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The reception of doctrine? Theologies of the Holy Spirit between Nicaea of 325 and Constantinople of 381

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This article explores the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit between AD325 and AD381 through a hermeneutical lens. After presenting an in-depth reading of Jauss's *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, the study examines Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* (*c*. 374) as a crucial instance of reception at work, before concluding by interpreting the Constantinopolitan Creed as a moment of creedalised reception – a crystallisation of what the Spirit had already enacted in the community's life.

Contribution: This article demonstrates that doctrinal development is not merely the revision of ideas, but the unfolding of a response to the living God: a pneumatological history of reception in which doctrine remains a living and life-giving witness to the Spirit who continues to lead into truth.

Keywords: systematic theology; pneumatology; reception theory; reception history; Basil; Jauss.

Introduction

The development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit between the Council of Nicaea in 325 and the Council of Constantinople in 381[1] is one of the most striking examples of doctrinal expansion in the history of Christian theology.[2] The Nicene Creed of 325 includes only the brief phrase 'and in the Holy Spirit' (Leith 1982:30–31), whereas the Constantinopolitan revision of 381 confesses the Spirit as 'the Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets' (Leith 1982:33). Within little more than half a century, the community moved from a minimal reference to a rich and explicit confession of the Spirit's full divinity and active role in revelation and salvation. Historical studies have traditionally traced this development through theological debates, especially in relation to Arianism (Brennecke 2018; Lyman 2008, 2021; Williams 2002) and, for example, the Cappadocian defence of the Spirit's divinity (Ramelli 2018). Such work is essential.[3] Yet the development of doctrine during this period also raises some deeper

1.There is no shortage of studies on the Council of Nicaea. For a Catholic perspective, see Anatolios (2011), who argues that the meaning of Nicene trinitarian doctrine is disclosed through its historical development and that Nicaea must therefore be retrieved by re-entering the debates and interpretations that produced both the creed and its aftermath. He insists – also an important point for the present argument – that Nicene theology was not abstract wordplay, but a coherent interpretation of the whole of Christian existence, that is, worship, salvation, and life in the Spirit. To understand and live trinitarian faith today, Christians must learn the Nicene grammar that shapes how they think, pray, and live in relation to the triune God, while still acknowledging that God cannot be fully comprehended by human knowledge. Noteworthy is Ayres (2004), who argues that Nicene doctrine must be examined by tracing the extended 4th-century controversy that gave rise to a range of Nicene theologies – especially from the 360s to the 380s – which interpreted Nicaea and eventually formed the basis of later orthodox belief. Nicaea must therefore be engaged not merely as a set of formulae, but as a distinctively Nicene way of doing theology. Ayres' book led to a special edition of the Harvard Theological Review (2006), with an introduction by Sarah Coakley and responses by Anatolios and Behr. Behr, writing from an Orthodox perspective and also contributing to the aforementioned special edition, subsequently published two volumes on Nicaea: *The way to Nicaea* (2001) and *The Nicene Faith* (2004, in two volumes). Also significant for the present argument is the reception history (318–381) offered by Hanson (2006), who argues that describing the 4th-century debates as the 'Arian controversy' is misleading, because Arius himself was not the true centre of the dispute and many decisive issues took shape long after him. Hanson maintains that the period is best understood as a prolonged and complex search – a process of trial and error. This search compelled the Christian community to clarify its theological language and eventually formulate dogma, thereby providing one of the earliest major historical case studies of how doctrine develops through time, conflict, and interpretation. For a more recent reception history (325–451), see Smith (2018:1–27), particularly the substantial introduction to Nicaea and its reception through 381. For a recent collection of essays devoted to Nicene scholarship, see the *Cambridge Companion* edited by Kim (2021). For further research, see Fernández (2024).

2.For a historical and theological guide to creeds and confessions, see Pelikan (2003). A more recent study is Kinzig (2024).

3.For important pneumatological contributions between AD325 to AD381, see Thiselton (2013) on the post-Nicene Eastern Fathers, particularly Eusebius of Caesarea (208–209), Cyril of Jerusalem (209–211), and Athanasius of Alexandria (211–213). See also Basil of Caesarea (214–217), whose pneumatology will be discussed in greater detail below, as well as Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa (217–220). See further Swete (1912) on the Arians and the community (163–191), as well as on Eusebius of Caesarea (192–199), Cyril of Jerusalem (199–210), Athanasius (211–221), Didymus (221–225), and Epiphanius (225–229). Swete (1912) also discusses the Cappadocians (230–254), with particular emphasis on Basil of Caesarea (230–240).

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hermeneutical questions (Thiselton 2007)[4]: (1) How does doctrine develop at all (Pelikan 1975)?; (2) What can the movement from AD325 to AD381 teach us about the nature of doctrinal development, not merely as a historical process, but as a theological phenomenon (McGrath 2024)?

