Introduction

“The hungry are dying. . . . The naked are stiff with cold. The man in debt is held by the throat.”

This is how Bishop Basil (329-379) described his city Caesarea of Cappadocia in the late fourth-century, especially amid a lingering famine that plagued his region. As the twenty-first century church ministering in the world’s cities continues to deal with problems such as hunger, usury, corruption, unemployment, displaced peoples, and even slavery, it seems useful to consider some models of urban mission from the church’s past. In this paper, I will explore the approach to urban ministry by the well-known church father Basil who is remembered mostly for his contributions to fourth-century Trinitarian theology. Following a brief survey of his life and call to ministry and the context in which he ministered, I will discuss his practical strategies and theology of mission regarding ministry in the city. In conclusion, I will begin a reflective conversation between Basil and modern practitioners on ministering in urban contexts.

Basil’s Life and Ministry

Basil was born into a wealthy Christian family and his grandparents were influenced by the ministry of Bishop Gregory Thaumaturgus (c. 213-c. 270)—the most prominent evangelist in Asia Minor in the third century. More than an average nominal Christian family in the post-Constantine era, Basil’s family followed the example of his famous grandmother Macrina and practiced asceticism as a household. Basil was educated in the classical tradition and studied rhetoric (communication) and philosophy in Cappadocia, Constantinople, and later Athens. After a brief stint in teaching, he traveled East in 356 pursuing the mentorship of the ascetic Bishop Eustathius of Sebaste. However, Basil later broke fellowship with his spiritual leader for theological reasons as Eustathius subscribed to a moderate Arian position.

Basil was baptized in 357 and then retreated with his close friend Gregory of Nazianzus to his family’s estate in Pontus in pursuit of a communal (coenobitic) monastic experience. Apparently, Basil was convinced by his sister (also named Macrina) that a monastic way of life was superior to the more academic path that he had begun to take following his return from Athens.

Though Basil was a monk, he did not reject the opportunity to be ordained as a minister in the church at Caesarea. He was set apart as a reader in 360, a presbyter in 364, and then finally as bishop of Caesarea in 370. While his preference would have been to remain in ascetic retirement in Pontus, Basil was compelled to accept ordination in large part because of the Arian heresy that was threatening the churches of Asia Minor. By combining his monastic and ecclesiastical callings, Basil played a part in one of the most intriguing developments of the fourth and fifth century—being a monk-bishop—that included other leaders such as Eusebius of Vercellae (283-371), Martin of Tours (316-397), Gregory of Nazianzus (329-c. 390), John Chrysostom (347-407), and Augustine of Hippo (354-430). Unlike many monks in his day, Basil regarded the city as both his context for monastic living and Christian mission. Though he rejected Eustathius’s theology, Basil did emulate his mentor’s concern for urban ministry. In addition to leading the church in his city of Caesarea, which included the tasks of preaching, administering the sacraments, and ministering to the poor, Basil served as a metropolitan bishop meaning that he oversaw the work of some fifty other bishops in Cappadocia. One of his
responsibilities included convening an annual council of bishops in which theological issues and practical church matters were addressed.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Basil’s Context: Cappadocian Caesarea}

Let us now consider Basil’s ministry context—Caesarea, the capital of the Roman province of Cappadocia in Asia Minor. Originally called Mazaca, the city was renamed Caesarea by the Emperor Claudius and it became the provincial capital in AD 17. It remained the largest and most important city in Cappadocia through the fourth century. Though precise population statistics are not available, the presence of fifty bishops leading congregations in the region of Caesarea—a reflection of the Roman administrative system—suggests that the population was significant.\textsuperscript{11}

From an economic perspective, Caesarea was not terribly prosperous. Though olives, grapes, grain and livestock were successfully harvested at times, overall, the Cappadocians struggled with agriculture.\textsuperscript{12} In addition, the pre-Roman feudal system created such a strong sense of dependency that when the Romans did gain control of the region, the Cappadocians asked them for a king.\textsuperscript{13} These conditions were only worsened by multiple earthquakes in the third century that destroyed parts of Pontus and Cappadocia.\textsuperscript{14}

