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THE CHRISTIAN FORM OF THE GREEK PAIDEIA

IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D.

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts

by

MARJORIE ANN MOFFATT

Australian National University
1965
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"Greeks go abroad and cross the sea to study letters; but we have no need to go abroad for the Kingdom of Heaven, nor to cross the sea to obtain virtue."

St. Antony [1]

1. The possibility of a juxtaposition of faith and culture.

Paideia, in the fullest sense in which the Greeks conceived it, was the process of education by which all that is peculiarly human about a man is evoked. Through paideia man tends to his most noble self-fulfilment. The drive to consummate this became a strong cohesive force in antiquity and contributed largely to that nexus of loyalties which held together the people of the Roman Empire even after Rome lost ground as the dominant city of the Mediterranean. Paideia became in these days a factor of prime social and political importance within the society and a dividing line between Roman and barbarian. [2] But at the same time too, it was a way of life for the individual, so that the idea of paideia was a serious rival to the religions in claiming allegiance and faith from its disciples. For it meant not only the

1. Athanasius, Vita Antonii; 20. A.C.W. p. 37. The life of this saint was written probably in 357, the year after the death of Antony. In this year St. Basil travelled to visit monasteries in Egypt, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Syria.
2. Libanius, Ep. 372. "If we lose rhetoric what will be left to distinguish us from the barbarian?"
initial formal education of a boy, but also the result of this education on the person. It included the process of further growth throughout the man's life as the cultural ideal of self-realization at the basis of his education was more perfectly achieved. [1]

Greek paideia presupposes therefore certain ideas about the nature and ultimate goal of man. Consequently when the Christians taught about a rebirth through the Holy Spirit, and of a wholeness in Christ, they gave fresh substance to these basic ideas. A new kind of search for self-realization was then to challenge the orientation of the classical paideia. It was to this development that St. Antony was pointing in his contrast between the goal of the Greeks, which he saw as being contained within the dimensions of space and time, and the faith and eschatological hopes of the followers of Christ.

These Christians renounced the values of the world as an explanation in themselves, though without in the end necessarily rejecting them "in toto" when they were freshly assessed in the light of the Christian faith. Indeed, Christianity was, from its very teaching of the incarnation a religion concerned with this renewed involvement in the world, and not with any ultimate denial of and

1. Marrou, A History of Education, p. 98f: a definition of paideia; Jaeger, Humanism and Theology, p. 36ff; "humanitas" as the Latin equivalent of "paideia".
mystical separation from human affairs. This involvement alone, this worldliness, would have warranted a new assessment by the Christians of their pagan heritage and cultural environment, but when the Greeks made their paideia a matter of ultimate concern, the final goal in their lives, when paideia became elevated to a "religion of culture", then the encounter of Christianity with paideia was far more immediately challenging. [1]

It was within this framework that Saint Basil in the fourth century worked out for some young people the nature of their involvement in the contemporary Greek culture. This is in the form of a short address, about twenty pages of Greek in the Budé edition, which often in the manuscripts bears the title, "To young men; how they might benefit from pagan Greek literature. [2]

As the backbone of his argument Basil made this clear distinction between life as conceived solely within the limitations of human capabilities, and another life towards which the Christian directs his hopes and efforts.

"We assume that this human life is in itself of no real import, and so we reckon that nothing can be called entirely good if its total value can be

2. ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΕΟΥΣ ΟΙΩΣ ΑΝ ΕΕ ΕΠΑΛΙΝΙΚΩΝ ΜΟΡΑΙΩΤΟΝ ΛΟΓΩΝ Π.Γ. XXXI, 564C ff.
He did not, however, suggest that one life precludes the other, nor that one or the other is an added luxury. Rather he acknowledged an integration of the two, and tried to construct for the young people an intellectually satisfying frame of reference, which might help them to learn some of the fulness of the Christian faith. He worked this out specifically in the case of the relationship between Christianity and the Greek paideia.

The short address by Basil is the only direct contribution to the discussion of this major issue of the fourth century.

The first possible stand which Basil could have adopted is the view that one life might preclude the other, that Christianity need have no truck with man's civilization and can cut itself off from it. At its simplest level this is blatantly untrue. St. Augustine, in prefacing his "De Doctrina Christiana" spelled out a refutation of this stand, emphasizing that it is necessary to read or at least know a language before understanding Scripture, and to learn this from human teachers. To ignore this, he said, is false pride.

"Rather let us put away false pride and learn whatever can be learnt from man ... And without doubt it was possible to have done everything through the instrumentality of angels, but the condition of our race would have been much more degraded if God had not chosen to make use of men as the ministers of His Word to their fellow-men." [1]

Christianity depends entirely for its expression on some degree of civilization, if only minimal, and for its transmission, on at least a rudimentary literary culture. Its teachings may be recast continually in the new thought forms of another or a changing culture, but at the same time it has to be interpreted and checked against the original literary Graeco-Roman and Hebraic formulation of the Bible, the earliest writings of the Church and its later tradition. [2] This first suggestion then, that Christianity might stand independent of any particular culture must be dismissed. While Augustine took care to avoid any misunderstanding on this score, Basil faced a different situation in the East, where the value of the Greek literary culture was generally taken for granted and an elementary education pursued without question. [3]

It is more legitimate to ask whether there is any

1. Augustine, De Doctrina Christiana, Preface.
3. See below, p. 8 and 84
need for a more sophisticated independent culture beyond that which is directly useful to Biblical and ecclesiastical studies. This second proposition is significant if it is believed that the most intellectually ignorant are amongst those to receive the joy and the promise of salvation. [1] It was on this level that the problem generally presented itself. The question is based, however, on the false premise that we can deep-freeze some aspects of a culture which we consider useful to us, and prevent any further growth or deterioration in them, while ignoring or disposing of the rest. This narrowing led in the Early Church to some extremist denials of the worth of pagan culture. Epiphanius of Salamis in the fourth century and the Pseudo-Clement in his "Apostolic Constitutions" provide good examples. [2] Later, more subtly, it led to the idea of a specifically "Christian" culture. [3] Such a delineation implies that there are areas within human culture irrelevant to the Christian. But to Basil's great friend, Gregory Nazianzen, it was just this openness to the widest bounds of a culture which he saw as the great legacy the Christians were inheriting.

"From secular literature we have received principles of enquiry and speculation, while we have rejected their idolatry, terror, and pit of destruction. Nay,

1. I Corinthians, IX, 25.
3. See below, Section 3 of this chapter.
even these have aided us in our religion, by our
perception of the contrast between what is worse and
what is better, and by gaining strength for our
doctrine from the weakness of theirs. We must not
then dishonour education, because some men are pleased
to do so, but rather suppose such men to be boorish
and uneducated, desiring all men to be as they them­
selves are, in order to hide themselves in the general,
and escape the detection of their want of culture."[1]

In no sense was the fulness of culture for him a
superfluous luxury.

But if Christianity is not separable from a free and
living cultural expression, it follows as a corollary for
the Christian that he cannot divorce any aspect of
civilization from Christianity. Or, to put it the way
St. Antony looked at it, the Kingdom of Heaven is present
in this world, and God's kingly rule extends over all
creation, all human civilization and its culture, and it
is present to each individual. There is, therefore, no
necessity to travel to the university town of Athens to
gain a knowledge of God. "Virtue", he says, "is within
us." The Christian faith cannot be seen as a separate
entity, viewed apart from and as an accessory to man's
understanding of the world. Thus the second proposition
is invalidated also. For the Christian neither the full
flowering of a culture nor the Christian faith itself,
may be added as an icing to the cake. Whereas Augustine

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 43.11 N.P.F. pp. 398 ff.
in the West could exclaim with approval, "How much Greeks out of number have borrowed from the heathen", [1] in the East there was a different attitude. For them it was not a question of borrowing from the Greek culture; as Greeks they considered they had a right to the language and literature of Greece. [2]

2. Basil's openness to all pagan literature.

This refusal then to make a distinct separation of the sacred from the secular, a refusal prominent in our contemporary theology, [3] seems to have been first formulated in Basil's address in the fourth century. Basil makes the strong claim that the Christian has an actual responsibility to use every possible opportunity to further and enrich his faith. In the case of his audience of young students this applied particularly to the benefit latent in classical literature.

"And so whatever contributes to this (Christian) life for us we ought to love and to follow with all our strength." [4]

This injunction embraces all of pagan literature, for Basil argued as Gregory Nazianzen did [5], that it can all be used in either a positive or a negative way to support

2. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 4
3+ e.g. Tillich, Theology and Culture, pp. 27 and 42; and Brunner, Christianity and Civilization, Vol. I, p. 6ff.
5. See above, p. 6f.
the Christian truth.

"If then there is any relationship between the two (Christian and pagan lives) in their statements, an understanding of them might be to some purpose; but if there is not, at least by placing the two accounts side by side and examining them closely it should be possible to determine which is the better by observing the differences." [1]

Similarly Basil's younger brother, Gregory of Nyssa, remarked that even the worst of pagan learning may lead a man up to the true faith. [2]

With this as his presupposition, Basil's aim in his address is to advise the students on the role which they should allow the pagan classical writers to play in the shaping of their lives.

"It is not necessary", he says to them, "for you to hand over to these men the directing of your intellect any more than you would the rudder of a ship, to use this analogy, and to follow along just wherever they lead. But, when accepting as much of them as is profitable, it is necessary for you to know too what you ought to disregard. What these things are, then, and how we shall discriminate between the two, this indeed is what I shall deal with, taking the matter up at this point." [3]

It is necessary to emphasize the fact that Basil is here including all of classical pagan literature as

1. Basil, προς τοις νεοντικ., III, 1 ff.
2. Gregory of Nyssa, Life of Gregory Thaumaturgus, P.G. XLVI, 901 B.
potential material in his approach to a paideia, because so often his intention has been misunderstood. [1] At no point does he suggest that a selection should be made of literature which is morally instructive for young people, as many have interpreted this passage. Basil sets out, not to act as a censor, but to suggest to the students the criteria which they themselves should use in deciding what there is in their reading they might want to accept and make a part of their own thinking, and what they might want to disregard. [2]

The English translation which is most readily available is thoroughly misleading in this respect if it is read in the light of the interpretation given in the introduction to the text. The translator claims that

"Basil says specifically that when the pagan writers teach what is good and noble and true, they are to be read, while if they teach vice they must be shunned."

To this he adds his own advertisement for the study of the Classics:

1. Basil, τρεις τοις νεοτις, I, 28ff: Τοῦτο μὲν οὖν αὕτω καὶ συμβουλεδὸν ἢμω, τὸ μὴ ὂστὶν ἐλς ἀκαί ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀνδρόσω τοῦτος; ὡσπερ πλοῦτος τὰ θηδεία τῆς διανοίας ὑμῶν παραδόντας, ἢμερ ἀν ἀγωγή, ταῦτα συνεποθή, ἄλλ’ ὅσον ἐστὶ χρήσιμον αὕτων δεχομένους, εἰδεναϊ τι χρὴ καὶ παραδεσίν.

2. So, de Labriolle, History and Literature of Christianity, p. 25: "Only he (Basil) insists on a proper selection in order that the suspect portions may be eliminated. Under reserve of this preliminary expurgation ..."; and Laistner, "The Christian attitude to pagan literature", History, 1935: (Basil) follows Plato's lead in advocating that Homer should be bowdlerised,"
"There exists no more explicit declaration of the right position of the classics in education than this. Every educator from Plato down has maintained similar views... His position is definite enough. The pagan classics have a place in Christian education, and, when properly selected and intelligently taught and received, their influence in education is beneficial and necessary." [1]

Yet the words Basil uses, and indeed their equivalents in the translation made by the same man, do not convey this idea of a selective approach to the reading of literature. The words which he represents here by "to read" are δέχομαι and its compounds, most frequently ἀποδέχομαι, which in fact mean "to accept", especially applicable to an intellectual acceptance and an approval of a statement. [2] Plato uses the fuller phrase, "receive into their souls" when he introduces this topic in the "Republic".

"Then shall we carelessly and without more ado allow our children to hear any casual stories told by any casual persons, and so to receive into their souls views of life for the most part at variance with those which we think they ought to hold when they come to man's estate?" [3]

The alternative proposed by Basil does not imply therefore a simple refusal to read. The contrast is not

2. Liddell and Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, 9th ed.
one of reading and not reading. Rather, the opposite of "accepting into their souls" is "disregarding" or "looking beyond" and for which the word used by Basil is usually παραρθώμ. To read the good and to shun the bad is a very different proposition from reading it all and approving and following the good teaching and disregarding or seeing beyond the bad. [1]

This interpretation is further enforced by two other considerations, the first of which is the illustration which Basil provides when he starts to discuss how the student is to draw out what is useful from pagan literature. He uses the example of Odysseus fleeing past the island of the Sirens.

"Do not pay court to each of (the poets) in turn, but whenever they convey to you the actions or words of good men, you should desire to emulate these and as far as possible try to be like these men, but whenever they come to represent ignoble men, you should escape such things, blocking up your ears no less than they say Odysseus did in the case of the songs of the Sirens. For sharing the ways of the base characters of literature is a road to trouble." [2]

Such an indulgence would be equivalent to staying on in the meadow of the Sirens. Now it is well known that Odysseus, though he blocked the ears of his companions with wax, nevertheless left his own ears unplugged so

1. Basil, πρός τοις νεότεροις, I, 17, 27; IV, 35; V, 24; VII, 1, 47; and I, 28; II, 12; VII, 42; VIII, 12.
2. ibid. IV, 9–11.
that when he was tied to the mast he still heard the songs as he fled past, but without the danger of being won over to their destruction. [1] His ears were blocked only in the sense that he could not be lured aside and corrupted by their songs. Basil’s use of the Homeric story is particularly forceful here because he is also making a deliberate reference to its similar usage in Plutarch’s “How to Study Poetry”. In many ways this treatise is the pagan predecessor and model for Basil’s work. [2] In Plutarch the mast is more clearly used to represent some guiding principle or criterion for judgment.