To pose the question in this way is to move beyond merely narrating doctrinal change towards reflecting on the conditions under which the church comes to speak differently about God. Rather than treating doctrine as either a static deposit or the product of abstract conceptual dispute, the 4th-century expansion of pneumatology invites an understanding of doctrine as a second-order response to the living God who acts in history. The creed does not create the reality of the Spirit; rather, the community's confession arises from the event of God's self-revelation through the Spirit in Scripture, worship, sacrament, witness, and theological conflict. To confess the Spirit as 'Lord and Giver of life' is already to acknowledge that the Spirit is not merely a topic of doctrine, but the very agent through whom doctrine becomes possible. The Spirit's presence and activity – prior to and beyond conceptual formulation – press the church towards new articulations where inherited language proves insufficient. Doctrinal development, in this sense, is fundamentally pneumatological.

Understanding development in this way encourages an approach to the period between AD325 and AD381 not merely as an example of historical change, but as a pneumatological history of reception. As the Nicene confession was received and embodied within the life of the church, it encountered new questions, tensions, and demands for clarification. The expansion of the creed at Constantinople may therefore be interpreted as the community's reception of Nicaea under new conditions – conditions shaped, inter alia, by the Spirit's activity within the life of the community. This insight opens a fruitful conversation with Hans Robert Jauss's hermeneutics of reception, which conceptualises change not as innovation but as an encounter between a received text and the emerging horizon of expectation of its interpreters. Such a framework provides a grammar for describing how doctrine develops by tracing the dialogue between what is received.

At the same time, this perspective in a way resonates with Basil of Caesarea's *On the Holy Spirit*, particularly in its appeal to the authority of unwritten teachings, that is, the Spirit-formed practices that precede doctrinal formulation. For Basil, the defence of the Spirit's divinity rested not on argument alone but on the lived and received practices of the community. To confess the Spirit as divine was not a mere innovation; rather, it was already presupposed in worship, sacrament, and witness. Basil's account therefore exemplifies how doctrinal development also emerges from the reception of the community's lived experience of the Spirit, rather than from conceptual construction detached from practice. Read alongside Jauss, Basil illustrates that doctrinal development is, paradoxically, a form of deeper fidelity: a creative reception – a receiving – of what has already been given through the Spirit's life-giving action within the community.

This article therefore explores the development of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit between AD325 and AD381 through this hermeneutical lens. After presenting an in-depth reading of Jauss's *Toward an aesthetic of reception* (1982a), the discussion turns to Basil's *On the Holy Spirit* (c. 374) as a crucial instance of reception at work, before concluding with an interpretation of the Constantinopolitan Creed as a moment of creedalised reception – a crystallisation of what the Spirit had already enacted in the community's life. The argument advanced is that doctrinal development is not merely the revision of ideas but the unfolding of a response to the living God: a pneumatological history of reception in which doctrine remains a living and life-giving witness to the Spirit who continues to lead into truth.

A doctrine of reception?

What follows turns to Jauss's *Toward an aesthetic* of *reception*[5] to clarify what it might mean to speak of doctrine as a history of reception.

Jauss (1982a:20) begins by arguing that literary history requires renewal because it has been shaped by assumptions associated with historical objectivism. The problem is not simply that earlier literary history made mistakes, but that it operated with a model of knowledge in which literature could be treated as an object and history narrated as though the observer's standpoint were irrelevant. Jauss therefore calls for a shift away from approaches concerned solely with production and representation, towards an approach centred on reception and influence, that is, on the ways in which texts are realised, appropriated, judged, and enabled to continue exerting influence. This first thesis establishes the agenda: if literary history is to become adequate to its object, it must attend to the historicity inherent in the life of works as they are received.

To explain why such a methodological shift is necessary, Jauss (1982a:21) clarifies the nature of the literary work as an 'object'. A work does not exist independently in such a way that it offers the same meaning to every reader in every historical period. Nor does it simply disclose a timeless essence in a monological manner. Rather, it must be understood as something that comes to presence anew through the responses of its readers. The work can be described as producing new resonances among its readers and is thereby brought into contemporary existence

4.Thiselton (2007:xvi), for example, asks whether 'a more significant interaction between hermeneutics and doctrine [*may*] lay some part in rescuing doctrine from its marginalized function and abstraction from life, and deliver it from its supposed status as mere theory?' For Thiselton on hermeneutics and doctrine, see Smit (2008).

5.This article draws primarily on the essays collected in Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, translated by Timothy Bahti (1982a), especially the first and most influential chapter, which also served as Jauss's inaugural lecture, 'Literary history as a challenge to literary theory' (pp. 3–45; translated from *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft* [1967]). This chapter was first published in English as an essay translated by Elizabeth Benzinger in *New Literary History* (1970). Also important, although not discussed in the present article, are Jauss's *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (also published in 1982b), as well as the essay collections *Question and Answer: Forms of Dialogic Understanding* (1989) and *Wege des Verstehens* (1994).

repeatedly. This claim explains why the historicity of literature cannot be grasped by treating literary works as fixed monuments: their 'being there' is inseparable from the changing situations in which they are received.