Despite these difficulties, Caesarea was an important city because some key Roman roads—trade routes that stretched from Constantinople to Syria—ran through the city. On one hand, this was beneficial to Caesarea because travelling merchants would stop in the city, lodge there, and spend money in its establishments. On the other hand, these roads were also frequented by Roman army troops, including some that commandeered local food sources and other supplies creating stress for the local inhabitants. Understanding Caesarea’s strategic geographic location, the Roman government established the city as one of its key administrative centers. Finally, the city’s location also made it a key intercultural crossroads as diverse peoples from Asia Minor, Armenia, Syria, Persia, and the Northern Gothic regions regularly spent time and interacted in Caesarea.\textsuperscript{15}

Spiritually speaking, Caesarea was initially evangelized in the first century. However, the most significant church growth and expansion occurred in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Mentioned previously, the most effective third-century evangelist was Gregory Thaumaturgus who enjoyed a fruitful ministry in Cappadocia.\textsuperscript{16} Not unlike much of the church in the Roman Empire in the pre-Constantine period, Cappadocian Christians were persecuted for their faith by the Governor Serenianus in the mid-third century.\textsuperscript{17}

What were the specific challenges that Basil faced in Caesarea in the fourth century? First, though Christianity had been tolerated and even preferred in Rome in the fourth century, Basil still experienced conflicts with political leaders. The most obvious was with Emperor Julian (361-363)—the so-called “apostate” who attempted to revive paganism. Annoyed by the growing number of Christians in Cappadocia, Julian’s revival also involved persecuting the church, which included confiscating church property and even drafting church leaders into the army.\textsuperscript{18} While the conflict with Julian made sense, Basil also had conflict with the Arian Emperor Valens. During Basil’s tenure as bishop, Valens divided Cappodocia in half, effectively limiting Basil’s influence over the churches and citizens of the region. As we will see shortly, Basil had no problem confronting the political establishment over such decisions. In fact, if Basil had not been so popular with the people, he probably would have been spent time in exile as other fourth-century bishops like Athanasius and Ambrose did when they clashed with the Roman authorities.\textsuperscript{19}
A second challenge that Basil faced had to do with theology. Though the Council of Nicaea of 325 had condemned Arius’s heresy, Arianism was quite prevalent and taught by many of the bishops in Asia Minor. While Basil and the other Cappadocian fathers (Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa) battled Arianism through preaching, writing, and church councils, it was this theological conflict that led to Basil’s political conflicts with Valens. Gregory of Nazianzus described the emperor as: “A cloud full of hail, with destructive roar, overwhelming every church upon which it burst and seized . . . Valens, most fond of gold and most hostile to Christ.” Describing the struggle, he continues:

Furious indeed were his first acts of wantonness, more furious still his final efforts against us. What shall I speak of first? Exiles, banishments, confiscations, open and secret plots, persuasion, where time allowed, violence, where persuasion was impossible. Those who clung to the orthodox faith, as we did, were expelled from their churches; others were imposed upon, who agreed with the imperial soul-destroying doctrines, and begged for testimonies of impiety.

A third major issue that Basil dealt with was poverty. In an insightful study on the nature of poverty in the early Christian centuries, Susan Holman writes:

In the Greek texts of the first four centuries C.E., there are two common words for the poor person, *penes* and *ptochos*. *Ptochos* traditionally designated the destitute beggar who is outside or at the fringes of society, the “street person,” the extreme poor. *Penes*, on the other hand, is used to indicate the individual whose economic resources were minimal but who functioned within society, the “working poor.” The *penetes* differ from the *ptochoi* in that their social ties within the community remain intact: they retain their dwellings, families, and responsibilities, including their debts. *Penes* could also be a derogatory term for anyone forced to engage in manual labor for survival.

Generally concurring with this distinction, Basil asserts, “I consider that a *ptochos* is he who falls from wealth into need; but a *penes* is he who is in need from the first and is acceptable to the Lord.” While both types of poor people lived in Caesarea, Basil’s sermons (i.e. Sermon 8) suggest that the *ptochoi* represented the most common type of poverty. Sadly, this included desperate families who were abandoning children on the doorstep of the church at Caesarea.

