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The Trinity In Early Traditions[1–2]

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1. Introduction: The significance of the Cappadocian legacy

In the 20th century various theological disciplines and *loci* of Systematic Theology, as well as the social sciences in general, rediscovered the rich heritage of the classic Doctrine of the Trinity (O'Donnell 1988:5–34; see Grenz 2001:25–27). Aspects for reflection ranged from metaphysics in philosophy to morality and spirituality in theology (O'Collins 1999:1–25; see also Bryant 1990:4–20). The phenomenon of 'plurality' was probably one of the most prominent stimuli for the discussion (see Migliore 2004:145). South African systematic theologian, Rian Venter (2011:3), calls it a 'Trinitarian renaissance' and a 'rediscovery of Trinitarian grammar' in his work *Speaking God today*. According to Venter (2011:2, footnote 4), *Theologies of the Other* (Kärkkäinen 2004; Callen 2004; Shults 2005) with their focus on aspects such as class, race, culture and gender, are the point of departure of Alain Badiou's ([2005] 2007:166) statement in the twentieth century that 'the God of monotheisms' is dead.[3] It is against

1 This contribution was originally published in Afrikaans, titled 'Transformasie, partisipasie en pluraliteit – die Kappadosiese erfenis vir die Sistematiese Teologie in die derde millennium', in *HTS Theological Studies* 69(1):2013.

2 In recognition of the academic support Prof Rian Venter over a decade and his legacy of writing and teaching an existential grammar of faith about the Trinity and in recognition of the translation of this contribution from Afrikaans into English by Prof Yolanda Dreyer.

3 Badiou ([2005] 2007) focuses on 75 years of the 20th century, from the beginning of the World War I in 1914 and the Russian revolution of 1917 and ending with the dismantling of the USSR and the end of the Cold War. He criticises totalitarism as master narrative and proposes counternarratives that are not based on logic and dialectics as epistemology. He replaces 'formalized inhumanism' with 'animal humanism'. Andrew Koch (2009:119) begins his review article on Badiou's book in the journal, *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences* with the following: 'The twentieth century was a century of terror, destruction, and acts of barbarism on a scale never before witnessed in human history. The century began with Herculean acts of genius and the potential to transform the world into something just shy of paradise. Human beings were in charge. God was dead, and for the first

this background that, a decade later, Harvey Cox (1999), in his work *The myth of the twentieth century: The rise and fall of secularization* and Richard Kearney (2010) in his work *Anatheism: Returning to God after God*, illustrate the relative value of Christianity in the 20th century.

Jaco de Witt (2008:16–17), a student of Venter's, identified two reasons for the renewed interest in Trinitarian thought. First, the increasing prominence of plurality in the social sciences challenges theologians to communicate very clearly in society on Christian identity and the meaning of a 'Christian life'. He puts it as follows: 'This search to achieve a better articulation about the Christian God led to the re-evaluation of the way we have viewed and conversed about the Trinity in the past' (De Witt 2008:117). Secondly, postmodernity requires that 'God-talk' should be personal. It should be communicated with legitimacy and in dynamic social and relational language, taking modern-day realities into account. For Cunningham (2003:189; see De Witt 2008:17), elements of Trinitarian theology can be useful for meaning-making in a postmodern context.

Venter applies his idea of a 'Trinitarian renaissance' in Systematic Theology to the challenges of being a church in a postmodern world with its changing demographics. Formal and informal urbanisation, inner cities and informal settlements have a particular impact on society. This means that the combination of 'relational Trinitarian' and 'postmodern ecclesiological' thinking has become especially relevant. Venter (2006:201–224) makes a connection between a 'Trinitarian ecclesiology' and a 'philosophy of space'. Engaging with Venter's work and with an emphasis on plurality, this contribution highlights the *ekklēsia* as space. Rather than the more general 'Trinitarian renaissance', the interest here is specifically a 'Cappadocian renaissance'. Where the focus is on *relationships* within the multifaceted and complex realities of the postmodern *ekklēsia*, the Cappadocian legacy is of singular importance. In the earliest 'apostolic church' the aspect of diversity and the *one* Spirit were inseparable:

> *Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body – whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:12–13).*

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time in human history mankind was unleashed from the shackles of superstition and 'ignorance'. Alain Badiou's book, *The Century,* concerns the question of what happened to derail the Enlightenment, Humanism, and all the promise of a Prometheus that was now unchained.'

