

Saint Basil the Great (329–379) and Pope Damasus of Rome (366–384): A moment of the relations between the Eastern and the Western Christianity

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Saint Basil the Great's efforts to maintain the peace and the unity of the Church, and to bring the heretic Ariens or the schismatic of his time back to Orthodoxy are well known; particularly significant were his endeavours to settle the Meletian schism and his relationship with Rome is set in this context.

What was the Meletian schism? It was a division which occurred in the Church of Egypt during the persecutions at the beginning of the 4th century. The historical sources vary in presenting its genesis and its development; however, it is certain that in order to bring peace to the Church Bishop Peter the 1st (300–311) of Alexandria has expedited the re-acceptance in the Church of those who had abjured their faith (*lapsi*). Bishop Meletius of Antioch, the second in the Egyptian hierarchy after the Bishop of Alexandria, has protested alongside others against Peter's tolerance.

During the reign of Galerius (305–311) and Maximin Daja (305–313) the persecution of the Christians erupted once again, and Peter of Alexandria together with other Christians have either been arrested or they have hidden away. In Peter's absence Meletius of Antioch (360–381)¹ became the head of the Egyptian Church, but we do not know whether his action was based on an understanding between him and Peter or not. It is known that Meletius took certain measures and that he performed the ordination of several bishops for the sees which were vacant, as at that time their former titular bishops were arrested and they no longer knew anything about them. But Meletius's gesture has alarmed and displeased members of the Church of Egypt and even though he himself was arrested, he continued his schismatic action among the Christians of the Faeno (Arabia) mines, creating enmity in their midst. Peter and four other bishops died as martyrs, but Meletius was released and taken to Alexandria where he organised his schismatic church, calling it the *Church of the martyrs*; the Meletians, just as the Novatians considered themselves to be the true church, and confronted Saint Athanasius the Great (†373) and the Orthodox with a great deal of obstacles².

Saint Basil the Great who was a member of the so-called Young-Nicaean party has continuously strived to make peace between the theological parties which were in conflict over the Arian heresy, by conducting negotiations with both the Oriental bishops and the Western ones, the first of which was pope Damasus the 1st of Rome³. What mattered to him was that the Church's unity had to be preserved by all the bishops, who for such an end had to be in communion with one another. Therefore, he calls out the large number of bishops he was in

¹ See: Benjamin Drewery, Antiochien II, in TRE 3, 1978, pp. 109–111; Carl Andresen – Adolf Martin Ritter, Geschichte des Christentums I/1, Stuttgart–Berlin–Köln 1993, pp. 78–80, on the Antiochian schism.

² Hubertus R. Drobner, Lehrbuch der Patrologie, Freiburg im Breisgau 1994, S. 169–173; Susanne Hammann, Alte Kirche, Bd. 3, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2003, pp. 84–85.

³ A. Franzen – R. Bäumer, Istoria papilor, București 1996, p. 51; K. S. Frank, Damasus I., Papst, in: Lexikon des Mittelalters, Bd. III, München – Zürich 1986, col. 469–470.

communion with, through faith and love; that exact multitude of hierarchs was his criterion of the true faith. For that reason, the heretics were those who chose to part with the communion of those upholding the true faith. In letter no. 204, Saint Basil reminded the citizens of Neocaesarea of precisely »the multitude (Πλῆθος) of bishops from around the world which by the Grace of God are united with us. You can ask those of Pisidia, Lykaonia, Isauria, those of the both provinces of Phrygia, the bishops of Armenia who are your neighbours, those of Macedonia, Achaia, Illyria, Gaul and Spain, those of Italy, Sicily and Africa, those who make up the healthy part of Egypt, all those of Syria. They all write letters to us and receive our letters as response.« From all of these letters »you may see that we are all united in our belief (σύμφυτοι) and that we think alike. Consequently, it stands that he who runs away from our *koinonia* parts he himself with the entire Church, you may be sure of this. Look around you brethren and see who shares *koinonia* with you! Who will acknowledge yours in the future, if you refuse ours?»⁴ It is obvious that for Saint Basil the letters are extremely significant as by their means the *koinonia*, namely the communion is preserved.