"Shall we then stop the ears of the young, as those of the Ithacans were stopped, with a hard and unyielding wax, and force them to put to sea in the Epicurean boat, and avoid poetry and steer a straight course clear of it, or rather shall we set them against some upright standard of reason and there bind them fast, guarding and guiding their "judgment" that it may not be carried away from the course of pleasure towards that which will do them hurt?" [3]

Neither Plutarch nor Basil wanted to limit the boys' reading of poetry, but to leave them free to hear all

1. Homer, Odyssey, XII, 39f, 154f.
2. Agreeing with Padelford and in opposition to Deferrari in Classical Journal, 1918, p. 502: "Plutarch's "How to Study Poetry" bears many similarities to Basil's work, not so much in content as in methods of argument. Any connection with Basil, however is probably very slight, as in these cases of likeness we have to do with "topoi" which may have a common source in the popular philosophy of the time."
3. Plutarch, How to Study Poetry, 15 D.
the pagan songs and able themselves to assess their value.

The second argument supporting this interpretation is that Basil assumes that the Greek literature is being read initially for more reasons than its "educational" value. He takes care to specify that in this address he is dealing with only one approach to literature, that of its role of paideia, while expecting the students also to be enjoying the literature for the sheer pleasure of it.

"It is possible for those who are pursuing not just the sweet and charming element in such works, also to put by some benefit from them for their soul." [1]

It follows that Basil expects them to have access to all available classical literature, and not just a selection made for its moral content, or its strictly educational value. He has made his own point, however, that for those who do wish to allow literature to contribute to the directing and shaping of their selves, and to fill the role of paideia, there should be certain criteria by which they are able to distinguish what is going to be helpful within this corpus. [2] This is the problem to which he turns.

"It is therefore fitting to review at the outset each of the branches of learning, and to harmonize them with the end, leading, according to the Doric

1. Basil, πρὸς τὸν νεόν, IV, 39f.
2. ibid., I, 24ff.
proverb, the stone to the plumbline." [1]

Here is the key to Basil's theme.

3. The possibility of a Christian culture.

There is a different criticism of Basil's approach which has been proffered by Professor Marrou. His criticism is not that Basil rejects aspects of pagan culture, but that his attitude belongs to the second category defined above, [2] according to which Christianity is considered as a luxury added only subsequently to the pagan paideia. He puts the case that Basil and other doctors of the Early Church,

"did not dare to lay hands on this tradition, to modify, correct or orientate it in accordance with the needs of the new religion. They felt disarmed before this venerable and powerful organism and they saw for the Christian only one possible issue - to undergo the regular formation of the pagan school, leaving it to the force of piety and the supernatural life to protect them, making a path through these dangers; then, when the cycle was run, once he became a cultivated man, to choose among all the knowledge acquired, to retain and use from it what could be of service in understanding Scripture for the progress of the soul towards perfection ... St. Basil did not set out to deal properly with the problem of Christian education. He admits that, as true of himself, the young men whom he is addressing must run the normal cycle of classical studies. Christianity has not yet

1. ibid., IV, 52f.
2. See above, p. 7
modified its programme; in St. Basil the two orders are still separated: he does not envisage an education which is specifically Christian, but only a Christian usage of traditional education ... and a choice after the event." [1]

This is the "icing on the cake" theory, and in one sense only is the accusation justified. Basil is addressing young people, whom he cannot necessarily assume to be committed and fully-fledged Christians, even if their home background was Christian. This is to some extent illustrated by two gently humorous references in the opening of his address which are a sign that Basil was assuming that his audience could have been even more impressed by the paideia of the pagans than by any Christian sentiments. In the first place he suggests that if they do not pay attention to him when he gives them his advice, he will not reprimand them, but they will betray the principles of one of the great pagans, Hesiod. [2] The second gentle taunt is to warn them that for all their pagan education from the schools they should not be too surprised to find that an ecclesiastical man dares to think that he can contribute something to their education too. [3] Two hints are dropped of young men who might be more inclined to respect the pagan literature

to the point of not considering the advice of the Church.

It is thus in keeping with the assumption that his audience is not entirely committed to the faith that Basil states his case and points to the path of the Christian life in secular terms. He does not talk in Scriptural or theological language. While his discourse is filled with a wealth of illustrations and references taken from classical literature, which would have given pleasure to a student audience, he uses Biblical illustrations only to draw parallels. [1] That this is intentional is clear from the outset when he says that the nature of the Christian life and the way it will be lived is beyond the scope of the work and the understanding of his audience. [2] He accepts this limitation; he is not preaching to the faithful.

However, Professor Marrou is not justified in saying that it was only after a man had completed his formal education that he would then use such of this training as he could towards his understanding of Scripture. The whole point of Basil's work was to show how the two could grow and develop together in an integrated way. Certainly he does not anticipate that they will have a full appreciation of the "depths of thought" contained

1. There is no use even of the reference to Christ as the schoolmaster as in the opening of Clement of Alexandria's "Paedagogus".
in Scripture. [1] But he does assume that they have heard at least the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. [2] Most of his Biblical illustrations are taken from these three chapters. Secondly, he assumes that they are capable of appreciating similar virtues when they are commended or illustrated in pagan literature. The one could throw light on the other. For this reason Marrou is unfair to Basil in claiming that the doctors of the Church left it to "the force of piety and the supernatural life to protect them". The very thing that Basil was doing was giving students guidance in terms which were meaningful to them, about the sort of reasoned thinking which they could use to work out the particular relationship between their formal literary education and their understanding of Christianity.

However, at the basis of Marrou's criticism there is a far more serious contention. It is that Basil does not break from the traditional form of education; that he had not thought of the possibility of a Greek Christian education, instead of simply adopting a Christian approach towards the pagan Greek paideia. This is not true of the elementary level of education. Basil's elder sister, Macrina, was herself brought up on such a thorough-going

1. ibid., II, 28; see below p. 98
2. Matthew, V - VII. Notably in §§ of Basil's address his Christian parallels to pagan examples of virtue are all taken from these chapters of the Gospel.
"Christian education", judging from the account of their young brother, Gregory, Bishop of Nyssa.

"The education of the child was her mother's task; she did not, however, employ the usual worldly method of education, which makes a practice of using poetry as a means of training the early years of the child. For she considered it disgraceful and quite unsuitable that a tender and plastic nature should be taught either those tragic passions of womanhood which afforded poets their suggestions and plots, or the indecencies of comedy; to be so to speak, defiled by unseemly tales of the women's quarters. But such parts of inspired Scripture as you would think were incomprehensible to young children were the subject of the girl's studies - the Wisdom of Solomon, especially the ethical parts, and the Psalms." [1]

Besides this isolated case there is evidence that the Bible was also used as a basis for elementary education in monastic schools for the training of the clergy. It is recommended for this by Basil in his "Longer Rules".

"Moreover their literary studies must be appropriate to their ideal. Thus their teachers will use the language of the Scriptures, and in place of myths will tell them stories of wonderful deeds and educate them by maxims drawn from the Proverbs ..." [2]

This education was not confined completely to boys destined for ordination since Basil elsewhere concedes that "children of the world" could be permitted to attend

1. Gregory of Nyssa, To the Monk Olympia, 962 D. Marrou is aware of this passage (A History of Education, p. 331) but he fails to consider it as significant evidence.
2. Basil, Longer Rules, P.G. XXXI, 356.B.
the monasteries for their education, provided that their parents wished to have them brought up "in the chastening and admonition of the Lord". [1] This must be what Marrou would call a Christian education. Similarly Jerome and John Chrysostom both toyed with the idea of a specifically Christian education and experimented in it in the same restricted situations, but none of them ever carried it forward consistently to the advanced level where it might compete with the full pagan paideia. [2]

In considering a full education, above the elementary level there is posed this real question of whether a Christian education which is directed solely towards an understanding of the Bible is a genuine alternative to Basil's approach. Marrou apparently subscribes to the view that it is. He also attributes this orientation to Augustine as its first exponent and therefore believes that a progressive step was taken by Augustine in his "De Doctrina Christiana" which was to be a pointer to the Church education of the Middle Ages.

Basil, however, while putting all culture subservient to the Christian life and its goal, did not set its direction towards Biblical exegesis alone, but let the two aspects of faith and culture grow to their own fulness together. This is borne out in his comparison between the

development of a plant and the growth of a man to maturity.

"I think that just as it is the native virtue of a plant to teem with fruit in season, though the plant bears some beauty and foliage which is shaken all around by the branches, so in the case of the soul too there is its main principle or fruit, the truth, but this is not without charm either, as a result of the soul having aimed at the wisdom from without [1]. This is comparable to the value afforded by some leaves which are both a protection for the fruit and a not unseasonable sight." [2]

The leaves of culture protect and display the true fruit, which is the Christian faith, as they develop side by side in the one plant. Basil conceived the possibility of a Christian form being given to the Greek paideia which was to be essentially a living and creative tension.

To go further than this and to demand a purely Christian culture seems to be impracticable, as was stated at the outset. [3] It would assume a degree of understanding of the Christian faith fixed for all time. It would require the drawing of water-tight distinctions between what can be of use now and what cannot ever, at

1. "τὴν ὑδραθέν σοφίαν" Pagan culture as distinct from the revealed knowledge of Christianity was frequently termed "the wisdom from without": e.g., in this address μαθήματα τὰ ἐξωθεν, IV, 1; τοις ἐξω ὅτι τοιτοις, II, 141; and Gregory of Nyssa, In Laudem Fratris Basilii, P.G. XLVI, 790Bf et al. Basil at one point, quoted below, p. seems to be uneasy about this phrase and modifies it to ἐν ἐπέρους (λόγους) ὁ λαμα διεστηκός.  
2. Basil, πρὸς τοὺς νέους, III, 6 ff.  
3. See above, p. 5
any stage of its development or expression, contribute to any man’s understanding of Scripture. Moreover, it may be claimed that, although some knowledge of the teachings of the Bible is essential to a Christian faith, there are other contributing factors, the importance of which varies with each individual’s response to the living God.

4. The pagan unity of faith and culture.

So far the relationship between the Christian philosophy and Greek paideia in Basil’s treatise has been discussed in terms of the modern concept of a unity of faith and culture. [1] Yet there is danger in attributing present-day connotations to the past. But despite the modern phraseology, the idea of an interdependence and interaction between theology or philosophy and education is to be found in the fourth century not only in the writings of Basil and the other Cappadocians, but even more clearly in the writings of the foremost of their pagan contemporaries, Julian, Themistius, Libanius and Sallustius. For them Hellenism embodied a way of living which cohered and which was considered the best way for the individual and for the happiness of society as a whole. Philosophy and education were interdependent parts of Hellenism.

1. See above, p. 8.
In 361, when Julian became Emperor, although the Empire had had a Christian at its head for almost fifty years, there was then a very genuine attempt to revert to this pagan ideal of Hellenism, in opposition to Christianity, and to try once more to bring about the sort of harmony within the state that was attributed to the old Republican and Augustan times. Professor Downey has drawn attention to this and points to it as a motive underlying the whole programme of reforms instituted by Julian, economic, judicial, political and administrative as well as philosophical and cultural.

"In the belief in which Julian had been schooled, both classical civilisation and the political ideal of the Roman Empire and its eternity were in themselves matters of faith, and Julian could not comprehend the new Christian idea of man, society and learning as another single and unified idea of faith." [1]

Libanius, in writing a funeral oration for the Emperor describes Julian's attempts to achieve this unity of faith and culture.

"Now he, believing that literature and the worship of the gods are twin sisters, and seeing that the one was entirely extinguished, and the other in great part, in order that everything relating to these subjects should be set to rights, he brought it about firstly by the honours bestowed upon the learned, and secondly by composing treatises of his own..." [2]

1. Downey, "Julian and Justinian .." Church History, 28 (1959) p. 343.
2. Libanius, Oration 18, translated King, p. 170.
With this understanding of Julian's policy the arguments which he gave to support his edict excluding Christians from the teaching profession become meaningful. For he charged the Christian teachers with dishonesty for teaching the pagan literature, while themselves holding opinions contrary to those expressed by the pagan authors, especially in matters concerning the gods.

"I hold that a proper education results, not in laboriously acquired symmetry of phrases and language, but in a healthy condition of mind, I mean a mind that has understanding and true opinions about things good and evil, honourable and base. Therefore, when a man thinks one thing and teaches his pupils another, in my opinion he fails to educate exactly in proportion as he fails to be an honest man. ... What! Was it not the gods who revealed all their learning to Homer, Hesiod, Demosthenes, Herodotus, Thucydides, Isocrates and Lysias? Did not those men think that they were consecrated, some to Hermes, others to the Muses? I think it is absurd that men who expound the works of these writers should dishonour the gods whom they used to honour. ... But if they believe that those whose interpreters they are and for whom they sit, so to speak, in the seat of the prophets, were wise men, let them be the first to emulate their piety towards the gods." [1]

This idea of a harmony of religion or philosophy with the practical political, cultural and social life was so vital to Julian's outlook and plans that he encouraged

his friend Sallustius to supply a compendium of pagan beliefs which might work side by side with his legislative reforms. [1] This catechism, entitled "Concerning the Gods and the Universe", is based largely on the Neoplatonic school of philosophy to which Julian also adhered. The opening lines show how the pagan religious and cultural ideals were seen to go hand in hand. [2]

"Those who would learn about the gods need to have been well educated from childhood and must not be bred up among foolish ideas; they must also be good and intelligent by nature, in order that they may have something in common with the subject. Further they must be acquainted with universal opinions, by which I mean those in which all men, if rightly questioned, would concur; such opinions are that every god is good and impassive and unchangeable..." [3]

He then proceeds to outline some of these "universal opinions", about the hierarchy of the gods, fortune, providence, mind, the origin of evil, the punishment and transmigration of souls, and the imperishable nature of the universe. The work consists of a brief exposition of these basic tenets which a pagan could use as criteria for his understanding of the Greek literary culture. By

2. Nock, Introduction to Sallustius, Concerning the Gods and the Universe, p. cxiv. Nock assumes that the work lacks a proper opening and is probably unfinished.
the application of these the literature could be "demythologized" to the point where it became an intellectually satisfying philosophy and rationale for pagan society. [1]

Julian attempted a new synthesis of every aspect of the Graeco-Roman civilization under his regime, and sought to formulate an intellectual basis for his reforms in the current philosophical terms. Meanwhile another pagan philosopher, Themistius, concentrated on bringing into prominence the ethical values of Greek philosophy. [2] As a philosopher Themistius has been spoken of disparagingly as "one of those men who sought to distinguish themselves from the pure "litterati", who were simply rhetoricians, without ever managing to become as philosophical as they would have liked or as they claimed to be." [3] This was because he saw his philosophical ideal as having its roots in the literary culture. By philosophy he meant an eclectic synthesis of the classical tradition. Through this "philosophy" a man acquires virtue, and for this his soul is naturally inclined. Themistius in fact placed his faith in the Greek paideia, but with some interesting innovations.