Paul's 'coordination of relationships', to put it in contemporary systematic theological language, is articulated as follows in Otto Weber's rendition of Karl Barth's ecclesiology (quotation marks and italics indicate Barth's own words and emphases in his *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Volume IV, 3/2):

> *The church is in Christ! This 'order of grace' is simultaneously an 'order of being' … The Holy Spirit is the power, and the actions of the Spirit are to coordinate the 'being of Jesus Christ' and the 'being of the church', which differs from him, but is included in him … The Holy Spirit is the power behind the action Jesus Christ took under his own authority. It is only in the Holy Spirit that the being of the church can be a predicate or dimension of the being of Jesus Christ himself. The christological .foundation of the church is its pneumatological reality! (Weber [1963] 1967a:319).*

The emphasis on *relational coordination* between Father, Son and Spirit as an ontic connection between 'being' *(Sein)* and 'action' *(Aktion)* reflects the legacy of the Cappadocians. Traces of this heritage can also be found in the work of Schleiermacher (19th century) and Barth (20th century). In Schleiermacher's grammar of faith, the discussion of the Doctrine of the Trinity appears at the end, though it is an implicit point of departure. Barth begins his *Kirchliche Dogmatik* explicitly with the Doctrine of the Trinity (*KD*, 2/1, in Weber [1963] 1967b) – a result of his view of Scripture – (*KD* 1/1 in Weber ([1963] 1967b:11–21) and ends with ecclesiology (*KD* 4/3, in Weber ([1963] 1967b) (see Schüssler Fiorenza, in Mariña 2005:171–188).

A modern theologian, Robert W. Jenson (1982), and a contemporary of Schleiermacher, Johann A. Möhler ([1827] 1996:5, 430), were both of the opinion that Schleiermacher did not connect *being church* and *being a believer* with the classical Cappadocian Doctrine of the Trinity. Theologians such as Richard R. Niebuhr (1964:156), Wolfhart Pannenberg (1991) and Jürgen Moltmann ([1980] 1981) had different perspectives on the matter and were critical of one another (see Muhrmann-Kahl 1997:165–225). They did agree that Schleiermacher was careful not to speak of God in an unwarranted anthropomorphic manner. This was because of the influence of the Kantian differentiation between practical, theoretical and aesthetic rationality. This is the reason for Schleiermacher's ([1830] 1928) implicit rather than explicit presupposition of the overarching role and place of the Trinity in his grammar of faith. Niebuhr (1964:156: cf. Schüssler Fiorenza 2005:172) stated it thus:

> *Consequently, the doctrine properly belongs at the conclusion of [Schleiermacher's (1830] 1928] The Christian Faith, for its authentic*

> *content is nothing else than the body of the theological exposition of the whole of the faith.*

Möhler ([1827] 1996:79–205) recognised a connection between Schleiermacher's view on the *unity of the church* and the *unity of the Trinity.* However, because of Schleiermacher's ([1822] 1835) comparison between Sabellius and Athanasius, Möhler suspected him of 'Sabellian modalism'.[4] Neither Pannenberg nor Moltmann agreed with this criticism. Schleiermacher's assent with the Cappadocians is apparent especially in his lectures on the historical Jesus based on the prologue of the Gospel of John (see Schleiermacher [1832] 1864).

In Schüssler Fiorenza's (2005) discussion, the nuances of these theologians become apparent. The influence of the Cappadocians is clearly visible, especially in the connection between 'being' (*Sein*) and 'action' (*Aktion*), in other words between the *ontological Trinity* and *ontic relations.* This has an influence on the ethics of being church:

> *Although Pannenberg's starting point, which is the relation of Jesus to the Father, is closer to Schleiermacher's Christological starting point, nevertheless his conclusion is quite different in the way he moves from the relation of Jesus to the Father to intra-trinitarian mutuality. Hence, he notes: 'we see a mutuality in their relationship that we do not see in the begetting' [Pannenberg 1991:313]. Although Moltmann likewise [see Muhrmann-Kahl 1997:165–225] begins from a Christological starting point, he underscores the Threeness so much that Walter Kasper [1984:379 footnote 183] discovers the danger of a tendency toward tri-theism. These authors represent a conception of the Trinity opposed to Schleiermacher, although they have been influenced by his starting point and his attempt to link the economy of salvation with the immanent Trinity (Schüssler Fiorenza 2005:185).*

The legacy of the Cappadocians, especially that of Eunomius of Cyricus and Gregory of Nyssa (see Schüssler Fiorenza 2005:187, endnote 17), whose thought influenced these theologians and led to what is today known as the 'social trinitarian ecclesiology', will now be discussed briefly. The section begins with a clarification of terms. The aim is not to analyse and compare the nuances of the various proponents' trinitarian thinking. It is

4 According to Tertullian, circa 160–220 nC, in his *Adversus Praxean* (vgl. Lossky 1957:58; Meyerdorff 1974:181), Sabellius of Pentapolis (Libia), circa 215 CE (see Rush 1980:10; Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:337–338), did not distinguish between the Father and the Son in the Trinity, as the Cappadocians did.

rather to add some depth to the understanding of the context in which this legacy originated. To this end, concepts and circumstances of the main Cappadocians will be described briefly from secondary sources.