From this, Jauss (1982a:21) draws a conclusion concerning interpretation and scholarship. If the work's character is dialogical in this sense, then philological understanding cannot be reduced to the accumulation of factual information about the text. Rather, it must remain an ongoing engagement with the text, because understanding can never be completed once and for all in a definitive statement. Philological understanding therefore remains inseparable from interpretation: alongside acquiring knowledge about the object, interpretation must also involve reflection on the completion of that knowledge as a moment of renewed understanding. This introduces a decisive dimension into literary history. Literary history becomes a process in which texts are realised through the receptive reader, the reflective critic, and the author who continues to write in relation to what has already been received. The first thesis thus opens onto a fuller account of how literary history takes place – not as a mere record of objects, but as a dynamic process of realisation and ongoing productivity.

This is why Jauss rejects the attempt to treat literary history as a series of 'facts' in the manner of conventional historical explanation. To regard a sequence of literary data as literary history is to confuse the eventful character of a work of art with the matter-of-factness of a deed that can be reconstructed by listing situational preconditions, motives, intentions, and consequences. A literary work cannot be explained in this way because the historical context in which it appears is not an independent series of events existing apart from the observer. Context is not a brute chain of happenings that simply causes a work; rather, it forms part of the historical field within which the work is perceived, judged, and rendered meaningful. This reinforces the initial point that the observer is not an accidental addition. The very possibility of literary history depends upon the manner in which works are encountered and responded to (Jauss 1982a:21).

Having rejected both the monument-model of the work and the fact-model of history, Jauss (1982a:22) proceeds to explain what enables a literary event to endure. A work continues to exert influence only insofar as later readers respond to it anew and later authors relate to it through imitation, surpassing, or refutation. The coherence of literature as an event is therefore mediated through the horizon of expectations that shapes literary experience for both contemporaries and subsequent readers. The question that now becomes central is whether this horizon can itself be objectified, as the possibility of representing literary history in its distinct historicity depends upon the capacity to describe, rather than merely assume, the expectations that govern reception. This transition leads directly into the second thesis: once the enduring effect of a work is in reception, the methodology must account for how reception may be studied without collapsing into private psychology.

The second thesis addresses precisely this methodological problem by specifying the kind of readerly experience that can be analysed. Jauss (1982a:22) argues that the study of the reader's experience avoids psychologising when it describes reception and influence within an objectifiable system of expectations belonging to the historical moment in which a work appears. This system arises from a prior understanding of genre, from the forms and themes of already familiar works, and from the distinction between poetic and practical language. The point is that a reader's encounter with a new work is structured by shared and historically available frameworks. Reception is therefore not primarily an inward psychological event; rather, it is shaped by conditions that can be reconstructed. This also explains why Jauss can speak of horizons being established and transformed: a work evokes expectations familiar from earlier texts and subsequently varies, corrects, alters, or reproduces them. The horizons governing reception are therefore not static; they shift as new texts enter the genre's succession and reshape what subsequent readers will anticipate.

This account also clarifies why questions concerning subjective interpretation and taste must be postponed until the horizon itself has been clarified. The interpretative reception of a text presupposes a context of aesthetic experience that conditions its influence. Only once the transsubjective horizon of understanding has been brought into view can meaningful questions be raised concerning differences between readers or levels of readership. Jauss (1982a:23) is therefore establishing an order for interpretation: before discussing how readers differ, the interpreter must first describe the shared conditions that make reading and judgement possible. This prepares the way for his more detailed claim that, even where explicit signals are absent, a horizon can still be objectified by relying upon generally presupposed factors: genre conventions, implicit relations to familiar works within the literary environment, and the distinction between fiction and reality, poetic and practical language, which remains available to reflective readers as a basis for comparison. Through these factors, the horizon of expectations becomes a methodological tool rather than a vague metaphor (Jauss 1982a:24).

Once the horizon can be reconstructed and objectified in this way, Jauss turns to the third thesis, which develops the way in which horizon-reconstruction functions as a criterion for aesthetic judgement. The reconstructed horizon of expectations enables one to determine the artistic character of a work by considering the kind and degree of its effect upon its first audience. Jauss (1982a:25) describes the disparity between a given horizon and the appearance of a new work as aesthetic distance. Reception may bring about a change of horizons either by negating familiar experiences or by raising newly articulated experiences to consciousness. This distance can be historically objectified by observing the range of reactions and critical judgements, extending from spontaneous success through rejection or shock to scattered approval, gradual understanding, or belated recognition. Jauss thus links

aesthetic value to reception history: the way in which a work fulfils, surpasses, disappoints, or refutes the expectations of its first audience provides a criterion for assessing its significance.

