevisan, *San Basilio. Commento al profeta Isaia* (Turin: SEI, 1939).

24 See CPG 2.2911; Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, 3 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1962), 147–148; Johannes Quasten, *Patrology* (Westminster, Mar.: The Newman Press, 1963), 218–219.

and scientific knowledge.²⁵ Other scholars, too, uphold Basil's paternity.²⁶ Like Origen's commentaries, also this commentary by Basil was not intended for a simple audience (and this can explain some of its features, including a rather overt penchant for the apokatastasis doctrine, since Basil, like Origen himself, addressed the simple in a certain way, and the more advanced in another).

In Commentary on Isaiah 2:85 Basil expresses a view of divine pedagogy that is similar to Origen's. God's claim that he will not forgive his people for their sins is presented as a παιδαγωγία σωτήριος, a pedagogical threat aimed at the salvation of the people. This threat is good, because its Author is good: 'the Good one does this as a benefit'. A parallel passage from Basil's *Homilies on Psalms*, PG 29.313.44-50 even displays verbal borrowings from Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*, since it takes over Origen's quotations from Jeremiah and his interpretation of these passages, about God's habit of first inflicting death and suffering on sinners, and later restoring them to life and bestowing many goods on them.²⁷ Basil is commenting on the Psalms, and not on Jeremiah; it is even clearer, then, that he wrote his passage with Origen's exegesis of Jeremiah in mind. Basil's passage, just like Origen's, focuses on God's action of restoring. Both Origen and Basil share the same quotation, with the verb ἀποκαθίστημι.²⁸ However, the whole teaching on divine pedagogy and threats is identical in Basil here and in Origen's *Homilies on Jeremiah*. This pedagogic perspective, indeed, had been already embraced by Clement, Origen and Nyssen, who used it in support of their theory of apokatastasis; Basil too emphasised the 'divine pedagogy', especially in his *Hexaëmeron*, the Commentary on Isaiah, and the *Homilies on Psalms*. Christ is the Teacher, and the world is a school for rational creatures. Now Basil is clear that all rational beings, and not only some, will profit from it: 'It was created in order to provide a *great* advantage to *all* beings, because it is the school of rational souls, the

25 Nikolaj A. Lipatov, 'The Problem of the Authorship of the Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah Attributed to St. Basil the Great', *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993): 42–48, and his translation of the Commentary itself, with introduction: St. Basil the Great, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* (Mandelbachtal–Cambridge: Editions Cicero, 2001).

26 E.g. Trevisan, *San Basilio*; Roger Gryson and Dominique Szmatala, 'Les commentaires patristiques sur Isaïe d'Origène à Jérôme', *Revue des études augustiniennes* 36 (1990), 1–41.

27 On which see Ilaria Ramelli, 'Origen's Exegesis of Jeremiah: Resurrection Announced throughout the Bible and its Twofold Conception', *Augustinianum* 48 (2008), 59–78.

28 Here is the most relevant passage from Basil: ἡδίων ἐστὶν ἢ ἀπόλαυσις, προκαθηγησαμένων αὐτῆς τῶν λυπούντων. Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀποκτενῶ, φησὶ, καὶ ζῆν ποιήσω. Δευτέρα ἢ εὐεργεσία μετὰ τὴν κόλασιν. Πατάξω, καὶ γὰρ ἰάσομαι. Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἀλγεῖν ποιεῖ, καὶ πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησιν· ἔπαισε, καὶ αἱ χεῖρες αὐτοῦ ἰάσαντο. Προλαμβάνει τὰ κακοῦντα, ἵνα μονιμώτεροι ἡμῖν αἱ χάριτες γένωνται. Origen in *Hom. in Jer.* 1.15–16 likewise wrote: 'Thus, he necessarily begins with bitter words such as "I shall kill" [Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἀποκτενῶ] and *then*, after killing, he says: "I shall make live [καὶ ζῆν ποιήσω]." "I shall strike, and I shall heal [Πατάξω, καὶ γὰρ ἰάσομαι]." ... First he beats, and after that he heals; for he causes one to suffer, and then he restores him again [αὐτὸς γὰρ ἀλγεῖν ποιεῖ, καὶ πάλιν ἀποκαθίστησιν]. ... In Scripture we have always observed the sad aspects, so to speak, mentioned first, and then those which appear joyous mentioned afterwards. First the aspects concerning injustice and sin are presented, then those concerning justification from sin, not the reverse ... first we shall receive bad things, sufferings, and then goods'. Basil is echoing Origen verbally.

place in which they are *educated to the knowledge of God*.²⁹ This claim has a strong universalistic drift and suggests that all rational souls will be educated to the knowledge of God.

God's being the Good itself is also at the basis of Basil's *De Spir. S.* 16. Christ's economy, that is, his incarnation and work for the sake of humanity, has taken place 'according to the goodness of God', κατὰ τὴν ἀγαθότητα τοῦ Θεοῦ. And it is brought to perfection by the Spirit. The Spirit assists the life of the Church, and it will assist all in the eschatological scenario. For it will be present at the second coming of Christ and the Judgement. Then, the crown of the just will be a grace of the Spirit, whereas the others will be separate from it, and this will constitute their very suffering. Otherworldly suffering will not be physical: this idea is rejected as something μυθικόν by Basil, just as by Origen and Gregory Nyssen. This perfectly corresponds to Orosius' report on Basil's rejection of a materialistic, literal conception of the πῦρ αἰώνιον, which I have already analysed.