2. The Cappadocian narrative

2.1 Terminological clarification

At the Council of Alexandria (362 CE) the Greek word *hupostasis* was accepted officially as the equivalent of the Latin *persona.* The Greek formula of the Cappadocians for the Trinity, *mia ousia*, *treis hupostaseis*, was officially validated. According to Engelbrecht (1978:138),[5] Calvin and Melanchton were of the opinion that the Cappadocian terminology for describing the Trinity – 'one being, three persons', with the Latin equivalent *una substantia, tres personae* – was irreplaceable. The confession that the Son was *homoousios, consubstantia* (one substance) with the Father, was rendered by means of three terms, namely 'one substance', 'Trinity' and 'persons'. 'Substance' also refers to *phusis*, *natura* and *essentia.* 'Person' also refers to *subsistentia* and *prosopon*, whereas 'Trinity' also refers to *Trinitas* and *proprietas.* The Reformers used these terms to take a stand against Arianism and Sabellianism (Engelbrecht 1978:139). In order to establish a clear distinction from Sabellius, the Latin church preferred *persona* over the Greek *prosopon* (cf. Bethune-Baker 1903:105, 234–235). The term *homoousios* was translated as *consubstantia* and *ousia* as *substantia* in Latin. Confusion ensued since *substantia* as a juridical term could also refer to the substance that all three persons possessed communally (Bethune-Baker 1903:235). It could also refer to the specific property owned by this person, which distinguishes this person from the other. *Substantia* then refers to a *distinctio*, a distinction, in the sense of the juridical term *species* (a specific item that has been bought, not a random item from a similar group). Hilary of Poitiers (see Moreschini & Norelli 2005a:258–260; cf. Meijering & Van Winden 1982) also used *substantia* to refer to the three distinct persons of the Trinity – there are three substances in God (Calvin [1559] [1931] 1956:102–105).[6] Dionysius of Rome (*Epistula ad Dionysium Alexandrinum*) used *ousia* and *hypostasis* interchangeably. Dionysius of Alexandria (see

5 This overview is based on B.J. Engelbrecht (1978) who in turn made use of the paradigmatic classification of Théodor de Regnon(1892) in *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*.

6 Hillarius (*De Trinitate* I.iii): 'nos filii Dei sumus, sed non talis hic filius. Hic enim verus et proprius est filius origine, non adoptione, veritate, non nuncuptaione, nativitate, non creatione.' Engelbrecht's reference to Hilary is from Calvin's (*Institutes* I, 13, 5) (cf. Meijering & Van Winden 1982).

The divine names 4.1:709B, in Moreschini & Norelli 2005a:668–670) used the terms to differentiate between 'substance' and 'person'. Origin did not differentiate between the Greek terms *ousia*, *hupostasis*, *hupokeimenon* and *prosopon*. Athanasius (in *De sancta trinitate* 1970:80–126, 307–334) used the terms *theotēs* [divinity], *ousia* [substance], *hupostasis* [person], *idiotes tēs ousias* [authenticity of being], *oikeiotēs tēs hupostaseōs* [property of the *hupostasis*] interchangeably. These terms were used to differentiate between *essential* and *accidental* characteristics. It was not about the sum total of the characteristics, but rather about the underlying aspects. According to Athanasius, the 'person' (*hupostasis*) is equal to the 'substance' (*ousia*). The meaning of the person *is* the being itself (*auto to on*). Athanasius equated *hupostasis* and *ousia* [person and substance] completely and also equated these terms with *theotēs* [divinity] (cf. [Von] Harnack 1888:215).

