

THE *CHRÊSIS* OF THE FORMULA *PHÔS EK PHÔTOS* IN THE CAPPADOCIANS

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Abstract

This paper explores how the philosophical expression phôs ek phôtos ('light from light'), found in Plotinus and later employed by Eusebius and Athanasius in discussions related to the Council of Nicaea, was interpreted by the Cappadocian Fathers. This investigation demonstrates that Nicaea can be read as a clash between two distinct theological interpretations of the philosophical formula phôs ek phôtos: one developed by Eusebius and the other by Athanasius. The Cappadocians advanced the latter interpretation, viewing the Council in a relational context.

Keywords: *phôs ek phôtos, homoousios, the Cappadocians, Athanasius, chrêsis, Plotinus*

1. Introduction

This paper examines how the philosophical expression *phôs ek phôtos* ('light from light'), present in Plotinus and later 'used' by Eusebius and Athanasius in the discussions related to the Council of Nicaea, was received by the Cappadocian Fathers. Drawing on Christoph Gnülka's theory of Patristic *chrêsis* ('use' of previous elements)¹, parallel to the architectural practice of *spolia* that repurposed earlier elements for new constructions, the theological borrowing of this philosophical formula is presented. This approach makes it possible to read Nicaea as a clash between two different theological *chrêseis* of the philosophical formula *phôs ek phôtos*, one developed by Eusebius, the other one by Athanasius. The Cappadocians developed the latter, interpreting the Council in a relational way.

¹ Cf. Christian GNÜLKA, *Chrêsis: die Methode der Kirchenväter im Umgang mit der antiken Kultur, Der Begriff des 'rechten Gebrauchs'*, Schwabe, Basel, 2012².