The other Origenian opinion of Basil concerning this fire (πῦρ αἰώνιον) reported by Orosius is its non-eternity, as I have already pointed out. Now this too can be found in Basil's commentary on Isaiah. In his Commentary on Chapter 9 of Isaiah, 19, Basil maintains that, if one acknowledges his sins, his punishment becomes, not eternal, but temporal; as a consequence, it can be expiated by means of the purifying fire. If such an acknowledgment of sins, which clearly implies their rejection, can take place in the other world as well, so that the otherworldly fire (πῦρ αἰώνιον) becomes, not an eternal punishment with no constructive goal, but a purification. This leaves the door open for universal salvation. Basil's commentary on Isaiah 9 interprets this chapter as an expression of the 'doctrine of salvation', τὸ δόγμα τῆς σωτηρίας. The Angel-Logos knows the Great Intention of God (being the ἄγγελος τῆς μεγάλης βουλής), that is, God's salvific plan, which had remained concealed for whole ages, and is finally announced to the ἔθνη as well. Christ, 'lifted up on the cross, *has pulled up everyone to himself*', πάντα εἴλκυσεν πρὸς ἑαυτόν (John 12:31–32). This points again in the direction of universal salvation.

Basil relates the peace established by Christ to his action of drawing all to himself and submitting all to himself, with a reference to the universal submission to Christ in 1 Cor. 15:24–28. Basil interprets this Pauline prophecy just like his brother Gregory in his *In illud: Tunc et ipse Filius* in reference to the eventual apokatastasis:³⁰

The peace given by the Lord extends to all eternity, since it knows neither limitations nor boundaries. For *all beings will submit to him* [πάντα γὰρ ὑποταγήσεται αὐτῷ], and all will recognise his power. And when *God has come to be 'all in all'* [ὁ Θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι],

29 See Basil's first Homily on the *Hexaëmeron*: this world is a θεογνωσίας παιδευτήριον, a διδασκαλεῖον.

30 For Gregory's *In illud*, in turn entirely dependent on Origen's exegesis of 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, see my '*In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius...* (1 Cor. 15:27–28): Gregory of Nyssa's Exegesis, Its Derivations from Origen, and Early Patristic Interpretations Related to Origen's', in Jane Baun, Averil Cameron, Mark Edwards, Markus Vinzent (eds.), *Studia Patristica XLIV* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 259–274.

after those who created disorders with apostasies have been *pacified* [καθησυχασθέντων τῶν θορυβούντων ταῖς ἀποστασίαις], *all will hymn to God in a symphony of peace*.³¹

The hymns to God and the symphony make manifest that the eventual submission of all, in Basil's view, will not be forced, but voluntary, just as Origen and Nyssen maintained, in their equation between universal submission and universal salvation. Basil does not foresee the destruction or the exclusion of those who are enemies of God due to sin, but their conversion with a view to the universal eventual harmony. This is also the way Origen, Bardaisan, and Gregory Nyssen conceived the ultimate apokatastasis: as harmony, peace, and unity.

Basil then in his commentary on Isaiah returns to the therapeutic and pedagogic function of punishments:

And the whole people did not convert, until it was not struck. As a consequence, for people of this kind, beating is necessary [...] Why does it hail? For our own fault, because we have a heart that does not want to repent, and *we do not convert unless we are struck*.

This leads Basil to a pivotal declaration in connection with apokatastasis, where again the concept of the πῦρ αἰώνιον emerges again. A sin generates other sins, like darnel, and this darnel will be burnt by fire, unless the series of sins is not interrupted by conversion. If there is no conversion, the darnel will be burnt out by the purifying fire, not for the destruction, but for the salvation of the sinner through purification. This is why Basil calls the threat and the punishment itself a benefit: 'Then he adds that his wrath does not yet go away, but his hand, raised, is still up there, because of those who in the people make others err and go astray themselves, that is, all the impious, the wicked, and those who say iniquitous things. The threat, however, in some way *manifests the benefit* [ἔχει δέ τινα ἢ ἀπειλή εὐεργεσίας ἔμφρασις]: *iniquity will burn like fire and will be burnt off*. For by the good Master, *as a benefit toward humanity, it has been providentially arranged for the matter provided by iniquity to be doomed to disappearance* [τὴν γὰρ παρασκευασθεῖσαν ὕλην ἐκ τῆς ἀνομίας ἀφανισμῶ παραδοθῆναι ἐπ' εὐεργεσίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων παρὰ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ Δεσπότητος ὠκονόμεται]. And — he says — it will be devoured by fire like dry darnel, and will be *burnt out* [...] if we put off sin by means of its acknowledgment, we shall transform it into dry darnel, worthy of being devoured by the *purifying fire* [ὑπὸ τοῦ καθαρτικοῦ πυρὸς καταβρωθῆναι]'. This is why Basil describes the otherworldly fire, πῦρ αἰώνιον, as both illumining the righteous and burning sinners,³² performs a purifying function in its very burning — hence, the final vanishing (ἀφανισμός) of iniquity (ἀνομία) and evil. It is the same theme of the eventual disappearance of evilness (ἀφανισμός τῆς κακίας) as is found in Origen, Gregory Nyssen, and Evagrius.³³ Basil, like Origen and Nyssen, stresses the value of free will: one has to acknowledge one's sins and detach oneself from them that they may be burnt out.

31 *Enarr.* in Isaiah 9.227.