He (Jauss 1982a:26) then explains how this criterion differentiates between various kinds of art. Where the distance between the horizon of expectations and the work diminishes, and where the receiving consciousness is not required to turn towards unfamiliar experience, the work approaches the character of entertainment art. Such works fulfil prevailing expectations, reproduce what is already recognised as beautiful, confirm familiar sentiments, sanction wishful notions, render unusual experiences enjoyable merely as sensations, and, even when moral problems are raised, they resolve them in an edifying manner as if the answer were already predetermined. By contrast, where the aesthetic distance is substantial, the work challenges the first audience's expectations and demands a transformation of horizon. Yet, Jauss (1982a:26) immediately adds that this distance does not remain fixed: what is initially experienced as alienating or as a new perspective may later become self-evident once the work's originally disruptive element has entered the horizon of future aesthetic experience as a familiar expectation. It is at this point that Jauss's analysis of 'classical' works becomes important. Through habituation, their form and meaning may become so unquestioned that they begin to resemble the easy persuasiveness of entertainment art. The interpreter must therefore resist reading such works merely through the lens of accustomed familiarity and instead make a deliberate effort to recover their artistic character by reading against the grain.

This analysis also leads Jauss to a reversible observation: not all works are addressed to an audience that already exists for them. Some works rupture the familiar horizon so decisively that the audience capable of receiving them develops only gradually. This further reinforces the point that reception is historical and that the 'newness' of a work may not be fully perceptible at its emergence. The third thesis thus prepares the way for the fourth: if horizons shift and if meaning and value unfold historically, interpretation must also account for the difference between earlier and later understandings and resist the assumption that meaning is simply timelessly present within the text itself (Jauss 1982a:26).

The fourth thesis (Jauss 1982a:28) develops horizon-reconstruction in a further direction. It is not merely a tool for measuring aesthetic distance and value; it also enables the interpreter to pose the questions to which the text once offered answers. By reconstructing the historical horizon within which the work was produced and initially received, it becomes possible to discern the assumptions, expectations, and questions through which its first readers would have viewed and understood it. This brings into view the hermeneutical difference between past and present understanding and makes visible the history of the work's reception as the mediating process between them. In doing so, Jauss challenges the assumption that literature exists eternally within the text and that an objective meaning, determined once and for all, remains immediately accessible to the interpreter. The fourth thesis therefore safeguards the methodological gains of the preceding theses against a concealed metaphysics of timeless meaning: understanding must remain historically conscious, because the very questions that make a text intelligible belong to historically situated horizons.

The fifth thesis (Jauss 1982a:32) broadens the scope of the argument from individual works to the structure of literary history itself. Reception theory allows one to conceive the meaning and form of a work through the historical unfolding of its understanding, but it also requires that the work be situated within its literary series to grasp its position and significance within the broader experience of literature. This marks a movement from a history of the reception of works to an eventful history of literature. The eventfulness involved here includes a crucial reversal: passive reception also occurs on the side of authors. Authors themselves receive earlier works, and new works emerge as responses to older ones. Within this sequence, a later work may resolve formal or moral problems left unresolved by its predecessors while simultaneously generating new problems in turn. The fifth thesis therefore portrays literary history as a sequence of responses and transformations in which reception shapes production and production carries reception forward.

Jauss (1982a:35) then adds a further claim concerning the way in which the past itself is constituted through reception. A literary past returns only when a new act of reception retrieves it into the present, whether through deliberate reappropriation or because a new moment in literary development unexpectedly casts light upon forgotten literature. For this reason, the new cannot be reduced merely to aesthetic innovation. It also becomes a historical category once one asks which moments first rendered the new genuinely new, how perceptible it was at the moment of emergence, what distances or detours of understanding were necessary before its significance could be realised, and whether its eventual actualisation alters the perspective on the old and thereby reshapes processes of canonisation. In this way, the implications of the fifth thesis are extended: once literature is understood as a series of responses and returns, the very categories of the new and the old themselves become historically dynamic rather than fixed labels.

The sixth thesis (Jauss 1982a:36) then provides the methodological apparatus necessary for representing this dynamic without reverting to a merely chronological narrative. Drawing on linguistics, Jauss argues that the distinction and interrelation between diachronic and synchronic analysis should encourage literary history to overcome its previously exclusive focus on diachrony. Reception history repeatedly encounters functional connections between the understanding of new works and the significance attributed to older ones, especially when aesthetic attitudes undergo change. For this reason, it must

also be possible to take a synchronic cross-section of a historical moment and to arrange the heterogeneous multiplicity of contemporaneous works into equivalent, opposing, and hierarchical structures. In this way, an overarching system of relationships within a particular literary moment may be discerned. If such cross-sections are subsequently arranged diachronically before and after, literary history becomes capable of articulating epoch-making changes in literary structures rather than merely listing successive works. The sixth thesis thus clarifies how the reception theory may function as a comprehensive historical method: it is able to grasp both the structure of a given moment and the transformation of structures over time.

