

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF GREGORY OF  
NAZIANZUS

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## Abstract

This thesis comprises the first full-length study of Gregory of Nazianzus's theology of the Holy Spirit. Gregory was a major political and intellectual figure during the pneumatological controversies of the late Fourth Century. Gregory is the first author whose works are extant to declare that “the Holy Spirit is God” in so many words. He advocated, against leading figures including Basil of Caesarea, that such a declaration should be made by the Church, but largely met with failure in his lifetime. Yet, Gregory's affirmation of the Spirit's divinity was eventually to be embraced by nearly all Christians, and it remains so today. Despite these facts, Gregory is usually treated by historians as a minor influence on Fourth Century pneumatology. This thesis will not necessarily challenge this assessment, but will seek to establish a fuller understanding of how Gregory's pneumatology functions in itself such that his historical place can be reassessed in the future.

Our key observation is that Gregory's pneumatology is rooted in his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. A discussion of Gregory's ecclesiological pneumatology comprises Part I. Having presented Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church, and his understanding of his own place within this relationship, we explore, in Part II, some of the texts in which Gregory argues for his pneumatological doctrine in the face of various opponents. We note that Gregory remains consistently concerned with ecclesiology when engaging other thinkers on the Spirit. We conclude that when Gregory's ecclesiological pneumatology is accounted for, his reactions to the pneumatological controversies of his day appear as consistent, pastorally motivated responses to concerns about the Church's relationship to the Holy Spirit and the preaching of pneumatological truth which Gregory thought this relationship demanded.

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## List of Abbreviations

Carm.	Gregory's Poetry, editions noted in bibliography
DVS	<i>De Vita Sua</i> ; Carm. 1.2.11
Ep.	Gregory's Letters, editions noted in bibliography
H.E.	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Lampe	G. W. H. Lampe Patristic Greek Lexicon
LSJ	Liddel-Scott-Jones Greek Lexicon
NPNF	Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Series
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
Or.	Gregory's Orations, editions noted in bibliography
SC	Sources Chrétiennes Series

## Introduction

*Brother clergy, I have nearly been killed by envy!  
From the edge of morning until sunset, my misfortune  
(when it came from enemies or from friends) you applauded.  
But let me lay out a parting message to you all.  
If someone else succeeds against me, you'll honour him;  
but the Spirit is holy to me, his advocate.  
For I am by no means standing in the no-man's land of this battle.<sup>1</sup>*

Discussions of Gregory of Nazianzus' theology of the Holy Spirit most often appear as little more than footnotes in assessments of the “Cappadocian” approach to pneumatology which focus on Basil of Caesarea, and to a slightly lesser extent on Gregory of Nyssa. This, it is generally accepted, is because Gregory of Nazianzus was not very different in his approach to the Spirit from either of his two friends. With his usual succinctness R. P. C. Hanson summarizes the typical position on Gregory's theology of the Spirit by saying that Gregory's “conception of the Spirit's function is, of course, much the same as that of Basil.”<sup>2</sup> Christopher Beeley argues that Gregory “played the leading role in reestablishing the Spirit's key position in subsequent Christian theology, and defined what soon became the orthodox doctrine of the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, for Beeley, Gregory's

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1 *Carm.* 2.1.7. All translations my own unless otherwise noted. English translations listed in the bibliography have been consulted. All Greek editions are as noted in the bibliography. Translations of Gregory's verbatim scriptural quotations are from the NRSV. Scriptural allusions and loose references to scripture will be translated in the form in which they appear in Gregory's works. Where Septuagint readings appear in Gregory's works, they will be translated in the form in which they appear. For a complete discussion of the manuscript history of the Gregorian corpus see Somers, *Histoire des Collections Complètes des Discours de Grégoire de Nazianze*, passim.

2 Hanson, *In Search of the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 782.

3 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 155.

contribution was more rhetorical and circumstantial than anything else.<sup>4</sup> Anthony Meredith concludes that Gregory's only significant contribution to Fourth Century pneumatology was his argument for a three-stage revelation of God proceeding from the revelation of the Father (in the Old Testament) to that of the Son (in the New Testament) and finally to that of the Holy Spirit (in the present).<sup>5</sup> Yet, Meredith elsewhere says in regards even to this innovation on Gregory's part that "Gregory does not seem to have been much influenced by it in his understanding of the life of the Spirit, in which there is little to distinguish his position from that of Origen and Basil."<sup>6</sup> From the point of view of most modern scholars, it seems, Gregory maintained a pneumatology well in line with his immediate contemporaries, and added little, if anything, of theological significance to Fourth Century orthodox theology of the Spirit.