The term *phusis* [nature] initially had the same referential meaning as *ousia* and *essentia*, namely 'substance'. Church Fathers Athanasius and Tertullian qualified these 'terms' more closely in the debate on the dogma of the two natures. Tertullian (*De testimonio anima* 32; see Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:325–326) differentiates between substance and the nature of substance (*aliud est substantia, aliud natura substantiae*). Human beings and animals have the same *nature*, but do not have the same *substantia*. God's *substantia* refers to God's uniqueness. No other being has the same *substantia* as God. If Jesus is said to have the *substantia* of God, it amounts to the confession that Jesus is God. According to Tertullian's distinction, two entities that have the same *substantia* do not necessarily have the same *natura* (*phusis*). *Natura*, according to Tertullian, is the sum total of the characteristics of an entity, whereas the *substantia* carries the characteristics. *Substantia* is the essence, the authentic being. In Tertullian's understanding of the dogma of the two natures, the *substantiae* is preferable to *naturae*. Should *natura* be used for Jesus, it would indicate that Jesus possesses the characteristics of God and human beings, but that Jesus *is* not essentially God and human. For Tertullian (see [Von] Harnack 1888:300), *substantia* had historical baggage and *natura* is insufficient. He therefore preferred the term 'status': *Videmus duplicem statum, non confusum, sed conjunctum in una persona, deum et hominem Jesum* [not a mixture, but a double status which comes together in one person, Jesus, God and human being] ([Von] Harnack 1888:300; cf. Bethune-Baker 1903:139–140). Athanasius had a similar understanding ([Von] Harnack 1888:235). The *phusis* is the complex of characteristics of *ousia*, but *ousia* 'carries' characteristics and refers, in the Aristotelian sense, to the *essential* ('authentic') *substance*. The Son is equal to the Father (*homoiōsis*

tou huiou pros ton patera kata tēn ousian kai kata tēn phusin), in *substance* and in *nature*.

Given the initial identification of *phusis* with *ousia*, it was not problematic for the Greek church to refer to the divine and human *phuseis* [nature] of Jesus Christus. Tertullian's distinction, however, had a significant influence on the Latin church. Here the terms *substantia* and *essentia* were preferred to *natura*. In the 30th *Epistola Dogmatica* (in Wiles & Yarnold 2011:587), Pope Leo described the Trinity as *utraque natura*, but added *et substantia*. Heremitus Vincentius (in Kelly 2002:113) described the dogma of the two natures by using the plural form *substantiae*: *modus uniti substantiae* and *modus informantis substantiae*. He accused Nestor of confusing *persona* and *substantia* and arguing that Jesus Christ had two *personae* (*divina et humana*) (see Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:566–571). This is then the frame of reference of the Council of Chalcedon. First the Council stated that there were two *substantiae* in Christ and thereafter that in the person of Christ there were two *naturae*. In this way the initial meaning of *natura* (*phusis*) was retained, namely *natura* as equal to *essentia*, *ousia* and *substantia*. In Articles 27–35 of the Credo named after Athanasius, *substantia* is therefore to be found. It refers to the two 'substances' of Christ and not the two 'natures'. In Reformed credos *natura* (*phusis*) is used. In the Belgic Confession in Article 29 it is used to indicate *substantia* (Engelbrecht 1978:143). In the Heidelberg Catechism,[7] *natura* is used in Question and Answer 35 and 47. It is used in the sense of *natura humana*. In this Confession, the divinity of Christ is not referred to in terms of *natura*, but rather in terms of *majestas et gratia*. The Heidelberg Catechism hereby confesses that Jesus was 'truly God' and that he was human in all respects except for sin (Van den Brink 1940:92–95).

The term *morphē* (*forma*) was often used for *ousia* (*substantia*). The Latin church found the term *natura* insufficient because it was not descriptive enough. The question was then: which terms would be sufficiently descriptive? Augustine used *filius Dei* instead of *natura divina* and *filius hominis* rather than *natura humana* (see Bethune-Baker 1903:233). Hilary used *forma Dei* and *forma servi* to differentiate between the divine and human nature of Jesus. Hippolytus of Rome referred to the words of Paul in Philippians 2:6, *en morphē tou theo huparchōn*, and concluded that Jesus was *en ousia theo huparchón*. Tertullian translated *morphé* as *status* and *conditio*.

7 For references to the Belgic Confession, the Credo named after Athanasius, and the Heidelberg Catechism, see Schaff (1977:186–197, 377–380).

This overview of Engelbrecht of the terminology used in the Doctrine of the Trinity, provides the background for understanding the Cappadocian narrative in its context. The framework of Frances M. Young and Andrew Teal ([1983] 2010:135–172) is followed to articulate this narrative.

2.2 The three Cappadocians: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Naziansus and Gregory of Nyssa

The three Cappadocians contributed substantially to the formulation of the classical Doctrine of the Trinity. They did more, however. They contributed to the creation of a language of faith and the use of imagery. Their insights were adopted widely in biblical, spiritual and doctrinal traditions. Doctrinal traditions, however, also developed beyond their language. Each of the Fathers made a dynamic and unique contribution to the articulation of the classical Doctrine of the Trinity. Some aspects of their work are especially relevant to the church today. One such aspect is the tension between and the accommodation of *faith* and *culture* over and against the so-called monastic ideal. The Cappadocians found a balance between these two extremes. This balance will prevent the church as institution from becoming completely absorbed into the world on the one hand, or retreating completely to a desert of isolation on the other hand.