The biggest factor that contributed to Caesareans slipping into poverty was the famine that hit Cappadocia in 368. In fact, it is impossible to understand Basil’s ministry without describing this period of tragedy. Gregory of Nazianzus wrote: “There was a famine, the most severe one ever recorded. The city was in distress and there was no source of assistance. . . . The hardest part of all such distress is the insensibility and insatiability of those who possess supplies. . . . Such are the buyers and sellers of corn.” Holman adds:

Basil’s famine sermon refers back to an extremely cold, dry winter that had been followed by an unusually hot, dry spring, and this led to catastrophic agricultural crisis as wells and rivers dried up and crops failed. Those able to hoard grain increased their vigilance and the market prices. Laborers began to starve. Schools closed down. The populace came to church to pray for rain. The poor who worked
in the fields and wandered along the roads took on the appearance of living cadavers. Possibly the poor resorted to exposing their children, or selling them, while the rich haggled with them over the purchase price. Gregory of Nazianzus implied that the situation was heightened by the difficulty of importing emergency food supplies to a landlocked region.26

Based on evidence from Basil’s letters, the famine probably lasted for four years and resulted in additional difficulties.27 In 372, there was a riot in Caesarea. As shown, some responded by hoarding grain while others resorted to stealing.28 From Basil’s sermons, we are also given a picture of the slow and horrible death that some were dying from starvation—“the hungry are dying.”28

Basil’s Approach to Ministry
Given this historical, political, and cultural background of Cappadocian Caesarea as well as the specific challenges that Basil faced in the fourth century, let us now consider some key elements of Basil’s ministry in his urban context. Four areas of ministry are most apparent: preaching and evangelism; a prophetic discourse toward oppressors; advocacy for the poor; and practical care for the poor in response to the famine and in the establishment of the basileas (“new city”).

Preaching and Evangelism
An important element of Basil’s ministry was evangelism and preaching. As we have shown, Basil praised the ministry of Gregory Thaumaturgus, the bishop who helped transformed Cappadocia in the third century through his evangelistic preaching.30 For Basil, an important element of his pastoral ministry was preaching in order to train believers and to reach non-believers with the Gospel. He discusses these aspects of ministry in much detail with his disciples in his Morals.31 Finally, while describing Basil’s humanitarian efforts, Gregory of Nazianzus suggests that spiritual teaching and Gospel proclamation were Basil’s priorities:

[Basil] provided the nourishment of the Word and that more perfect good work and distribution being from heaven and on high; if the bread of angels is the Word, whereby souls hungry for God are fed and given to drink, and seek after nourishment that neither diminishes nor fails but remains forever; thus [i.e., by his sermons] this supplier of grain and abundant riches [he who was] the poorest and most needy [person] I have known, provided, not for a famine of bread or a thirst for water, but a longing for the truly life-giving and nourishing Word, which effects growth to spiritual maturity in those nourished well on it.32

Prophetic Discourse
As social, economic, and political issues plagued Caesarea, Basil’s preaching was also characterized by a prophetic discourse in which he challenged the rich, poor, and political leaders to pursue righteousness. Indeed, it was the famine of 368 that prompted Basil to preach his most famous sermons on hunger and poverty—Sermons 6-9 and two sermons of Psalm 14.33 Brian Daley asserts that Basil—not unlike other preachers trained in rhetoric—put his communication skills to work in an effort to influence his hearers toward holy living.34

Basil’s first audience included money lenders—those who were exploiting the poor during the economic crisis and lending “to the financially desperate at highly usurious rates.”35
While declaring in one sermon that money lenders were worse than dogs, Basil preaches from Psalm 14 that “usury involves the greatest inhumanity. . . . seeing a man by necessity bent down before his knees as a suppliant . . . [the creditor] does not pity him who is suffering misfortune beyond his desert; he takes no account of his nature; he does not yield to his supplications.” He builds his entire message around the single phrase, “[the righteous man] does not lend out his money at interest.” Similarly, in Sermon 8, Basil invited those involved in price gouging and usury to repent publicly of their sin. Holman notes that Basil goes even further and calls “usurers—anyone who lends at interest” to stop oppressing the poor and offer interest free loans instead.

