

Pro-Nicene Exegesis in Hilary of Poitiers' *De*
Trinitate and Basil of Caesarea's *Contra Eunomium*:
a Comparative Study

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Declaration

I, Seumas Jeltzz Clayton Macdonald, certify that this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Date:

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Abstract

This thesis argues that Basil and Hilary demonstrate similarities in exegetical practice in their doctrinal works that reflects their common pro-Nicene trinitarian theology.

Theological writing in the 360s represents a second stage in the development of the fourth century trinitarian debates. Recent scholarship highlights the way in which methodological issues, particularly exegetical practice, underlie theological difference and provide the formulation of one group of authors as pro-Nicene.

This study examines how exegetical practice in doctrinally focused works exemplifies those methodological similarities among pro-Nicenes, with some contrast to non-Nicene readings. It argues that pro-Nicene theologians demonstrate exegetical techniques dependent upon theological presuppositions in a way that is consistent across pro-Nicene writings. To demonstrate this consistency, I conduct close textual readings of Basil and Hilary's use of significant texts in doctrinal polemic, contextualised against other fourth century theologians.

I demonstrate their parallel and complementary usage of partitive exegesis. Their treatment of John 1 exemplifies pro-Nicene presuppositions about the co-eternality and pre-existence of the second person of the Trinity. I argue that the pro-Nicene approach to texts that speak of the Son's creation are governed for all fourth-century theologians by a set of related exegetical questions, for which Basil and Hilary, in common with other pro-Nicenes, have a set of similar, co-ordinated answers, even when differing in details. Texts which appear conducive to equality arguments are interpreted through the matrix of theories of names, the category of 'birth', and the identity relationship between δύναιμις and οὐσία. Texts strongly suggestive of subordination are, in contrast, regularly explained in terms of either causality or economy.

Certain distinctives of pro-Nicene theology function as hermeneutical rules of interpretation, which shape how pro-Nicenes exegete passages of scripture. Those rules and distinctives are common across the pro-Nicene spectrum on a basic level, even as they vary at the level of author and text. This commonality with variation is clear in Basil and Hilary, and exemplary of an identifying feature of pro-Nicene exegetical practice in the fourth century.

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Abbreviations

CSEL	Corpus scriptorium ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die Griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
GNO	Gregorii Nysseni opera
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
JECS	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LXX	The Septuagint
NPNF	A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PG	J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca
PL	J. P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SP	<i>Studia Patristica</i>
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
UBS5	<i>The Greek New Testament</i> , 5th Revised Edition. United Bible Societies.
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCS	Supplements to <i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZKG	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
ZNTW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

