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THE *LIFE OF ST. BASIL* IN ICELAND

BASIL OF CAESAREA or St. Basil the Great (329 or 330–379 A.D.) is considered a saint in both Eastern and Western Christianity and recognized as an influential ecclesiastical figure in both churches. Hence it is not surprising that his *vita* should have reached Iceland, although the current state of its transmission in that country is highly problematic. This article will discuss some of these problems, contextualize the Icelandic *vita* with Continental versions, and present an edition of a previously unknown Icelandic manuscript text of the *Life of St. Basil*.

To begin with, the Icelandic text, *Basilius saga*, is far from complete. Extant in two very fragmentary vellum manuscripts, the text that remains is severely damaged. The longer of the two manuscripts, AM 238 II fol., contains three leaves, of which f. 3v is almost entirely illegible and has been left unedited, while AM 655 VI 4to contains two leaves, of which f. 1r and f. 2v are so badly damaged that they could not be edited.¹ The former manuscript is dated to the first half of the fourteenth century and the latter to the first quarter of the thirteenth century.²

- 1 Edition by Gustav Morgenstern, *Arnarnagnæanische Fragmente*. (Cod. AM. 655 4to III–VIII, 238 fol. II, 921 4to IV 1.2). *Ein supplement zu den Heilagra manna sögur nach den handschriften* (Leipzig and Copenhagen: Emil Gräfes and Skandinavisk antiquariat, 1893; repr. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2010), 24–35. A facsimile and text edition of f. 2r of AM 655 VI 4to is found in Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script: As Illustrated in Vernacular Texts from the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Íslenzk handrit. Icelandic Manuscripts, Series in folio, vol. 2 (Reykjavík: Manuscript Institute of Iceland, 1965), plate 21 and xvi.
- 2 *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog: Register* (Copenhagen: Den Arnarnagnæanske kommission, 1989), 459, 436. Cf. also Kirsten Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints in Old Norse-Icelandic Prose* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 56–57; Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnarnagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols. (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1889–94), 1:199; 2:50; Gustav Morgenstern, “Notizen,” *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 11, ny följd 7 (1895): 97. The manuscripts are abbreviated here as 238 and 655.

Gripla XXVI (2015): 57–79

The poor state of the texts is such that assigning them to a known Latin source has proved unsuccessful. Gustav Morgenstern attempted to connect the Icelandic translation to the Amphilochian version of the *Vita Basilii*,³ but the Icelandic differs greatly from the Latin, and, in addition, Morgenstern was forced to assume that the Icelandic translator rearranged sections of the Latin original. Fortunately, a single, unedited Latin leaf of the *vita* exists in Iceland on the second leaf of a thirteenth-century bifolium, Lbs fragm 74,⁴ which owes its preservation to its having once been used as a book cover. Seven rows of small holes indicate that it was once sewn to something, e.g. the spine of a book, and several larger holes have destroyed text at 1r-v2-6, 1r-v9-10, and 1r5 (1v4). Folds parallel to each of the four sides of the bifolium also indicate that it was used to cover papers or a book at one time. The worn pages f. 1v and especially 2r not only support this view, but demonstrate that they must have been on the outside of the object covered, meaning that the leaves are currently folded the wrong way and that the *Vita Basilii* preceded the *passio* in the original manuscript. Estimates of the amount of missing text support this assertion, and in the discussion below, the *Basilii* text begins on 1r. The other half of the bifolium contains the *passio* of Julian and Basilissa, though a strip of vellum 3.7 cm wide has been cut off the outer margin, destroying 1.3 cm of text on each side of the leaf.⁵

Lbs fragm 74 is written in a small, regular hand and is doubtless the work of a careful, practiced scribe. The use of *e* instead of the ligature *æ* indicates the manuscript's provenance as Icelandic as opposed to Norwegian. A dating to the thirteenth century is supported by the rounded character of the script in general, the form of *y* with a right-hand stroke as the descender, the use of Caroline, unclosed *a*, long *s* not extending appreciably

3 Amphilochius, *Vita et miracula Basilii Magni*, in *S.S. Patrum Amphilochii Iconiensis, Methodii Patarensis, et Andreæ Crewtensis Opera omnia, quae reperiri potuerunt*, ed. Franciscus Combebis (Paris: Simon Piget, 1644), 155–225; Morgenstern, “Notizen,” 97.

4 Jakob Benediktsson, “Skrá um skinnblöð í Landsbókasafni Íslands,” in Páll Eggert Ólason and Lárus Blöndal, *Skrá um handritasöfn Landsbókasafnsins*, Supplement 2, Viðauki (Reykjavík: Landsbókasafn Íslands, 1959), 16. The manuscript is dated there to the fourteenth century.

5 Cf. Peter Jorgensen, “St. Julian and Basilissa in Medieval Iceland,” in *Sjöttu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977*, eds. Einar G. Pétursson and Jónas Kristjánsson, vol. 2 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar á Íslandi, 1977), 473–480.

below the line, the use of *u* for *v* (except as a capital), the extended crossbar of *e*, and the near total absence of “*e*-caudata.”⁶

Since the text of Lbs fragm 74 falls in one of the six lacunae in *Basiliius saga*, it is impossible to determine whether it served as the source for the Icelandic text, and, if so, whether the Icelandic was a loose or close translation of it. Initial attempts to find a comparable Latin text in any of the printed versions of the life of Basil were unsuccessful. In the 1980s, the search for pre-thirteenth-century manuscripts known to contain both the *Vita Basilii* and the *Passio sanctorum martyrum Juliani et Basilissae* turned up a number of texts all related to Euphemius’ ninth-century translation of the pseudo-Amphilochian Greek text. Subsequent manuscripts whose texts agree with Lbs fragm 74 proved so easy to find that it must be assumed that a large number of them exist. Although the Euphemian translation is listed in the *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Latina* (BHL) as no. 1023,⁷ the editions cited there do not contain a passage close to the Latin fragment in Iceland. In addition, these editions are missing a number of chapters found in those manuscripts that do have a text corresponding to that of Lbs fragm 74, prompting the use here of the term “17-chapter version” to refer to the texts of the ten manuscripts listed below.⁸