As to the heretics Saint Basil states that *koinonia* is not to be upheld with them, as it is obvious that they are not within the Church and that their baptism is not valid. In order to support his statements Saint Basil quotes the words of Saint Cyprianus of Carthage and those of metropolitan Firmilianus of Caesarea: »Those who separated themselves from the Church no longer had the grace of the Holy Spirit over them.«⁵ And to maintain the community it was necessary that the true faith should be kept. In this context Saint Basil refuses *koinonia* to Paulinus, who was being supported by Rome and who was Meletius's of Antioch counter-bishop, by arguing the following: »If it depended on me, I would never agree to give in on the grounds that someone has received a letter from men⁶ and that he boasts upon it; I will not step down for such a minor thing. Not even when such a letter were to come down from Heavens, if it were not consistent with the true teachings of the faith, I couldn't receive such a man in the saint's communion (*koinonia*)«⁷. Later on, in letter 263, written in 377 and addressed to the Western bishops, Saint Basil will even accuse Paulinus of heresy: »As to Paulinus, he also deserves some reprimands especially on the subject of his ordination, a matter you are aware of. In any case, I am also troubled by the fact that he inclines towards the teachings of Marcel⁸, as his adherents are allowed to enter communion with him without any control. As you most honoured brethren know, Marcel's teaching is a sort of cancellation of our entire hope, because neither does he accept that the Son has His Own hypostasis, but affirms that He has only shown Himself briefly to the world then returned to He of Whom

⁴ *Saint Basil the Great*, Letter 204, in Scrieri. Partea a treia. Trad. de C. Cornițescu – T. Bodogae: PSB 12, București Edit. Institutului biblic al BOR 1988, 421 (we will further use this edition for quoting); *Wilhelm de Vries*, Die Obsorge des hl. Basilius um die Einheit der Kirche im Streit mit Papst Damasus, in: *Albert Rauch – Paul Imhof* (Hgg.), *Basilius, Heiliger der einen Kirche*, München 1981, S. 30.

⁵ Letter 188: PSB 12, 375.

⁶ It is the letter received from pope Damasus which Paulinus brought with him to Antioch, as the pope's representative. At the same time he demanded that the creed he came with was to be signed by all, as a sign of communion with him and the pope, which Saint Basil categorically refused to do. See: *de Vries*, art. cit., p. 36.

⁷ Letter 214: PSB 12, 440. Paulinus had been ordained by bishop Lucifer of Cagliari in 362, that means two years after Meletius who was then in exile but later returned to Antioch.

⁸ Marcellus of Ancyra was at first a strong supporter of the Nicæan creed but he later adopted the Sabelian heresy. See: *Andresen – Ritter*, op. cit., p. 80.

He sprung from, nor that the Paraclete exists in a defined way. Therefore, no one would err in proclaiming that this is a heresy completely dissimilar to Christianity and calling it a decayed form of Judaism. For that reason we insist that you take this problem into your consideration.⁹

On the contrary, Saint Basil stays in close contact with Meletius and acknowledges him to be the single legitimate bishop of Antioch, as he was convinced that Meletius's faith was incorruptible. He writes to Saint Athanasius: »In my previous letter¹⁰ I have considered it sufficient to tell Your Holiness that all that part of the Antiochians who have kept the Orthodox teaching, must be guided towards unity and understanding, so that all those who had been separated until now, look for a way to reunite together and recognise as sole leader our beloved bishop Meletius... I have considered it necessary to stress that in the whole East¹¹, Meletius is a very well seen person, with whom I am in *koinonia*, and I wish all-heartedly to see him manage God's Church of Antioch, because his faith is irreproachable and his moral conduct unparalleled. We can therefore say that he is actually a sort of head of the whole body of the Church, whereas the other groups are mere limbs which have torn themselves apart from this body.«¹²

Nevertheless, Meletius has refused *koinonia* to Saint Athanasius the Great in 363, but we are unaware of his reasons in acting as he did. It is possible he had interpreted the term *homousios* further than Saint Athanasius and was therefore distrustful of him¹³. Saint Athanasius for his part considered it an offence, thus siding with Paulinus and recognised him as the true bishop of Antioch. Despite Saint Basil's intercessions Athanasius and Meletius will never again reach communion with one another.

On the other hand, Saint Basil was warning the Western bishops not to enter communion with those eastern bishops which only manifest a seemingly orthodox form of faith, but who are in fact suspected of being heretics¹⁴. However, when the situation only consists of disputes, the communion is not to be completely terminated because the Church deals with a sort of »schism«, and the schismatics belong to the Church, to a certain extent. This is why the Antiochian rift was at first considered by Saint Basil as a schism; he would only later accuse Paulinus of heresy, as the letter 214 which he sent in 375 to *comites* Terentius shows¹⁵. Even more so, since Paulinus had the support of Rome, there also arose the issue of the communion with this church, as well as with Saint Athanasius who was in communion with the Roman bishop.