In the same sermons, Basil aims part of his message at the poor themselves. He urges them to repay their debts, to refrain from borrowing more, and to be content in their simplicity. Reiterating his understanding of how Caesareans slipped into poverty (ptochoi), Basil preached, “the debtor is . . . one who has borrowed and adopted a lavish lifestyle which he could not otherwise afford.” Finally, in Sermon 8, Basil reminds the poor that they are not so desperate that they cannot be generous themselves.

A third group that Basil condemned through his sermons included those who hoarded food during the famine. Through storing grain in barns and in caves around Caesarea, Basil preached that the wealthy “would rather burst themselves eating than leave a crumb for the hungry.” Though the rich were materially well off, Basil asserted that they were the truly poor ones:

You turn away from those you meet lest you be forced to let even a morsel escape your clutches. You have only one phrase: “I have nothing to give; I am a poor man.” You are indeed poor; and in need of every good. You are poor in love for your fellow man; poor in humanity; poor in faith in God; poor in the hope of eternity!

Instead of fearing the poor, Basil urged them to fear God who will judge those who fail to act justly. Further, he encourages them to imitate God in his goodness and the Patriarch Joseph in his love for his fellow man. He adds: “Make your brothers sharers of your grain; and what may wither tomorrow, give to the needy today. For it is greed of the most horrible kind, to deny to the starving even what you must soon throw away!”

Similarly, Basil chastised the wealthy for their failure to be generous with the poor. Preaching from the passage on the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, Basil largely directed Sermon 7 toward this group. Asserting that accumulating wealth was an indication of misguided love and ultimately a vain endeavor, Basil reminded the wealthy that they are merely stewards of their possessions—not owners. He adds, “Consequently, the one who loves his neighbor as himself possesses nothing in excess of his neighbor's. However, you obviously have many possessions. . . . clearly your wealth and superabundance indicates a lack of charity.” While warning that hoarding wealth would lead to further social problems in Caesarea, Basil invites them to participate in the joy of giving—a sure outcome of their salvation in Christ. In this sense, he commends to them the example of the Good Samaritan and charges them to be good neighbors to the poor and oppressed in Caesarea. In short, for Basil, authentic faith should transform Caesarea’s economic system as generosity overcame greed while the rich and poor worshipped together in Christian community.
While much of Basil’s prophetic discourse was directed at the issues of poverty and hunger, he also confronted the social sin of slavery. Slavery was not a new issue to Asia Minor as the Goths had attacked the region in the fourth-century and taken some Cappadocians captive—including the famous Arian missionary Ulfilas (c. 310-383). Though, as noted, some parents were abandoning their children to the care of the church during the famine, many others were selling their children into slavery. In *Sermon* 8, Basil called parents to repentance for these tragic choices. Elsewhere, arguing that all creatures were subservient to God—not one another—Basil categorically denounced slavery as a human condition. While he did preach against slavery, Basil wrote many more letters to communicate prophetically about this social sin.

Finally, Basil was not opposed to confronting Roman officials in a prophetic manner, especially those with Arian leanings that were putting pressure on the church. Gregory of Nazianzus records an exchange that Basil had with the Roman Prefect Modestus who openly challenged Basil for not respecting the Emperor Valens. Basil related that he only followed the teachings of a true Sovereign—the Lord. When Modestus asked if Basil feared him, the following exchange occurred:

> “Fear of what?” said Basil, “How could it affect me? . . . confiscation, banishment, torture, death. Have you no other threat?” said he, “for none of these can reach me . . . Because . . . a man who has nothing, is beyond the reach of confiscation; unless you demand my tattered rags, and the few books, which are my only possessions. Banishment is impossible for me, who am confined by no limit of place, counting my own neither the land where I now dwell, nor all of that into which I may be hurled . . . As for tortures, what hold can they have upon one whose body has ceased to be? . . . Death is my benefactor, for it will send me the sooner to God.” Amazed at this language, the prefect said, “No one has ever yet spoken thus, and with such boldness, to Modestus.” “Why, perhaps,” said Basil, “you have not met . . . a bishop . . . where the interests of God are at stake, we care for nothing else, and make these our sole object.”