32 Here in 10.544AB and in *Hex.* 6.336–338.

33 For Evagrius' eschatology see my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section of Evagrius.

Likewise Basil interprets Isaiah's verse, 'The whole earth has been burnt together [συγκέκασται] by the force of the Lord's wrath', as referring to the purifying fire, whose aim is not do destroy, but to benefit those burned, again through purification: 'He shows that earthly things are handed to the *punishing/educating fire for the advantage of the soul* [τὰ γήϊνα τῷ πυρὶ τῷ κολαστικῷ παραδίδωται ἐπὶ εὐεργεσία τῆς ψυχῆς], in the same way as is also suggested by the Lord when he says: 'I have come to cast fire onto the earth, and I would like to see it already kindled.' And *the people, seen as burnt by fire, will represent the human being*. He does *not threaten destruction, but indicates purification* [οὐκ ἀφανισμόν ἀπειλεῖ, ἀλλὰ τὴν κάθαρσιν ὑποφαίνει], in accord with what the Apostle says: 'If the work of anyone is burnt, this person will suffer a loss; however, he himself *will be saved*, but only in this way, as through fire'. Even the otherworldly punishing fire (πῦρ κολαστικόν) is purifying: it punishes what is earthly for the purification of the soul. This fire is brought about by the Lord, who is the Good itself, and only does good. Κολαστικός derives from κόλασις, a kind of punishment that benefits the punished and educative punishment. This differs from τιμωρία, a retributive punishment, and not purifying. The New Testament speaks only of κόλασις αἰώνιος, educative/purifying punishment in the other world (Matt 25:46), and never of τιμωρία αἰώνιος. The fire of which Basil is speaking will entirely destroy evil, and not any human person; these will be *purified* from evil, and thereby liberated from evil, by that fire. Basil is clearly following Origen on this score. In support of his idea of the πῦρ αἰώνιον as a fire that consumes sins and evil deeds, thereby purifying and saving the sinner, Basil adduces 1 Cor. 3:14–15, where Paul deals with the eschatological test: if one's deeds are good and resist fire like a strong building, one will receive a reward; if, instead, one's building — that is, one's deed — is burnt out by that fire, one 'will suffer a loss; however, he himself *will be saved*, as *through fire*'. This passage contemplates either an immediate salvation or a salvation 'through fire;' there is no mention of a definitive damnation.

It comes as no surprise that this Pauline passage should be cited in support of the doctrine of restoration.³⁴ Origen and his followers did not posit, besides the purifying fire, another, merely retributive fire, while theologians such as Augustine kept the purifying fire separate from the retributive one, thus paving the way for the construal of purgatory as separate from hell. Basil, seems to attach both functions to the same fire: punishment and definitive destruction of sins, and thereby purification of sinners. Actually, Sozomen states that Basil, like Gregory Nazianzen, 'relied to the utmost extent on Origen's teachings',³⁵ including in their scriptural exegesis — and indeed Basil based himself, often even heavily, on Origen's exegesis.³⁶ Socrates, an admirer of Origen, speaks at

34 Origen, *Hom. 3 in Ps. 36*; Jerome, *Lect. 3 in Amos*; Ambrose, *Exp. in Ps. 36*; Basil himself, Augustine, *Exp. in Ps. 36*; Caesarius, *Serm. 104*.

35 *HE* 6.17.

36 See Mark DelCogliano, 'Tradition and Polemic in Basil of Caesarea's Homily on the Theophany', *Vigiliae Christianae* 66 (2012), 30–55. Basil's criticism of allegory in his *Hexaëmeron* should not be understood as directed against Origen, who is never mentioned by name therein, but rather as directed against radical allegorists and dualists such as 'Gnostics' and Manichaeans.

length of Basil and Nazianzen's predilection for Origen and of their compilation of the *Philocalia*, the anthology of Origen's writings,³⁷ which followed Pamphilus' quotation methodology and excerpted not only his exegetical works, but also his letter to Gregory Thaumaturgus, *Contra Celsum*, and Περὶ Ἀρχῶν (Chapter 1 of the *Philocalia*, which opens the section on Biblical exegesis, and Chapter 21, which opens that on free will, derive from Origen's philosophico-theological masterpiece and are highlighted more than the others from a doctrinal viewpoint). After beginning their study of philosophy, according to Socrates, Basil and Gregory approached Origen's works, and drew from him the allegorical method of Scriptural exegesis. Socrates observes that in the day of Basil Origen enjoyed 'everywhere a great prestige and renown' (μέγα κλέος). Socrates underscores that Basil and Nazianzen were able to refute 'Arianism' thanks to their hard study of Origen.³⁸ The 'Arians' adduced passages from Origen in support of their own ideas, but Basil and Nazianzen argued that they misunderstood Origen's writings, since these buttressed the Nicene doctrine.³⁹ Basil was also influenced by Eusebius, who was neither 'Arian' nor 'semi-Arian' but subscribed to the Nicene creed, perhaps even determining its shaping⁴⁰ — further confirms Basil's allegiance to the line of Origen. Basil ordained a reader Evagrius, a faithful Origenian, and inspired his thought, certainly also influencing him in his appreciation of Origen; Evagrius' other great mentors were Nyssen, Nazianzen, and Melania, all convinced admirers of Origen. And Evagrius' letter *On Faith* was ascribed to Basil as Letter 8. Now this letter refers to apokatastasis as the final restoration to unity,⁴¹ with Biblical quotations that are among Origen's favourite: Acts 1:6, John 17:21–22, and 1 Cor. 15:28.

It is no chance that Origen's Περὶ Ἀρχῶν 2.6 was ascribed to Basil as his *Sermo de incarnatione Domini*, for instance by Leo the Great. Basil depended on Origen heavily in many respects, including the notion of the last Judgment, punishments, and ultimate end, and his definition of time. The Judgment will consist in the accusation of each one's conscience,⁴² and passions and sins are torments to themselves.⁴³ This comes close to Orosius' definition of Basil's Origenian conception of punishment in the next world as not material torture, but the torment of one's sinful conscience. Basil at one point maintains that the veil will be removed from each person's spiritual sight, which will return to being like that of angels.⁴⁴ Basil's definition of time is exactly the same as

37 *HE* 4.26.