1. See below, p. 41 ff. and 75
His philosophy was based on a broad literary training which was intended to reach all classes of society. It was not to be limited to a cultural élite. His horizons were even wider than this for he saw Greek education as a means also of controlling and assimilating the barbarians. His religion of culture might have rivalled Christianity in the claim to universality. [1]

Downey has remarked on the great influence which Themistius wielded over a substantial part of the fourth century [2]. In the first place we have more material written on the subject of education by Themistius than by any other figure of that period. Secondly, judging from the statements of his contemporaries and the number of copies of his writings, his works were much read. His influence extended over Christians as well as pagans, especially the emperors, with whom he was particularly concerned, from Constantius through to Theodosius, whose son Arcadius he tutored towards the end of the century. His power rested in the fact that although he never attacked Christianity, by supporting Hellenism he implied that it was a real alternative to Christianity. In Themistius' orations Downey sees

"a clear picture of the way in which intelligent pagans sought to show that paganism could offer.

spiritual satisfactions and practical ethical teaching equal to what could be found in Christianity; and a considerable part of what Themistius says is concerned with the values and purposes of the pagan educational system, and the effect which this course of study might, he hoped, have on the Empire and its history." [1]

In Julian, then, who had a Christian upbringing, and even more significantly in Themistius and Sallustius, there can be seen a new phenomenon, which is the influence of Christianity in its turn on paganism. [2]

The two attempts at seeking a unity of faith and culture are largely indebted to each other, [3] and the search was mutual. As part of this movement Basil proposed a working plan for the young Christians of the fourth century. In it he showed how students might share in all the pagan culture not only without harm to their faith, but as an integral part of living and growing within that faith.

1. Downey, "Education in the Christian Roman Empire: Christian and pagan theories under Constantine and his successors"; Speculum, 32 (1957) p. 57.
2. The use of the word "philanthropia" by the pagans in rivalry to the Christian "agape", and its subsequent adoption as an alternative by the Christians is traced by Downey, "Philanthropia in religion and statecraft in the fourth century after Christ", Historia, 4 (1955)
CHAPTER II
AN ETHICAL APPROACH TO LITERATURE

1. Basil takes up a traditional theme.

Although the liberal attitude which Basil adopted towards the reading of the whole of pagan Greek literature can be deduced from the address, this was not his primary theme. Basil took a particular problem, a very old one, and reconsidered it in relation to the Christian faith. It was in the course of this investigation that he made apparent the broader issue of a Christian form of culture. Scholars looking for a direct discussion of the relationship between Christianity and Greek paideia have criticized Basil for his failure to provide one.

"Il n'a nullement posé dans toute son extension et avec toute sa gravité, le problème des rapports entre la littérature païenne et l'enseignement chrétien. C'est sans doute qu'en fait il le considère comme déjà résolu, et il est vrai qu'il avait été pratiquement tranché dès le IIe siècle et au IIIe," [1]

This is a fair summary by Puech of the position. It is strange that often the first part of this passage has been quoted by Basil's critics who have then ignored Puech's explanation, and looked to Basil for the treatment of a problem which to Basil was no problem.

The question actually posed by Basil was what part

of our reading we should allow to influence us and to act as a positive directive to our living. By what criteria are we to accept anything as useful and worthy to become part and parcel of our own selves? [1]

Basil's answer to this is almost entirely in terms of what can help contribute to the practice of morality and to a man's awareness and understanding of this. He is concerned with that ethical teaching which is contained explicitly or implicitly, within literature, and which is available to those who are "prepared to find more than direct enjoyment in their reading". [2]

There is only one point which does not conform to this theme, and it arises almost as an aside within the context of the ethical approach. When, like Plato, he criticizes the pagan poetic descriptions of friction amongst the gods, and their number and failure to be of one mind, he not only hints at monothecism, but possibly too at the triune God of the Christians and the current theological discussion stemming from the Nicene formulation of the relationships within the Trinity. [3]

With the exception of this one reference his concern is to reconsider the ethical values involved in a literary

3. ibid. IV, 20f. Πάντων δὲ ἡκιστα τερπν θεόν τι διαλεγομένων κρισεκομεν, καὶ μαλισθ' ήταν δὲ τερ
κολλών τε αὐτῶν διεξελωι καὶ τούτων οὕδ' ὅμοιονοντων.
The most conspicuous analysis of this had been made seven centuries earlier by Plato in Books II, III and X of the "Republic" in reference to the poets, and later in the "Phaedrus", "Gorgias" and "Laws", where prosewriters were included too. Plato’s objection to most of the writings of the poets was based on their misrepresentation of the gods, especially the descriptions of immoral conduct on the part of both gods and men, - their drunkenness, anger, adulteries, conflict and cruelty - vices from which Zeus himself was not exempt. The danger of this in literature as Plato saw it was twofold; in the first place when the child hears these stories he is unable to discern what is intended as allegory and what is not [1], and secondly, he was concerned that at that age when a child is liable to believe the stories at face value, he carries away a lasting impression of them. Therefore, as the philosopher-king of his republic, Plato discriminated between true and false literature, the first only being permissible. He also established two canons as his criteria for judging this; firstly, "that God is not the author of all things, but of good alone", and secondly, "that gods are not magicians, and do not change themselves or deceive us by lies, either in word or deed". From this he concluded that a child should hear only the

1. Plato, Republic 378 D. allegory: ἀληθοῦς
beautiful stories which would inculcate those views of life which he should hold later too as an adult.

In formulating his ideal state Plato wanted literature to be a vehicle for education, capable of fostering the great traditional virtues of courage, honesty, temperance, and justice. [1] In this context he evaluated literature primarily from the moral standpoint. He emphasized that in any attempt to teach virtue through literature, great care had to be taken to guard "the city in a man's soul" so that reason would not be made subservient to the emotions; for it was an acceptable common-place in antiquity that the emotions were easily pleased by the pleasantness of poetry. To protect his citizen against this danger Plato decided that poets must be banished from his ideal state, at least until such time as their existence "as a positive force for the good" could be established. [2] Meanwhile he would admit into the city only such poetry as hymns to the gods or praises of good men. He made this strict stipulation because of his initial decision to search for whatever would make a useful contribution to the just state. However, he tried to leave room for the possibility of some day removing his strictures.

"And we might also allow her champions, who are not poets but lovers of poetry, to publish a prose

2. ibid. X, 607.
defence on her behalf, showing that she is not only pleasant but also useful for political constitutions and for human life, and we shall listen with friendly feelings. For it will be to our profit if she is made out to be not only pleasant but useful." [1]

The same narrowing of the discussion of literature is made by Basil in his address, and the usefulness of literature keeps recurring as his theme. [2]

2. A rhetorical commonplace?

This was a valid question for men of Plato's generation. Along with the emergence of the Athenian democracy there had been experimentation in education and a variety of responses to the political situation was made by the sophists. These men tended towards one of two extremes. Often they taught the art of eristics, which, because it was designed primarily to convince men in the agora, Plato criticized for being opportunist and lacking in moral foundation. Alternatively, they gave an encyclopaedic education which, in assembling and presenting every branch of learning, without discrimination probably failed to discipline and cultivate the mind. Plato's curriculum proposed in the "Republic" was carefully balanced, and in later centuries took the form of the seven liberal arts curriculum. It then consisted of the "trivium" of grammar, rhetoric and dialectic, and

1. Plato, Republic, X, 607. See below, p. 103
2. Basil, Ἐρμηνα τοῦ νεόνευος, I, 19, 23, 27; II 1, 38; IV 1, 40, 45, 50; VII 5.
the "quadrivium" denoting arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. For Plato the curriculum was part of a bigger scheme for the education in philosophy of his ruler class. It was therefore necessary that the preliminary subjects should be in line with his total purpose, and that, as a result, the reading of the classics should come under such close scrutiny.

When Basil, however, echoed many of these same sentiments centuries later it might be wondered whether, in an age famous for its schools of rhetoric, this was still a genuine dilemma, or whether it was not rather an academic question, a rhetorical "topos" raised to exercise and display the skill of the man of letters. For there can be little doubt that Basil was deliberately working within what had become by then, under Cynic and Stoic influence, a traditional theme. [1] Such is the conclusion to which Marrou comes in his history:

"as the centuries rolled on, the reason why it was a good thing to study the poets became more and more hazy in the Greek consciousness until from the time of Plutarch to the time of St. Basil, the question had become simply a subject on which to exercise one's skill; As so often happens the means had become an end: the study of the classics had become an object in itself, and no one quite knew why it was so

1. Pire, Stoicisme et Pédagogie; Marrou, A History of Education, p. 100; Nock, Sallustius, p. xlv ff; Büttner, Basileios des Grossen Mahnworte an die Jugend"
important to be acquainted with them." [1]

On the contrary, to say that the study of the classics had become an object in itself, is not to do justice either to the Stoics and Plutarch and the early Christians such as Origen and Clement of Alexandria, or to the lively thinking about educational issues in the fourth century.

In the intervening years, with an awareness of Plato's criticism, writers and teachers in the schools had formulated methods by which his objection might be overcome. Plutarch adopted the same approach and wrote a treatise intended for the benefit of the student who "takes up poetry not for amusement, but for education", that is, paideia. [2] He seems to have explored every possible scheme for overcoming the objections of Plato and he probably characterizes, if not apparently caricaturing, the extremes to which this method could be carried. For example, he thought that in the schools it was legitimate for the teacher and pupils to emend a text, and to change a word which offended. [3] Alternatively, the teacher could offset one passage with a nobler exemplar from elsewhere in the same work or in one by the same author. If this failed he could resort to another writer, preferably a philosopher, for

2. Plutarch, How to Study Poetry, 30 D.
3. ibid., § 34.
philosophers carried more authority. If no obvious contrast was available, a line such as "Surely you know how to think up a better saying than this one", [1] could be used to counter some description of a thought or action judged in itself to be disgraceful.

This kind of mental gymnastics tended to become the actual content of a literary education, when it was continued beyond the mere fact-finding stage of the grammarian's teaching. Plutarch's justification and defence of Greek literature does appear to be naïve. [2] However, even admitting the crudeness of the answers, there are grounds for believing that underlying this superficial treatment, there was a genuine problem posed in the minds of Plutarch and his contemporaries.

"Die Art und Weise einer solchen Dichterinterpretation wurde sodann in der ganzen kynischen Schule üblich und auch von der Stoa übernommen, ein Beweis, dass wir es hier "nicht mit einem frivolen Spiel des Witzes zu tun haben" sondern mit einer ernstgemeinten Beschäftigung, die ethischen und bei den Stoikern überdies naturphilosophischen Zwecken diente." [3]

Although it was a perennial question, it does not mean that it was therefore an arid exercise. It might be

1. Homer, Odyssey VII 358 and XII, 232, quoted by Plutarch, How to Study Poetry, 20 E.
compared with or even considered as one approach to the classic problem of evil, which recurs in all ages. In this case, if one assumes an omnipotent beneficent God who creates the world, and at the same time notes the apparent existence of evil in that world, it seems that one of these assumptions must go. Either the statement of the omnipotence and beneficence of God or of the presence of evil in the world is discredited. Similarly the man bred in the Greek tradition, which was by this time a virtual religion of culture, could ask the question: if classical literature (the god paideia) is responsible for leading man to virtue (arete) and to a fulness of manhood (kalokagathia), surely there cannot be any evil teaching in classical literature? For the greater the reverence for pagan literature and its formative value in education the more precisely the Greeks and Romans tried to fix and classify this value. Men were fascinated by the educative potential of the Greek literary culture. 

One answer to the problem of evil is to deny its positive existence and to look on it rather as a privation of good. There were Christians in the fourth century who put forward this solution. Similarly the pagan supporters of the authority of classical

1. Jaeger's Paideia: 3 volumes illustrating this quest of the Greeks for arete throughout their civilization.
2. Athanasius, De Incarnatione Verbi, 4; Basil Hexaemeron II, 4; Callahan, "Greek philosophy and the Cappadocian cosmology", D.C.P., 12 (1958) p. 52.
literature attempted to explain away the inconsistencies and contradictions of their literature and philosophy.

Under the Empire the growing faith of the pagans that the key to the civilization of man was embodied in their particular cultural heritage made the question of the value and authority of literature an increasingly pertinent one. As the cultural tradition was itself formalized more specifically in the schools of the Empire and as the number of schools increased so rapidly, men became more conscious of this heritage. The awareness of it grew too with the attempt to win over the barbarians to "Romanitas" by using this cultural tradition as a civilizing force. It grew with the tendency towards individualism which was concurrent with the very noticeable decline in Plutarch's generation of the political effectiveness of the unit of the "polis" in Greece and in the East; and it thrived when education began to count for more than family as a qualification for the new imperial service at Constantinople in the fourth century. "La rhetorique est le dénominateur commun de la bonne société" [1]; it was the equivalent of the aristocracy in Rome. Paul Petit came to this conclusion from his study of the letters of Libanius.

"Though it is still difficult for us to define precisely the size of the phenomenon, we know now that the loud

1. Petit, Les Étudiants de Libanius... p. 96.
complaints of Libanius, piously recorded by the historians, are very exaggerated: rhetoric is still at the end of the century the royal path which opens up high posts, as the brilliant careers of his students prove. Thus the paideia, the sanction of which was theoretically to assure the survival of the idea of the "polis", finds itself equally, by a sort of irony, and by the favour which it still enjoyed in the milieu of the officials, responsible, at least partially, for the desertion of the curials." [1]

It is true then that the problem of the moral value of literature was a rhetorical question inasmuch as this was one of the numerous themes which were analyzed and developed by orators for an audience readily pleased by rhetorical display. The result was that such themes were generally dealt with on the level of a public display rather than on a philosophical basis. Nevertheless it was also a real question in a society so conscious of the constructive role of this rhetorical education. Professor Downey earmarked it as "a century during which both pagans and Christians were very much concerned with the educational bases of the cultural and political problems which confronted them as a result of the emancipation and growing success of Christianity." [2] The Greeks did feel they knew the reason why it was important to be acquainted with the classics. This belief was put in

1. ibid., p. 191.
summary form by Julian in the course of his opposition to the Christians.