In this matter, the scholars' opinions vary. For instance, David Amand de Mendieta OSB believes that Saint Basil was in communion with neither Rome nor Saint Athanasius, seeing that he had declared himself to be Meletius's advocate and had contested Paulinus. Mendieta asserts the following: »Whatever the case, it is certain that Basil, despite his strong

⁹ Letter 263: *PSB* 12, 545.

¹⁰ Letter 66: *PSB* 12, 234–236.

¹¹ Namley *Asia Minor, Syria and Palestine*.

¹² Letter 67: *PSB* 12, 236–237.

¹³ *Wilhelm de Vries SJ*, Die Obsorge des hl. Basilius um die Einheit der Kirche im Streit mit Papst Damasus, in: *Albert Rauch/Paul Imhof (Hgg.)*, Basilius, Heiliger der einen Kirche, München 1981, S. 31–32.

¹⁴ Letter 129: *PSB* 12, 313.

¹⁵ Letter 214: *PSB* 12, 439–442.

wish (for unity), remained outside the *koinonia* of the Roman Church¹⁶. Yves Courtonne reached the same conclusion in his study on Saint Basil¹⁷, but it was contested by Wilhelm de Vries¹⁸. Eduard Schwartz on the other hand believes that Saint Basil was in communion with Saint Athanasius, and thereby, with Rome¹⁹, but Jean Gribomont states that Saint Basil was officially recognized by Saint Athanasius²⁰. More recently, Wilhelm de Vries has joined the latter in considering that regardless of the difficulties he had encountered in his relations with Rome, Saint Basil was indeed in communion with this church²¹.

With respect to his relations with pope Damasus, we must mention first of all, that Saint Basil was in communion with the bishops of Italy and Gaul as letter 204 – which we have previously referred to – proves²². These bishops were in communion with Damasus, ergo Saint Basil was also in communion with him. Saint Basil's problems with the Roman bishop emerged from his authoritative decision to support Paulinus, an attitude he required everyone else to adopt. But Saint Basil found it intolerable, as he had a different perception of a bishop's authority and he stood by Meletius. The second point of divergence was Damasus' pretension that everyone, including the Easterners, should subscribe to a creed that had been conceived in the West and brought to Antioch by Paulinus, a demand Saint Basil refused. This means that for Saint Basil the idea of the pope's primacy was simply unacceptable, due to the fact that he understood the hierarchy as a communion of equal bishops, united in the same faith and love, the head of this communion being Jesus Christ. The idea of a visible head of the Church, such as Rome would have it, was inadmissible to the Easterners.

None the less, this hasn't impeded Saint Basil's asking the Roman bishop for support in his fight against the heresies. He writes to him in 371²³ informing him about the actual situation of the Eastern Church. Here are his words: »Most honoured Father, almost the whole of the Orient (and by Orient I mean the territories from Egypt to Illyria) is ravaged by a powerful storm stirred by the heresy Arius, that foe of the truth, had once seeded and which once again sprouts from its bitter roots and bears terrible fruits. By now this heresy has come to predominate because the foremost representatives of the true faith have been banished from their churches in nearly every eparchy, through denounces and threats; those who have risen to power terrorize the consciences of the common Christians. The only solution against these misfortunes would be your Holiness's benevolent visit. In the past we have always been comforted by your love and our souls have rejoiced for a moment by learning of your future

¹⁶ *David Amand de Mendieta*, Damase, Athanase, Pierre, Méléce et Basile, in: *L'Eglise et les Eglises I*, Chevetogne 1954, p. 274–275.

¹⁷ *Yves Courtonne*, *Un témoin du IV-e siècle oriental: Saint Basile et son temps, d'après sa correspondance*, Paris 1973.

¹⁸ *Wilhelm de Vries SJ*, Die Obsorge des hl. Basilius um die Einheit der Kirche im Streit mit Papst Damasus, in: *Albert Rauch/Paul Imhof (Hgg.)*, *Basilius, Heiliger der einen Kirche*, München 1981, S. 33.

¹⁹ *Eduard Schwartz*, Über die Sammlung des Cod. Veronensis LX, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 35 (1936) 1–23.

²⁰ *Jean Gribomont*, Rome et l'Orient. Invitations et Reproches de S. Basile, *Seminarium* 27 (1975) 336–354.