Jauss (1982a:37) further explains why such integration is necessary. A purely diachronic account may explain changes in genre history according to internal dynamics such as innovation and automatisation, problem and solution, but it reaches the genuinely historical dimension only when influential works are set against exhausted conventions and situated within the broader literary milieu in which they compete alongside other genres. Historicity emerges precisely at the intersection of diachrony and synchrony. The literary horizon of a specific moment must therefore be rendered intelligible as a synchronic system in relation to which contemporaneous literature may be received diachronically through relations of non-contemporaneity, allowing works to appear current or outdated, fashionable or obsolete, perennial, premature, or belated.

Jauss (1982a:38) then distinguishes between two perspectives. From the standpoint of production, contemporaneous literature fragments into a heterogeneous multiplicity of the non-contemporaneous because works are informed by different moments within the formed time of their genre. From the standpoint of reception, however, this multiplicity coalesces for the audience into the unity of a common horizon of expectations, memories, and anticipations through which significance is constituted. Because every synchronic system contains within itself both past and future as inseparable structural elements, each synchronic cross-section necessarily implies further cross-sections before and after it. In this way, the sixth thesis shows how the method can grasp continuity and change, structure and event, without reducing literature either to timeless form or to mere chronology.

The seventh thesis (Jauss 1982a:39) completes the argument by situating literary history within a broader conception of social history. Literary production must be represented both synchronically and diachronically, but the task of literary history remains incomplete unless literature is also understood as a distinct form of history possessing its own unique relation to general history. This relation cannot be reduced merely to the observation that literature offers typified, idealised, satiric, or utopian images of social existence. Rather, the social function of literature becomes fully visible only where the reader's experience enters the horizon of expectations of lived praxis, shapes the reader's understanding of the world, and thereby influences social behaviour. The argument thus moves beyond representation alone: literature matters socially insofar as it reshapes the frameworks through which people perceive, judge, and act.

Jauss (1982a:41) then clarifies how this reshaping occurs. Reading can liberate a person from the adaptations, prejudices, and predicaments of lived praxis because it compels a new perception of reality. The horizon of expectations belonging to literature differs from the horizon of historical lived praxis in that it not only preserves actual experiences but also anticipates unrealised possibilities. It broadens the limited sphere of social behaviour by opening up new desires, claims, and goals, thereby creating pathways for future experience. At the same time, the relation between literature and reader may actualise itself in two registers: sensorially, as an incitement to aesthetic perception, and ethically, as a summons to moral reflection. A new work is received and judged against the background both of other works of art and of the everyday experience of life. Its social function within the ethical realm must therefore be grasped according to reception itself, through the same modalities of question and answer, problem and solution, by which it enters the horizon of its historical influence. This completes the movement of the theses by showing that the reception-historical method is not merely a means of writing literary history but also a way of describing how literature participates in shaping experience and action over time (Jauss 1982a:42).

On this basis, Jauss (1982a:45) draws a final conclusion concerning what is distinctive about literature's social achievement. It must be sought precisely where literature is not absorbed into the function of representational art. The gap between literature and history, between aesthetic and historical knowledge can be bridged if literary history does not merely describe the process of general history once again through the reflection of literary works, but rather discovers within literary evolution the socially formative function belonging to literature as it competes with other arts and social forces in the emancipation of human life from natural, religious, and social constraints. This conclusion gathers the entire sequence: by shifting from objectivism to reception, by reconstructing horizons, by measuring distance and transformation, by integrating diachrony and synchrony, and by relating literary experience to lived praxis, Jauss offers a model of history in which meaning, value, and social effect are inseparable from the ongoing process of reception.

These seven theses therefore accomplish more than the proposal of a new method for literary history. They provide a general account of how a tradition becomes historically real: not as a deposit that simply endures, but as a sequence of receptions in which meaning is realised, contested, and renewed; in which horizons are established and transformed; in which the 'new' is sometimes recognised only through detours of understanding; and in which what later appears self-evident or 'classical' is often the result of a prolonged

process of normalisation. On this basis, the remainder of the book may be read as an extended demonstration of what the theses themselves already require. Chapters 2–5 do not introduce a second theory alongside the theses; rather, they test and expand the same claims by showing what follows when reception is treated not as a marginal afterthought but as the locus in which meaning, value, and historical effect come to presence.

Chapter 2 (Jauss 1982a:46–75) broadens the field. The argument no longer concerns literature alone but the history of the arts more generally. This extension is significant because it demonstrates that the fundamental claim of the first thesis – the rejection of an objectivist model in favour of historically mediated understanding – is not confined to a single discipline. The question becomes how historical understanding is possible across temporal distance without collapsing either into purely reconstructive historicism or into purely presentist appropriation. The framework established by the theses already implies this tension: horizon-reconstruction must render the past visible as past, yet reception must also explain how works continue to come to presence. Chapter 2 provides a broader canvas for this same dialectic. It clarifies why the aesthetic dimension is not merely an obstacle to historical understanding, but one of its essential conditions, and why historical knowledge requires both distance and mediation rather than the illusion of immediate access to timeless meaning.