The lives and work of the three Cappadocians were intertwined. All three hailed from Christian families. Peter, a brother of Basil and Gregory, also became a bishop. Their mother and sister were later canonised. The father of Gregory of Nazianzus, a friend of Basil and Gregory, was a bishop. The three of them grew up among devout Christian believers. Their faith tradition had a significant influence on their imagery, language and attitude toward faith. Their individual calling, however, transcended their immediate context with its specific historical frame of reference. Their families were from the upper classes in Cappadocia (see Van Dam 2002:13). In spite of their Christian background, all three were also exposed to broader society. They received a classical education (Mitchell 1993:77–79; Sartre [2001] 2005:417). Basil studied in Caesarea, the capital of Cappadocia, as well as in Constantinople and Athens. Gregory of Nazianzus also studied in Athens, but chose Alexandria above Constantinople. Gregory, the brother of Basil, also received a classical education, though not as extensive as that of his brother.

In 370 CE Eusebius died and Basil was the logical successor. His election as bishop of Cappadocia and his reign were fraught with power struggles (McGuckin 2001a:79; 2001b). He attempted to consolidate his status by creating new political positions. He appointed Gregory of Nazianzus in one such position. His younger brother, Gregory, was elected

bishop of the town of Nyssa. Their relationship became strained because of Basil's politics.[8] At the time, an 'Arian-minded emperor' was in power (Young & Teal [1983] 2010:139). Basil was a protector of Nicaean orthodoxy, which brought him into conflict with emperor Valentinian. Basil's work on the Holy Spirit was 'a careful and limited gloss on the simple teaching of Nicaea' (Rousseau 1994:276).

Basil died in 379 CE. Gregory of Nazianzus heard of his death while he himself was seriously ill. Theodosius had become emperor. Gregory was the obvious choice for the position of bishop of Constantinople. His appointment would protect the Nicaean theology. Gregory published prolifically. He continued his brother's emphasis on and defence of the Holy Spirit. In 381 CE, Theodosius convened the Council of Constantinople, where both the Gregory brothers defended orthodoxy. Gregory of Nazianzus, elected bishop of Constantinople, was so repulsed by the political machinations of the bishops during the Council that he withdrew and isolated himself. He resigned as bishop and continued his defence of orthodoxy in his writings. The Council had rejected his emphasis on the divinity of the Holy Spirit and issued a rather vague confessional statement that did not include the term *homoousion*. He resided in Nazianzus and continued writing until his death in 390 CE. Gregory, the brother of Basil, was not isolated in this manner. He often travelled to the East in service of the church, politics and the emperor.

During this period the inordinate emphasis on monasticism caused much tension. It was about the conflict between a life of seclusion and contemplation over against a life of social responsibility and leadership. The life of Gregory of Nazianzus attests to this tension. He was pulled in both directions (McGuckin 2001a:37–54). Basil was also influenced by this tension. In his writing he tried to find a balance between the two extremes of public theology and ascetic life (see Torrance 2012:230). However, he did not succeed in putting this theoretical balance into practice. Gregory, his brother, was more successful with the integration of these opposites. For example, in his work, *De Virginitate*, he discussed celibacy, though he himself was married (Gregorius Nyssenus [c. 335–395], *De virginitate*, in Silvas 2007:48–53). It was the ideal of the three Cappadocians to bring about a balance between the extremes (Young & Teal [1983] 2010:135). They grappled with the relationship between Christian tradition and contemporary culture and whether that relationship would be one of

8 It was a complicated friendship. Basil was frustrated with the two Gregory brothers' misappropriation of church funds. Gregory of Naziansus accused Basil of betraying their youthful ideal of 'a life of philosophy'. Gregory, the brother of Basil, felt inferior to the other two (see Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:86–89, 89–96).

tension or accommodation. This ideal reflects their own theological beginnings that hark back to Origin. He was both devoted to Scripture and engaged actively with the Greek philosophical tradition (see Rousseau 1994:4).

Basil also made use of Greek philosophy in his work. He found an example of 'good philosophy' in Homer and Plato. He adopted the questions and methods of philosophers in his own work. Many of their examples, illustrations and proposals are to be found in his writings (see Mitchell & Young 2006:595). However, as the 'official representative of the orthodox church', he also criticised the philosophers and scientists for concerning themselves with questions that cannot be answered and then proposing solutions from their 'arrogant human reasoning'. In the process of criticising them, he demonstrated his own knowledge of the natural sciences, especially astronomy. It seems as though Basil reached a synthesis between 'biblical teaching and selected elements of the profane systems' (Young [1983] 2010:148).