Yet, while Gregory has been treated by theological historians as a minor influence on Fourth Century pneumatology, Gregory's career and writings suggest that he did not necessarily see himself this way. As is well known, Gregory engaged in serious debate with a number of Fourth Century groups whose views on the Spirit he rejected. Most well-recognized has been Gregory's critique, especially in *Oration 31*, of the so-called Pneumatomachians, along with the Eunomians, both of which groups Gregory criticizes for not accepting the divinity of the Spirit.<sup>7</sup> And Gregory also had much to critique in the pneumatologies of some of his closest friends and allies. For instance, Gregory's correspondence with his best friend, Basil of Caesarea, reveals a serious disagreement between the two men on the topic of whether the Church should declare that "the Spirit is God" in such certain terms.<sup>8</sup> What is more, Jean Bernardi has argued that Gregory's insistence on the Church's proclamation that the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father was the fundamental cause of a rift which arose between Gregory and the bishops of the pro-Nicene Council of Constantinople in 381, over which

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4 Beeley, "The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen," passim.

5 Meredith, "The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers," p. 197. See also Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, p. 261.

6 Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, p. 46.

7 See Norris, "Gregory Nazianzen's Opponents in *Oration 31*," passim; Beeley, "The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen," passim.

8 See the discussion of *Eps.* 58 and 59 in Chapter 5 below.

Gregory briefly presided.<sup>9</sup> After Gregory resigned in frustration, the Council would adjourn having produced a creed which, according to the description of John McGuckin, “represents all that Gregory took objection to” with regard to the pneumatological proposals discussed by the bishops there.<sup>10</sup> Gregory remained deeply aggrieved regarding the proceedings of the Council for the rest of his life. For Gregory, the differences which he saw between his own understanding of the Spirit and the approaches of his contemporary Christians, whether friend or foe, were worth fighting for, even at substantial cost to himself.

All this ought to make us curious about Gregory's point of view when it comes to the pneumatological developments of the Fourth Century. While Gregory may not have been a particularly innovative thinker on the topic of the Spirit, the fact that he sought to influence several of the important pneumatological debates of his time, and argued with vigour against thinkers both within and outside of the Eastern Nicene camp regarding pneumatology, makes him a potentially important witness to the nature and development of late Fourth Century theologies of the Spirit. Yet, the state of current scholarship makes it difficult to explore Fourth Century pneumatology as Gregory saw it. This is because, as of yet, no full-length study has appeared which treats Gregory's theology of the Spirit in itself, as it is presented in his writings. Indeed, with the exception of two recent and closely related treatments by Beeley focusing on Gregory's *Oration 31: On the Holy Spirit*,<sup>11</sup> little work of any kind has been done on Gregory's theology of the Spirit. Scholars have not yet explored at length the questions of how Gregory viewed his own pneumatology, where he thought it differed from that of other Christians, and, most of all, why he thought those differences were important. It is time to ask what the pneumatological landscape

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9 Bernardi, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, pp. 222-228. Gautier, *Le retraite et le sacerdoce*, pp. 388-402, disagrees with this assessment, arguing instead that it was Gregory's use of the phrase, “the Spirit is God” which caused Gregory's problems at the Council. More will be said on this topic in Chapter 6.

10 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 367.

11 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 153-186; Beeley, “The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen,” *passim*. Beeley is quick to note the pressing need for further scholarship on Gregory's pneumatology.

of the Fourth Century looked like from Gregory's point of view, and why and how he understood himself to play a role in shaping that landscape.

We should summarize what is well known about Gregory's pneumatology. Gregory is the first author in whose extant works it is declared that “the Spirit is God” in these explicit terms. He is also among the first generation of authors to state that the Spirit, like the Son, is *homoousios* with the Father. These two closely related formulations are the hallmarks of his theology of the Spirit. Gregory, as any scholar of the Early Church will already be aware, believed in the unqualified divinity of the Holy Spirit, and argued vigorously in favour of this belief with any Christian whose theology he thought challenged it. These facts require little if any further discussion beyond what other scholars have already provided.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, what this study will explore is not, in essence, Gregory's final doctrinal formulations on the subject of the Spirit which, when they are not identical to those of his predecessors, can be summarized, as we have just seen, in very few words. Rather, we will examine how Gregory construed the importance of the question of pneumatology, and how he responded to some of the pneumatological errors which he perceived to exist among Christians of his day. What we will argue is that Gregory's chief pneumatological concerns all centre on the question of how the Spirit relates to the Church. For Gregory, it is through the Church that the Spirit participates in guiding and teaching Christians, making baptism efficacious, and opening up the possibility of *theosis*. However, Gregory does not generally discuss the Spirit's relationship to the Church theoretically. Instead, he emphasizes his own personal place within this relationship. Gregory makes it clear that he understands himself to be a Christian leader ordained by the Spirit, and thus a pastor and teacher. By working as such a leader, he participates in the process whereby the Spirit guides other Christians.