²¹ *Wilhelm de Vries*, Die Obsorge des hl. Basilius um die Einheit der Kirche im Streit mit Papst Damasus, in: *Albert Rauch/Paul Imhof (Hgg.)*, *Basilius, Heiliger der einen Kirche*, München 1981, S. 45.

²² Letter 204: *PSB* 12, 421.

²³ Letter 70: *PSB* 12, 240–241. Although the pope isn't named, the recipient of the letter can be deduced as clearly being Damasus.

visit. But when that hope was lost and we could no longer wait, we have come to ask you by this letter that you are ready to help us and to send people who share our ideas, so that they will either reconcile the disunited, or pacify the Churches of God, or at least better identify the authors of the disturbances, so that You will also know in the future who to be in communion with.²⁴

Saint Basil then proceeds by making mention of the good relations between the two bishop sees, insisting on the necessity for Roman help: »We ask for nothing new, but only that which was customary to the blessed worshippers of God before us, and to You. Because we know from tradition, from the fathers we have asked and from a letter we still have with us, that Dionysius²⁵, that most blessed bishop, maintained contact with the Church of Caesarea by means of letters and sent his men to ransom our brethren who had been sold into slavery²⁶. Yet the present circumstances are far more difficult and darker, and therefore ask of us an even greater understanding. Actually, we do not wail the destruction of some earthly buildings, if not the slavery of the Churches: the matter is no longer a physical slavery, if not a slavery of the souls we see every day imposed by those who fight so that their heresy would prevail. For these reasons if you didn't rise to come and help us now, you will shortly find no one left to give a hand to, for all would have been dominated by heretics.²⁷

Damasus, who was trying to lay the foundation of the Petrine idea of primacy²⁸, had something else to do. In fact, in one of the letters he sent to the bishop Eusebius of Samosata in 376, Saint Basil showed with regard to the Westerners' attitude that he was accustomed to the behaviour of the Roman bishop, and in an indirect manner he briefly characterizes it when he says: »I remembered one of Diomedes's sayings: *you should not have begged him, for he is an arrogant man, and in all truthfulness, the proud natures usually fill themselves up with contempt when one wished to be careful with them*²⁹. And if God's wrath were to persist, of what help would the pride of the West be to us? These people do not know the truth, have no patience for you to explain, but for the suspicious men they do now what they had once done for Marcell³⁰, namely they had entered a fight against those who were trying to explain the truth to them and have thus fortified the heresy. As far as I am concerned, I would have wished a personal letter had been written to their coryphée, and not a collective letter³¹. I wouldn't have written anything about the ecclesiastic problems, only what would have been needed to be mentioned, in order to make them understand by a few words that they do not know the truth about what is happening here, and shouldn't therefore bother to come and learn them. That is why I would have remarked that they should neither harass the people

²⁴ Letter 70: *PSB* 12, 241.

²⁵ Dionysius, bishop of Rome from 259 to 268. Cf. *Elisabeth Grünbeck*, Dionysios, Papst, in: »Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche« (LThK), Bd. III, Freiburg im Breisgau 1995, S. 246.

²⁶ The text refers to the Gothians' and the Scythians' pillages. Cf. *Sozomen*, Ecclesiastic History, II, 6.

²⁷ Letter 70: *PSB* 12, 241.

²⁸ The primacy doctrine has been gradually developed and during Damasus's time didn't have a clearly defined form. The term *pope* as we use it today for the Roman bishop is not encountered prior to the 6th century. Cf. *Andresen/Ritter*, Geschichte des Christentums I/1, Stuttgart–Berlin–Köln 1993, 159.

²⁹ *Homer*, Iliad, I, 698.

³⁰ Marcellus of Ancyra.

³¹ For this very reason Saint Basil is not addressing the Roman bishop directly, but generally *To the sanctified brethren and fathers of the west* just as in Letter 90: *PSB* 12, 263.

who have been humiliated in their trials, nor confuse dignity with pride, a sin which alone can suffice in generating hostility towards God.³²

Even so, as the letter had no consequences, in 372, Saint Basil writes again *to the sanctified brethren and fathers of the west* asking the Western Christians' help once more. Although it was not directly addressed to Damasus, it has been supposedly handed to him³³. The first part contains an important piece of information regarding the relations between Saint Basil and Saint Athanasius. Here is what the bishop of Caesarea says: »The good God, He Who never lets a distress without a comfort, has now granted us a great joy through the letters the Most Reverend Father Athanasius has received from You and which he also sent us as a testimony of the sound faith and as a proof of perfect unity from Your part, this being a trait of the shepherds who walk in the footsteps of our fathers and who in good will tend to the people of God.«³⁴ We can clearly see from these lines that there was an exchange of letters between the two bi-shops, which means they were in communion. Furthermore, the fact that Saint Athanasius had sent his Caesarean colleague the Roman letters means that he also considered the other two (Saint Basil and pope Damasus) to be in communion.