Angers, Bibliothèque municipale d’Angers, 804 [12th c.] = A

Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, cod. sign. 12461 [12th c.] = B₁

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 13761 [10th c.] = P₃

Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 16736 [12th c.] = P₆

St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen, 566 [late 9th, early 10th c.] = G

6 Hreinn Benediktsson, *Early Icelandic Script*, 44–45, 49–51, 57–58; Didrik Arup Seip, *Norge og Island*, vol. B, *Palaeografi*, Nordisk Kultur, vol. 28 (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1954), 77–78, 90, 92, 94, 138, 140–41; Harald Spehr, *Der Ursprung der isländischen Schrift und ihre Weiterbildung bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts* (Halle/Saale: Karras, Kröber & Nietschmann, 1929), 102.

7 *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, ed. Société des Bollandistes, vol. 1, *Subsidia Hagiographica*, vol. 6 (Brussels: Société des bollandistes, 1898–1901), 153–54.

8 Using these ten manuscripts, plus the fragmentary Vatican 4854 (12th c.), John Nicholson prepared an edition with English translation of this version; see Nicholson, “The *Vita Sancti Basilii* of Pseudo-Amphilochius: A Critical Edition with Commentary and English Translation” (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 1986).

Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 8565 [11th or 12th c.] = **V**₈

Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottobonianus, lat. 120 [11th c.] = **O**

Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Palatinus, lat. 582 [9th or 10th c.] = **P**₅

Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Regina Sueciae, lat. 528 [9th or 10th c.] = **R**

Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Series Nova 4635 Han [early 9th c.] = **W**

With the appearance of Gabriella Corona's edition of Ælfric's *Life of Saint Basil the Great* in 2006, another two complete manuscripts could be added to this list.⁹

London, British Library, Cotton Nero E. i, part 1 [3rd qtr., 11th c.] = **N**

Salisbury, Cathedral Library, 221 [end, 11th c.] = **S**

In the edited text below of Lbs fragm 74, the numerous abbreviations have been silently expanded.

|^{1r2} uir eius accurrit ad eam. contendens non haberi ita ueritatem. Illa autem |³ in consolationem ueniente suadibilibus eius sermonibus dixit ad eum. Si uis |⁴ mihi satis facere et misere anime mee. crastina ego et tu unani⁵ | miter eamus ad ecclesiam. [et cora]m me participa. incontaminatorum misteriorum |⁶ et sic satisfacta ero. tunc coactus dixit ei sententiam capituli. Continuo |⁷ ergo deponens illa muliebre infirmitatem. et consilium bonum consilians illi. |⁸ currit ad pastorem et discipulum: xristi basilium aduersum impietatem clamans |¹ Miserere mihi miserere sancte dei. miserere mihi discipule domini. que cum demonibus causam egi. |⁹ Miserere mihi misere. proprium patrem non obaudientem. Et docet eum rerum gesta |¹⁰rum ordinem: Sanctus autem dei uocans puerum sciscitatus ab eo est. si ista in

9 *Vita Basilii*, in *Ælfric's Life of Saint Basil the Great: Background and Context*, ed. Gabriella Corona (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006), 223–47, along with the very fragmentary Exeter, Cathedral Library, FMS/3 (1st qtr., 10th c.). In the discussion below, manuscript citations are taken from the oldest manuscript, W. Because it is easier to gain access to the Corona text than to the original manuscripts, citations based on her edition are also supplied = N.

hunc ¹¹modum se habent. Qui ad sanctum cum lacrimis ait. Etiam. sancte dei si ego | ¹²siluero opera mea clamabunt: Et enarrat ei etiam ipse a principio ¹³usque ad finem consequentem diaboli malam operationem, Tunc dicit ei sanctus. Vis re¹⁴uerti ad dominum deum nostrum. Ad quem puer: Vtique uolo. sed non ualeo. Dicit ¹⁵ei: Quare? Respondit puer. Scripto abnegauit xristum. et professus ¹⁶sum diabolo. Dicit ei. Non sit tibi cure. Benignus est deus noster. et recipiet te ¹⁷penitentem. Compatitur enim maleficiis nostris. Et iactans se puella ad ¹⁸pedes eius. euangelice deprecata est eum dicens. Discipule xristi dei nostri. quan¹⁹tum potes adiuua nos. Dicit ad puerum sanctus. Credis saluari? Qui ait. ²⁰Credo domine. adiuua incredulitatem meam. Et continuo adprehendens manum ²¹eius. faciensque xristi signaculum in ipso. et orans reclusit eum in uno loco in²²terioris sacri periboli. et dans ei regulam collaborabat ei per tres dies. ²³Post quos uisitauit eum. et dicit ei. Quomodo habes fili? Dicit ad eum. In mag²⁴na sum domine. defectione. Sancte dei non fero clamores eorum et terrores et ia²⁵culaciones. seu lapidationes eorum. tenentes manuscriptam meam. cau²⁶santur me dicentes. [T]u uenisti ad nos. non nos at te. Et dicit ei sanctus. Noli ²⁷timere fili. tantum crede. Et dans ei modicam escam. faciensque super eum ²⁸xristi iterum signaculum ac orans reclusit eum. Et post paucos dies uisitauit ²⁹eum et dixit ei. Quomodo habes fili? Dicit ei. Pater sancte alonge clamores eorum ³⁰audio. et minas. sed non uideo eos. Et iterum dans ei escam. et orans claudensque ³¹ostium. abiit. Et quadragesimo die rediit et dicit ei. Quomodo habes frater? ³²Respondens dicit ad eum. Bene habeo sancte dei. Vidi enim te hodie in uisu ³³pugnantem pro me. et uincentem diabolum. Mox ergo sanctus secundum consuetudinem ³⁴faciens orationem eduxit eum. et adduxit in dormitorium suum. Mane autem ³⁵facto. uocauit sacrum clerum et monasteria. et omnem xristo amabilem populum. ³⁶et dixit eis filioli mei dilectissimi omnes gratias agite domino. Ecce enim ouem per³⁷ditam debet bonus pastor in humeris reportare. et offerre ecclesie. Quapropter³⁸ debitum est et nos uigiliam facere nocte. ac postulare eius benignitatem. ³⁹ut non uincat corruptor animarum etiam in hoc facto. Et alacriter populo ⁴⁰populo coaggerato per omnem noctem postulauerunt deum cum bono pastore cum ²lacrimis clamantes pro eo. kirieleison. Et mature cum omni multitudine³ne populi accepit sanctus puerum. et tenens dexteram manum eius. ducebat illum ad ⁴sanctam dei ecclesiam cum psalmis et ymnis. Et ecce. [di]abolus. om-