Chapters 3 and 4 (Jauss 1982a:46–138) further deepen the hermeneutical core already present in Thesis 4. In the thesis, Jauss argued that reconstructing the horizon of expectations enables the interpreter to pose the questions to which the text once offered an answer, thereby making visible the difference between past and present understanding and challenging the assumption that objective meaning is immediately accessible at all times. Chapters 3–4 develop this insight into a more explicit logic of interpretation. Understanding is no longer treated as the extraction of content but as an engagement with a field of problems. The past becomes intelligible when one learns to hear the questions that once rendered a text meaningful and recognises that subsequent receptions do not simply repeat earlier understandings but rather reconfigure them as horizons shift. This does not dissolve truth into subjectivity; instead, it clarifies the conditions under which meaning may be historically realised. If the past can return only through new acts of reception, and if the 'new' becomes fully new only through historical moments of realisation, then interpretation itself must be described as a disciplined movement between horizons – not the elimination of difference, but its recognition and mediation.

Chapter 5 (Jauss 1982a:139–188) gathers these insights by returning to the social dimension already introduced in thesis 7. The thesis argued that literature's social function is not exhausted by representation but becomes actualised where literary experience enters the horizon of lived praxis, reshaping the understanding of the world and thereby influencing social behaviour. Chapter 5 develops what is already implicit in this claim: reception is not merely a literary-historical category but also a formative one. A text's influence cannot be reduced to what it depicts; rather, it resides in how it transforms perception, expectation, and judgement. The work's historical effect is therefore inseparable from its capacity to open pathways for future experience and to broaden what a community can desire, claim, and enact. This completes the movement from method to agency: reception becomes a means of describing how tradition operates historically, that is, how it forms, corrects, and reorients human life within the temporal density of memory, expectation, and anticipation.

A reception of doctrine?

At this point, the transposition into doctrinal development becomes conceptually straightforward. The seven theses provide a grammar for describing any tradition whose meaning is realised through communal reception over time. Doctrines, like texts, do not function as monuments that present the same view to every reader in every period. Their coherence as events is mediated through horizons of expectation, that is, through the questions, controversies, practical pressures, and interpretative habits that condition how they are heard. Doctrinal 'classics' may likewise become self-evident through habituation, thereby requiring renewed interpretation if their original horizon-changing force is to become perceptible once again. Doctrinal novelty, moreover, need not be recognised solely at its emergence; it may require detours of understanding before becoming fully actualised, and it may even reshape the way in which the past is viewed and canonised. In other words, doctrinal history may be written as an eventful history of reception in which later understanding mediates earlier formulations and brings their significance anew into presence.

This provides the immediate opening for Basil of Caesarea. Basil's pneumatology belongs to a concrete horizon of expectation shaped by inherited language, contested interpretations, and urgent practical and ecclesial concerns. His work does not merely add information about the Spirit; rather, it responds to questions that had become unavoidable, clarifies what earlier language had left underdetermined, and does so in a manner that reshapes the horizon for subsequent reception. In Jauss's terms, Basil stands within a literary – or, in this case, doctrinal – series: he receives earlier formulations, confronts unresolved problems, and offers resolutions that also generate new questions. The significance of Basil's contribution is therefore not exhausted either by his own intentions or by what a later tradition will declare about him; rather, it must be situated within the unfolding process of reception through which the community learns to perceive, articulate, and confess more clearly.

The final theological step is to articulate what Jauss leaves implicit. If doctrinal development is a history of reception, it is not merely the accumulation of interpretations; it is the historical realisation of truth in and through communal understanding. In Christian terms, this is precisely the sphere

within which the Spirit's agency can be spoken of without bypassing history. The Spirit is not added to reception as an external explanation. Rather, the Spirit may be understood as the agent at work within this temporal process – within the shifts of horizon, the detours of understanding, the reactivation of the past, and the opening of future possibilities – so that the community's reception becomes neither mere repetition nor human invention, but a guided coming-to-understanding. This is why Basil[6] constitutes a natural next step: his pneumatology gives doctrinal substance to the claim that truth is not only preserved but also rendered present and clarified across time. Viewed through the lens of reception, doctrinal development may therefore be described as a history in which the community's understanding unfolds and in which the Spirit is active precisely within that unfolding.

Basil of Caesarea's *On the Holy Spirit* is written as an extended theological letter addressed to Amphilochius (Kaiser 2018), whom Basil describes as his 'right well-beloved and most deeply respected brother'. He begins by commending Amphilochius's desire to examine every word used about God. In an age marked by people who ask questions merely to trap others or provoke disputes, Basil honours someone who really seeks understanding. For Basil, careful attention to terminology – even to syllables – is not a game but part of the serious task of coming to know God. Speech constitutes the beginning of teaching; words are how the knowledge of God is transmitted. Therefore, to investigate even small expressions forms part of the path towards likeness to God (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.1).