38 Ὅν ἀσκηθέντες [sc. Origen's work] δυνατῶς ἀπήντων πρὸς τοὺς ἀρειανίζοντας.

39 Καίτοι τῶν Ἀρειανῶν τὰ Ὀριγένους βιβλία εἰς μαρτυρίαν, ὡς ᾔφοντο, τοῦ ἰδίου καλούντων δόγματος, αὐτοὶ ἐξήλεγον, καὶ ἐδείκνυον μὴ νοήσαντας τὴν Ὀριγένους σύνεσιν.

40 Demonstration in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Origen's Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line', *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 (2011): 21–49. On Eusebius's influence on Basil see Mark DelCogliano, 'Basil of Caesarea on Proverbs 8:22 and the Sources of Pro-Nicene Theology', *Journal of Theological Studies* 59 (2008): 183–190.

41 *Ep. de fide* 7.25.

42 *Hom. in Ps.* 48.2.

43 *Ibid.* 7.7.

44 *Hom. in Ps.* 33.11.

Origen's.⁴⁵ What is more, Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto* is full of Origenian themes, and here Basil also expresses profound admiration for Origen:

Already Origen in many of his Discourses on the Psalms renders glory “with” the Holy Spirit, although he has conceptions that are not entirely right in every respect on the Spirit; however, *for many times [...] he has expressed himself in a pious way*. In the sixth, I think, on his Commentaries on John, he has manifestly declared that it is necessary to adore it, textually writing [...]. And again, in his Commentary on the Letter to the Romans, he says [...].

Basil also greatly valued Gregory Thaumaturgus, the direct disciple of Origen, who brought Origen's thought to Cappadocia and supported the theory of apokatastasis. Basil highly praises him and calls him ‘the Great’.⁴⁶ In the same passage, Basil lists Origen and the Origenians among the defenders of orthodoxy for sanctity, authority, and science.

Gregory Nyssen, one of the most outspoken supporters of apokatastasis, venerated his brother Basil, wrote the continuation of Basil's *Hexaëmeron*, defended it, and praised Basil with emphatic expressions in the preface of his *De hominis opificio*. It is even more significant that Gregory dedicates his *De anima et resurrectione* to the memory of Basil, since this is the dialogue in which he supports in the most extensive form his doctrine of apokatastasis.⁴⁷ I wonder whether he would have used Basil's revered personage, and so prominently, in a dialogue entirely devoted to the argument for universal apokatastasis, if Basil had rejected this doctrine.

The evidence I have collected so far, from Orosius, Basil's Commentary on Isaiah, terminological analysis, and else, suggest that, in fact, Basil did not reject this doctrine. Moreover, like Origen, Nyssen, and Evagrius, Basil too supported the ontological negativity and non-substantiality of evil, to which he devoted a whole homily.⁴⁸ Evil is a lack of Good doomed to disappear in the end. It comes from a weakness and illness of the soul, which fails to adhere to the Good and Beauty, which attracts all. This illness requires a therapy, even drastic if necessary. Its aim is the health of the soul, and its Physician, Christ, is infallible. Likewise, Origen argued that for Christ-Physician no creature is incurable, and that Christ-Logos is more powerful than any illness of the soul.⁴⁹ Again like Origen and Gregory Nyssen, Basil also has the restoration of humanity (ἀποκαθισταμένη) to its original state (τῆ κατ' ἀρχὴν καινότητι) depend on Christ's inhumanation.⁵⁰ This is far from being the only case in which Basil uses the

45 Τὸ συμπαρακτεινόμενον τῆ συστάσει τοῦ κόσμου διάστημα: Basil *C. Eun.* 1.21; Origen *Comm. in Eph.* fr. 9; see Panayiotis Tzamalikos, *The Concept of Time in Origen* (Bern: Lang, 1991), 149–150.

46 Letters 28 and 204; *De Spir.* S. 29.74, and elsewhere.

47 Commentary in Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa Sull'anima*.

48 *God Is Not the Author of Evil*, in PG 31.

49 *Princ.* 3.6.5.

50 Ὅτι αὐτοῦ δι' ἐμφυσήσεως ἀποκαθισταμένη· συντρέχειν γὰρ δεῖ τῆ κατ' ἀρχὴν καινότητι τὴν νῦν ἀνακαίνωσιν καὶ τὴν συνδρομὴν (*C. Eun.* PG 29.729A). On Origen's and Gregory Nyssen's doctrine of apokatastasis as dependent on Christ's inhumanation, sacrifice, and resurrection see my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the sections devoted to them.

terminology of apokatastasis. Even dismissing all the occurrences of ἀποκατάστασις and ἀποκαθίστημι in the astronomical sense in Basil's corpus, or in the sense of a restoration to physical health, or in the trivial sense of 'to render, to give back', the rest of the terminology of apokatastasis in Basil's oeuvre is noteworthy. A few instances, as I am going to show, refer to the final universal apokatastasis, and these are from works not destined to the simple, such as his letters and Commentary on Isaiah. From the latter I have already singled out Basil's interpretation of 1 Cor. 15:28. Sometimes, in his letters, Basil speaks of restoration into the Church for those who are outside,⁵¹ and has restoration depend on repentance.⁵² One case is *Enarr. in Is.* 1,42, in which, moreover, Evagrius associates apokatastasis with οικείωσις or familiarity with God—the Good, depicting separation from the Good due to sin as an alienation (ἀλλοτριώσις):

If one has transgressed the law and has become *alienated from God*, as though he had been deprived of God's providence, you please be quick to *restore him to familiarity with God*, by means of a righteous and intelligent judgment [...] Please judge by offering him useful ways of repentance.⁵³

This description of apokatastasis as οικείωσις was greatly developed by Origen and later by Basil's brother, Nyssen.⁵⁴

Basil claims that the restoration of humanity into eternal glory is made possible by the Spirit:

The *restoration into Paradise comes about thanks to the Holy Spirit*, the ascent to the Kingdom of Heavens [...], the participation in *absolutely eternal glory* and, in sum, the coming to be in the absolute *fullness of benediction*, both in this world and in the next.⁵⁵

The restoration at stake here is clearly eschatological. Likewise Basil seems to refer to restoration after death, when he represents it as a restoration to the original peace,

51 *Ep.* 251.3; 188.4; 263.3; 265.3.