nium fascinans |⁵ in tristem uitam cum omni pernitiosa uirtute aduenit. et inuisibiliter apprehen|⁶dens puerum conabatur rape eum de manu sancti. Et cepit clamare puer. |⁷ Sancte dei adiuua me. Et tanta improbus instantia aggressus est. [ut etiam] mem|⁸[o]rabilem uirum compelleret trahens puerum. Con[u]ersus ergo sanctus ad d[i]abolum dixit |⁹ Improbissime et animarum corruptor. pater tenebrarum et perditionis. non |¹⁰ sufficit tibi tua perditio. qua te et eos qui sub te sunt affecisti. nisi etiam et dei mei |¹¹ temptes plasma? Diabolus autem dixit ad eum. Preiudicas me basili. ita ut |¹² plurimi ex nobis audirent uoces demonum hec dicentium. clamante |¹³ populo kirieleison. Sanctus autem dei ait ad eum. Increpat dominus diabole. Qui respon|¹⁴dens ait ad eum Basili preiudicas me Non abii ego ad eum. sed ipse uenit |¹⁵ ad me. Abnegauit xristum. et professus est mihi. Et ecce manuscriptum habeo: |¹⁶ et in die iudicii ad communem iudicem eum duco. Sanctus dei dixit. Benedictus |¹⁷ dominus deus meus. non deflectet populus iste manus de altitudine celi donec red|¹⁸das manuscriptum. Et conuertens se dixit populo. Erigite manus uestras in celum. |¹⁹ clamantes cum lacrimis. kirieleison. Et stante populo in horam multam exten|²⁰sas habentes manus in celum; ecce manuscripta pueri per aerem delata. et |²¹ ab omnibus uisa uenit. et imposita est manibus memorabilis nostri patris |²² et pastoris. Susciciens autem eam et gratias agens deo. gausus factus est ualde. |²³ et coram omni populo dixit ad puerum. Cognoscis litterulas has frater? Qui ait ad eum. |²⁴ Etiam sancte dei. manuscripta mea est. Et dirumpens manuscriptam sanctus basilius |²⁵ perduxit eum ad ecclesiam. et dignum fecit sancto ministerio et communioni misteriorum |²⁶ et munerum xristi. Et faciens susceptionem magnam refrigerauit omnem populum. |²⁷ Et ducens puerum ac instruens seu dans ei regulam decentem; reddidit eum |²⁸ mulieri eius intacibili ore glorificantem et laudantem deum amen.

Chapter 13

|²⁹ Enarrauit mihi predictus beatus uir elladius. |³⁰ quia in una dierum splendore diuino illustratus sanctus pater |³¹ basilius exiuit de nostra ciuitate nemini dicens quo deberet pergere. Et egrediens: |³² coram omnibus dixit nobis. Filii mei sequimini me. ut uideatis una mecum |³³ gloriam dei. et ammiremur de discipulis magistrum. postquam ergo exiuit de nostra ciui|³⁴tate communis [noster] pater cognouit et hoc uirtute spiritus sancti p[resbite]r anastasius. |³⁵ et dicit nomine tenus mulieri. sorori autem sue

usu. Ego uado agricolari |³⁶ domina soror. tu surge et orna domum tuam. Et circa horam nonam accipi|³⁷ens thuribulum et cereos obuia sancto basilio archiepiscopo. Venit enim diuer|³⁸ti in domum nostram peccatorum. Illa autem contremiscens in admirabili dictu.

1r1 Miserre...egi] Text omitted between lines 8 and 9, added at top of page by scribe. *Miserre* an error for *miserere*.

1v23 has] added above the line.

1v29 Enarrat] with large, red E. The space at the end of the line contains a faded, red chapter title: *De ana[stasio spirit]al[i] p[re]s[b]i[t]ero*.

1v30 pater] following empty space has sufficient room for *noster et magnus* as per W, G, etc.

A comparison of the twelve Latin manuscripts listed above, as well as the unedited manuscript Brussels, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, cod. sign. 9636–7 [11th c.] = B₂, reveals that there are no major textual deviations, especially considering their geographical and chronological distribution. The Latin leaf from Iceland agrees with now one, now the other. Rarely does Lbs fragm 74 stand alone in omitting a word: *te* (1v13), *noster et magnus* (1v30) (although space has been left for it), or changing a word or its position: *signaculum* for *signum* (1r21) (all mss. use *signaculum* some seven sentences later), *bonus pastor* (1r37) (rev. all other mss.), *ad* for *in* (1v3) (with B₂), *habentes* for *habente* (1v20). Although no single manuscript stands out as being closest to Lbs fragm 74, several vie for that position. Among the few salient examples:

Lbs fragm 74]