Gregory of Nazianzus was especially intrigued by cultural matters. He contested emperor Julian's attempts to bar Christians from education (see Elm 2012:157). He opposed the supposition that the Greek language, mathematics and poetry are 'heathen'. In his opinion, no race or nation could have an exclusive claim to culture (see Young & Teal [1983] 2010:148). Gregory found that such 'intellectual tools' should be available for the training of theologians and the development of apologetics. A large component of his *Orationes* (see Asmus 1910:325–367) was dedicated to this point of view. The work of Gregory of Nyssa also attests to oratory proficiency, especially three eulogies he delivered in Constantinople (Børtnes & Hägg 2006:243–253). Gregory had an intimate knowledge of the works of Neoplatonists, such as Plotinus and Lamblichus, as well as the philosophical traditions of the Platonic school in Athens (see Turcescu 2005:50). Over the centuries this frame of reference has been reflected in the church and the message of the church. The Christian tradition was interpreted through the lens of contemporary culture (Young & Teal [1983] 2010:151). However, at the same time, the church distanced itself from other religions. This duality also influenced the framework of the three Cappadocians. The ambivalence in their work laid the foundation for a Christianised culture which simultaneously makes use of some non-Christian traditions and distances itself from others.

In summary, one could therefore say that all three of the Cappadocians were involved in the controversial doctrinal issues of their time. This was then also the main focus of their oeuvre. The era between 360 and 370 CE was a confusing time. Alliances were formed and political shifts

took place, all of which had an influence on church and theology. Basil attempted to form an alliance with Athanasius and the Western Church in order to consolidate a 'neo-Nicene' position (Young [1983] 2010:156). This position was defended by his brother and friend, especially before and after the Council of Constantinople in 381 CE. Though each of the three represented a specific theological focus, their theology influenced the central debates of the day. These debates were again revived during the Renaissance (Beeley 2008).

The Cappadocian heritage was taken further in the apology against Eunomius. He followed Aetius, who insisted that the essence of the Father and that of the Son were incomparable. In 360 CE Basil attempted to repudiate the theological convictions of Eunomius in his *Apologia* titled *Contra Eunomium* (in Hildebrand 2007:213). In the first of the three volumes of this work, he argued that *agennēsia* [not begotten] was not an essential characteristic of the Divinity. The other two volumes were about the essential equality of the Son (Book 2) and the Holy Spirit (Book 3) with the Father.

After the death of Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus continued to oppose the Eunomian position in public debates in Constantinople. Basil's brother, Gregory, engaged with Eunomius's reply to Basil's *Contra Eunomium*. Gregory of Nyssa wrote various shorter treatises in defence of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. He completed the treatise *Ad Ablabium* [Not three gods], towards the end of his career (see Coakley 2003; cf. Barnes 2001). The fundamental aspects of Trinitarian orthodoxy stemmed mainly from these treatises and the reactions they elicited (see Karfikova, Douglass & Zachhuber 2007; Ludlow 2007).

The central argument of Eunomius was that God can be 'known' because God is a 'unity'. God cannot be separated, and is not sometimes this and sometimes that. The one *ousia* of God cannot be divided into a threefold *hupostaseis*, because God is absolutely one at all times (*Refutatio Confessionis Eunomii* 33, in Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:126–127). Eunomius argues that the unity of God is possible only if the elevated and absolute One is isolated from the second and the third. That God is not begotten (*agennēsia*) is, for Eunomius, the divine attribute that guarantees the simplicity and uniqueness of God. However, Gregory uses the same description to argue that a plurality of the hierarchy of 'separate beings' is impossible because one 'eternal being' cannot be greater or less than another 'eternal being'. There are three 'subjects', but the fact of their infinity means that they cannot be distinguished as three. There is 'existence' and there is 'non-existence', but there are no degrees of 'being'. The crux of Gregory's argument, which was similar to

that of his brother Basil, was to oppose the idea that a *hierarchy* in 'Being' or 'Substance' is at all possible. The attempt of Eunomius to distinguish between God and creation led to a 'hierarchical' understanding of God's existence (see Vaggione 2000:336–340). Gregory accepted the distinction that Eunomius made between God and creation as a fundamental truth. However, for Gregory, God was a 'Trinitarian God'. 'Father' and 'Son' were not different 'beings', but rather an eternal relationship within one 'Divine Being'. Without the Son, the Father has no 'existence' or 'name' (*Refutatio* 6–7; *Ad Ablabium* 117, in Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:126–127). Because Gregorius gave a generic definition of the *ousia* shared by the Father, Son and Spirit using the analogy of the *ousia* that human beings share universally (for example, Peter, John and James), he was accused of tri-theism (*Contra Eunomium* I. 202, *Gregorii Nysseni Opera* 1–2, in Jaeger 1960). Gregory also used the term 'generation'. He argued that, in the 'generation' of a child, the 'substance' of the father was not diminished or divided. Because of this possibility of the generation of a separate individual, it could be problematic to base a monotheistic theology on the argument of a shared *ousia*. Gregory's definition of 'divine substance' preempted this problem. If 'divine substance' is in principle indivisible and undifferentiated and a number cannot be allocated to 'divine simplicity', if 'one' and 'one' and 'one' do not add up to 'three', and if they are all 'infinite' and cannot be placed next to one another, but only exist *in one another*, then the 'unity' of God is ensured. If divine substance is in principle unchangeable, then the mutual relationships within the Trinity are infinite and non-hierarchical (cf. Beeley 2008).