The concrete issue raised by Amphilochius concerns the way in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are described through small connecting terms – above all the prepositions 'of whom', 'through whom', 'in whom', and 'with whom' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.2). Certain teachers insist that the Father must always be described as the One 'of whom' all things are, the Son only as the One 'through whom' things are made or given, and the Spirit as the One 'in whom' gifts are received. From this fixed pattern, they infer that only the Father is truly the source and Creator, while the Son and the Spirit are subordinate. These prepositions are thus treated as though they establish ranks within the divine nature, and the Holy Spirit is denied equal status with the Father and the Son because, it is claimed, the Spirit's nature and dignity are distinct and inferior (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.3–4).

Basil responds by turning this method back upon its proponents (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.3). If doctrine is to be constructed strictly upon prepositions, then those prepositions must be read carefully throughout the whole of Scripture. Once this is done, their neat scheme begins to collapse. A key passage is the confession that 'of him and through him and to him are all things' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.5). If this passage is applied to the Son, then 'of whom', which his opponents reserve exclusively for the Father, is clearly also used of the Son. If it is applied to the Father, then 'through whom', which they reserve exclusively for the Son, is likewise used of the Father. In either way, the exclusive assignment between 'of' for the Father and 'through' for the Son disintegrates. The same applies to the expression 'in': at times it is used of the Spirit, at other times of the Son, and at still other points of God in a more general sense. There is therefore no rigid scriptural system by which the three may be classified according to fixed prepositional slots (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.5–8).

For Basil, these expressions certainly possess meaning, yet their significance does not lie in dividing the divine nature into higher and lower beings. 'Of whom', 'through whom', and 'in whom' may instead describe differing relations or modes of operation – ways in which the same God acts towards humanity. It is therefore mistaken to use such expressions as the basis for denying the Spirit has equal rank with the Father and the Son.

Having established this preliminary argument, Basil turns more directly to the question of the identity of the Holy Spirit (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.9). In detail (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.10), he argues that the Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son in every divine work: 'In all things the Holy Spirit is inseparable and wholly incapable of being parted from the Father and the Son' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.16).

To clarify the Spirit's status further, Basil turns to the titles attributed to the Spirit. The Spirit is called simply 'Spirit', and God too is described as Spirit. The Spirit is also called 'holy'. In the case of creatures, holiness is something received; creatures become holy by participating in what they are not by nature. The Spirit, however, is the One who bestows holiness; he sanctifies others. This distinction between the sanctifier and the sanctified is fundamental to Basil's argument: a being who merely receives holiness belongs among creatures, whereas the one who imparts holiness through his own presence cannot be placed on the same level. To deny honour to the Spirit is therefore to ignore what Scripture itself implies through the Spirit's name and activity.

From this point, Basil turns to the question of how to confess one God while speaking of three (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.17). He accepts the language of 'three hypostases': the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct subsistences. Yet he insists that this does not entail belief in three gods. The Father is the source, the Son is from the Father, and the Spirit is likewise from the Father; this order concerns origin rather than difference of nature. The three share one divine being (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.19–22). Basil also addresses the issue of numbering, for example, referring to the Father as 'first', the Son as 'second', and the Spirit as 'third'. He responds that number does not necessarily imply ranking in terms of superiority or inferiority. Although the Spirit may be named third, the Spirit is not third in nature (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.18).

6.For Basil, see Hildebrand (2018b) and his more elaborate *Basil of Caesarea*. For Basil on the Spirit, see McConnell (2014).

The sharpest controversy within the treatise concerns the doxology employed in prayer and worship (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.23–24). Basil's opponents accept the formula 'glory to the Father with the Son' yet resist the addition 'and with the Holy Spirit' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.25). They insist that one should speak only of glory 'in the Holy Spirit', and they accuse Basil of introducing a new and unwarranted expression by adding 'with the Spirit' to the liturgical formula. Basil responds firstly by recalling what he has already demonstrated: the word 'in' is used in Scripture of the Father and the Son as well as the Spirit and therefore cannot function as a technical term reserved exclusively for the Spirit. He then turns to the word 'with'. Basil argues that 'with' is also in harmony with Scripture and fittingly expresses the communion of the Spirit with the Father and the Son. To glorify the Father with the Son and with the Spirit is therefore to confess their undivided honour.