1r4 mihi satis] G, V₈, P₅, P₆, N, S

1r12 enarrat] W, G, V₈, P₅, R, O, N, S, P₃, B₂

1r34 et adduxit] W, G, V₈, P₅, P₆, P₃,

R, O, B₁, B₂, A

1v1 coaggerato] W, G, V₈, P₅, P₆, N, S,

R, B₁, B₂, A

1v12 plurimi] W, G, V₈, P₆, R, O, B₁, B₂, A, P₃

1v19 kirieleison] W, P₆, O, A

rev. P₃, R, O, B₁, B₂, A, W

narrat B₁; enarrat A, P₆

÷ N, S

coadunato P₃, O

multi N, S, P₅

christe Kyrie eleison

P₃, N, S, G, V₈, P₅, R, B₁, B₂

1v20 habente(s) manus in celum]	in caelum manus et N,S,P ₅
W,G,V ₈ ,P ₆ ,	
R,O,B ₁ ,B ₂ ,A,P ₃	
1v27 ducens] W,G,R,O,B ₁ ,B ₂ ,P ₃	docens N,S,V ₈ ,P ₅ ,A,P ₆
1v28 intacibili ore] W,G,V ₈ ,P ₅ ,R,B ₁ ,	indesinenter P ₃ ,O,A,P ₆
B ₂ ,N,S	

It should be noted that both N and S conflate chapters 1 and 2 to a single chapter, and that chapter headings in S do not appear consistently. Lbs fragm 74 seems closer to the oldest manuscripts and to those preserved in the South: Vienna, St. Gall, and the Vatican (V₈), though B₂ could perhaps be added to the latter group as well.

A comparison of the *Basilius saga* fragments and the 17-chapter Latin versions not only strengthens the view that the 17-chapter text was indeed used by the Icelandic translator, but also shows that the translator, while following the text, did not adhere slavishly to his source. Entire sentences are often omitted, presumably to move the narrative along. Direct speech is usually kept, which contributes to a lively narrative style, as does the avoidance of Latinisms. The translator often adds explanations that the reader might need, e.g.:

in partes caesariensium civitates=cesaream borg. I þeiri borg var þa
 biskvps stoll heilags basilii (238, 2r17)
 stipatores=manna er hesta hans gættv (238, 2r20)
 ducebatur invictus=ok settiz i myrkvastofv ok fiotra (238, 2r10)
 quae habebant unus quisque eorum in manibus=ok safnaðv af
 gersimvm sinvm ok oðrvm fiarhlvtvm (238, 2v1)

Latin present participles are, of course, reformulated, usually as a simple past: “ostendens=syndi” (238, 2r29), but occasionally as a past perfect: “haec dicens=hafði þetta mællt” (238, 4r28) or as a historical present: “Resurgens=spretr han up” (655, 1v18). At other times the translation can be inexact: “ad consuetas orationes=a bænvm” (238, 4r20); “nusquam comparuit subito=Siðan reið hann i brott sva at vær vissvm ecki hvat af honvm varð” (238, 3r11). Below are four illustrative examples of the translator’s art taken from longer passages that do not contain appreciable omissions.¹⁰

¹⁰ Except for minor graphic variants, the text of *Basilius saga* cited below follows Morgenstern’s edition.

655, 1v14 Enn er basilius com allt fram a iordanar bacca. þa varp han ser niþr á iorþ. oc baþ meþ tarom oc callaði til guþs. at i þæssom atburþ scyldi necqvert tacn vitrasc af himni i hans tru. Siþan spretr han up meþ scialpta oc flęsc or cleþom sinom.oc meþ siqlfom san-nliga þeim cleþom þar meþ fer han or en forna manni.

238, 2r16 [A] þeiri tið er ivlianus gvðniðingr for af velldi sins rikis með lið mikit ok ætlaði til serklands herfor þa kom hann skipastoli sinvm við cesaream borg. I þeiri borg var þa biskvps stoll heilags. basilii. En er ivlianus la þar við land þa for Basilius til motz við hann ok villdi honvm bravð færa. En er ivlianus sa basilius þa mællti hann Ec em þer spakari. Basilius svaraði. Vel væri þa ef þu værir mer spakari. Siðan færði hann ivliano þria bygg hleifa blezaða. En er keisarinn sa hleifanna þa mællti hann til þeira manna er hesta hans gættv.Taki þer hey ok gefit basilio þviat hvartveggia er eykia foðr bygg ok bravð ok hey en ecki konga krafir. Basilius tok við heyinv ok mællti sva

238, 4r20 Ok þa er hvn varð þess vis. at hann var a bænvm þa rann hvn a lavn til kirkio ok kastaði

W10r2 (N,227,7) Basilius autem iuxta ripam factus, proiecit se in humum. et cum lacrimis ac clamore forti, postulat signum reuelari eius fidei. Resurgensque cum tremore, dispoliat se uestimentis suis, et cum ipsis uere uetusto homine.

W15v9 (N,230,2) In illo tempore, iulianus impius imperator pergens aduersus persas. uenit in partes caesariensium civitates. Basilius autem simul cum coessentibus sibi obuiauit ei. Et uidens eum imperator dixit: Super philosophatus sum te, o basili. Qui respondit ei: Utinam philosophareris. Et optulit ei pro benedictione tres hordeacios panes. Imperator autem iussit stipatores suos accipere quidem panes, et reddere ei foenum dicens: Hordeum enim pabulum est iumentorum quod dedit nobis; recipiat et ipse foenum. Qui suscipiens dixit ei

W41v5 (N,243,17) Considerans autem tempus oportunum quando sanctus basilius ad consuetas ora-

ritinv firir fætr honvm. Siðan fell hvn til fota Basilio ok kallaði hatt ok mællti. Miskvnnu þv mer heilagr faðir þvrat ek em ollvm syndvgvm monnvm syndvgri. En sæll kristz þion stoð ok leit til hennar ok spvrði hver savk til veri er hvn var sva hrygg. hvn svaraði. se herna drottinn ek reit allar syndir minar a blaði þessv ok innsiglaða ek sialf. En ek bið þik. heilagr. gvðs. maðr. at þv takir ecki blyit af ritinv

tiones ibat in sanctam ecclesiam, cucurrit clam et proiecit cartam secus pedes eius, et super faciem iactans se ipsam clamabat dicens: Miserere mihi, sancte dei, super omnes peccatrici. Stans autem beatus christi famulus, sciscitabatur ab ea causam doloris. Quae ait: Ecce, domine, omnia peccata mea scripsi in ista carta et iniquitates meas, et sigillaui eam. Tu autem, sancte dei, sigillum amoveas ne

238, 3r14 þa mællti Basilius at taka skilldi fe þat er hann hafði við tekit af borgar monnvm ok skilldi þa hvern taka sitt fe. þa svaraðv allir sem einni roddv ok mællto. Ef vær villdvum davðligvm keisara gefa fe vart til þess at ecki eyddiz borg var. miklv helldr byriar oss at færa þetta fe ihv xpo odavðligvm kongi þvrat hann leysti oss or sva miklvvm haska Þa lofaði Basilius agætliga trv lyðsins. Siðan skipti hann fenv i þria hlvti. þeim sialfvm feck hann einn hlvt þo at þeir villdi varla við taka... pryddi hann alltari ok heilagar kirk...