The debate on the Doctrine of the Trinity also engendered a debate on theological language (cf. Maspero 2010:17–31). Eunomius argued that all descriptions of the 'Logos' were analogical and that 'Son of God' was *metaphorical* rather than *literal*. Gregory accepted the analogical nature of descriptions and titles such as 'rock', 'door', 'way' and 'shepherd', but differentiated between these descriptions and those that referred to the 'essence' of things. For Gregory, 'Son' should be understood more literally than metaphorically (*Contra Eunomium* III, in Jaeger 1960:127–141). Terms that describe Christ's relationship to humanity would be analogical, whereas terms that describe Christ's relationship to God would be essential. Gregory emphasised that God was incomprehensible and unfathomable. Therefore he could be criticised for his attempt to articulate anything at all about God. He acknowledged that all names and descriptions of God were inadequate expressions devised by human beings. However, all these terms were rooted in the *being* and *action* of God, as revealed in the Bible. This provides sufficient grounds for developing theological constructs. Because of the enormous distance between Creator and creation, these

terms and descriptions should be evaluated critically. The terms tend to be simultaneously applicable and misleading. Metaphor and analogy always also have an 'is-not' character. There is always a difference, a non-equality as well. According to Gregory, the attempt of Eunomius to define the 'substance/being' of God was rather arrogant (Young [1983] 2010:159).

This debate on the Doctrine of the Trinity was accompanied by a debate on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Basil argued for the divinity of the Spirit (see his treaty against Enomius, *Contra Eunomium* III, in Jaeger 1960:110, 127–141). His *De Spiritu Sancto* of 375 CE provided an exposition of this argument (cf. Anderson 1980). Some years later Ambrosius based his *De Spiritu Sancto* on the work of Basil. This in turn served as the basis for the exposition of Trinitarian theology by the two Gregory brothers. Though Basil did not refer to the *homoousion* of the Holy Spirit, Gregory of Nazianzus did (Young & Teal [1983] 2010:141). After the death of Basil in 379 CE, his brother Gregory took the debate on the Holy Spirit further, bringing Christology also into the picture. The doctrinal problems created by Arius were solved successfully by the Cappadocians' Doctrine of the Trinity for the Orthodox Church. The transcendence of God which complicated the possibility of a relationship between God and the world and for which the mediation of 'Logos' was needed no longer presented a problem since 'Logos' partook in the transcendence of God. In the Doctrine of the Trinity of Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus (in response to that of Eunomius), based largely on the work of Apollinarius, they did not refer to 'two sons' (which would implicate Jesus and the Spirit) in their Christology. After the Council of Constantinople they came into conflict with Apollinarius. With Gregory of Nazianzus' explanation of 'that which cannot be adopted, cannot be redeemed', he countered the argument of Apollinarius that Christ did not have a 'human soul'. Gregory, the brother of Basil, countered Apollinarius with the argument that Christ's 'human nature' was recreated and that this change in Christ 'marks the beginning of the transformation in which each of us is called to participate' (Daley 2003:432–436).

3. In conclusion: The Cappadocian legacy and a theology of 'the Other'

The two terms *transformation* and *participation* constitute the epistemological core of the Cappadocian heritage. This legacy can be seen in the recent emphasis on the significance of a 'Trinitarian ecclesiology', in spite of the 'academic' argument that the Cappadocian Doctrine of the Trinity is too abstract and 'anthropological'. This was the thought of some 20th century scholars whose religion criticism culminated in the

pronouncement that the 'God of monotheism' was dead. Ludwig Feuerbach ([1841] [1853] 2008:294) pointed to the 'anthropological origin' of the Christian faith. He quotes Hillary (*De Trinitate* I.iii, in Moreschini & Norelli 2005b:258–260) as substantiation.[9]

With the rise of 'plurality' in the third millennium, the epistemological significance of the terms 'transformation' and 'participation' derived new meaning in light of the Cappadocian emphasis on *being* and *action* in the ontology of ethics (cf. Migliore 2004:145; Naudé 2007; Smit 2006:73-92; Venter 2004:207–239.[10] Rian Venter (2011:2, footnote 4) has connected this 'renaissance' with contemporary 'theologies of *the Other*'. He incorporates social aspects such as race, culture and gender.