Advocacy for the Poor
Basil went beyond merely preaching about the spiritual and physical needs in Caesarea; he used his position as a bishop to be an advocate for the poor, needy, and suffering in his city. In addition to integrating a monastic and ecclesiastical calling, Basil also combined his pastoral office with that of a Roman patron—one endowed with authority and influence to impact society. While patrons were a normal part of the Roman social fabric, in the post-Constantine era, bishops were accorded a level of authority and often functioned as judges and mediators in the court system. In light of Caesarea’s needs, Basil did not reject this opportunity to influence political leaders and even model for the government how to solve important social and economic problems. Sterk writes, “In Basil’s capacity as a patron he endeavored to act consistently with his understanding of both monastic vocation and episcopal responsibility [and] attempted to apply the principles of the Gospel in confronting the social and political realities of his day, even . . . [using] . . . the tactics of petition and mediation.”

Peter Brown notes, “Nowhere was the Christian representation of the church’s novel role in society more aggressively maintained than in the claim of Christian bishops to act as ‘lovers of the poor.’” Through his letters and personal meetings, Basil lobbied to secure tax relief for the
poor, tax exempt status for priests, and tax exemption for his *basileas* ministry (see forthcoming discussion). In addition, he appealed to the wealthy to gain an eternal perspective on material possessions and leave part of their estates to the poor. Though Basil experienced conflict with Valens, the bishop still managed to secure a donation from the emperor for his ministry to the poor.

**Practical Response: To Famine**

Andrew Dinan correctly notes that Basil’s ministry was not limited to preaching and advocacy as “Basil’s solicitude for the welfare of his people was manifest in concrete ways.” In an extended description, Gregory of Nazianzus describes Basil’s courageous leadership and generosity in response to the famine of 368:

> By his word and advice [Basil] opened the stores of those who possessed them, and so, according to the Scripture, dealt food to the hungry and satisfied the poor with bread . . . and in what way? . . . He gathered together the victims of the famine with some who were but slightly recovering from it, men and women, infants, old men, . . . and obtaining contributions of all sorts of food which can relieve famine, set before them basins of soup and such meat as was found preserved among us, on which the poor live. Then, imitating the ministry of Christ . . . he attended to the bodies and souls of those who needed it, combining personal respect with the supply of their necessity, and so giving them a double relief. Such was our young furnisher of corn, and second Joseph . . . [But unlike Joseph, Basil’s] services were gratuitous and his succor of the famine gained no profit, having only one object, to win kindly feelings by kindly treatment, and to gain by his rations of corn the heavenly blessings.

Unlike the proconsul of Carthage (North Africa), who personally profited from the famine during this period, Basil upheld his conviction for generosity toward the poor and hungry. Again, according to Gregory, Basil liquidated some of his own inherited assets to help meet the needs of the Caesareans. He writes:

> [Basil] ungrudgingly spent upon the poor his patrimony even before he was a priest, and most of all in the time of the famine, during which he was a ruler of the church, though still a priest in the rank of presbyters; and afterwards did not hoard even what remained to him.

Though Basil’s brother Gregory of Nyssa likened him to Elijah, Gregory of Nazianzus presented him as a Joseph for the people of Caesarea. While Basil’s brother and companion upheld the bishop as a model for imitation by making such a comparison, Basil also compared his ministry to Joseph’s. In *Sermon 6*, he interpreted and applied the Joseph narratives from Genesis toward his ministry in Caesarea: “I shall open my barns. I shall be like Joseph in proclaiming the love of my fellow man.”