"You yourselves (Christians) know, it seems to me, the very different effect on the intelligence of your writings as compared with ours; and that from studying yours no man could attain to excellence or even to ordinary goodness, whereas from studying ours every man would become better than before, even though he were altogether without natural fitness. But when a man is naturally well endowed, and moreover receives the education of our literature, he becomes actually a gift of the gods to mankind, either by kindling the light of knowledge, or by founding some kind of political constitution, or by routing numbers of his country's foes, or even by travelling far over the earth and far by sea, and thus proving himself a man of heroic mould .." [1]

What they could not analyse satisfactorily and the question which they continued to ask was how this attaining of excellence came about. In the light of this it is possible to see how the use of allegory for the moral justification of literature was not as Marrou suggested, something "apart from the essence of Hellenistic education" [2], but, on the contrary, arising from their vision of its power. The lesser motives which he tried to emphasize, of their wanting to give an appearance of being learned, or of aiming at social status were probably

2. Marrou, A History of Education, p. 120.
no more or less pronounced than they are today. A little story in Eunapius depicts this. It is the story of Aedesius, whose father sent him from Cappadocia to Greece to educate himself so that he would be in a position to increase the family finances which were at a low ebb. But the father was to be disappointed because the boy took a liking to philosophy. However, when he showed later that through philosophy he had acquired a virtuous character he was allowed back home. [1]

3. Pagan handling of the theme in the fourth century A.D.

Now, at this time the pagan Sallustius took up the same question which Plutarch had handled, and dealt with it in a more sophisticated manner. He touched only briefly on the direct question of the purpose of myths in literature. Yet this is his first proposition, and the key to the rest of his work.

"Why have the ancients told in their myths of adulteries and thefts and binding of fathers and other strange things? Is this also admirable, meant to teach the soul by the seeming strangeness at once to think the words a veil and the truth a mystery?" [2] Sallustius answered this with the explanation that there are different levels of allegory at which the myths may be understood. He believed this to be a legitimate form of criticism on the assumption that the myths were

1. Eunapius, Lives of the Sophists.
2. Sallustius, On the Nature of the Gods .. § 3.
deliberately constructed at these various levels through some divine ordering. They could therefore be called "divine myths". [1]

"Consideration of those who have employed myths justifies us in saying that myths are divine; for indeed the inspired among poets, and the best of philosophers, and the founders of solemn rites, and the gods themselves in oracles, have employed myths." This was extended to mean that the poets deliberately intended teaching men through myths. The myths were to be construed in a manner which would profit the student according to the varying stages of the development of his insight.

Sallustius classified the levels of interpreting myths under four headings, material, physical, psychical and theological, attributing the latter type to the philosophers, and the physical and psychical to the poets. He divided the readers of classical literature into two categories: those who were concerned to discover the universal opinions by an allegorical interpretation, and those who were aiming at transcending these universal opinions and striving for some sort of philosophical union with the divine. The faith grew that all would fit into this divine scheme if only man had the wit and ingenuity to perceive how to extract the value.

The basis for this allegorizing was a set of "universal opinions" believed to be latent in the literature. An outline of these is the chief content of Sallustius' handbook. The very first one he mentions in his initial paragraph is that every god is "good, impassive and unchangeable". [1] This echoes the criteria by which Plato had judged and condemned most of classical Greek literature. The emperor Julian possibly had the same sort of idea in mind in framing his edict about Christian teachers when he also stressed the necessity for the educated man to hold "true opinions about things good and evil." [2] Myths were to be assessed by these standards, derived in an eclectic fashion from philosophy. At the same time the student was judging his poetry by the standards of philosophy and conversely, whetting his appetite for philosophy through his reading of poetry. The teacher could not assume that children would arrive at the universal opinions and true values by reading the literature without the aid of these basic tenets of philosophy. In this Sallustius accepted Plato. He acknowledged the need for guidance, for a measuring stick in seeking the "hidden meanings" in literature.

This idea of literature as a preparation for the tougher meat of philosophy was a commonplace in the

1. See above, p. 25.
2. See above, p. 24.
educational thinking of antiquity. It appears in Plato's curriculum where the training in the seven liberal arts led up to and culminated in an intensive study of dialectical method. The final application of dialectic

"finds the eye of the soul embedded in what is really a swamp of barbarism and gently draws and raises it upwards, using the arts which we have enumerated as handmaids in the work of conversion." [1]

Plutarch in his "How to Study Poetry" put it plainly.

"Poetry should not be avoided by those who are intending to pursue philosophy, but they should use poetry as an introductory exercise in philosophy, by training themselves habitually to seek the profitable in what gives pleasure, and to find satisfaction therein; and if there be nothing profitable, to combat such poetry and be dissatisfied with it. For this is the beginning of education." [2]

Of course, a philosophy may be reflected in poetry and other literary genres. But pagan thinking was developing along more extreme lines in claiming that this foretaste of philosophy in literature was a deliberate part of the didactic purpose of literature. The poets were credited with almost prophetic powers. Even subsequent and far-fetched allegorical interpretations were thought to have been part of the divine plan behind the composition of the literature. No systematic account was taken of the changes over a long period of time of the

1. Plato, Republic, VII, 533.
2. Plutarch, How to Study Poetry, 16 A.
meaning of thought forms or even of such key words as "arete". These have been traced by modern scholarship. [1] The school-master of antiquity attributed his own or his contemporaries' interpretation of a poem to the intention of the poet. The pagan approach bordered on a providential view of the role of philosophy in literature. It rested on the assumption that a man's natural ability is developed to maturity by education in the classical culture alone, and that this was the intention of the gods who worked through the poets. Greek literature was therefore devised for this education of mankind.

4. The ethical approach in a Christian context.

The formal expression of this need for guidance in reading the classics and the answer to it was the "creed" of Sallustius. But it was an answer to a need at a time of crisis, when the Christians were seeking their guidance and authority not from within the culture, but in the revelation of God's actions in Jesus Christ, as described in the Bible and the Church. So St. Antony could refute the popular conception of the Greek gods and their allegorized form by appealing to the Christians' postulation of a creator God, and by emphasizing the different grounds Christians had for faith in this. [2]

"Christians possess the truth not on the basis of Greek philosophical reasoning, but founded on the

1. e.g. Snell, Discovery of the Mind, p. 158.
power of a faith vouchsafed us by God through Jesus Christ."

Gregory Nazianzen ridiculed the apparent vanity of looking to pagan poetry to find concealed there a philosophical basis for the rhetorical system of education. He does this in a speech written against the Emperor Julian.

"All these tales, and yet more than these so cleverly and ingeniously put together, and quite out of the common rule, who is there of your party so sublime, so powerful and truly "comparable to Jove for wisdom", as to be able to bring them into a decent form by means of the words of cloudy dissertation, soaring far above the limits of our comprehension?"

He saw no ultimate basis to the allegorizing.

"But if they will argue that these things are only fictions and idle stories of poets employing two instruments to give a charm to their poetry, namely metre and fable; and sweetening as it were by these the sound of their works, whereas there is concealed in the same fictions a more secret and transcendent sense, only accessible to a few of the wiser sort: consider in what way I shall learn from the latter plainly and honestly these two things: firstly, how it is that they load with praise the person (i.e. poet) who makes a mock of those whom people worship; and why they esteem worthy of all but divine honours those very persons for whom it were full enough good luck to escape the punishment due to their impiety. Secondly, .. the inner sense is not worthy of credit, whilst what conceals it is full of mischief. What good can come from such things, and what the end of
these tales? Thou wilt go on babbling and allegorizing thine own hallucinations and fancies, - but there will be nobody to believe them; because what strikes the eye has the stronger power of persuasion." [1]

For the Christian it was not so much a question of whether he should accept the value of the traditional education through classical literature [2], as a question of how this was to be done. This is where Laistner's criticism of Basil's address as "a very slight performance" is invalid. He is disturbed that Basil "fails to point out that pagan culture alone at that date could train the mind and inculcate breadth of view and depth of perception." [3]

At all levels the value of the education was largely taken for granted in the East, as it is in Western society even today.

In fact, as Professor Downey has stated firmly, "there was no essential need for a clash between Christianity and the classical tradition. The basic problem here ... was the question of the source and the authority of knowledge and wisdom - whether these were God-given, as the Hebrews and Christians believed, or were something that man had worked out for himself, as the Greeks believed." [4]

Again the question for the Christians, just as for the pagans, was how the value was to be derived, and by

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. IV, 116 ff.
2. See above, p. 29.
3. Laistner, Christianity and Pagan Culture, p. 52.
what standards. They had to consider the question for themselves because they were unable to accept "in toto" the pagan solution, with its basis in the "universal opinions". Nor was that invariably satisfactory even for the pagan. Julian, in the special case of the education of his pagan priests, was as stringent as Plato.

"And the priest ought to keep himself pure not only from impure or shameful acts, but also from uttering words and hearing speeches of that character. Accordingly we must banish all offensive jests and all licentious intercourse. And that you may understand what I mean by that, let no one who has been consecrated a priest read either Archilochus or Hipponax or anyone else who writes such poems as theirs. And in Old Comedy let him avoid everything of that type - for it is better so - and indeed on all accounts philosophy alone will be appropriate for us priests; and of philosophers only those who chose the gods as guides of their mental discipline, like Pythagoras and Plato and Aristotle and the school of Chrysippus and Zeno."

Basil, like Gregory Nazianzen, was critical of allegorizing. While reporting the pagan view that "all poetic composition is for Homer the commending of virtue" he attributed this saying to "one who is clever at understanding the intention of a poet", and so did not commit himself to a thorough-going application of this

1. Julian, Fragment of a Letter to a Priest, 300 C f.
3. Boulenger suggests, and it is assumed so by Padelford, that Basil is referring to Libanius.
principle. [1] Rather he pointed to two conspicuous examples in which the poets were incontestably supporting a virtuous line and pointing a moral. These two are the stories of Odysseus' meeting with Nausicaa and the Phaeacians, and Prodicus' description of Heracles' choice between the two women at the branching of the ways, one woman representing Virtue, and the other Vice. No one would quibble about Basil's interpretation of these. [2] He did not select, as the pagans did, the most difficult passages for justification, as if he were obliged to defend them to accord with his own philosophy. [3] His own position was far more carefully qualified than that of the pagans, Plutarch, Julian or Themistius.

"Near enough to all those who have a reputation for wisdom have each as far as they could, whether great or small, developed in some detail in their writings some commendation of virtue; and these are to be followed, and an attempt made to display the accounts in our lives." [4]

While pagans could repeat the commonplace that all Homer was a praise of virtue, and little children could write on the first page of their writing book that Homer was not human, but a god [5], the Christians, on the

2. Basil, ἀρκόν τοῦ δικτύουν, V.
4. Basil, ἀρκόν τοῦ δικτύουν, VI 1 ff.
other hand, though they were themselves deeply involved in the classical tradition, could at the same time stand aside from it. They had a new guide. While Plato's system depended on a philosopher-king, who for Plutarch was the teacher guiding the student through literature, and while Sallustius pointed to some underlying principles within the literature, the Christians looked to the teachings of the Bible and to the Church as their guide in their reading.
CHAPTER III
THE CHRISTIAN IMPACT IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

1. The problem of the occasion of Basil's address.

It has been assumed in the previous chapters that Basil's ideas could be taken to represent the opinion of a large section of Eastern Christendom at that time. Besides this it has been assumed that such Christian opinion in the fourth century could be of great significance not only as part of the Christian heritage down to today, but also in Basil's own society. An examination of the circumstances of Basil's address can help place his thought in the context of what has been called "a true renaissance". [1]

It is patently obvious that from the time of Constantine and the beginning of a succession of Christian emperors, the tide had turned. The influence of Christians was growing. The change has been stated quite dramatically.

"Constantine's policy with respect to Christianity produced one of the greatest alterations of society which we know or can conceive, and all aspects of life, public and private, were affected by the changes which took place." [2]

Yet thirty years later, within his very short reign, Julian had the mileposts painted to his glorification:

1. Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia, p. 75.
"born for the good of the State", "always invincible", "perpetually triumphant", "removing the vices of past times", "destroyer of superstition", "restorer of temples and the reign of liberty". [1] These were among the catch-phrases of a new form of paganism. Julian had a new party policy formulated and partially inaugurated before his death even though most of his time had to be occupied with military concerns in the East. It is therefore necessary to look more closely at the scale of the Christian factor in the shaping of fourth century ideas about education and at Basil’s part in this.

The first step in this research, then, is a consideration of the circumstances which prompted Basil to write the "Address to Young Men". The answer usually given is that he wrote it in his old age for his nephews. The evidence for the audience being his nephews is internal, and is based on the following two passages. In the opening Basil remarks:

"As it happens that I have the closest natural relationship to you after that of your parents, I bear you no less goodwill than that of a father. But I do think, unless I am utterly mistaken in my judgment of you, that when you look at me you are not longing for your parents." [2]

1. Bidez, La Vie de L'Empereur Julien, p.229. He notes that considering the brevity of his reign the number of these inscriptions throughout the Empire is impressive.
2. Basil, ἐν δος τοὺς νέους, I 8 ff. τῇ τε παρὰ τῆς φύσεως οικειότητι εὐθὺς μετὰ τοὺς γονέας μήν τυγχάνω
The second passage is towards the end. It carries the suggestion that he would continue to be associated with the boys in the future.

"These things which I have just said I consider to be very important, but I shall continue to advise you in other ways too over the years." [1]

This last passage could easily be understood to refer not to the continuing association through family ties but to the pastoral advice which Basil could expect to continue to give as a priest to the children in his diocese. The first passage is a more formidable challenge to such an interpretation, but might also be in accord with it. The very close relationship may not refer to blood kinship. Could it be the closest relationship outside of the family, and one which is nevertheless as close as being next to the parents, that is, the relationship of a priest? The evidence therefore on the side of the argument that Basil was speaking to his nephews is not absolutely convincing. There is clearly room for an alternative explanation.