In a lecture on 26 September 1922, Karl Barth ([1924] 1925:125–155) described the '*Synthese von Christentum und Kultur*' (merging of Christianity and culture) as a problem of contemporary ethics ('*Das Problem der Ethik in der Gegenwart*'). In recent times, Karl Dienst (2012:22), in his work 'Kirche mitten in der Stadt' (Church in the middle of the city) refers to this phenomenon as the '*soziokulturelle Volkskirchenmilieu*' (cf. Dienst 2012:21, 45, 47). In reaction to this milieu, human rights have become universally prominent. Habermas ([1998] 2001:119–120), however, described it as 'masked hypocrisy':

> *'So-called equal rights may have only been gradually extended to oppressed, marginalized, and excluded groups. Only after tough political struggles have workers, women, Jews, Romanies, gays, and political refugees been recognized as 'human beings' with a claim to fully equal treatment. The important thing now is that the intellectual advances in emancipation reveal in hindsight the individual advances that human rights had fulfilled up to that times. That is, the egalitarian claim to*

9 Hillarius, *De Trinitate* I.iii: Nos filii Dei sumus, sed non talis hic filius. Hic enim verus et proprius est filius origine, non adoptione, veritate, non nuncuptaione, nativitate, non creatione'.

10 Naudé (2007:9) articulates it as follows: 'Unity was not only important to the New Testament churches. Throughout history the unity of the church was threatened by internal differences. In the fourth century when the church was just more than 300 years old, serious doctrinal difference ensued. It was about how God could be one. This led to a significant church council in the town of Nicea in the year 325. This was followed by a council in Constantinople in 381. This is where the churches confessed: We believe in one God, Father, Son and Spirit, though they are three Persons, and though Christ has two natures. They also confessed the marks of the church: Over and against our dissent, we believe in one church, built on the teachings of the apostles, and catholic.' Naudé (2007:9) states explicitly that the *unity* transcends church denominations.

> *universal validity and inclusion had also always served to mask the de facto unequal treatment of those who were silently excluded.'*

Habermas exposes this 'false universality', which he describes as the 'abstractive fallacy' of a Platonistic 'Western notion of reason' with an 'imaginary humanity' which fails 'to provide *every* voice with a hearing' (Habermas [1998] 2001:120; original emphasis). The challenge is to develop a democratic order which is simultaneously particular and universal. Such a 'constellation' (in reference to Habermas' notion of a 'postnational constellation'), requires values that can dissolve the double tension of inclusivity-exclusivity and unity-diversity. These values presuppose participation and transformation, being and action, in order that radical inclusivity does not remain a theoretical and abstract imagining, but can come to fruition in practice. From a political perspective, Habermas [1998] 2001:73) finds democracy to be the most viable model. The challenges are to learn from the catastrophes of the 20th century in a self-critical manner and to address the contemporary problem of the 'plurality' of human rights in a way than ensures human dignity for all. This will require *inclusion* without *exclusion* (Habermas 1996:154–184).

With regard to this, Mannion (2007:xii) quotes Rahner to describe the 'church's task as a whole' as follows:

> *It is hoped that the church may become ever more truly a sacramental sign and mediation of the triune God who is love so that the church might demonstrate all the more vividly in its relations both ad intra and ad extra that Deus caritas est.*

The application of this terminology from the Cappadocian Doctrine of the Trinity to ecclesiology in a postmodern context today shows the correlation between ontology and ethics to be the central issue for being church today. The main challenge is that the love of God should manifest in the church. The most important *nota ecclesiae*[11] should not be betrayed. This has to do with the tension between unity and plurality and the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity.

In a re-evaluation for today of the theology of the Cappadocians as reflected in their life histories, the emphasis will be on 'person', rather than on 'substance' only. This represents a shift from the impersonal to the personal, from not being involved (abstraction) to participation. In the

11 This is commensurate with the conviction of Ulrich Körtner (2010:416–426) and Ulrich Luz (2010:404–415) that *agapē* (love) is the focal point of the *notae ecclesiae*.

words of systematic theologian Paul S. Fiddes (2000), this is an indication of 'a pastoral doctrine of the Trinity'. The emphasis of the Cappadocians on 'economy' alongside 'immanence' confirmed the significance of ethics. Their legacy for the third millennium is the language and tools to make reconciling diversity a reality. For the Christian church, it provides the possibility to create a space for reconciling diversity – a space where unity will not be threatened by diversity and the one will not fear the Other.