**Practical Response: The Basileas**

A second concrete expression of Basil’s ministry to the poor in Caesarea was the establishment of the *basileas* or “new city”— “a complex of buildings constructed at the edge of Caesarea
during the early years of Basil’s episcopate.”

Built on land owned by Basil’s family or perhaps donated by the emperor, the complex was first called the *basileas* by the fifth-century church historian Sozomen who recorded: “. . . the *basileas*, the most celebrated hospice for the poor. It was established by Basil, bishop of Caesarea, from whom it received its name in the beginning, and retains it until today.”

While Basil was influenced by others to act on behalf of the poor (his pious family, his sister Macrina, and Eustathius), it seems that the devastation caused by the famine of 368 drove him to launch the *basileas* project.

What were the specific ministries of the *basileas*? First, the complex included a home for the poor. Some of residents probably included children that had been abandoned by their parents during the famine. Second, the facility had a hospital that cared for the sick. Sterk suggests that some patients were suffering from leprosy. Third, the *basileas* offered the poor an opportunity to work and to develop job skills. Fourth, as noted, the complex included storehouses with food supplies administered by the “Joseph” of Caesarea. Finally, as Caesarea was located on a crossroads between Asia Minor, Syria, Armenia and the Gothic regions, the *basileas* included a hospice for travelers.

Basil insisted that his disciples be able to show hospitality to minister to other believers but also as a means to witness to non-Christians. In his *Long Rules*, he writes:

> Has a guest arrived? If he is a brother . . . he will recognize the fare we provide as properly his own. What he has left at home, he will find with us. Suppose he is weary after his journey. We then provide as much nourishment as is required to relieve his weariness. Is it a secular person who has arrived? Let him learn through actual experience . . . and let him be given a model and pattern of frugal sufficiency in matters of food. . . . In every case, care must be taken for a good table, yet without overstepping the limits of the actual need. This should be our aim in hospitality—that the individual requirements of our guests may be cared for.

For Basil, the *basileas* ministry was perhaps the clearest expression of what it meant for him to be a monk-bishop ministering in the city. Indeed, his monasticism was characterized by voluntary poverty following the example of John the Baptist (if one has two coats, give the other away), Jesus (sell all you have and give it to the poor), and the early Christians in Acts (selling their goods and sharing everything in common). In his instruction to Christian leaders in *Morals*, he stated, “one who is entrusted with the preaching of the Gospel should possess nothing more than is strictly necessary for him.”

As a coenobitic monk, Basil’s monastic vision also relied largely on community. McGuire helpfully notes that “Basil is the first monastic writer in the East to be totally convinced that a common life provided the best way of bringing individual men to God.” In addition to the monasteries that Basil oversaw in Caesarea, the *basileas* also provided a communal context of spiritual growth for Basil’s disciples.

Basil’s expectation was that the monastic community would be a community that served others. Distinguishing his communal monastic vision from those who withdrew into isolation, he simply asked: “Whose feet will you wash? For whom will you care? In comparison with whom will you be the least?” As Dinan helpfully notes, the goal of Basil’s manual labor was charity—loving God and loving one’s neighbor.

Finally, Basil was convinced that an important task of a bishop or Christian leader was caring for the poor. Basil instructed spiritual leaders in his *Morals* that “the preacher of the Word
should be compassionate and merciful, especially toward those who are suffering distress of soul” and be “solicitous even with regard to the bodily needs of those in our charge.” While it is clear that clergy in Caesarea were quite involved in administrating the work of the basileas, Basil also encouraged church leaders in Cappadocia and Asia Minor to make ministry to the poor a priority in their churches. Though at times this admonition was met with some resistance by some church leaders, there is evidence that a number of smaller projects for the poor developed in Cappadocia under the leadership of bishops that Basil supervised.

Sterk helpfully summarizes: “for Basil, then, involvement in such a foundation was what committed ascetics as well as bishops ought to be doing. Such activity on the part of monks, bishops, and laity alike made the Gospel a living reality in the city.” Basil’s efforts appeared to be sustainable as the basileas facility remained intact and ministry to the poor continued for over a century after his death.