The approximate age of the boys to whom it is addressed is ascertainable. There are several internal references which point to the period of early adolescence. The children must have been old enough to appreciate the literary references and allusions, and yet young enough

for the remark about not longing for their parents not to be absurd. [1] But the most significant evidence is that of the treatise itself; for it was directed at a particular aspect of the school curriculum which concerned children at the level of the early years at high school.

Under the Hellenistic system the study of literature was undertaken under the grammarian once the child could read and write fluently. It started relatively late because of the laborious method by which the child was taught. It involved the study of particular authors, in a process that was formally divided into four stages: criticism of the text, reading, exposition and judgment. In theory the crowning-point of all this was the "judgment" of the piece of literature, and this, according to Dionysius Thrax, was "the finest flower of the Grammarian's art". [2] It was not an aesthetic but a moral judgment. Petit, in his research into the correspondence of Libanius, has found that the boys in Libanius' school studied under a grammarian from the age of about eleven or twelve, and at about fifteen went on to the higher studies of rhetoric under the great rhetor himself. [3] Moreover, although there was some overlap between the work of the grammarian and rhetor it tended to be the grammarian encroaching of the rhetor's field.

rather than the reverse. [1] The upper age limit is thus set fairly reliably at the stage where the boys graduate to the study of rhetoric. Therefore it can be assumed that the boys were somewhere between the ages of eleven and fifteen.

Scholars, working on the assumption that Basil was writing for his nephews, and knowing that Basil was the eldest boy in a family of ten, have concluded partly on the strength of this that they must assign a late dating to the work. There were four younger boys in Basil's family. One died in infancy and the remaining three were Naucratius, who died at the age of twenty-six while living as a hermit, Gregory, later Bishop of Nyssa, and Peter, the youngest of the family, who became Bishop of Sebaste. There were five girls too, of whom Macrina was the eldest of all the children, and became a second mother to the family. [2] She was ten or eleven years older than Basil. [3] It is therefore fairly probable that some, if not all of the other four sisters, were born before Basil. [4] It follows then that they could have married and had children old enough to have the work of Basil addressed to them even as early as the year in which

2. Gregory of Nyssa, Letter to Olympias 272 C  
3. Strachey, Saints and Sinners, Chapter 2, for family details. Macrina was born in 319.  
4. In the genealogy in the N.P.F series the four girls were probably filled in late en bloc with no particular concern for their ages.
Basil returned home from Athens, when he was in his mid-twenties. Gregory Nazianzen, in speaking of the family in a panegyric of Basil, mentioned "the blessed roll of priests and virgins, and of those who, when married, have allowed nothing in their union to hinder them from attaining an equal repute." [1] As the young Gregory is the only one of the boys who seems at all likely to have married, this probably refers to the girls. In the prolegomena to the Migne edition it is noted that all four girls were married by the time Basil returned from Athens, which was in 356. "Quattuor filias honorifice collocaverat S. Emmelia, paulo antequam Basilius Athenis rediret."

It now seems reasonable to assume that even early in his ecclesiastical career [2] Basil could conceivably have had nephews old enough to be the recipients of this treatise. Thus, even assuming that the premise were true that Basil was writing to his nephews, there would be no real necessity to date the treatise any later than approximately 356, when Basil returned from university. In actual fact other considerations do suggest that the date should be a few years later than this. [3]

The other evidence often used for a late dating are the remarks made by Basil in the preface to the work,

1. Gregory Nazianzen, On. 43
2. Basil was ordained deacon in 360 at the age of 30.
3. See below, p.
where he gives his qualifications for advising them:

"The fact of my age and my training - by this time in a variety of circumstances - these are my qualifications, plus the special experience of sharing fully in a change (of faith) in both directions, for this teaches a person a great deal. [1] These factors have made me familiar with a wide range of personal situations so that for those who are now just beginning to feel their way, I can point to the life which is as it were the safest path." [2]

But the word for "age", ἡλικία, seems to cover either age in general or anything beyond boyhood, such as the prime of life, or military age, or simply manhood. It need not necessarily stand for old age. At another point Basil uses the word in a way which includes both himself and the boys. [3] Thus the only conclusion to be drawn in this particular context is that Basil is making some contrast in age, and so is talking to people younger than himself.

The tone of the remarks could conceivably be explained as the generalizations of an old man, as it is in the prolegomena to the translation in the series of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

1. καὶ μὴν καὶ τὸ τῆς κάντα καθομονόθης ἐκ άμφω μεταβολής ἡκατοντα μετασχέταιν. This "change in both direction" is usually interpreted as changes of fortune. This has a materialistic ring about it in English which is inapplicable. Basil's wavering in his faith is hinted at quite strongly in Gregory of Nyssa's account of the life of St. Macrina. (To the Monk Olympias) Mention of it would have been inappropriate in the funeral oration.
2. Basil, πρὸς τοὺς νέους, I, 3 ff. 3. ibid., II, 27
"The treatise would seem to have been written in the Archbishop's later years, unless the experience of which he speaks may refer rather to his earlier experience, alike as a student and a teacher." [1]

But this latter experience does seem to be the most relevant to the subject which he has in hand. It is this second suggestion therefore that should find favour.

In the first place, Basil died in 370 at the age of forty-nine, so that whatever the dating these remarks could scarcely be thought of as the ramblings and condescension of an old man. There must be some other explanation for their tone and vagueness. Furthermore, if it were almost twenty years since he had himself been a student and then, for one year, a teacher of rhetoric, he would have had to spell out this experience more explicitly to the boys.

On the other hand, had they been fairly recent events it would have been the common knowledge of both his own family and of the citizens of Cappadocia. All that is known for sure is that he was not at this time a teacher of rhetoric, since he says to the boys:

"It is true that you are going to school each day and have contact through the works they have left behind with those of the ancients who are greatly treasured. Even so, do not be surprised if I still say that I have found out something quite useful, and that this is the advice I have come to give you." [2]

2. Basil, πρὸς τοὺς νέους, I 20ff.
It is known that Basil returned from Athens to Caesarea in 356, and that he taught there in 356 - 7. This is therefore the earliest date to which the work can be assigned on the strength of the evidence contained within the address.

2. Attempts at a solution.

So far it has been claimed simply that the argument which is based on internal evidence, that Basil was writing for his nephews, is not convincing. Other factors not only point to this conclusion too, but also favour an early dating. Is it possible that although it is sometimes labelled and thought of as a letter it could actually have been an oral dissertation, taken down on the spot by a scribe? The implications of this do not seem to have been discussed seriously, even though it has occasionally been thought of as a homily.[2]

It is almost certain that Basil's sermons were largely extempore. One indication of this is in the eighth homily of the "Hexaemeron" where Basil realises his omission of the birds in his account of the creation, and a member of the congregation apparently signalled this by flapping his arms:

1. See above, p. 53
2. Deferrari, "The classics and the Greek writers of the early Church", C.J., 13 (1913) p. 585. "Homily 21 has very marked indications of being an extempore speech. All the sentiments of this sermon are met with in others of Basil's works."
"Let the earth bring forth the living creature". (Basil repeats the quotation from 'Genesis' with which he began the sermon.) "Perhaps many of you ask why there is such a long silence in the middle of the rapid rush of my discourse. The more studious among my auditors will not be ignorant of the reason why words fail me. What! Have I not seen them look at each other, and make signs to make me look at them, and to remind me of what I have passed over? I have forgotten a part of the creation, and that one of the most considerable, and my discourse was almost finished without touching upon it. 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' I spoke of fish as long as eventide allowed: today we have passed to the examination of terrestrial animals; between the two, birds have escaped us." [1]

It can be assumed too that Cyril of Jerusalem did not write the full text of his sermons, since his catechetical lectures which were given in church were later published from the shorthand notes of his congregation. [2] Scribes were not numerous in Cappadocia at this time, but they were in great demand. [3]

If likewise the treatise for young men was delivered orally this manner of presentation would help to account for the apparent shift to a different category of the treatment of the theme of a moral education. This occurs in the latter part of the work and seems out of place.

On the whole Basil is dealing with the boys' intellectual development through literary studies. The second category into which discourses on education can fall is that of more direct instruction in moral behaviour. The works of the Stoics and some sections of Plato's "Republic" are like this. [1] They were more concerned about extravagances of dress, wealth and hair styles and the dangerous influence of women and the theatre than with the child's intellectual pursuits.

John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople at the end of the fourth century, followed this line of approach in his "Address on Vainglory and the right way for parents to bring up their children." He confined his remarks about a literary education to a recommendation of the Biblical stories and a warning against letting children listen to "a youth kissed a maiden" type of story. However, there is this long section in Basil's address in which he also develops this second type of instruction and with relatively few references to occasions when these "mores" are advocated in classical literature. He inveighs against the use of perfumes, extravagant hair styles, elaborate food and clothing and excessive concern about wealth and popularity and luxurious living. [2]

Büttner, in his dissertation published in 1908,

1. Plato, Republic III; Pire, Stoicisme et Pédagogie.
2. Basil, πρακτικα γονέων, IX.
noticed this section but used it as particular support for his own thesis that Basil was reworking a Cynico-Stoic treatise with only slight deviations.

"As an original contribution of Basil one can only designate with complete certainty, the Christian elements which he has occasionally inserted in order to illustrate the kinship between heathen and Christian views." [1]

However, there is no need in this instance to attribute such dull-wittedness to Basil.

The sliding away from his particular argument to the less relevant commonplaces of the contemporary pagan and Christian philosophy is more reasonably accounted for by the theory that the address was given extempore. Knowing that the two types of instruction were often dealt with together he may not have consciously observed the distinction.

If it is assumed on the strength of the argument so far that it was an extempore address, but also that it was an "entretien" directed towards his nephews, as Boulenger postulates [2], it is necessary to assume too the presence of a third party to note down the conversation. This is starting to sound very clumsy and unlikely. Alternatively, if it were thought to be a letter rather than an "entretien", the question would have to be asked.

1. Büttner, Basileios des Grossen Mahnworte.. p. 64
2. Boulenger, Intro to Budé text, p. 25.
why Basil was so formal as to have committed this to writing, with the help of the scribe, unless he was separated from the boys for some time and by a considerable distance. This would not be consistent with his remarks about his continuing association with them, though the possibility of this situation has not yet been eliminated altogether yet.

There is the further argument against this, however, that it would seem out of character for Basil to have written this address solely for his nephews, wherever they happened to be at the time. His other writings are all written for particular situations of some moment. He combatted heresy, gave lively sermons, laid down rules for a monastic life, wrote letters of consolation, advice recommendations, rebukes, and defences of nations, cities and individuals. This address though is far longer and the theme more extensively developed than the subject of any of his letters. It was therefore presumably intended for a more formal situation.

Bearing in mind again Basil's economy in writing, it can be said at the same time too that the work is unlikely to have been produced as an intellectual exercise, intended for display and in which the boys were only nominally the addressees. There are no works of Basil aiming at literary ingenuity, no "Praise of Baldness", no "Beard-hater", no autobiography even. A literary coup
would have been out of place in Basil’s works [1], and of course, it may be added, even less likely to have been written in his later busy years as bishop than when he was himself a rhetor. He was a man who lived at a serious pace, whether in organizing his monastery and forming the community centre within it for the care of the sick and poor, or using the great tradition of Greek learning in writing sermons, or fighting the battles for orthodoxy, recommending boys to teachers, or settling tax disputes. He is unlikely to have written the work either solely for his nephews or solely for his own and his friends’ entertainment.

Other people, sensing this, have in fact suggested that Basil, though addressing his nephews, was writing also for a wider audience. Boulenger in his introduction to the Budé edition has put forward this theory.

"Cet opuscule n’est pas un discours, au sens propre du mot, autrement dit il n’est pas destiné à un auditoire plus ou moins nombreux; .. Il semble, d’après le contexte lui-même, que cet opuscule écrit dans les dernières années d’une vie qui devait être si courte, ne soit qu’un entretien de S. Basile avec ses neveux en cours d’étude. Il n’est pas interdit de conjecturer que ces pages, écrites pour l’instruction de quelques jeunes gens de sa famille, ont été par la suite revues pour être mises à la portée de toute la jeunesse. On peut aller plus loin, et grâce aux allusions de plus en plus fréquentes à

Boulenger assumes that Basil was writing this address in his later years primarily for his nephews, but realizing that it was very likely to be published subsequently.

The argument is weak at several points. For one, it is doubtful whether it would have been too much to expect the boys to know that Prodicus was the "Celian philosopher", especially as this was the very sort of "knowledge" on which the rhetorical training was concentrated. Children learned lists of the names of heroes and places and their characteristics and wrote aphorisms and proverbial phrases in their exercise books. So too the reference to Hesiod's "little by little" [2] is likely to have been as well known as our adage, "Take care of the pennies and the pounds will take care of themselves." [3] This is therefore tenuous evidence for positing a wider and more learned audience.

Secondly, although it is known from a letter of Gregory Nazianzen that some of Basil's letters were published along with his own, within Gregory's lifetime,

2. ομικρόν ετι ομικρόν
Campenhausen has remarked that as far as he knows Gregory was the first Greek author to collect and publish his own letters. [1] If this is so it makes Boulenger's case very weak. Basil probably had no plans to publish his correspondence. If the address was a letter dictated to a scribe and then sent to his nephews, Basil could not have reckoned with any confidence at the time of writing that it would ever reach a wider audience, let alone in time to serve some immediate cause, as would have been characteristic of him. [2]

Finally, if, as Boulenger suggests, the address was written primarily for his nephews, but with an eye to a wider audience, it would be reasonable to expect him to have identified his nephews as his particular addressees more clearly, so that readers would not be left to try to deduce this for themselves. In this way Plutarch wrote his essay "How to Study Poetry" ostensibly for Cleander, the young son of his friend Marcus Sedatus, and elaborated a little on this to create a setting for his work so that the whole dramatic scene made sense to his readers, who were familiar with the use of this literary

2. Campenhausen, op. cit., p. 85, is to the point in calling him "a man of action". His works consist of sermons, letters, expositions on the Holy Spirit and baptism, arguments against the Arians and Eunomius and ascetical works concerned with the regular life of a monastery. Deferrari, Loeb, vol I, p. xxxviii describes his letters as "the response of a St. Paul to the sterner realities of a crisis rather than the researches of a Pliny the Younger stealing an excuse for display."

device, especially in Plato's dialogues.