At this point, Basil introduces a different line of argument, which has become among the most famous aspects of the work. He distinguishes between teachings and practices within the community that derive from written sources and those preserved through unwritten tradition. Some things, he says, have been received through written teaching; 'others we have received delivered to us in a mystery by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.27). These practices are observed within the community even though they are not recorded in Scripture word for word. Basil lists a series of examples: the sign of the cross made over those who trust in Christ; the custom of praying facing east; certain words and gestures used in the blessing of baptismal water and oil; the renunciation of Satan and his angels prior to entering the sacramental life; the threefold immersion in baptism; and other comparable rites. None of these practices, he notes, is explicitly prescribed in Scripture, yet they are practised and are not regarded as innovations. They belong to what has been handed down and faithfully guarded within the community.

Basil then introduces a further distinction: some things are dogmata – teachings preserved in reverent silence and transmitted without public explanation – whereas others are *kerygmata*, proclamations openly preached. Scripture itself sometimes employs reserve and allusion rather than explicit statement when addressing the deepest mysteries: 'This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our dogmas may not become neglected and contemned by the multitude through familiarity' (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.27). It is therefore not surprising that certain forms of prayer and worship, although not explicitly set out in Scripture, have nevertheless been transmitted within the community. The practice whereby the faithful pray and worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is an example. This practice, Basil argues, demonstrates that glorifying the Spirit together with the Father and the Son is not a novelty, but a part of Christian doxology. Consequently, to reject the phrase 'with the Spirit' in the doxology is to undermine the living tradition of Christian prayer and worship (Basil of Caesarea, 1894:ch.28).

Conclusion

This article began with a simple historical contrast: whereas the Creed of 325 refers only briefly to the Holy Spirit, the creed of 381 confesses the Spirit as Lord, giver of life, worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son, and active in revelation. The question, however, has not only been what occurred between these two moments but also how such a development is theologically possible. The argument has been that the movement from AD325 to AD381 may be understood as a history of reception: the church received the Nicene confession, lived within it, discovered what it required under new conditions, and therefore confessed more explicitly what it had already come to know of God through the Spirit.

Jauss enables this kind of change to be described without reducing it either to mere innovation or to a rupture with the past. For Jauss, reception is an event occurring between what is handed down and the horizon of expectation belonging to those who receive it. A received text does not remain fixed in meaning because its reception is never merely abstract; it unfolds within time, within concrete embodied communities facing concrete questions. When new conflicts arise, the community does not merely repeat inherited words. Rather, it tests whether those words still express what must be said. If they prove insufficient, the community seeks precision, not to replace the earlier confession, but to receive it more faithfully under altered circumstances. In this sense, development is not a departure from tradition, but a deepening of it.

Basil's pneumatology provides a theological instance of this reception in action. He shows that the Spirit's divinity was not first discovered by argument. It was already presupposed within the life of the community, that is, in practice and in the shared patterns of prayer and worship. Basil's appeal to unwritten teachings therefore does not represent a movement away from doctrine, but rather a claim concerning the origin of doctrine itself: the community speaks because it has first been addressed. His defence of the Spirit therefore demonstrates how doctrinal clarification may itself constitute an act of continuity, as the community brings into explicit confession what had long remained implicit within its Spirit-shaped life.

Read together, Jauss and Basil illuminate the logic of doctrinal development between AD325 and AD381. The Nicene confession was received in prayer, worship, and teaching, yet it encountered a contested horizon shaped by continuing disputes, inter alia, concerning what ought to be confessed regarding the Spirit. The community was compelled to say more, not because it wanted novelty, but because minimal language could be misunderstood, reduced, or employed to deny what the community had already come to confess in practice. Under this pressure, reception itself became productive.

For this reason, the Constantinopolitan Creed may be understood as creedalised reception. It is not merely a new statement added to an older one. Rather, it constitutes the community's more explicit reception of a reality already confessed – and already enacted – through the Spirit's work. The expanded statement about the Spirit names what the community had learned was necessary to confess if it was to pray and worship rightly, interpret Scripture responsibly, and speak truthfully about who God is. The creed therefore functions as a public crystallisation of the community's lived recognition that the Spirit is fully divine and fully active.

On this reading, doctrine develops because God is living and because the community is addressed within history. Doctrine is a second-order response to God's self-revelation; and in pneumatology this becomes especially clear, because the Spirit is not merely the object of confession, but also the agent who *makes* confession possible. The Spirit leads the church into truth not by bypassing history, but within it, that is, through Scripture, worship, sacrament, witness, theological conflict, and the necessity of discernment. Doctrinal development, therefore, is not simply change over time; it is the unfolding of theological speech in and through the Spirit.

The movement from 'and in the Holy Spirit' of 325 to 'the Lord, the Giver of life' of 381 may therefore be understood as a pneumatological history of reception. It shows how the community receives an earlier confession, discovers its implications amid new conflicts, and confesses more clearly to remain faithful to the God whom it prays to and worships. In this sense, the doctrinal development of 381 is not an addition or supplement that departs from Nicaea, but a reception that moves more deeply into what Nicaea had already set in motion: the *ongoing* task of speaking truthfully about the living God who gives life through the Spirit.

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