52 Letter 188.4; *Enarr. in Is.* 1,30, where the astronomical apokatastasis serves as a metaphor of the restoration of humans to their original condition. Evagrius, too, will use astronomical apokatastasis as a metaphor of the final apokatastasis of all rational creatures to their initial state in KG 3,60, as argued in Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, *Evagrius' Kephalaia Gnostika: Propositions on Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill–Atlanta: SBL, 2014).

53 Ἐάν τις διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου ἀλλοτριωθείς τοῦ Θεοῦ οἰονεῖ ἀπορφανισθῆ τῆς προνοίας αὐτοῦ, κρίσει δικάια καὶ ἐπιστημονικῇ εἰς τὴν πρὸς Θεὸν οικείωσιν αὐτὸν ἀποκαταστήσαι σπουδάσον [...] κρίνατε αὐτῷ τοὺς ὠφελίμους τρόπους τῆς μετανοίας ὑποτιθέμενοι.

54 See for Origen my 'The Stoic Doctrine of *Oikeiosis* and its Transformation in Christian Platonism', *Apeiron* 47 (2014): 116–140, and for Gregory my 'The *Oikeiosis* Doctrine in Gregory of Nyssa's Theology: Reconstructing His Creative Reception of Stoicism', in Johan Leemans and Matthieu Cassin (eds.), *Gregory of Nyssa: Contra Eunomium III. An English Translation with Commentary and Supporting Studies. Proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14–17 September 2010)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

55 Διὰ Πνεύματος ἁγίου ἢ εἰς παράδεισον ἀποκατάστασις, ἢ εἰς βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἄνοδος [...] δόξης αἰδίου μετέχειν, καὶ ἀπαξαιλῶς ἐν παντὶ πληρώματι εὐλογίας γενέσθαι, ἐν τε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι. (*De Spir. S.* 15.36).

which was broken by sin, and as threatened by apostasy.⁵⁶ Apokatastasis is described by Basil just as it is described by his brother Gregory,⁵⁷ as the restoration to freedom after enslavement to evil.⁵⁸ Like Evagrius, Basil thinks that first there will come the just Judgement (κρίμα), and then the manifestation of God's mercy (ἐλεημοσύνη); every human becomes enslaved to sin and thus receives its punishment in captivity, but, once punishment is completed, thanks to God's mercy is restored to the original freedom in 'the apokatastasis to the original condition': 'Her captivity will be *saved with Judgement and with mercy*'. Nothing of the above has been said by the prophet in reference to sense-perceptible enemies or captives; when he calls her liberation '*the restoration of her captivity*', he lets us understand that each of us being under the power of sin, when we are dominated by the enemy, we become, so to say, prisoners of sin. Now, by means of the Judgement one is handed to captivity, but by means of mercy one is *called back*. [...] Those who are made worthy of *restoration to the original condition are saved* by means of Judgement and mercy'.⁵⁹ Humanity was deceived by the devil and exiled from its original condition at the beginning; now the devil attempts to prevent humanity from obtaining restoration, which is the opposite of the fall in the beginning, and, by symmetry, will take place in the end: the devil 'committed an injustice against two humans and chased them out at the beginning, and now he obstructs *their way back*. Out of envy he deprived you of the first goods by means of a woman, and prevents you again *from being restored*'.⁶⁰

56 Ὡσπερ τοῖς Ἰσραηλίταις τὴν ἑβδομηκονταετίαν ὥρισεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀμαρτημάτων εἰς τὴν τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας καταδικῆν, οὕτω τάχα καὶ ἡμᾶς ὁ Δυνατὸς χρόνῳ τινὶ ὠρισμένῳ παραδοῦς ἀνακαλέσεται ποτε καὶ ἀποκαταστήσει εἰς τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς εἰρήνην, εἰ μὴ ἄρα ἐγγὺς πού ἐστιν ἡ ἀποστασία καὶ τὰ νῦν γινόμενα προοίμια ἐστί τῆς εἰσόδου τοῦ Ἀντιχρίστου. Ὅπερ δὲ ἐάν ᾗ, προσεύχου ἵνα ἡ τὰς θλίψεις παρενέγκῃ ἡ ἡμᾶς ἀπταίστους διὰ τῶν θλίψεων ὁ Ἄγαθος διασώσῃται.

57 In *De an. et res.* 101–104 and elsewhere, Gregory argues that the fall caused a limitation of human freedom and insists on the necessity of a liberation from passions and sins, which enslave people to evil. Freedom from passions is the authentic condition of humans, as it was planned by God at the beginning and will be fully recovered in the end, when all have liberated themselves from enslavement to sin, which produces suffering here and punishment in the next world. The ultimate end will be the realisation of all humans' freedom, in virtue and in God, once all have rejected sin, and evil has disappeared (*De an.* 101). The assimilation to God, who has no master and is free, is presented as a participation in God's image, which was blurred by sin and covered by debts, when the human being became enslaved to sin, but will shine forth again in its purity after being purged from evil (the 'restitution of one's debts'). See also my 'Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism. Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis', *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 313–356.