Now if Basil's work was extempore, and intended for a young audience, as the evidence suggests, many of these difficulties would be overcome if it were concluded that Basil was not writing for his nephews, or even necessarily for a group of Christians, but that he was writing for a single audience, and that a young audience. It is true that there is no sure solution to this question now. Yet to posit this sort of audience fits the facts and circumstances better than that usually proposed. The tone of the work indicates that it could have been an address on an occasion equivalent to the modern speech night, when Basil was invited to a school as the guest speaker.

Another possibility to be considered is that he was addressing a Christian youth group. There is, however, no record of this sort of organization at the time. The one possible exception could have been a group meeting for catechetical instruction, if this ever catered for young people. For the most part, however, and as in the case of Basil himself, baptism was then deferred to a mature age, if not until close to death. Added to this, it would have been an extremely unusual type of lecture for catechumens, for the course of Cyril of Jerusalem, given perhaps in 348, is thought to have been very full in comparison with other teaching of
that period. [1]

However, it would not have been out of place if Basil, after studying in Athens, teaching for a year back home as a rhetor and then, recently returned from further travelling, this time around the eastern part of the Mediterranean, were invited, on the strength of his experience, to address a group at the local school.

In all this it is most interesting to note that at a time when there were no Christian schools [2], Basil could choose this topic and assume his audience to be substantially from Christian homes. However, this appears less remarkable when some assessment is made of the strength of Christianity in Cappadocia at the time.

The Emperor Julian criticized these provincials during his pagan regime, saying,

"and show me a genuine Hellen among the Cappadocians - For I observe that, as yet, some refuse to sacrifice, and that, though some few are zealous, they lack knowledge." [3]

Julian's criticism was based on his experience throughout the Empire, West and East, though it could have contained some bias against the Cappadocians because of his virtual imprisonment in a castle there in his boy-

1. Stephenson, "Cyril of Jerusalem and the Christian gnosis", Patristic Studies I, p. 149. For the date: Swete, Patristic Study; Marrou, Hist. of Education, p. 328
hood. It is supported, however, by the record of the
destruction of the temples of Zeus and Apollo in
Caesarea and the demolition of the altar of Fortune. [1]
The reference in one of Basil's sermons [2] to the
children being let out of school to pray during the
severe famine of 368 A.D. has also been taken as
evidence of the strong cooperation between the schools
and the Church. [3] Petit's statistics of Libanius' students are a further indication. Of the one hundred
whose religion is known, twelve were Christian. Of
these six were Cappadocians and four Armenians, though
only one third of his students came from outside Antioch.

3. The debate highlighted by Julian.

So far in this argument the earliest possible
dating for Basil's work has been calculated as 357,
when Basil ceased to be a teacher of rhetoric at
Caesarea. As has been mentioned, he then spent a year
on a tour of the monasteries in Egypt, Palestine,
Mesopotamia and Syria. The only other indication for
dating produced so far is the suggestion that Basil may
have been speaking to the boys in his capacity as a priest.

There is some difference of opinion about the date of

1. Bidez, La Vie de L'Empereur Julien, p. 231; Fortescue,
The Greek Fathers, p. 61.
2. Basil, Homily VIII, 72.
his ordination, but most place it in the year 362, when
Eusebius succeeded Dianius as bishop of Caesarea.

Prior to that Basil had spent much of his time at
his retreat in the Pontus; sometimes Gregory Nazianzen
joined him there. 359 was the year of the Councils of
Seleucia and Ariminum at which the doctrine of the
Trinity was debated, and, says Jerome, "the whole world
goraned to find itself Arian". In 360 Basil was ordained
deacon, and was involved in disputes with the heretic
Actius. He also attended the Council of Constantinople.
Then, when Basil's own bishop, Dianius, subscribed to the
Arian creed formulated at the Council of Ariminum, Basil
left Caesarea and joined Gregory in Pontus. Probably it
was in the following year, 361, that he published his
"Moralia", evidence of his concentration then on the
affairs of his experiment in Pontus. Late that year, on
November 3rd, Julian was proclaimed Emperor, and arrived
in Constantinople on December 11th. On the 24th George,
an aggressive Cappadocian and Arian bishop of Alexandria
was lynched by a pagan mob.

On Christian day, Gregory Nazianzen was ordained
priest against his will, and fled to Basil, who was
apparently still in Pontus. [1] In February Julian
proclaimed religious freedom, and Gregory Nazianzen also
returned to his parish by Easter, 362. Judging from
1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 38.
a letter sent by Gregory to his friend, Basil had not yet been ordained himself at that date. [1] Then Dianius was dying, and Basil returned to his side. Dianius was succeeded by Eusebius. It is most likely that it was then that Eusebius, who belonged to the Nicene school of thought, ordained Basil priest. Subsequently, in 363 and 364, the two produced the "Contra Eunomium". In mid-May, 362 Julian left Constantinople for Antioch. Some time after June 17th in Antioch he published his Rescript on Christian teachers. From then on tension mounted. On October 22nd the temple of Daphne was burnt. On January 1st Julian and Sallustius became fellow consuls. Between February 18th and March 5th Julian published his tract, the "Misopogon", directed against the citizens of Antioch. On March 5th he left for his campaign in Persia where he was killed on June 26th.

Various factors have pointed to an earlier dating of Basil's address than is usually assigned to it. It is therefore in line with this evidence that the further hypothesis is now submitted that the address was provoked by Julian's hostility to Christians as teachers, and as an immediate and relevant reaction to the emperor's edict banning Christians from teaching the pagan classics.

This would place the address within the period after the edict and prior to the Emperor's death, that is between June 17th, 362 and June 26th, 363. At this date, with the accession of the orthodox emperor Jovian, the force of the edict may assume to have lapsed, and six months later, on January 11th 364, it was formally revoked in the terms recorded in the Theodosian Code.

"If any man should be equally suitable in character and eloquence for teaching the youth, he shall either establish a new auditorium or seek again one that has been abandoned." [1]

The edict was valid then for eighteen months, and effective for twelve, yet it made a lasting impression on Christian and pagan thinking. Bardy, in three articles on the Church's approach to education in the first four centuries [2], has developed the thesis that it took the edict of Julian to bring the question of a Christian type of education into the open, with the result that it was treated in the next fifty years by Basil, John Chrysostom, Jerome and Augustine.

"et il a fallu les mesures prises par Julien l'Apostat pour faire comprendre enfin aux évêques ou aux éducateurs l'importance de la question qui se posait à eux." [3]

1. Theodosian Code, 13.3.6
Gregory Nazianzen soon afterwards [1] wrote two invective speeches against Julian which reflect contemporary indignation at the edict.

"How did it come into thy head, thou silliest and greediest of mortals, to deprive the Christians of words? (For this was not one of the measures threatened only, but of those actually enforced." [2]

Later, towards the end of the century the theme persisted in pagan and Christian writing. About 390 even the pagan Latin historian, Ammianus Marcellinus wrote,

"it was a harsh law that forbade Christian rhetoricians and grammarians to teach, unless they consented to worship the pagan deities"

"But this one thing was inhumane, and ought to be buried in eternal silence, namely, that he forbade teachers of rhetoric and literature to practise their profession, if they were followers of the Christian religion." [3]

Gregory's condemnation was repeated through the succeeding centuries no less vehemently. It appears in Milton's "Advancement of Learning" in 1605.

"a more pernicious engine and machination against the Christian faith than were all the sanguinary prosecutions of his predecessors". [4]

2. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 4, 101.
3. Ammianus Marcellinus, 25.4.20 and 22.10.7.
The immediate and more specific reaction, however, is harder to assess. There was one solution proposed apart from that of Basil. This was the rather curious attempt of the two Apollinarii, father and son, to turn the Bible into Greek literary forms, to take the place of Homer, Plato, the historians and tragedians in the schools. [1]

The edict by which the law was repealed referred to the class rooms which had been abandoned, and Gregory made a special point of the fact that the law was enforced. We do know too that two very conspicuous chairs of rhetoric in Athens and Rome were relinquished by the Christians Prohaeresius and Victorinus, and it may be assumed that there were other Christian teachers who martyred themselves in their careers. [2] It does not follow as readily, however, as Bardy would believe, [3] that the children of Christian homes would consequently have quit studying the classics, whether under Christian or pagan teachers, unless in fact there was further legislation to bring this about. The evidence mustered to support such a piece of legislation seems slight, especially in view of the closing sentences of Julian's edict which would be contradicted by any ban placed on

1. Marrou, St. Augustin, p. 397;
2. Bardy, R.S.R. (1934) p. 546, believed that almost all Christian teachers preferred to desert their chairs.
3. Ibid. p. 548.
the students. [1] There seems to be no reason why the Christians should have felt obliged to accept the rather specious arguments of Julian that the study of the pagan writers presupposes assent to their stories or their personal beliefs about the gods. Indeed, such a literal interpretation was not shared by other pagans of the period. Sallustius can be thought of as "demythologizing" the stories of the poets in an attempt to get back to an "essential paganism" which would be acceptable to reason and by the standards of philosophy.

It is here that Basil's work seems to fit into the pattern. For he is answering this very doubt. Were the children obliged to accept all the pagan classics as bearing the stamp of truth? No, he says, the Christian is not obliged to accept everything which an author has to say as "gospel"; he does not have to follow wherever they lead him, for he has an ability to abstract himself from the values of his cultural environment. Just how this can be done is the topic he is trying to tackle. [2]

It is feasible then to propose that Basil could have written this work at a date when the question of a liberal education for Christians was a highly contentious

1. Julian, Ep. 36. "For religious and secular teachers let there be a general ordinance to this effect: Any youth who wishes to attend the schools is not excluded; nor indeed would it be reasonable to shut out from the best way boys who are still too ignorant to know which way to turn."

2. See above, p. 47.
issue. And it is relevant to note that he was dealing not with the question of the teachers' response to the edict, where little headway could be made under the prohibitive legislation, but with the implications of the edict for the students. Here, where there could well have been considerable confusion during the latter half of the year 362, Basil addresses himself to the students' problem of the authority of pagan literature.

4. The degree of education amongst the Christians.

There is evidence of the dominance of the Christian influence in Cappadocia, especially in Caesarea, its capital. This is the situation out of which Basil's treatise seems to have arisen. In other parts of the Eastern Empire too Christianity had the upper hand. A.H.M. Jones, writing in the recent collection of essays edited by Momigliano on Christianity and paganism in the fourth century, concluded that Christianity was then still mainly an urban religion and that at the beginning of the century its great strength lay in the lower and middle classes of the towns, the manual workers and clerks, the shopkeepers and merchants, and the humbler decurions. He warns though that there were sharp local variations. [2] Professor Downey in his

1. See above, p. 68f.
history of Antioch suggests that of the common people in Antioch most were Christians at least nominally, by the middle of the century. [1] Even Athens, so notorious as a pagan university town, [2] probably contained a high percentage of Christians as the core of its local permanent population. [3]

By the 360s Gregory Nazianzen in a rhetorical outburst against Julian could declare that his measures taken against Christianity affected such numbers that it had to be viewed as a threat to the well-being of the state itself.

"neither was this most excellent and sagacious of all sovereigns aware that by the former persecutions it was but a little thing that was troubled and upset, inasmuch as our system of religion had not spread over many people, and the Truth was established in only a few, and stood in need of illustration; but now that the Word of Salvation was spread abroad, and prevailed the most in our parts of the world, the attempt to change or upset the status of the Christians was no other than to toss about the Roman Empire, and endanger the whole commonwealth, and to suffer at our own hands what not even our enemies would wish us worse; and this too from that new-fangled philosophy and government through which we were made so happy, and had returned once more to

2. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 43.
3. Julleville, L'Ecole d'Athènes, p. 14: remarking on the fact that in 324 Constantine considered Athens a city he could rely on in what was in fact a religious war with Licinius.
that Golden Age and way of life so free from all
fighting and discord." [1]

It has been estimated that about one tenth of the
population of the Empire was Christian, and in the case
of Asia Minor, about one half; but the Christians were
more influential than this fraction would suggest since
a disproportionate number of these were in the cities. [2]

These actual figures can be little better than guesswork,
but the indication is helpful.

The question, however, of the extent to which
Christianity had spread through the upper classes is,
Jones admits, a difficult one, and again the local
variations are great. Even early in the century
legislation recorded in Eusebius requiring that the anti-
Christian "Acts of Pilate" be read in the schools shows the
considerable extent to which Christianity had made an
impact on the educated classes, for it implies that many
children were Christian, and this was prior to the reign
of Constantine. [3] But the proportion in the generation
ahead of them must still be reckoned as small, judging
from the care with which Eusebius in his "Book of Martyrs"
and elsewhere in his history referred to the fine education
of a few men such as the two young brothers, Apphianus

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 4. 74.
2. Hyde, Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire, ch 6
3. Eusebius, H.E., IX, 5. false Acts "to be published to
all throughout the Empire and given to schoolmasters to
hand to their pupils to study and commit to memory, as
eamples for declamation;" also Chapter 7.
and Aedesius, and of Eusebius' own teacher Pamphilus, martyred in 310. [1]

The situation in the East seems to have changed quite radically by the time of Basil, who was born in 330, and so belonged to the post-Constantinian generation. Bardy comments on the increase in the number of Christians who were teachers by the middle of the century. [2] Educated Christians were prominent in other professions too. Gregory Nazianzen's brother, Caesarius, who was a physician in the imperial court, is an obvious example. Indeed, A.H.M. Jones has noted that almost all the prominent men in the East were Christians. [3] Certainly it seems that the bulk of the literature of the fourth century which made a contribution to man's experience of the world, was of Christian authorship.

This is not simply a matter of judgment being passed on what has survived under the bias of a Christian tradition, though it is clear that the greatest proportion surviving is Biblical exegesis, sermons and dogmatic treatises defending the faith. For although it is true that heretical writings have not in the main been allowed to survive, judging from the references to the foremost pagans of the century, there are extant some of

the works of their literary leaders, notably Themistius, Himerius, Julian, Sallustius and Libanius, and of their men of science, Oribasius, Priscus and Theon.