Then, Saint Basil presents the ecclesiastic situation in the East once more, showing that »here all things have grown weak, most honoured brethren, and due to the repeated strikes of our enemies, the Church is on the verge of sinking like a ship struck from both sides by the sea waves.«³⁵ He then asks them »to show understanding with regard to the dissensions which have sprung among us and not to distance yourselves from us because of the geographical distance between us, but on the contrary, as we are united in the Spirit, to welcome us in the harmony of a single body.«³⁶ The picture Saint Basil conveys to us is quite moving, a proof of his talent as a writer. He writes the following: »Our sufferings are known even if we do not show them presently, for they have been made known throughout the world for some time now. The dogmas of the Holy Fathers are despised, the apostolic traditions are no longer observed; instead, new inventions are proclaimed in the Churches and the people have become technicians of the human word. Instead of speaking of God the worldly wisdom has now come to rule after it had usurped the good name of the Cross. The shepherds are exiled and their places, wolves are being brought, who tear apart the flock of Christ; the praying houses are now empty and in exchange, the deserts are full of weeping people. The elders shed tears as they compare the past with the present, the youth are even more deplorable as they do not realise what they have lost. Naturally, the mere mention of our afflictions can generate compassion in those who know the love of Christ, but words are too faint when compared with the actual reality.«³⁷ The hierarch of Caesarea addresses a vibrant and desperate call to the Westerners, asking them to come and help them fight the Arians. »Therefore *if you have any comfort in His love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy* (Philippians 2,1) then decide to come and help us! Let yourselves burn with fervour for the true faith and deliver us from this storm.«³⁸

³² Letter 239: PSB 12, 496–497.

³³ PSB 12, 263, n. 1.

³⁴ Letter 90: PSB 12, 263.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 264.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

In 372 Saint Basil wrote to both bishop Valerian of Illyricum³⁹ and the bishops of Italy and Gaul, asking their support against the Ariens. His way of addressing himself sows the communion between the Eastern and Western hierarchs: »God-loving and blessed brethren fellow servants from Italy and Gaul and their beloved bishops of one heart with us«⁴⁰. He asks them: »come to our defence, one that the Churches of the East have so long awaited from You but have not yet been deigned with.«⁴¹ (...) This time we ask that even in this hour You stand fast for truth with compassion towards us, so that all that may have escaped your ears could now be better understood from the words of our devout fellow servant Sabin, who will be able to give You his account of all those written in this letter. And through him we conjure You to be merciful, setting aside any hesitation, and be consumed with loving ardour for us, disregarding both the length of the way and any other human interests or reasons.«⁴² Moreover, in a most serious fashion he conveys the danger menacing the whole of the Christendom, a fact which should make the westerners hasten and come to their eastern brothers' assistance. »The peril threatens nowadays not a single Church, this tempest has struck not only two or three, but the disaster of this deviation extends its devastation from the borders of Illyria to Egypt's Thebaid. Its evil seed had been thrown by Arius and as there have been many of us who have arduously cultivated this lawlessness the heresy grew deep roots and now bears vicious fruit«⁴³ the Christians being now the laughing stock of the pagans⁴⁴. This is why he strongly asks for help to reunify the Church: »from now on, as long as some of the righteous still stand, as long as there is still a trace of the former peace and understanding, before the Church should shipwreck, hasten, come to us quickly for this is what we ask of you: most beloved brethren, give a helping hand to those who have been broken! May Your brotherly love You take pity on us, may You shed tears of compassion! Do not allow that half of the earth be engulfed by blasphemy, do not let the flame of faith be put out in those of whom it had been lit first.« The solution would be convoking an ecumenical synod to reinforce the teachings of the Nicaean Fathers⁴⁵.

