

**THE INFLUENCE OF  
PLATO ON SAINT  
BASIL; A DISSERTATION**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649342501

The Influence of Plato on Saint Basil; A dissertation by Theodore Leslie Shear

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**THEODORE LESLIE SHEAR**

**THE INFLUENCE OF  
PLATO ON SAINT  
BASIL; A DISSERTATION**



III. 11452

THE INFLUENCE OF PLATO  
ON SAINT BASIL

BY

THEODORE LESLIE SHEAR

---

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY  
IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

---

BALTIMORE  
J. H. FURST COMPANY  
1906

~~HF. 11452~~  
C 617.81

Harvard College Library  
JUL 11 1907  
From the University  
by exchange

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1- 4
1. Influence of Plato on the Fathers.....	1- 3
2. Life of Saint Basil.....	3- 4
II. INFLUENCE OF PLATO ON BASIL IN THEOLOGY AND ETHICS.....	5-21
1. Existence, name and attributes of God.....	5- 7
2. Nature of Man.....	7- 8
3. Superiority of soul over body.....	9-11
4. Immortality of the soul.....	11-12
5. Virtues and vices.....	12-21
6. Scheme of the four virtues.....	18
III. INFLUENCE OF PLATO ON BASIL IN PHILOSOPHY.....	21-37
1. Voluntary and involuntary action.....	21-22
2. Relation of the Hexameron to Plato's <i>Timaeus</i> .....	23-37
a. Existence of creator.....	24
b. Creation of universe.....	25
c. Theory of elements.....	26-28
d. Nature and form of universe.....	28-31
e. Beginning of time.....	31-32
f. Formation of creatures, man, beast, etc.....	33
IV. INFLUENCE OF PLATO ON BASIL IN LANGUAGE.....	37-58
1. Direct quotation.....	37-39
2. Comparison and metaphor.....	39-50
3. Grammatical statements.....	50-51
4. Literary allusions.....	51-55
5. Miscellaneous.....	55-58
V. CONCLUSION.....	59-60





## THE INFLUENCE OF PLATO ON SAINT BASIL.

---

### INTRODUCTION.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF PLATO ON THE CHURCH FATHERS.

The relation of Plato to the Church Fathers is a subject that has received considerable attention in special treatises as well as in general works. A brief survey of some of the results obtained will be given to show how widespread this influence was.

Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 A. D.), the earliest apologist whose works have been preserved even in part, was a Platonist before he was a Christian and Platonic quotations abound in his works. Huber, however, points out, *Die Philosophie der Kirchenväter*, p. 14, the difficulty of harmonizing Justin's pro-Platonic and anti-Platonic views. In *Apol.*, II, 13 (Migne, *Pat. Gr.*, VI, p. 465, B. 11) he states that the teachings of Plato are not foreign to Christ, and then again in many places we find that he attacks the heathen philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, etc.; see *Cohor. ad Graecos*, chap. 5 ff., and declares Plato's inconsistencies in chap 7.<sup>1</sup> But whether as an advocate or an opponent of Plato's doctrines he shows a thorough knowledge of his works, quoting from the Republic, Timaeus, Meno and Phaedrus.

Similar views of the importance of Plato were likewise held by Athenagoras, a contemporary of Justin, and a man who, like Justin, was trained in the Greek philosophy, see Huber, *op. cit.*, p. 24, and Ackermann, *Das Christliche im Plato und in der platonischen Philosophie*, p. 3.

The theological nature of the work of Irenaeus (c. 130–202 A. D.) that has been preserved to us, *Contra Haereses*, does

<sup>1</sup> See attack on Justin's authorship of this work by A. Puech in *Mélanges Henri Weil*, 1898, pp. 395–406.

not offer very much opportunity for reference to Plato, but even in Irenaeus two quotations from Plato are cited, from the *Laws* and the *Timaeus*. These quotations are in the same section, *Migne*, VII, 3, 25, 5, and are cited by Irenaeus in praise and defence of Plato.

Tertullian (c. 150-220 A. D.) quotes Plato frequently but condemns him. He says that Plato has become the source of all heresies, that the philosopher serves only for his own glory and, therefore, between him and the Christian a great difference exists.<sup>1</sup>

Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A. D.) and his pupil Origen (185-254 A. D.) were both great admirers of Plato. Both quote Plato frequently, though Clement very much more frequently than Origen, and both emphasize the Christian element in his works in their attempt to harmonize Platonism and Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

Passing over others we may mention further Hippolytus who flourished early in the third century, and who wrote a work against Plato, and Arnobius, c. 200 A. D., who calls Plato the "sublime head and pillar of philosophy," *Adv. Gent.*, I, 8, and quotes him several times.

We come next to the fourth century and to two authors, contemporaries of St. Basil, whose relation to Plato has been discussed in special dissertations. Gregory of Nyssa, Basil's brother, is shown to be dependent on Plato for many of his statements on the immortality of the soul by A. M. Akulas, *ή περί άθανασίας της ψυχής δόξα του Πλάτωνος έν συγγραφαι προς την Γρηγοριου του Νύσσης*, Athens, 1888.

The second author is Julian, the fellow-student of Basil, and afterwards the Emperor Julian. Prof. Gildersleeve in his essay on the Emperor Julian, *Essays and Studies*, p. 373, remarks that "his prodigious memory seems to have held in solution all Plato." And further, W. C. France in a dissertation entitled, "The Emperor Julian's relation to the new sophistic and neo-Platonism, with a study of his style," Chicago, 1896, makes the statement, p. 71, that Plato is Julian's favorite prose author. In

<sup>1</sup> See Huber, p. 106, and Ackermann, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ackermann, pp. 6 and 7.

support of this she cites statistics from Schwarz, *Philologus* 51, 1892, p. 642, which show that in Julian there are fifty-one quotations from Plato, a number that greatly exceeds the quotations of all the other prose authors combined. To this France also adds a list of some thirty-five cases of Platonic reminiscence.

From this brief statement of a few facts bearing on the relation of Plato to the leaders of early Christian thought it is plain that Ackermann's observation is entirely correct when he remarks on p. 8 that it seems very difficult for the Christian Fathers of the first centuries to escape the influence of Plato.

Now the purpose of the present study is to show how far the influence of Plato is manifested in the works of Basil, but before proceeding to the subject proper it is desirable to take a rapid review of Basil's early life and education in order to show the tendency of his preliminary training.

#### OUTLINE OF LIFE OF ST. BASIL.<sup>1</sup>

The period of Basil's life that was devoted mainly to education comes before the time of his decision to consecrate himself to the work of the Church and falls naturally into four divisions: 1, his term of study under his father; 2, his term at Caesarea; 3, at Constantinople, and 4, at Athens.

Basil the elder was a famous teacher of Pontus. The biographers devote much space to eulogy of the two families that were united in this Basil and St. Emmelia, and describe this couple as endowed with the highest attainments and most excellent virtues. If we may judge from the history of their children this record must be true, for the oldest daughter Maorina has been canonized a saint and three sons were bishops in their life-time and were afterwards made saints. If it is a great thing to receive glory

<sup>1</sup>The chief authorities consulted for the life of St. Basil are: Böhringer, *Die drei Kappadocier*, p. 1 ff.; Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Oratio in laudem Basilii Magni*, Migne, v. 36, 494, A 1 ff.; Maranus, *Vita Sancti Basilii*, Preface of Migne, v. 29, p. v ff.