It was an age when oratory impressed. And yet who did the impressing? John Chrysostom complained that people came for the rhetoric of his sermon and then left. N.H. Baynes refers to the applause with which sermons were greeted. [1] Gregory Nazianzen defended his father as being a pious man rather than an orator, in contrast to many of the "modern" Christian teachers of the next generation. He complained too of the use of rhetorical artifices in the churches and of the majority looking not for priests but for orators. [2] Gregory himself earned from the Byzantines the title of "the Christian Demosthenes" [3]; and yet Gregory praised Basil's ability above his own. [4] Both had received the fullest education, first in the seven liberal arts, and followed by about ten years of university study, when five or six years was all that was required to become a professor.

In much of the philosophy and science the backward-looking nature of the late pagan empire is very clear. Oribasius collected for Julian the medical writings of

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2. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. XVIII, 12; XXI, 12; XLII, 24.
4. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 43. 12.
previous centuries, especially the works of Galen. Theon in Alexandria wrote commentaries on Euclid, Aratus and Ptolemy; Themistius paraphrased Aristotle, and there are fragments remaining of the "Panita" of the Athenian teacher of philosophy, Priscus. Iamblichus has left nothing; neither has Hypatia, the gifted daughter of Theon, and likewise a Neoplatonic philosopher.

A very different approach was adopted by the Christians. Unlike Clement and Origen, they were no longer seeking in the same way to reconcile Greek philosophy and science with Christianity for doctrinal or apologetic purposes. Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Nemesius used philosophy critically as part of a broader approach to their faith, in their attempts to construct reasoned Christian cosmologies.

In the writing of history the Christian Eusebius was foremost. Momigliano and Wallace-Hadrill have both emphasized recently his role in the development of historical method.

"Eusebius, like any other educated man, knew what proper history was. He knew that it was a rhetorical work with a maximum of invented speeches and a minimum of authentic documents. Since he chose to give plenty of documents and refrained from inventing speeches, he ... must have intended to produce a nothing different from

ordinary history." [1]

Included in this advance was an attempt by Eusebius at a universal history; for he was motivated by the view that all history is governed by the providence of God. Eusebius pioneered too in the new spheres of hagiography and of ecclesiastical history, described by Momigliano as "the most important contributions made to historiography after the fifth century B.C. and before the sixteenth century A.D." [2] It was not until the end of the century that Eunapius wrote his lives of the philosophers and sophists at the time of the pagan revival in the West, and in clear opposition to the new hagiography.

The one branch of literature which is obviously unfairly represented is the epistolary genre. The men trained in Libanius' school, for example, who filled offices in the public service, must have spent much of their time in writing letters. These do not survive, whereas their Christian counterparts, the business letters of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, dealing with the daily problems of ecclesiastical administration, have survived because of the devotion and respect felt for these saints. Some correspondence remains too of Isidore of Pelusium, Evagrius Ponticus, John Chrysostom,

1. Momigliano, The Conflict between Paganism ... p. 89.
2. Ibid. p. 88.
Synesius and Gregory of Nyssa, but of the pagans, only of Julian and Libanius, two of the pagans' most outstanding men.

In the field of poetry, the epigrams of Palladius remain amongst the versiculi of the Palatine Anthology. There are also the hymns of Julian, the epic of Quintus Smyrnaeus, and from late in the century, the anonymous "Aetheriae Peregrinatio". On the Christian side, Gregory Nazianzen wrote stressed poetry which was the first move taken towards the new forms achieved in the Middle Ages; Synesius wrote hymns and the Apollinarii are reputed to have tried all the classical forms. F.A. Wright picks out as the two striking achievements of the dying paganism the revival of sophistic eloquence and of epic poetry. [1]

Here was a growing corpus of good literature, known as "the golden age of Greek patristic literature." It involved a more natural use of the Greek literary forms and a swing away from apologetic writing. It was at all this constructive work that Julian's edict was directed. In responding with his invective, Gregory Nazianzen put these words into Julian's mouth:

"Ours are the words and the speaking of Greek, whose right it is to worship the gods; yours are the want of words and clownishness, and nothing beyond the

faith in your own doctrine."

To this Gregory Nazianzen himself replied,

"Whose property are the words of the Greek language? And how must that language be spoken and conceived?.. for thou must either assert that they belong to the religion, or else to the nation which first invented the meaning of language." [1]

Gregory's argument is that if the Christians are entitled to use the language, they are entitled to use it in all the fulness of its cultural tradition.

"Ask... whether it is thy intention to debar us entirely from speaking Greek - for instance, from this kind of ordinary and prose expressions, or merely from the polished and transcendental style, as not allowable to be approached by any others than persons of superior education? Why do you not exclude us... from the Greek tongue altogether?... Such a course would be the more humane and put the finishing stroke to your barbarism." [2]

The conclusion to be drawn then from the evidence of the Christian "literati" is that the free use of the pagan Greek culture was fairly much taken for granted, and was accepted in practice, despite Julian's opposition.

5. Christianity as an educative force.

The evidence speaks thus for what is a cultural elite in any society. Professor Bolgar has been

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 4, 101 and 103.
2. ibid. 105
critical of the literature which the Christians produced because he considers that it did not mirror the culture pattern of the age. [1] To what extent did it represent the feelings of those other reasonably intelligent men of the period who did not themselves express their views in any extant written form? There is one very substantial clue to this. It was observed earlier that the bulk of the surviving works from the fourth century were sermons, works of exegesis and doctrinal explication. And for whom? For these Christians of the towns, "for the manual workers and clerks, the shopkeepers and merchants, and the humbler decurions" and a growing number of men of greater influence and education. And at what level were they pitched? Certainly for people who were intelligently curious, of all ages, and involved in the continuity of the fabric of the Greek civilization. Nor was this a passive involvement. They may not have been well-acquainted with their literary heritage at first hand, and not all even literate, but their interest in it was lively.

The spoken word played a great role in their lives. Basil's nine sermons based on the "Genesis" account of creation were delivered during Holy Week, morning and evening on successive days. In these we have a record of the gentle personal concern Basil had for those to whom

he was speaking. One morning's sermon began,

"I know that many artisans, belonging to mechanical trades are crowding around me. A day's labour hardly suffices to maintain them, therefore I am compelled to abridge my discourse so as not to keep them too long from their work. [1]

In another he showed that he was conscious of the questions that his congregation were asking and aware of the way in which they reacted to his explanations. It seems likely that subsequent discussion of the sermons is reflected here. [2] Apart from material like the Pompeian scribblings on walls, is there any more candid record of this class at any other time in antiquity?

The counterpart of the sermons in paganism were the displays of the schoolmen and the audiences they drew. They are most graphically described by Eunapius, but the suspicion that Eunapius was attempting to show them as a rival to the Christian sermons seems justified. Gregory Nazianzen parodied the reversal of roles and the pagan tendency in his generation to imitate Christians. The parody was intended to be a picture of the ludicrous extreme when he suggested that to be thorough-going Julian should set up pagan schools in all the provinces along the lines of the Christian worship - a meeting in the theatre, then the reading of books upon theology and

2. ibid. IV, 2.
morals.

"But what books, pray, and of what authors? A fine thing, truly for the books of Hesiod to be chanted by them with their wars and rebellions, the Titans and Encelados, ... He (Julian) was intending to establish schools in every town, with pulpits and higher and lower rows of benches, for lectures and expositions of the heathen doctrines, both of such as give rules of morality and those that treat of abstruse subjects, also a form of prayer alternately pronounced, and penance for those that sinned in proportion to the offence, initiation also, and completion, and other things that evidently belong to our constitution." [1]

However, unlike much of the pagan public rhetoric, the sermons have a freshness and pointedness that arose from the serious teaching purpose at their basis. It is conceivable, too, that at the very time when the pagan Themistius was claiming the need for universal education, the Church, within its outreach, was achieving this more successfully. Basil's Hexaemeral sermons show a complex manipulation of much of the questioning and solutions of his Greek predecessors over the past thousand years, and it still conveys the exuberance of a new discovery. For the old culture was in a sense rediscovered, when it was seen through the eyes of the Christian.

"I want creation to penetrate you with so much admiration that everywhere, wherever you may be, the least plant may bring to you the clear remembrance

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 4, I11ff, and other examples.
Basil at one point virtually gives a botany lesson on the development of the plant from a seed: the germination of the seed and the swelling with the warmth and moisture, and then the movement of the earth particles pumped up within the seedling.

"A single plant, a blade of grass is sufficient to occupy all your intelligence in the contemplation of the skill which produced it." [2]

The same exuberant wonder is apparent in his letters. In one he analyzes the structure of the rainbow, and in another he considers the anatomy of an ant.[3] With some humour, in answer to the old question, "Why has an elephant got a trunk?" Basil tells his congregation,

"Because if its neck was large and in proportion to its feet it would be difficult to direct and would be of such an excessive weight that it would make it lean towards the earth". [4]

There are more scientific answers to questions about the universe, in which Basil draws on the theories of the Aristotelians, Stoics and Neoplatonists. The sermons contain more direct teaching, too, such as a list of rivers and a description of the seasons rather like the accounts in the "Georgics" and Hesiod's "Works and Days".

2. Ibid., V, 3.
5. Ibid. VI, 4.
This educative function is true of one type of sermon, the exegetical, in which the preacher has a fairly free hand to elaborate on his theme. Could that apply to the treatment of the more narrowly Christian topics, such as doctrinal questions? Again there is evidence which points to the affirmative. "There was a time when He was not", was the slogan of the Arian supporters, to be heard in the streets. It was complained that if you stopped a man in the market-place to ask the time, this was the response you were liable to provoke.

W.H.C. Frend, in a chapter in "The Layman in Christian History", has pointed out the power of the laymen in the Church of the fourth century. Merchants trading beyond the frontiers or travellers made captive abroad proved to be lay missionaries. Men in diverse situations were caught up in the current theological debates.

"The persistence of the classical tradition in education had the effect of training Christian laymen to think in the philosophical terms in which the doctrine of the Church was being expressed." [1] The reverse was true too. The formulation of the Creeds in this period has been referred to by N.H. Baynes as a "late flowering of the Greek intellect" [2] which probably in turn stimulated Greek Christian interest in the

classical philosophy. This meant that lay theologians were produced equally as well instructed as the clergy. In observing this Frend concludes that the last part of the fourth century became the great age of the lay theologian in the early Church, and the most conspicuous examples were Synesius and Marius Victorinus who both had a strong grounding in Neoplatonism.

In an atmosphere of confidence in the communicability of the Christian faith to all men, Gregory Nazianzen concluded his first sermon to his father's church at Nazianzus with the declaration that it was the time

"not to hide the lamp under the bushel, and withhold from others the full knowledge of the Godhead, when it ought to be now put on the lampstand and give light to all churches and souls and to the whole fulness of the world, no longer by means of metaphors, or intellectual sketches, but by distinct declaration. And this indeed is a most perfect setting forth of Theology." [1]

The force of the Christian factor in the shaping of the ideal of a fine education for future generations had exploded. It was widespread and significant both on the level of custom and of constructive thinking. Its strength was established by the educational role of the sermons of the Church, by the standards of education achieved by the Christian leaders, and by the general interest of most Greek Christians in their cultural

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 12, 6.
heritage. Its lasting impact was assured by the lively thoughtfulness of the Christian writers who produced a literature meaningful and mature not only for their own age but for subsequent centuries. This literature embraced the classical tradition in considerable fulness.

Basil's liberal approach to the reading of the classics can therefore be considered to be representative of informed popular opinion as well as that of most of his fellow Christian scholars and leaders of the Church. The edict of Julian and the postulation by Sallustius of some of the essential beliefs of Hellenism highlighted a great debate within this generation; and it seems a good possibility that this in turn occasioned the Christian solution expressed by Basil in his "Address to Young Men."
CHAPTER IV

PAIDEIA AS A WAY TOWARDS THE CHRISTIAN'S GOAL

1. The political ideal.

Apart from the period under the reign of Julian, the Christian of the fourth century was not obliged to be aggressive in order to share fully in contemporary society and culture. But neither did he accept it for its intrinsic value. The acceptance and participation were purposive. There was the feeling that the whole culture was to be used as a constructive step in moving towards a goal.

Early in the century, when the Church first came under imperial patronage the idea of using this political power was seized upon to be used towards this end. There were good grounds for this. In one of the last attempts to unite the Empire Diocletian had instituted a large-scale reorganization of the administration and established four great geographic units termed prefectures. One of those took in Britain, Spain, Gaul and the northwest tip of Africa; the second, Italy and Illyricum to the east. Those were the Latin-speaking provinces. Further east was the prefecture of Grococo, and the fourth was the vast area of the Eastern Mediterranean from Thrace through the provinces of Pontus and Asia to Egypt. Constantine had then fitted the ecclesiastical organization of the
Christian Church into those divisions. [1] Constantinople, the new capital of the Empire from its foundation in 330, lay between East and West, between the Latin and Greek-speaking areas, and throw the East into a new prominence. The correlation of administrative and ecclesiastical boundaries was an indication of a new phase of Roman imperial government. So too was the movement of the capital from Rome to this newly built city.

Under the patronage of a Christian emperor, Christians started to hope for an era which would see the sacred and secular united. Eusebius, flushed with enthusiasm, formulated the Christian theory of life as a mimesis of the kingdom of heaven. [2] This new era was believed to be "the age of fulfilment" when Christians had come into the open and were the natural allies of the secular power. [3] The spirit of optimism was largely ill-founded and full of dangers. Much of this illusion died with its generation. Its strongest hold was amongst the Arians. However, it did give Christians the initial confidence to embrace the entire world about them.

"In the fourth century the once despised Christian Church walks out on to the high road of history.

Questions of faith are so to speak on the agenda of Cabinet, and imperial patronage brings a train of disappointments and embarrassments." [1]

For Athanasius imperial patronage contained the promise of peace and the triumph over factions and passing philosophies.

"The philosophers of the Greeks have composed many works with plausibility and verbal skill; what result then have they exhibited so great as has the cross of Christ? For the refinements they taught were plausible enough till they died; but even the influence they seemed to have while alive, was subject to their mutual rivalries; and they were emulous, and declaimed against one another. But the Word of God, most strange fact, teaching in meaner language has cast into the shade the choice sophists; and while He has, by drawing all to Himself, brought their schools to nought, He has filled His own churches." [2]

But in practice imperial patronage heralded too the greatly divisive theological discussion and the political conflict between Arianism and orthodoxy, in which Athanasius was himself involved for the rest of his life. Eusebius' theory that in Constantine's conversion God's purpose in history was reaching its culminating stage became the basis of the Arian attempt at establishing a state church. Some of the danger of equating the roles church and state was immediately apparent to the orthodox

1. Murchison, *An Introduction to the Greek Fathers.*
and it was most conspicuous at the great councils of the Church over which the emperor presided during that century. A temporal king presiding over the deliberations of the Christian Church did not augur the establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth, nor did the political triumph of the Church mean the end of faction.