His plea has been futile as his western brothers had other more important matters to attend to. Hence, in a new letter Basil apparently wrote to the bishop of Rome in 376.⁴⁶ He expresses his disappointment at their lack of love: »Why then have we received no letter of consolation, no brotherly visit, nor any other sign of love? For lo, this is the 13th year since the heretics have waged war against us, and in this time more afflictions have stricken our churches that people can remember ever having tormented the Christians since the Gospel of Christ was first preached.«⁴⁷ None the less, Saint Basil still appeals to his brothers of the West who »have kept their faith immaculate, and the treasure of the Apostolic Creed untainted.«⁴⁸

³⁹ Letter 91: *PSB* 12, 264–265. Although there are some who contest the fact that Valerian of Aquilaea was its recipient. *PSB* 12, 265, no. 4.

⁴⁰ Letter 92: *PSB* 12, 266.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 267.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 268.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*. The synod Saint Basil had wanted to participate at took place in 381, but he died shortly before and did not attend.

⁴⁶ Letter 242: *PSB* 12, 500–502.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 501.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 502.

He voices the same reproach to the bishops of Italy and Gaul who, just like the others, hadn't bothered to help the Eastern Church. In 376 Saint Basil writes the following in letter 243: »We have begged Your love so many times for mercy and help. We see that the measure of our punishment has not yet been reached, as you were not allowed to aid us.«⁴⁹ After having described the deplorable situation of the Church once again, he says: »Maybe you will finally decide to pray more fervently for us, asking God to reconcile with us.« And this more than ever just now when »we fear this disaster may spread even further, as the scorch of the fire spreads through flammable matter, that once it burnt the vicinity throws itself even further. The infection of the heresy spread indeed further still and we fear that once it would have overwhelmed our Churches it will also attack the healthy part of Your dioceses.«⁵⁰

It was all in vain as the Westerners refused to do anything in support of Saint Basil's entreaty. Naturally, the question which comes to one's mind is: why? We believe that among the multitude of elements which have been of importance in this situation, there is a crucial one, namely the different perception on ecclesiastic authority in East and West. Because while in the West the idea of a monarchic primacy steadily gained pre-eminence even through pope Damasus of Rome, the East treasured the synodality, so then, by not recognising Paulinus who the pope considered his emissary, Saint Basil got into conflict with the Roman bishop who exacted obedience from everyone. While the Westerners accepted this Saint Basil could not agree to his view, due to the Eastern ecclesiology. For him the single head of the Church is Lord Jesus Christ, and in this sense, Lukas Vischer wrote the following words in his dissertation, referring to Saint Basil: »The Church is **one** body, and its members suffer and rejoice for one another, and are moved by **one** (single) Spirit.«⁵¹ He quotes a text of Saint Basil's (*De iudicio Dei*, 3): »The sole and true head keeps each together and binds each one in unity with one's neighbour. It is Christ.«⁵² For Saint Basil, the bishop of Rome is the coryphée of the Western bishops, and as the west has its coryphée so does the East have its own, as the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch. Therefore, he had no difficulty in addressing the Roman bishop as a brother in faith and not as a superior, whom he should obey, and he had the courage to oppose Damasus in supporting Meletius against Paulinus, who for his part had the papal support, without seeing his attitude as a break from the communion with the see of Rome.

According to our above-mentioned statements we can agree with Wilhelm de Vries when he says that »the Orthodox of the East and the West, and even (Saint) Basil were always united with Damasus. There was no break between them. This is true in spite of all the dissensions between the bishops of Caesarea and Rome, and (Saint) Basil's simply ignoring the papal primacy which Damasus demanded for the whole of the Church and also tried to impose in the East. The different ecclesiological conceptions have been the fundamental cause of these dissensions. Basil has strived for the well-being of the Church, for a better cooperation between East and West, trying to establish normal relations between the two parts of the Church in a perfect *koinonia*. If he hasn't achieved is goal is certainly not due to his lack of good will, but to the historical circumstances not even he could have changed.«⁵³

⁴⁹ Letter 243: *PSB* 12, 502.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 504.

⁵¹ Lukas Vischer, *Basilius der Grosse. Untersuchungen zu einem Kirchenvater des vierten Jahrhunderts*, Basel 1953, S. 87.

⁵² *Saint Basil*, *De iudicio Dei* 3: *PG* 31, 660 A.

⁵³ See: Wilhelm de Vries, *Die Obsorge des hl. Basilius um die Einheit der Kirche im Streit mit Papst Damasus*, in: Albert Rauch/Paul Imhof (*Hgg.*), *Basilius, Heiliger der einen Kirche*, München 1981, S. 2.