58 *Ep.* 264.1.

59 Μετὰ γὰρ κρίματος σωθήσεται ἡ αἰχμαλωσία αὐτῆς, καὶ μετὰ ἐλεημοσύνης. Οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς ἄνω περὶ πολεμίων αἰσθητῶν, οὐδὲ περὶ αἰχμαλώτων εἰπόν, τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν αὐτῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ἄφρασιν λέγων, ὑποβάλλει ἡμῖν νοεῖν, ὡς ἐκάστω ἡμῶν ὑπὸ ἀμαρτίαν γινόμενου, ὅταν κατακυριευθῶμεν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἐχθροῦ, οἷον εἰ δέσμοι τῆς ἀμαρτίας γινόμενοι. Διὰ μὲν οὖν τὸ κρίμα παρεδόθη τῇ αἰχμαλωσίᾳ, διὰ δὲ τὸν ἔλεον ἀνεκλήθη. [...] τοὺς ἀξίους τῆς ἀποκαταστάσεως ἐπὶ τὰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς μετὰ κρίματος σωθῆναι καὶ μετὰ ἐλέους. (*Enarr. in Is.* 1.58–59).

60 Δύο γὰρ ἠδίκησε, καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐξέβαλε, καὶ νῦν τὴν ἐπάνοδον διακόπτει. Ἐβάσκηνέ σοι τῶν πρώτων ἀγαθῶν διὰ γυναικὸς καὶ πάλιν [...] εἰς τὴν ἀποκατάστασιν κωλύει, *Hom. in Lac.* PG 31.1456,21.

The devil might be the only rational creature to whom God does not give the possibility to repent, after giving it before the creation of humanity; Basil admits that he is not even sure of this (he premises a *τάχα*, ‘perhaps’):

Perhaps, before the creation of the human being, a chance of repentance and conversion was left open for the devil, too, and his pride, although it was a more ancient illness, nevertheless could still be cured, if he had healed himself by means of repentance, and God could restore him to his original condition. However, after the creation of the world, the planting of the garden of Eden, the introduction of the human being in it, God’s commandment, the envy / hostility of the devil (to the human being) and the killing of the one who was held in honour, maybe the possibility itself of repentance was precluded to him.⁶¹

Another important passage in which Basil uses the terminology of apokatastasis is one in which he puts forward once again the notion, dear to Clement, Origen, and Gregory Nyssen too, that God may use the most drastic therapeutic means, but exclusively to the benefit of the spiritually ill:

If I cut, if I cauterise, I shall not leave neglected either the amputation or the wounds of the cauterisation. For, after the *destruction of evil*, because of which such painful treatments are applied, then I shall *administer the rest of the healing* and shall *restore this person to health*.⁶²

What is most remarkable is that Basil describes the final apokatastasis as universal: ‘This ignorance will keep prisoner the race of human beings. However, whoever now looks for the truth to emerge from ignorance, and struggles with pains to find it, will finally see it face to face, and will attain *the perfection of knowledge*, when there will come *the time of universal apokatastasis*’.⁶³ The future tense leaves makes it clear that the reference is to the final restoration; in the last sentence, Basil paraphrases Acts 3:21.⁶⁴ The eventual restoration is also linked, once more, with the perfection of knowledge, τὸ τῆς γνώσεως τέλειον, an association that Evagrius will stress. Now this restoration will be made possible by God’s action of destroying evil, which will purify the creatures of God:

61 *Τάχα* γὰρ πρὸ τοῦ κτισθῆναι τὸν ἄνθρωπον *τόπος τις μετανοίας* καὶ τῷ διαβόλῳ ὑπελείπετο, καὶ ἐδύνατο ὁ τύφος (εἰ καὶ ἀρχαιότερον ἦν νόσημα) ὁμῶς διὰ μετανοίας ἑαυτὸν ἐξιασαμένου θεραπευθεὶς ἀποκαταστήσαι αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ ἐξαρχῆς. Ἄφ’ οὗ δὲ τοῦ κόσμου ἡ κατασκευὴ καὶ παραδείσου φυτεία καὶ ἄνθρωπος ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐντολὴ Θεοῦ καὶ φθόνος τοῦ διαβόλου καὶ φόνος τοῦ τετιμημένου, ἀπεκλείσθη αὐτῷ καὶ ὁ τόπος τῆς μετανοίας (*Enarr. in Is.* 14.280).

62 Ὅταν *τέμω* καὶ ὅταν *καυτηριάσω*, οὔτε τὴν τομὴν οὔτε τὰ ἀπὸ τοῦ καυτηῆρος ἔλκη ἀτιμέλητα καταλείψω. Ἐπειδὴν γὰρ ἀνυσθῆ τοῦτο, δι’ ὃ τὰ ἐπίπονα παραλαμβάνεται, τότε τὴν λειπομένην θεραπείαν ἐπαγαγὼν εἰς τὴν ὑγείαν ἀποκαταστήσω (*Enarr. in Is.* 7.196).

63 Αὕτη ἡ ἄγνοια καθέξει τὸ γένος τῶν ἀνθρώπων· ἀλλ’ ὁ νῦν αὐτῆς ἐκζητῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, καὶ ὠδίνων αὐτῆς τὴν εὔρεσιν, ὄψεται ποτε πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον καὶ ἀπολήγεται τὸ τῆς γνώσεως τέλειον, ἐπειδὴν ἐνσθῆ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀποκαταστάσεως. (*Enarr. in Is.* 8.223).