2. Jacob's ladder to perfection.

Yet all the time it was realized by some that the range and ultimate goal of man's life was not his establishment of the kingdom of heaven on earth. These particular aspirations could be included in the usual catalogue common amongst Christians and pagans of the possible allurements to idolatry. It appears in Basil's address.

"And so we still do not judge worthy of prayer either conspicuousness of ancestors, or strength of body, or beauty or stature, or the honours from all men, or kingship even, or any personal achievements that can be described, however great they are. Nor do we look with admiration at those possessing them. But we cast further with our hopes and accomplish everything as part of the preparation for another life." [1]

Basil speaks in metaphysical terms of "another life" which is the goal of the Christian. He returns to this point again towards the end of the address.

"A helmsman does not let the boat drift with the winds

but guides it straight to the harbours, and the archer
shoots to a target, and anyone too who is a bronze-
smith or a carpenter also aims at some particular end
according to his craft. Is there any reason then why
we should nevertheless fall short of such craftsmen,
at any rate in our ability to comprehend the range of
our own affairs? For it cannot be possible that while
there exists a target for the handicraftsmen to work
for, there is no goal in our personal lives towards
which we ought to do and say all that is relevant—
everyone, that is, who wants to be considered not
altogether lacking in sense." [1]

In this address, it is true, Basil is more concerned
with working out the means of approaching this goal than
with actually describing it, though he does refer to it
briefly as a "sumnum bonum" which can be pointed to only
by means of analogies. The ultimate goal is not to be
summed up in terms of politics or any other aspect of the
material world.

"Perhaps I should point out to you that all of the
happiness taken together from when men have been born,
in a word, anyone collecting and heaping this into one
measure, will find that it does not become comparable
to the smallest fraction of that richness of life,
but that the sum total of the fine things here are
more removed in value from the least among these than
the extent to which shadowy dreams fall short of the
actual reality. Or rather, to use an analogy which is
closer to home, the difference between the two lives

1. Basil, ξρός τοῦ χαρίτος, VIII, 6 ff.
is of the same order as the degree to which the soul
is more highly valued than the body in every way." [1]

The address to the young men purports to be a guide
for students which might indicate "the safest path" [2]
for them in working towards this goal. Man steps from
the known to the unknown. That has been described as
the cosmological approach to God, as opposed to an
ontological one. Paul Tillich made this distinction in
his book "Theology and Culture" when he was thinking about
the history of the Church.

"One can distinguish two ways of approaching God:
the way of overcoming estrangement (the cosmological)
and the way of meeting a stranger (ontological)." [3]

One however presupposes the other. Basil affirms the
belief in a goal which transcends human value, one that
is strange to men's understanding, but his concern is with
directing the young men along a path towards this goal.

Another analogy besides that of the path which is
commonly used to express this progress is the figure of
Jacob's ladder, with its steps by which one ascends
towards perfection.

"This is the reason why we say that the great Moses,
moving ever forwards did not stop in his upward climb.
He set no limit to his rise to the stars. But once he
had put his foot upon the ladder on which the Lord

2. Ibid., I, 8.
3. Tillich, Theology and Culture, p. 10.
loaned [1], as Jacob tells us, he constantly kept moving to the next stop; and he continued to go ever higher because he always found another step that lay beyond the highest one that he had reached." [2]

Now it is possible that pagan culture may be one step in this ascent, and the Bible another. Basil came close to using this analogy.

"To this (life) Holy Scripture leads us, teaching us through ineffable things. Indeed, as long as it is not possible, anyway, because of our age, for us to understand the depth of thought expressed in Scripture, then in other writings, which do not stand altogether apart, as it were in some images and mirrors, we train ourselves beforehand by means of "the eye of the soul" (the mind), imitating those going through exercises and manoeuvres." [3]

Like all analogies there are limits to its application. The idea of the rungs of a ladder suggests that they are used once and then become redundant, except perhaps as a means of holding the ladder together. In this view the student would graduate beyond pagan literature, leaving it behind him, and proceed to studies in Holy Scripture. This line of thought has led to a translation in the Loeb edition of the passage above which in the English is ungrammatical, even though the Greek does not call for

2. Gregory of Nyssa, Life of Moses, 401; Idea too in his "Sermons on the Beatitudes" and in Syncellus' "Dio"§8f. "There is a reason behind the practice of virtue. It is not an end in itself, as foreigners think, but steps of those ascending to the mind, as mastery of letters to the comprehension of a book."
such a construction. Basil is speaking at this point in the first person, as given here. He identifies himself with the boys, acknowledging that he too has not yet reached the stage of "understanding the depths of thought contained in Scripture". There is no need to switch over in mid-sentence and make this refer only to the boys. [1] That translation has been forced on those who hold as a preconception the view that Basil looked on the Christian faith as an accessory which is added as a bonus. It suggests that the faith is capable of being defined, whereas Basil says that these things are "inoffable".

In a sermon, "In principium Proverbiorum" [2], Basil repeats the point of his address to the young men, affirming that a student may find himself bogged down within the limits of the seven liberal arts unless he has a knowledge of God, by which to judge worldly wisdom. Again there is the tension of the two approaches to God.

The distinction was an important one in the fourth century because the heresy of Aetius and Eunomius involved a denial of the ontological. For them God did lie within the range of human comprehension. Both Gregory of Nyssa and Basil wrote attacking this position, teaching that

1. Basil, πρὸς τοὺς νέους, II, 23. Litch translation reads "your age".
2. Basil, Homily, 12.
God is beyond definition and incomprehensible. [1] The attraction of this negative or apophatic theology and its part in the mysticism of the Eastern Church have been traced recently by Lossky [2]. In countering Eunomius Gregory of Nyssa used the analogy of steps leading to the transcendent, but he showed too how the cosmological approach alone is unsatisfactory.

"Abraham surpassed in understanding his native wisdom, that is, the philosophy of Chaldaea, which rested merely in appearances; he went far beyond that which can be perceived by the senses, and from the beauty he saw around him and from the harmony of the heavenly phenomena he gained a yearning to gaze upon the archetypal beauty. So too, all the other qualities which are attributed to the divine nature, such as goodness, omnipotence, necessity, infinity and the like, Abraham understood them all as he advanced in thought; and he took all these as his provisions on his journey to heaven, using them as steps; ... Abraham passed through all the reasoning that is possible to human nature about the divine attributes, and after he had purified his mind of all such concepts, he took hold of a faith that was unmixed and pure of any concept, and he fashioned for himself this token of knowledge of God that is completely clear and free from error, namely the belief that God completely transcends any knowable symbol." [3]

Thus while man may have this negative type of vision of God, apart from the forms of the world, a glimpse of the

1. Introduction to S.C. 28: Jean Chrysostome.
3. Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eun., 940A. Musurillo p. 120.
back of God, as it was often called, there is a need too for a man to cling to the forms which he knows.

"As it is impossible for a fish to glide about outside of the waters, so it is quite impracticable for those who are in the body to be conversant with objects of pure thought apart altogether from bodily objects ... Every rational nature longs for God and for the first cause but is unable to grasp Him." [1]

And the form or "bodily object" which expressed this longing most meaningfully to many Christians and pagans of the fourth century was the idea of paideia. Through paideia a man progresses up the ladder towards the transcendent.

3. The Christian life as a form of paideia.

Christians accepted the idea of paideia as a progress along stepping-stones towards God. It was an idea peculiar to those Greek Christians of the fourth century, because for the first time then they were using the classical tradition at least as fully and constructively as the pagans. Philosophy had influenced Christianity even in pre-Christian times through Judaism, and later too through Philo. Then the apologists and Clement and Origen had used philosophy extensively. But except possibly at Alexandria paideia under the Empire had a bias towards rhetoric and literary studies. It was only in the fourth

century when Christianity burst onto "the high road of history" that rhetoric too was embraced confidently. [1]

Philosophy and rhetoric were old sparring partners from the time of Plato and Isocrates. Marrou sees [2] underlying this tension man's desire for human wholeness. The Christians inherited this debate in their acceptance of paidia. It exhibited itself in the parallel form of the rival claims of an active or a contemplative life. The monks who lived as hermits were the figureheads of the contemplative life. It is true that there was the notable occasion when in the crisis in Antioch over the mutilation of the imperial statues the monks came into town and used their influence to advantage. On the whole, however, a swing strongly one way or the other was liable to be viewed with suspicion. Palladas pinpointed this with his satirical verse about the hermits.

"If solitaries, why so many? And if so many, how again are they solitary? O crowd of solitaries who give the lie to solitude." [3]

Brasil's experiment then in providing with his monastery both community life and the opportunity to retreat from the rest of the world was an attempt at reconciling the two streams, and at coming closer to the ideal of paidia.

doing so uses all that he can along the way. Yet by this time it was no longer a finely calculated and deliberate borrowing to support independent beliefs and arguments in the manner of the earlier apologists. The frequent appearance in Basil's address of the idea of "using" the full culture has been noted. [1] It occurs in Plutarch's essay [2] and in Gregory Nazianzen's eulogy of Basil in which he preached fervently that

"the greatest of our advantages is education; and not only this our more noble form of it which disregards rhetorical ornaments and glory, and holds to salvation and beauty in the objects of our contemplation: but even that external culture which many Christians ill-judgingly abhor, as treacherous and dangerous, and keeping us afar from God. For as we ought not to neglect the heavens, and earth and air, and all such things, because some have seized wrongly upon them, and honour God's works instead of God: but to reap what advantage we can from the works of nature apprehending the Worker and, as the divine apostle says, bringing into captivity every thought to Christ." [3]

The vital clue is that whatever the path it should be used to take a man to Christ.

This way of looking at the Christian life as a journey or process of education is fairly strange to the thinking of the present century. The emphasis now is

1. See above, p. 33.
3. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 43.12.
not so much on growth and the fullest expression of one's manhood as on the search for meaningfulness in the universe and in men's role within it. For the Cappadocians though the meaning of life was this paideia. Gregory Nazianzen applied the commonplace precepts of educational theory in a natural way to his thinking about this Christian form of paideia. Life then becomes the education of the soul, and it is subject to different forms of instruction,

"some by doctrine, others by example; some need the spur, others the curb ... some are benefitted by praise, others by blame ... or encouragement or rebuke ... in public or private ... by close supervision or seeming lack of it..." [1]

This is the popular philosophy of education in a new guise. Christianity was seen through the medium of paideia. The world for Basil was "a school where reasonable souls exerçize themselves". [2] The priest was a teacher or tutor whose responsibility it was to guide men; a fearful responsibility, it seemed to Gregory when he was first ordained, and one which he tried to escape. Alternatively, he was the physician who cared for a man's soul.

"The guiding of man, the most variable and manifold of creatures, seems to me in very deed to th the art of arts and science of sciences. Anyone may recognize this, by comparing the work of the

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 2, 30.
physician of souls with the treatment of the body; and noticing that, laborious as the latter is, ours is more laborious, and of more consequence, from the nature of its subject matter, the power of its science and the object of its exercise." [1]

Gregory placed the Christian form of paideia in the light of eternity.

4. A tradition of worldliness.

There was a mighty synthesis of the Greek cultural tradition and the Christian faith involved in the new form of paideia. It does seem justifiable to call it a synthesis. There was no feeling that the Christian was translating his understanding of the faith into a separate set of terms which might make sense to the pagan. Synesius the gentleman farmer who became a Christian and bishop of Cyrene wrote very much in the language of the Neoplatonists because this was integral to his thinking. This has proved disconcerting for scholars who have because of this tried to debate his sincerity.

But the synthesis had at its root a concern for the full development of the individual. For Basil the universe was centred about man and must ultimately be explained in terms of human destiny. The world was created for man. But even if man were not convinced by the ordering of creation that he was God's supreme concern,

1. Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 2.16
it should be apparent from the evidence of men alone.

"Scrupulous attention to yourself will be of itself sufficient to guide you to the knowledge of God. If you give heed to yourself, you will not need to look for signs of the Creator in the universe, but in yourself as a miniature replica you will contemplate the great wisdom of the Creator." [1]

Looking back at the fourth century in the light of the Renaissance, Jaeger has pressed home the later significance of this Christian humanism. [2] The Greek Christians joyfully accepted the world, seeing that it was good. They saw that God was in the world, and that He could be approached through the world. And the literature of the Cappadocians is vibrant with their joy and wonder at it. It was a new discovery and it brought with it an enthusiasm to step out and explore the fine things in the world. One of the finest was the cultural heritage of the Greeks of the classical period. In later centuries readers of those Fathers of the Church captured again from them their enthusiasm for this classical culture.

The "golden age of patristic literature" was a vital period in our cultural tradition for it was prior to the division of the Roman Empire. From the end of the century East and West tended to go their own ways with relatively little communication between Greek and Latin-speaking

2. Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia.
worlds. But for the Western Church this Greek thought prior to the division is in the direct line of their heritage. The literature of the period became sanctioned as classical in its turn by succeeding centuries and the Byzantine Empire carried through to the Renaissance this Christian assessment and reformulation of the Graeco-Roman humanist tradition.

Significantly the first work which Leonardo Bruni translated into Latin in the fifteenth century was Basil's address to the those young school-boys. Bruni then went on to translate works of Demosthenes, Aeschines, Plutarch, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle. At least nineteen editions of Basil's address were produced in that century all over Europe, in Venice, Parma, Milan, Leipzig, Nürnberg and in other towns. It was through the stimulus of the Fathers that the Renaissance men were led back to the classical literature and culture. Basil's treatise continued to be a favourite, for it said that the works of the pagan writers should be taken up confidently and are capable of leading a man towards a fuller realization of his humanity. And it was this regenerative synthesis of Christian and pagan thought propounded by Basil which did ultimately prove to be the rationale responsible for the preservation, though for many centuries in a Christian form, of the pagan Greek paideia.
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