The theological challenges of the fourth century provided the exercise ground which allowed orthodox theologians to work out clear statements of orthodox Christian faith. This process began with Arius and the Arian movement, which resulted in preliminary statements of faith at Nicaea in 325 A.D. But it was with the second generation Arians and their best spokesman, Eunomius, that major issues were argued and faith statements were more clearly defined. The efforts of Basil and his brother Gregory culminated in the Constantinople/Nicaean Creed at the Council of Constantinople in 381. This achievement brought an end to the Arian challenge and represented the triumph of orthodoxy.

Eunomius and Basil shared a lot in common. They were both born in Cappadocia around the same time, and both were intelligent, articulate and well-educated. Where Basil and Eunomius differ in their background, is in the social standing in which they were born. Basil’s family was part of the landed aristocracy, the elite of Cappadocian society. Eunomius was born in northwest Cappadocia into a family of peasants and craftsmen.1 While we have not specific information concerning Eunomius’ education, we can deduce from the writings of his accusers that he moved through the Greek educational system to its highest level, from grammar school through the study of Greek philosophy. Basil accuses him of basing his ideas on Aristotle and Chrysippus, and Gregory of Nyssa, in challenging his second Apologia, accuses him of Neo-Platonism. It is interesting to note that his experience provides evidence of the possibility at that time for those born into the poorest class of society to achieve upward mobility and influence within that society.

Eunomius was a disciple of Aetius, the leader of the second generation Arians called Anomoeans, who held an extremist position

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concerning Father and Son. Eunomius followed Aetius from Antioch to Alexandria studying philosophy and dialectics under him during the years 356–358. Intellectually he outshone his master. In 358, the two of them together with the Arian Eudoxius participated in the Arian council held in Antioch. Here, they alarmed the more moderate Arians such as Basil of Ancyre, who was able to get them exiled to Phrygia. Two years later the tables turned, Eudoxius was made bishop of Constantinople, and the emperor called a synod in 360 in that city to solidify the Arian position. Eunomius came as a deacon, having been ordained by Eudoxius at the Council of Antioch in 358, and Basil came accompanying Dianius, who ordained him reader on their return to Caesarea. It was at this synod that Eunomius delivered his *Apologia* and stirred up a lot of commotion, challenging and stimulating the Cappadocian Fathers to produce some of their most important works.

I. Eunomius’ *Apologia*

Eunomius’ *Apologia* begins with a rhetorical and methodological preamble and a preliminary confession of faith. The principal body of the work sets out to explain the tenets of this confession of faith and leads to a more developed confession of faith at the end. The three principal sections address 1) God as unique and ungenerated, 2) the Son as product and creature of the Father, and 3) the Spirit as creature of the Son, Paraclete and third in order of nature. We will briefly consider the main points.

*God as unique and ungenerated:* The central point of Eunomius’ thesis is that ungenerated denotes the substance of God. He claimed that God himself and the nature of being ungenerated were correlative. From this he deduces that because God is ungenerated he cannot generate. Eunomius responds to objections by saying that neither time, century, nor order is able to differentiate the essence of God, thus proving God’s simplicity of essence (οὐσία).

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2 B. Sesboüé, Introduction to Basil’s *Adversus Eunomium*, SC 299, 19.
3 Eunomius, *Apol.*, 7 (SC 305, 244–246). (For Eunomius’ *Apologia*, the edition used was SC 305, with Introduction, French translation and notes by Bernard Sesboüé and Georges-Matthieu de Durand. It will be abbreviated *Apol.*, followed by the section(s) numbers.)