Thus, we will conclude that Gregory saw his contribution to Fourth Century pneumatology as one in which he struggled against various opponents in order to participate in the Spirit's guidance of the Church to a full confession of the Spirit's divinity, without which he thought *theosis* impossible and baptism ineffective. Though they may appear insignificant to the eyes of modern scholars, the pneumatological battles in which Gregory found himself embroiled were,

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, McGuckin, “Perceiving Light,” pp. 20-21.

from his point of view, of tremendous importance in light of his pneumatological ecclesiology.

In Part I, we will explore Gregory's pneumatological ecclesiology in detail by assessing passages taken from throughout his orations, letters and poems. In Chapter 1 we will examine some of Gregory's general discussions of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. We will see that, for Gregory, the Spirit plays a critical role in helping to structure the Church, especially by appointing certain kinds of leaders, such as pastors and teachers, ordaining at least some of those leaders as priests and bishops, and working with them to make the Church the dwelling place of Christ for the illumination of individual Christians. In Chapter 2, we will explore Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to baptism. We will see that, for Gregory, the Spirit is the divine presence in baptism. Moreover, for Gregory, if baptism is to be efficacious, Christians must confess the divinity of the Holy Spirit when they are baptized. In Chapter 3 we will explore Gregory's many discussions of his own relationship to the Spirit. Here we will see that Gregory says in his writings that despite his own desire to live a private life, he understands it to be the Spirit's will that he live the public life of an ordained Christian leader, pastor and teacher. Gregory believes that the Spirit guides his discourse, and that the Spirit wills that he use his rhetorical skills to teach truth in public, especially to help guide Christians to a right confession of the Trinity at baptism.

Because Gregory understands part of his role in the Church to involve engaging in discourse, guided by the Spirit, in order to teach, his writings themselves constitute the extant records of his attempts to participate in what he understood to be the Spirit's relationship to the Church. Gregory generally focuses in his writings on addressing specific errors which he sees in the pneumatological positions of those around him. In particular, Gregory responds at length to two groups. First are the pneumatomachians, a Fourth Century group which denied the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Second are a group which we will term the “non-proclaimers.” This group comprised a number of pro-Nicene theologians of Gregory's time who, though they may have privately believed in the Spirit's divinity, refused to declare openly that “the Spirit is God.” Gregory

counts his friend Basil of Caesarea and the bishops of the Council of Constantinople among this group.

Thus, in Part II, we will explore several of Gregory's orations, poems and letters as records of his attempts to persuade his contemporaries to what he understood to be a correct confession of pneumatological truth. Part II will comprise three chapters. In Chapter 4 we will explore *Oration 31*, Gregory's most famous discussion of the Holy Spirit, at length. We will examine Gregory's responses, in the oration, to the pneumatomachians. In Chapter 5, we will explore Gregory's *Epistles 58 and 59*, *Oration 43*, *Oration 42* and his poem, *De Vita Sua* with an eye towards the passages in these texts in which Gregory addresses the problem of the non-proclaimers. The Chapter will help to bring into focus a pneumatological conflict of the Fourth Century which has been largely neglected by modern scholars. In Chapter 6 we will explore two of Gregory's extended responses to the non-proclaimers. These are found in certain sections of *Oration 31*, a text which we will revisit, and throughout *Oration 41*. We will see that, for Gregory, the problem of the non-proclaimers involves their failure, in his eyes, to participate fully in the Spirit's relationship to the Church.

For Gregory, by the late Fourth Century the time had come for the Church to declare openly that “the Spirit is God.” He believed this not merely because he thought such a declaration to be true, but rather because his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church caused him to conclude that such a declaration had become absolutely necessary if the Church were to be a place wherein *theosis* and efficacious baptism could occur. While Gregory seems to have sought to make little further contribution to Christian pneumatology beyond advocating for the acceptance of his famous phrase, he also thought, on the basis of his ecclesiological pneumatology, that the *theosis* of all Christians hung in the balance should the Church fail to declare in so many words that “the Spirit is God.”