W20r4 (N,232,26) praecepit omnibus magnus basilius recipere pecuniam Qui una uoce dixerunt ad eum: Si mortali imperatori haec tribuere uoluimus ut non desolaretur nostram ciuitatem. multo magis christo inmortalis imperatori oportet offerre ea, qui tanto interitu nos redemit. [Ecce ergo in manibus tuis sunt omnia; sicut tibi deus iusserit, age.] Qui ammiratus fidelissimi populi magnanimitatem. tertiam partem etiam nolentibus tribuit eis. et de reliquo ornauit omne presbiterium cum ciburio. Altare..

Only a few words can be deciphered on the verso of the second leaf of AM 655 VI 4to: *heilagra manna standa* (2v15), which probably matches the Latin text at W13r14: *stantes...viros gloriosos*. The last word on the next line of the Icelandic text might be *kallandi*, corresponding to *glorificantis* on W13r17. There appears to be a nineteenth, final line which is virtually

illegible, but the final words on the line preceding it appear to be *fyrir þeim oc* 'before them,' which could be a logical continuation of *Exeunte autem Basilio* (W13v3). In any event it is probable that the end of 2v19 would coincide approximately with W13v5.

The most problematic passage is found on the only legible portion of f. 2r in 655, which corresponds to chapter 5 of the *vita*. Both contain the information that Jesus and his apostles appear in church as Basil is making an offering of bread during the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Latin text has Basil place a third of the offered bread into a dove of pure gold hanging above the altar, and he then commissions a smith to fashion a dove of pure gold which he hangs above the altar. The Icelandic text has the Lord note that Basil sings (a hymn?) to the dove (the Holy Spirit). That dove must then be swung above the altar three times in an east-to-west motion (*sólsarsinnis*). Since all the Latin texts, including those not part of the 17-chapter version, note that the golden dove was present above the altar before Basil had a smith fashion a dove at the end of the chapter, it is possible that the Icelandic translator was trying to make sense of this portion of the text. That the dove above the altar is to be swung three times would have been known to the translator since it is mentioned at the beginning of chapter 9. The only verbal similarity on f. 2r identifiable in the Latin versions occurs when Basil eats a portion of the bread: *berghi han meþ micilli brætzslo* (2r14), *communicauit timore multo* (W13r9).

Despite the fact that the first eight lines of the fourth leaf of 238 are quite legible, they present some difficulty. Chapter 16 obviously begins at 4r9 and ends at 4v12, again with the usual deletion from the Latin of whole sentences. The remainder of the leaf translates the beginning of chapter 17. However, the initial eight lines of f. 4r do not correspond to the end of chapter 15, where the Latin text describes the Emperor Valens allowing Basil to take over a church occupied by the Arians. Instead, the Icelandic text matches loosely that on W22v7–23r3, which is found at the end of chapter 11.

22v7–23r3 Ista uidens protector [i.e. Anastasius]. post obitum ualentis, adnuntiauit imperatori ualentiano uirtutes uiri. Ille autem ammirans glorificauit deum. dans ei multam pecuniam per ipsum protectorem in opus egentium, et dimisit eum. Qui magnanimitatem

imperatoris suscipiens. aedificauit domos bene actionales...uirorum et mulierum...Haec audiens imperator. oblationes multas dedit ad nutrimentum eorum (N,233,34–234,42)

4r1–7 þa tok valentinianus keisara velldi eptir valentem. þat er sagt at anastasius greifi sa er fyr var getit sagdi valentiniano fra morgvm dyrðar verkvm Basili. En er keisarinn heyrði krapta verk hans þa tok hann glaðliga gvð at lofa ok sendi anastasivm greifa með mikla fiarhlvti at gefa envm heilaga Basilio með allri vegsemd. Basilius tok við fenv...þa let hann vpp reisa agætliga spitala...karla ok kvenna... En þa er valentinianus fretti þessa til tekiv Basili þa gaf hann til þessa spitala mikil avðæfi

None of this Icelandic text, however, seems to match anything at the corresponding place on the admittedly damaged leaf 3v of 238. Since both chapters 11 and 15 concern Valens and Basil, and since both close with the death of the Emperor, it is possible that Icelandic antiquary interest prompted a repeated explanation of Valens' successor. This conjecture is supported by the Icelandic reference on 4r2 to *anastasius greifi sa er fyr var getit*.

Despite these problematic passages, the Icelandic texts are close enough to the Latin source that one can see where all the fragments fit in to the entire *Vita Basili*. On the badly damaged, unedited first page of 655 it is possible to make out the words *viþ yþr Herra* (1r8), [*h*]elldr hlæja (*blanda?*) (1r11), *portconum* (1r12), *oc preter* (1r14), *ef necqverr af yþ[r]* (1r15), *oc veiter. biþi h[an]* (1r16). These snippets of text match portions of the Latin text in W, bolded below, between ca. 9r8 and 9v3:

ad sublimes *subditionem*, *ad aequales et minores caritatem non fictam; parua dicere, plurima autem intellegere; non temerarios uerbo; non superabundare sermonibus; non faciles esse ad risum; verecundia ornari, cum mulieribus inreuerentibus non disputare, deorsum uisum, sursum habere animam; fugere contradictiones; non magistralem usurpare dignitatem; nihil existimare omnes saeculi honores. Si autem quis ex uobis potest et aliis proficere, apud Deum mercedem expectet.*

Assuming that no appreciable Latin text has been omitted in the Icelandic manuscript, line 1r1 probably began around W9r2, the latter portion of chapter 2. The middle of the last line of 1v: *en forna Manni. þat er dauða i*, matches well with W10r7: *vetusto homine* (middle of ch. 3).