64 Χρόνοι ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων = καιρὸς τῆς τῶν ὅλων ἀποκαταστάσεως, ‘the time of universal restoration, the time of the restoration of absolutely all’.

The work that is proper to God, qua Good, is to have evil disappear, in order to restore his own creature, once this is purged of every evilness, and to bring it back to its natural condition, once it has been liberated from every illness.⁶⁵

Here it is clear that for Basil, just as for Origen and Gregory Nyssen, the eventual apokatastasis will be a work of God, and specifically of God's *goodness*, that is, God's being the absolute Good (the early Augustine too had apokatastasis depend on *Dei bonitas*).⁶⁶ Thus, God-the Good will destroy evil and restore his creatures, once purified from all evilness as from an illness, to the condition that belongs to them by nature, that is in God's eternal plan. Passages such as this explain the reason why Orosius listed Basil among the supporters of the Origenian doctrine of universal apokatastasis.

Basil identifies the ultimate end with the eschatological 'eighth day' — Maximus the Confessor will make the most of this identification — which will inaugurate absolute eternity (ἁϊδιότης). Then all those 'movements (of will)' that caused creatures to abandon God will cease.⁶⁷ This conception has its roots in Origen. Basil also admits of the saints' intercession for sinners, who will be thereby liberated from their suffering: 'You [*sc.* the saints] will request the salvation of your brothers afflicted by suffering'.⁶⁸ The context is eschatological:

from death you will pass on to life in the other world [...] you will dance dances in the world to come and will be crowned among the angels, remaining forever in the blessed choir.⁶⁹

Therefore, the salvation requested by the saints is the eschatological salvation of sinners. This concept was already developed in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, one of the most significant precursors of the doctrine of apokatastasis.⁷⁰

3 PASTORAL CONCERNS OR INTERPOLATION?

What I have pointed out so far surely accounts for Orosius' apparently strange claim that Basil supported the doctrine of universal restoration, among other Origenian theories. However, unlike his brother Gregory — but to a certain extent like Origen himself — Basil, out of pastoral concerns, seems to have hesitated to preach this doctrine to anybody, especially to those who are still morally immature and uneducated.⁷¹ This, at least, is

65 Ἀγαθοῦ ἔργον ἐστὶ Θεοῦ τὰ φαῦλα ἐξαφανίζειν, ἵνα καθαρὸν ἀπὸ πάσης κακίας τὸ ἑαυτοῦ δημιουργήματα ἀποκαταστήσῃ καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴν ἀπὸ παντὸς ἀρρώστιατος εἰς τὸ κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαναγάγῃ (ibidem 13.268).

66 See Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, 'Origen and Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception', *Numen* 60 (2013), 280–307 received by Karla Pollmann, 'The Broken Perfume Flask', lecture at the *Colloquium Origenianum Undecimum*, Aarhus, August 2013 (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming).

67 See especially *Enarr. in Is.* 1.180B; 2.260B; 4.333C–336A; 13.584C; *Hex.* 2.178–184.

68 Αἰτήσεις ἀδελφῶν σωτηρίαν καταπονουμένων.

69 *Or.* 10, PG 31.624.

70 See my 'Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation,' *Harvard Theological Review* 102 (2009): 135–168.

71 Henryk Pietras, *L'escatologia della Chiesa* (Rome: Augustinianum, 2006), 97 remarks that, like Origen, Basil spoke 'in a certain way to the simple, and in another to the more learned and advanced'.

what a passage I am going to analyse suggests, provided that it is not interpolated. This passage comes from Basil's short *Regulae* for his monks, a highly interpolated work structured in questions and answers. The question at stake is: 'If "one will be punished with many stripes and one with few," how can some say that there will not be an end to punishment?' The same Biblical passage was cited as evidence for the limited duration of punishments in the next world by Theodore of Mopsuestia, shortly after Basil, who reasoned on the basis of the principle of commensurability between sins and punishments.⁷² This is the answer that, at least in the manuscript, is attributed to Basil, but might in fact come from a slightly later time and be inspired by Theodore's remarks:

In a passage the Lord says that these will go to αἰώνιος punishment, in another passage he sends some to αἰώνιον fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and yet another time he mentions the Gehenna of fire and adds: 'where their worm does not die and their fire is not extinguished'. Again, the prophet has foretold, concerning some, that 'their worm will not die and their fire will not be extinguished'. In the divinely inspired Scripture there are these and similar passages in many places. But, for a deception of the devil, many people, as though they forgot these and similar statements of the Lord, espouse the theory of the end of punishment, out of an audacity that is even superior to their sin. For, if at a certain moment there is an end to αἰώνιος punishment, αἰώνιος life will certainly have an end as well. And if we do not admit of thinking this concerning life, what reason should there be for assigning an end to αἰώνιος punishment? In fact, the characterisation of αἰώνιος is equally ascribed to both. For Jesus states: 'These will go to αἰώνιος punishment, and the righteous to αἰώνιος life'. If one accepts this, one must understand that the expressions 'One will be punished with many stripes', or 'with few', do not indicate an end, but a difference in punishment. For, if the Lord is a righteous judge, he is so not only with the virtuous, but also with the wicked, and renders to each one according to one's deeds. One may deserve the eternal fire, and this, milder or stronger; one may deserve the worm that does not die, and his such a to cause more or less suffering, in accord with each one's desert; and another may deserve the Gehenna, which is similarly differentiated in its kinds of punishments, and another person may deserve the outer darkness, where one may be found only in weeping, another also in the gnashing of teeth, according to the duration of these punishments. And it seems indeed to be the case that there are an outer and an inner darkness. And the Proverbs' expression, 'down to the bottom of hell', indicates that there are some who are in hell, to be sure, but not on its bottom; these undergo a less severe punishment.⁷³

There are many ideas here that do not square with those of Basil. One is the notion of physical punishments in hell and of hell itself as a physical place with different locations. Basil, on the contrary, as I have mentioned and as was noted also by Orosius, did not conceive of hell as a dimensional, physical place, where physical punishments go on. What is more, the very core argument of this passage is in total disagreement with Basil's linguistic use. The author of this passage maintains that αἰώνιοι punishments must be understood as absolutely eternal, otherwise neither could αἰώνιος life be eternal. The 'many' Biblical passages he invokes as supporting eternal punishment, however, *never* mention an αἰδιος ('eternal') punishment, but only an αἰώνιος one ('otherworldly').