**Conclusion**

Basil died at the age of forty-nine; yet, he lived a very full life. He was a theologian par excellence who also presented a winsome model for Christian leadership. Having discussed the political, theological and social issues that he faced in fourth-century Caesarea, I have argued in this paper that Basil was a Christian leader who was quite engaged with his context and ministered in a relevant manner. Basil’s ministry was holistic. While apparently prioritizing the ministries of preaching and evangelism, he ministered courageously to the needs of the poor in Caesarea. He read the Joseph narratives in quite a functional manner and found meaningful application for them in his context. Finally, his ministry to the poor was a concrete expression of his monastic and pastoral theology. He chose a lifestyle of voluntary poverty in community with others and, in turn, this community lived out the Gospel in word and deed in Caesarea.

As evangelical Christians participate in urban mission today, what can be learned from Basil? In closing, I would like to stimulate some dialogue for modern practitioners by discussing Basil’s four approaches to urban mission.

1. Preaching and Evangelism. Part of being an evangelical is proclaiming the Gospel—inviting sinners to believe in the unique Savior Jesus Christ for salvation. In his work as a theologian and conflicts with the Arian political authorities, Basil showed great resolve to maintain the purity of the Gospel. Even as he ministered during the famine, he makes proclamation his priority. As evangelicals move forward in urban mission today, how will we safeguard this priority? As many good and legitimate ministries in an urban context demand our energy and focus (i.e., nutrition, community health, sports, literacy, job skills training), how will we keep our urban mission Christian?

2. Prophetic Discourse. Basil was a preacher by trade. Not only did he disciple his congregation through preaching, but he also aimed his biblical exegesis at the social evils of his day and confronted usurious money lenders, the discontent poor, the indifferent wealthy, and heretical political leaders. What does our prophetic discourse look like today? Should we blast government decisions and leaders that fall short of a biblical standard? Are we engaged enough with our urban contexts to preach relevantly toward the city? Is it wise or safe to preach against drug trafficking, gang violence, and prostitution? How do we preach against social sins and remain focused and grounded on a biblical exegetical foundation?
3. Advocacy. Basil used his position as a bishop in the Roman Empire to be an advocate for the poor. Yet, what does advocacy look like in the twenty-first century, post-Christendom era? To be sure, many pastors and missionaries in the present global urban context do not have the clout to appeal to the authorities about the poor or other injustices. As we assess the role of North American Christians in global missions in the twenty-first century, advocacy seems to be a real strength of North Americans and a place in which they may reasonably contribute. Groups such as International Christian Concern are doing a formidable job of telling the story of the persecuted church around the world and lobbying on their behalf to political leaders. Even as I write this paper, some American Christian leaders waged a campaign on Twitter and successfully lobbied for the release of an Afghan Christian sentenced to death for his faith.

4. Practical response in the basileas. Basil was engaged with his urban context through the basileas—a community that cared for the poor and hungry, the sick, and travelers passing through. Most evangelicals today involved in urban mission are not monks; yet, what monastic principles observed in Basil’s ministry are meaningful for evangelicals today? Evangelicals who have started or served in hospitals, orphanages, schools, food pantries, and clothes closets can relate to the major components of the basileas. However, can we identify with the ministry of hospitality that Basil championed? How does hospitality relate to mission?

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3 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.12; Rousseau, 4-5; and Andrea Sterk, *Renouncing the World Yet Leading the Church: The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 35.
5 Basil, *Letter* 223. Classical Arianism can be attributed to the Alexandrian presbyter Arius’s (c. 250-336) position that the Son was not eternal. In contrast to Basil’s homoousion position—that the Son shared the same essence with the Father—Eustathius held the homoean view in which Jesus was similar to the Father but not necessarily the same.
6 Coenobitic (from the Greek *coenobium* or community) monasticism regards community as an important element of spiritual growth in the monastic paradigm. This is contrasted with anchoritic (from *anachoressis* or withdrawal) monasticism that more highly values isolation.
7 Rousseau, 9-11; Sterk, 36.
8 Basil, *Letters* 207.2, 223.5; Rousseau, 2, 68-69, 84-85, 93; and Sterk, 43, 74-76.
9 Sterk, 25-27.
Square Publishers, 1972), 281. Though Sterk (Sterk, 73) doubts that there were fifty bishops, this number is based on the account of Gregory of Nazianzus in Gregory, *On His Life* 2.1.11.