In Morgenstern's edition of the Icelandic fragments, no attempt was made to edit f. 3v or the first five lines of f. 2r in 238. Line 6 and the following lines closely follow the text of chapter 7 in W15r3, just a few lines into the story of Basil's intercession on behalf of a debtor. The initial line of f. 2r begins as follows: *[e]r komin at bvrð...vik segia ma sia hvessv mikils verd voro ord ens heilaga basili*, and seems not only to introduce a story, but also indicates it to be about the importance of Basil's words. Since this short chapter does indeed illustrate the effect of Basil's pronouncements, which a local prince convincingly learns on two occasions, it is logical to assume that 238, 2r1 is introducing the tale that comprises chapter 7 (*De Scriptura quam Mulierculae Fecit*). At 3v20, the name *elladius* is legible and at the end of the next line the name *p[ro]terius* can be made out, which convincingly indicates that chapter 12 (W23r4) began on 3v20.

Given the numerous lacunae and illegible portions of text, the six extant leaves in Iceland have been matched in the chart below with their corresponding positions in the Vienna manuscript of the *Vita Basilii* (W).

A portion of the *Vita Basilii* in chapters 8 and 9, dealing with the death of Julian the Apostate, appears as an independent miracle in two versions of *Mariu saga*, as well as in *Basiliius saga*.¹¹ Although the first version (I) is only 25 lines long in C. R. Unger's edition and contains no information not found in the longer, 100-line version (II), the former ends with the following, tantalizing information about the miracle: *ok er þetta viðá sagt í ritningum ok [þó einkanliga, Version II] í sögu Basiliius byskups*. One could well assume that the "saga" reference would apply to *Basiliius saga*, while the *ritningar* might well refer either to the *Vita Basilii* or to the "Death of Julian" in a collection of Latin miracles. Such collections are, of course, widespread, and an excellent example of the story of Emperor Julian's death can be found in London, British Museum, Cotton Cleopatra C.x.¹²

11 *Mariu saga: Legender om jomfru Maria og hendes jertegn*, ed. C. R. Unger (Oslo: [n.p.], 1871), 72–73, 699–702; 238, 2r16–2v26.

12 *Die lateinischen Vorlagen zu den alt-französischen Adgar'schen Marienlegenden*, ed. Carl Neuhaus (Aschersleben: H.C. Bestehorn, 1886), 23–25.

Mss. in Iceland		Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 4635 Han		
Ms. Sig.	Page & Line	Page & Line	Chapter Number	Chapter Heading
		1v1	prologus	Amfilochii Episcopi Iconii in Vita Miraculis Sancti Patris Nostri Basilii Archiepiscopi Cappadociae
		3r3	Cap. 1	De Tempore quo Doctrinae Vacavit et Conversione Magistri sui Euboli [Concerning the Period of his Education and the Conversion of his Teacher Eubolus]
	1r1	7v5 (9r2)	Cap. 2	De Adventu Eius Antiochiam [Concerning his Arrival in Antioch]
AM 655 VI 4to	1v20	9v7 10r7	Cap. 3	Quomodo Baptizatus est in Jordane [How he was Baptized in the Jordan]
		10v14	Cap. 4	Quomodo Diaconii Gradum Antiochiae Suscepit et apud Caesaream Divina Revelatione Innotuit [How he Received the Rank of Deacon at Antioch, and Became Known Through a Divine Revelation at Caesarea]
AM 655 VI 4to	2r1 2v19	12r4 (12v7) (13v5)	Cap. 5	Quomodo Episcopus Factus Missam Composuit et Salvatorem Nostrum cum Apostolis Vidit [How, after Becoming a Bishop, he Composed a Liturgy and Saw our Savior with the Apostles]
		14r5	Cap. 6	De Hebreo qui Vidit Infantem Partiri in Manibus Basilii Tempore Sancti Sacrificii [Concerning a Jew who Saw an Infant Divided in the Hands of Basil at the Time of the Holy Sacrifice]
	2r1	14v11 14v14	Cap. 7	De Scriptura quam Mulierculae Fecit [Concerning the Letter that he Wrote for a Girl]
		15v6	Cap. 8	De Mistica Satis Revelatione et Morte Apostatae Juliani [Concerning a Highly Mystical Revelation and the Death of Julian the Apostate]

Mss. in Iceland		Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Ser. n. 4635 Han		
Ms. Sig.	Page & Line	Page & Line	Chapter Number	Chapter Heading
AM 238 II fol.		18v13	Cap. 9.	Quomodo Sancti Spiritus Adventum Vidit et de Quodam Diacono et de Libanio Sofista [How he Saw the Arrival of the Holy Spirit, and Concerning a Certain Deacon and Libanius the Sophist]
		20v3	Cap. 10	De Quibusdam Gentilibus et Interpretatione Exameri [Concerning Certain Pagans, and his Sermon on the Six Days of Creation]
		21r1	Cap. 11	Quomodo Ductus est Antiochiam et de* Filio Valentis [How he was Led to Antioch and Concerning the Son of Valens]
	3v33 1r1	23r4 23v13 26v15	Cap. 12	De Negante Christum Scripto [Concerning a Document Denying Christ]
Lbs fragm 74	1v38	30v2 31r3	Cap. 13	De Anastasio Spirituali Presbitero [Concerning the Holy Priest Anastasius]
		33v14	Cap. 14	De Beato Patre Nostro Effrem [Concerning our Blessed Father Ephrem]
		37r4	Cap. 15	De Valente Deo Odibili [Concerning Valens, a Man Hateful to God]
AM 238 II fol.	4r9	40v9	Cap. 16	De Muliere cuius Peccata per Oracionem Delevit [Concerning a Woman whose Sins he Wiped Away through Prayer]
	4v32	44r12 45v13	Cap. 17	De Ioseph Hebreo [Concerning Joseph, a Jew]
		48r16-20		Explicit Vita Beatissimi Basilii Archiepiscopi

* The addition of *Valente* here is an obvious error, but one that is also found in mss. B₁, B₂ and V8.