⁷² See my *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, the section of Theodore.

⁷³ *Reg. brev.* 267 PG 31.1264C–1265D.

Only life is *ἄϊδιος*, whereas death, fire, punishment etc. are only described as *αἰώνια* in Scripture. Basil was well aware of this, and consistently distinguished *ἄϊδιος* and *αἰώνιος* in his own linguistic usage, which perfectly corresponds to that of Scripture, Origen, and Gregory of Nyssa. *Αἰώνιος* is equally ascribed to both life and punishment in Scripture, but in this case *αἰώνιος* means ‘otherworldly, of the next world’, and not ‘eternal’.

Not only was Basil entirely aware of the semantic distinction between *ἄϊδιος* and *αἰώνιος*, but he was also aware that Origen had already refuted the argument put forward in the central part of the *Regulae* passage: that, if life is eternal, death also must be eternal. This argument is attested with certainty some decades after Basil’s death, in the late Augustine: *dicere autem in hoc uno eodemque sensu, vita aeterna sine fine erit, supplicium aeternum finem habebit, multum absurdum est.*⁷⁴ Augustine did not know the meaning of *αἰώνιος*, since both *αἰώνιος* and *ἄϊδιος* were translated into Latin as *aeternus*,⁷⁵ but Basil did, and he also knew that Origen had prevented the argument of the parallel eternity of life and death. For Origen argued that two eternal entities opposed to each other are two logic contradictories, which exclude one another; consequently, eternal life rules out the very possibility of an eternal death.⁷⁶ The eternity of life is corroborated by the identity between life and Christ (John 11:25; 14:6) and the non-eternity of death is proved by the announcement of the elimination of death in the end (1 Cor. 15:26), as well as by the fact that in Scripture death is never called *ἄϊδιος*.

In addition, the *Regulae* passage even claims that those who admit that otherworldly punishments will not be eternal are under the power of the devil. Yet, among these were Origen, whom Basil regarded very highly, Basil’s own sister Macrina and brother Gregory, whom he ordained bishop and praised enormously as a ‘great man’ worthy of governing the whole Christian church.⁷⁷

These substantial incongruences call for an explanation. It may be that out of pastoral concerns Basil sacrificed his terminological and conceptual consistency, so to avoid teaching the doctrine of apokatastasis to people who were not morally, intellectually, and spiritually advanced. Even more probable, however, is that the passage at stake is in fact an interpolation. In a work made of a number of disjointed questions and answers, *simply* juxtaposed to one another, a question and its answer could be interpolated at any stage, by someone who wanted to place the condemnation of apokatastasis under the authority of the great Basil. Many of the works ascribed to Basil are spurious: more

74 CD 21.23.

75 See Ramelli, ‘Origen and Augustine’.

76 *Aeternum aeterno contrarium non erit, sed idem. Nunc autem certum est mortem uitae esse contrarium: certum est ergo quod, si uita aeterna est, mors esse non possit aeterna. Cum mors animae, quae est nouissimus inimicus, fuerit destructa [...], regnum mortis pariter cum morte destructum erit* (Comm. in Rom. 5.7).

77 ‘I wish my brother Gregory could govern a church that is commensurate with his gifts: but this would have been the entire Church under the sun! Since this is impossible, then, let him not be a bishop who receives dignity from the place, but let the place receive dignity from the bishop. For it is typical of a really great man not only to be worthy of great things, but also to magnify small things with his power’ (Ep. 98).

than a half of those known, and a very high number of interpolations is in his *moralia* to the monks, and precisely the work at stake here: the *Regulae brevius tractatae*.⁷⁸ One such interpolation may easily consist in the passage on eternal punishment, which is glaringly at odds with Basil's own language and ideas, in addition to declaring inspired by the devil Origen and Basil's own sister and brother.

4 VERY SHORT CONCLUSION

Whether this problematic passage is by Basil or – as is more likely – not, it is historically of great import, in that it testifies that in the second half of the fourth century or in the fifth, many people still upheld the theory of the limited duration of otherworldly punishments and of universal restoration. According to Orosius, whose testimony at first sight improbable is in fact supported by all the evidence I have produced above, Basil himself was one of the supporters of this doctrine, even though he did not preach it so overtly as his brother Gregory did.

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78 Photius read two books of *Ascetica* by Basil of Caesarea, whose second book included fifty-five questions and answers (*Bibl. Cod.* 191). In our manuscripts of the *Asceticon magnum sive Quaestiones (Regulae brevius tractatae)*, the questions and answers are 311 (τϑα). In the *Amphilochia* ascribed to Photius, many sets of questions and answers were added later: according to the Prologue, there were three hundred questions and answers, but the manuscripts include more, in various amounts and arrangements. Edition: Basilius Laourdas and Leendert Gerrit Westerink, *Photii patriarchae Constantinopolitani Epistulae et Amphilochia*, 1–6.2 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983–1988).

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