12 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 70; and Rousseau, 133.
13 McHugh, “Cappadocia,” in Ferguson, 213.
14 McHugh, “Cappadocia,” in Ferguson, 214.
15 Rousseau, 133-34; Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 69-70.
18 Sozomen, *History of the Church* 5.4; Sterk, 44; Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 70; Ramsay, 304.
19 Basil, *Letters* 74-76; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 43.56; Ramsay, 283; McHugh, “Cappadocia,” in Ferguson, 214; and Sterk, 72.
20 Basil described the Arian battle in Letters 80, 82, 90.1, 91, 92.2-3, 203.1, 242.1, 243.4, 244.8, 256; and *On the Holy Spirit*, 30.76-77. See Sterk, 45.
22 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 5.
24 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 78-80.
26 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 68-69.
29 Basil Sermon 6.6, cited in Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 65; see also Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 77, 97.
30 Basil, *On the Holy Spirit* 29.34; Sterk, 37.
31 Basil, *Morals* 70.9-11, 31-34.
37 Basil, *Sermon on Psalm* 14b.1 cited in Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 120. Note: Psalm 14 is Psalm 15 in English Bibles.
38 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 114.
39 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 78.
40 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 114.
41 Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 114; also Ihssen, “Basil And Gregory’s Sermons on Usury,” 420-21.
49 Basil, *Sermon on Psalm* 14a.3; Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, 105, 109, 112.
50 Basil, *Sermons* 322.2; 323.5; Rousseau, 178-79.
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51 McHugh, “Cappadocia,” in Ferguson, 214.
52 Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 81.
53 Basil, On the Holy Spirit 20.51; Ramsey, 67; Frend, 570.
54 Basil, Letters 72, 73, 177-78, 273-75, 307.
55 Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.48-50.
56 Sterk 66-69; Rousseau, 170-71; Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 98.
57 Sterk, 68-69.
58 Cited in Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 18.
59 Basil, Letters 88, 104, 110, 303, 308-309, 316-17; Sterk, 68.
60 Basil, Letters, 86-87, 109; Rousseau, 143, 159.
61 Basil, Letters 142-44; Rousseau, 142-43; Sterk, 67.
62 Sterk, 139; Frend, 569.
63 Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.63; Theodoret, Church History 4.16; Sterk 70; Rousseau, 140; Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 75.
65 Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.34-36 cited in Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 65. For a similar account of Basil’s generosity, see Gregory of Nyssa, On His Brother Basil.
66 Gregory of Nazianzus, Against Eunomius 1.10 cited in Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 66; see also Sterk, 103.
67 Basil, Sermon 6.2 cited in Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 128.
68 Sterk, 69.
70 Sterk, 40, 69; Gregory of Nazianzus, Life of Macrina 6.5-13; Dinan, “Manual Labor in the Life and Thought of St. Basil the Great,” 137-38; Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 76.
71 Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 43.35; Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 80.
72 Sterk, 69; Rousseau, 142.
74 Rousseau, 142.
75 Rousseau, 133.
78 Basil, Morals 70.27. English translation from Wagner, 180.
80 Smither, 56; see also Basil’s Letter 150 to Amphilochius in which Basil invites this disciple to come serve for a time at the basilica.
81 Basil, Long Rules 7 cited in Ramsey, 180.
83 Basil, Morals 70.19-20. English translation from Wagner, 175.
85 Basil, Letters 141.2, 223.3; 142-44; Rousseau, 149; Sterk, 69-70.
86 Sterk, 71.
87 Holman, The Hungry are Dying, 75.

Shane Claiborne’s “Simple Way” ministry is an interesting example of “new monasticism” that is committed to urban mission in the North American context; see http://www.thesimpleway.org/ (accessed February 25, 2011).