However, there are passages in the independent Icelandic miracle (the longer Version II listed below with page and line from Unger's edition) that could not have come from the *saga* (with ms. page and line).¹³ These are given below, followed by *Basilius saga* (p. and l.), the *vita* (Vienna ms. 4635 =W, + p. and l. ref. in Corona's *Ælfric*=N), and the independent miracle from Cotton Cleopatra C.x.=C (Neuhaus' edition p. and l.).

II,699,17	for til bardaga mot Persis
saga, 2r16	ætlaði til serklands
W15v10 (N230,2)	aduersus persas uenit
C23,42–43	aduersus Persas Caesaream
	Cappadociae deuenisset
II,700,26	aa fiallinv
saga, 2v8	---
W17r16 (N,231,33)	in monte
C24,28	totum montem
II,701,2–3	þuilika vitran vm dauda Juliani
	sa Libanius sophistoquestor
	ath tign, sem hann var i Perside
saga, 2v15	las hann davða iuliani niðings
W17v17–18r3	Similem uero uisionem mortis iuliani
(N,231,44)	uidit ipsa nocte et libanius sophista
	cum esset cum eo in perside.
	et quaestoris dignitatem perageret.
C24,34–36	Non imparem uero uisionem uidit
	et Libanius sophista dum esset cum
	tiranno in Persida. quaestoris
	officium exequens.

With regard to the relationship of the Icelandic miracle to the *Vita Basilii*, there are instances where the *vita* contains readings closer to Version II

- 13 Nor could it have derived from the better-known version in the *Legenda Aurea*. Aside from obvious textual differences, the arrival of the *Legenda Aurea* in Iceland doubtless postdates the oldest Icelandic manuscript 655. Jacobus a Voragine, *Legenda aurea vulgo Historia Lombardica dicta*, ed. Johann Graesse, 3rd edn. (1890; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1965), 144–45.

than does the Latin miracle (C). Basil's disrespectful reply to Emperor Julian's boast about being a better philosopher than Basil (*Utinam philosophareris* W15v15; N230,5) is reflected in the Icelandic miracle (*Gud villdi, at þu kendizt við sanna speki* II,699,24), but the Latin miracle offers no corresponding passage. C is likewise silent where Julian accuses Basil of urging the people to break the statue of the goddess worshipped by the emperor (W16r17–16v3; N230,5) and Version II has the emperor accuse Basil of breaking his command and of ridiculing the goddess Diana (II,700,3–5). When Julian's *quaestor*, Libanius, arrives in person to report on Mercurius' deadly attack (W19v4, N232,16; II,701,21), the miracle only notes: *Refertur autem in tripartita historia* C25,3). The miracle omits a paragraph found in chapter 9 of the *vita*, in which Basil attempts to restore to the people their donations, and the assassinated emperor is mocked by the populace of Antioch. The text in Version II at 702,6–17 corresponds closely to the text in chapter 9 of the *vita* (W20r,6; N232,28). Other examples showing the affinity of the *vita* and Version II vis-à-vis the independent miracle include the following:

II,700,8	sagdi þeim ord keisarans
W16v7 (N230,19)	narravit ei imperatoris uerba
C24,15	---
II,701,14	at aa þeiri sǫmu nott mundi hinn
	grimmi konungr Julianus vera drepinn
W18v5 (N,231,56)	quia ista nocte interfectus est tyrannus
C24,45	---

Although it is clear that the detailed text of the independent miracle could not have been copied from the loosely narrated Icelandic miracle in *Mariú saga*, there do exist a few examples where the independent, Latin miracle is closer to Version II than is the *Vita Basili*. The somewhat surprising remark in the Icelandic miracle that Basil had gone to school with the emperor (*er fyrrvum hafdi verit hans skolabrodir* II,699,20–21) is found in this context only in C24,2–4, *erant enim prius in iuuenili aetate conscolastici cum Libanio sophista sub praeceptore Graeciae Eubalo*.¹⁴ Other examples where

14 The fact that Basil and Julian, a Christian at the time, attended school together is, however, mentioned at the beginning of chapter 1.

the independent Latin miracle, rather than the *vita*, is closer to version II are:

W17r14 (N,231,33)	in uisu
II,700,26	in suefni
C24,27	in somnis
W19v15–16 (N,232,23)	cum blasphemia clamorem
II,701,31	Sigradir þu enn galuerski, sigradir þu
C25,11–12	Vicisti Nazarene. uicisti

None of the versions discussed here could have been the immediate source for the Icelandic miracle, although the version in the *vita* is very close.¹⁵ Given how relatively little the manuscripts of the Euphemian *Vita Basilii* differ from one another, it is unlikely that some manuscripts of the Euphemian translation served as the source for the Icelandic miracle. The statement in the Latin miracle: *Refertur autem in tripartita historia* (C25,3) would lead to the expectation that the *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita* by Epiphanius-Cassiodorus¹⁶ could be the source, but this turns out not to be the case. It is quite plausible, however, that an older, independent story of the *Death of Julian* was so much closer to the *vita* that it served as the source for the tale in the *Cleopatra* manuscript as well as for chapters 8 and 9 of the Euphemian *Vita Basilii* (and quite probably of the obviously related version in the *Legenda Aurea*).

It is also unlikely that any of the versions of the *Vita Basilii* discussed above is indebted to the *Vitae Patrum*, a chronicle of church fathers that was very popular in the Middle Ages.¹⁷ That collection reached Iceland and

15 Cf. Peter Jorgensen, “Julian the Apostate and Manuscript Relatedness in *Mariu saga*,” in *Across the Oceans: Studies from East to West in Honor of Richard K. Seymour*, ed. Irmengard Rauch and Cornelia Moore (Honolulu: College of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature, University of Hawaii, 1995), 113–23.

16 Cassiodorus-Epiphanius, *Historia Ecclesiastica Tripartita*, eds. Waltarius Jacob and Rudolphus Hanslik, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, vol. 71 (Vindobonae: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1952).

17 *Vitae Patrum*, ed. Heribert Rosweyde (1615/1628; repr. *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series latina*, ed. J. P. Migne, vols. 73, 74, Paris: Migne, 1844–65).

was translated into the vernacular,¹⁸ with the oldest Icelandic manuscript dating to around 1340.¹⁹ An inventory dated 1461 from the monastery at Möðruvellir lists both a Latin and a vernacular version.²⁰ The (admittedly fragmentary) Icelandic version of the *Vitae Patrum* does not contain a *Vita Basilii*, and the Latin recension of the *Vitae patrum* that might once have served as its source matches poorly with Lbs fragm 74. The definitive textual transmission of the *Vitae Patrum* remains to be written, but the Rosweyidian text, which serves as the basis for modern scholarship, relies for its *Vita Basilii* on a translation from the Greek by Ursus, *BHL* number 1022, whereas Lbs fragm 74 follows the translation by Euphemius, number 1023 in the *BHL*.²¹

It does not appear that St. Basil served as the patron saint for any of Iceland's churches or monasteries,²² which removes any obvious candidates for the site of the original translation of Basil's life into Icelandic. The only church inventories to list material related to St. Basil are those of the monastery at Möðruvellir and of the churches at Kolbeinsstaðir and Búrfell. The copious holdings of Möðruvellir list numerous books with Latin titles, but under the rubric *Þessar norræn v bækur* is listed *basilius saga*. The very modest inventory at Kolbeinsstaðir lists *eina Sögubok og er þar a Nichulas saga. Ambrosius saga oc Basilius saga*, and the lives of the first two saints are known to exist in Icelandic.²³ The church at Búrfell lists *v. Mariuskript. Basiliusskriptt*,²⁴ which, in this context, is probably a pictorial representation, since, though *skript* could mean a writ or scripture, *ritning* would be the more usual term.

18 *Heilagra manna sögur. Fortællinger og legender om hellige mænd og kvinder efter gamle haandskrifter*, ed. C. R. Unger, 2 vols. (Oslo: [n.p.], 1877).

19 Wolf, *The Legends of the Saints*, 394.

20 *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. 5 (Copenhagen and Reykjavik: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1899–1902), 288–90.

21 Nor does there appear to be a direct relationship between *Basilius saga* and the Old Swedish *Sagan om S. Basilius*, printed in *Ett forn-svenskt legendarium, innehållande medeltids kloster-sagor om helgon, påfvar och kejsare ifrån det I:sta till det xiii:de århundradet efter gamla handskrifter*, edited by George Stephens, vol. 1, *Samlingar utgivna af Svenska fornskriftsällskapet*, vol. 7 (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1847), 601–605.

22 Margaret Cormack, *The Saints in Iceland: Their Veneration from the Conversion to 1400*, *Subsidia Hagiographica*, vol. 78 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1994).

23 *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, vol. 4 (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1895), 182.

24 *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, 4:90.

Had it not been for the use of vellum leaves taken from manuscripts to protect books and papers after the advent of the printing press, the only record of the life of St. Basil in Iceland would have been Basil's name listed in conjunction with unknown books in several church inventories, and the story of his interaction with Julian the Apostate from addenda to *Mariu saga*, though even that tale owes its presence in Iceland rather to the figure of Mary than to St. Basil. The five badly damaged leaves of *Basilius saga*, of which fewer than seven pages could be edited, presented a tantalizing, but incomplete picture of Basil the Great in Icelandic literary history. With the editing of Lbs fragm 74, this article demonstrates that a common, but long overlooked, version of the *Vita Basilii* made its way to Iceland and served as the source for the vernacular version, probably around the beginning of the thirteenth century. A comparison of *Basilius saga* with the Latin source shows us how much of the Icelandic text has been lost and gives us a glimpse of the Icelandic translator's *modus operandi*. Finally, as this article has shown, neither *Basilius saga* nor the Latin manuscript of the *Vita Basilii* that made its way to Iceland could have served as the source for the Icelandic miracle about the death of Emperor Julian that is appended to *Mariu saga*.

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EFNISÁGRIP

Heilagur Basilius á Íslandi.

Lykilorð: Heilagur Basilius, *Basilius saga*, *Vita Basili*, Júlían keisari, Eufemíus.

Í þessari grein er í fyrsta sinn gefinn út latneskur texti um heilagan Basilius eftir skinnbrotinu Lbs fragm 74, sem var áður ókannað. Samanburður brotsins við fjölmörg handrit sem varðveita lífssögu Basiliusar, *Vita Basili*, í heild sinni sýnir að textinn er náskyldur áður útbreiddri en lítt þekktri þýðingu Efemíusar frá níundu öld e.Kr. á grískri lífssögu Basiliusar, sem var eignuð Amfilókíos samtímamanni Basiliusar en er mun yngra verk. Þau fimm blöð sem enn eru til af hinni norrænu *Basilius sögu* – sem aðeins er varðveitt í slitrum – eru hér borin saman við *Vita Basili*. Greinin sýnir einnig fram á að frásögnin af dauða Júlíanusar keisara sem varðveitt er bæði í *Vita Basili* og *Basilius sögu* getur ekki verið fyrirmynd jarteina-sögu um dauða keisarans sem varðveitt er í tveimur gerðum meðal jarteina sem fylgja *Mariu sögu*. Líklegt er að sjálfstæð Mariujartein um dauða Júlíanusar keisara hafi verið til og að sú frásögn hafi verið heimild 8. og 9. kafla í *Vita Basili* og síðan *Basilius sögu*.

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