The basic method of this study will involve careful reading of Gregory's extant written works with an emphasis on what they say about the Holy Spirit and other topics closely related to Gregory's pneumatology. Here, Gregory will be treated as a historically important theologian, and his writings on the Holy Spirit

will be interpreted with the primary goal of understanding their theological structure, context and content. This is not to say that Gregory was not, in his lifetime, very much a politician, son, brother, student and country gentleman among other things.<sup>13</sup> However, as much as political and personal issues motivate much of what Gregory writes, he is also often driven by real theological concerns and doctrinal interests. Gregory is not just a theologian – but he is that. It is his theological thought regarding the Spirit which we will attempt to explicate here.

The reader may notice that with the notable exception of our treatment of those works written by Gregory in response to the Council of Constantinople, 381, the historical context of Gregory's writings is often treated as of secondary importance in our explorations of Gregory's writings. Moreover, while Gregory worked in three primary genres, namely oration, poetry and epistolary, the problem of genre in Gregory's works is not treated systematically here, and only occasionally constitutes an important area of enquiry for us. It will further be noted that development within Gregory's pneumatology is not addressed below. As we read Gregory's works, we will treat passages topically rather than chronologically, and Gregory's corpus will be treated as a whole wherein, on the topic of the Spirit at least, no significant development exists.

There are several important justifications for our decision to minimize discussions of context, genre and development. First, the issues of context and genre have preoccupied scholars of Gregory for several decades, and a large body of excellent scholarship already exists on both topics.<sup>14</sup> Second, much of the work

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13 On Gregory's life in politics, see especially Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, passim. On his family life in Nazianzus see Van Dam, *Families and Friends*, passim.

14 There exist an exceptional number of works devoted to descriptions and discussions of Gregory's life and career, as well as the political and social context in which he wrote. See, for example, McGuckin, *Saint Gregory Nazianzus*, passim., Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 1-61., Elm, *Sons of Hellenism*, passim., Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, passim., Van Dam, *Kingdom of Snow*, passim. The topic of genre and style is perhaps the most thoroughly treated by scholars of Gregory. See, for example, Demoen, "The Attitude," passim., Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla*, passim., Efthymiadis, "Two Gregories and Three Genres," passim., Guignet, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze et la Rhétorique*, passim., Hägg, "Playing with Expectations," passim., McGuckin, "Autobiography as Apologia," passim., McGuckin, "Gregory: The Rhetorician as Poet," passim., McLynn, "A Self-Made Holy Man," passim., Milovanovic-Barham, "Gregory of Nazianzus' Ars Poetica," passim.

which has been devoted to dating and contextualizing Gregory's orations, letters and poems relies on assumptions regarding the theological and even the specifically pneumatological content of these documents. As a result, giving an interpretive primacy to the context of any of Gregory's texts can sometimes amount to question-begging.<sup>15</sup> It is our hope that by establishing the best readings of Gregory's pneumatological texts as they appear in themselves, this work will be of service to the continued project of dating and contextualizing Gregory's writings. Third, and most important for us here, Gregory's works, when they deal with the Holy Spirit or most any theological topic, maintain a remarkable level of consistency and unity throughout his corpus. While it is inconceivable that considerations like Gregory's intended audience, or the time and place in which he wrote a sermon or poem would not have influenced Gregory's way of taking up a topic like the theology of the Holy Spirit, it remains clear that when Gregory does discuss the Spirit his treatments thereof maintain a basic stable shape regardless of the context or time in which he is writings or speaking.<sup>16</sup>

There are two possible reasons why this is the case. The first is that Gregory had already established his mature doctrine of the Spirit before he began his career of preaching and writing. The second, and perhaps more likely explanation, is that Gregory smoothed over any pneumatological inconsistencies which may have existed in his writings during his retirement. Gregory, it is well known, edited his sermons with the deliberate intention of publishing them as a form of apologetic in favour of his doctrinal and political positions,<sup>17</sup> and he did so during the period of his life in which he was composing most of his letters and poems.<sup>18</sup> Among Gregory's important doctrinal commitments is, of course, the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Gregory certainly had the opportunity, as well as a strong motive, for making especially sure that his discussions of the Holy

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15 See for example the problem of *Or.* 41 discussed by Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, pp. 202-204 and in n. 384 on p. 201.

16 Bernardi, *La prédication*, p. 258 sees a pervasive unity and deliberate architecture imbued in the Gregorian corpus by Gregory himself prior to the publication of his works.

17 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 1, n. 2; pp. 394-396.

18 For the dates of Gregory's letters, see notes on the individual letters in Gallay, *St. Grégoire de Nazianze Lettres*, 1964. For some discussion of the dates of Gregory's poems, see McGuckin, "Gregory: The Rhetorician as Poet," pp. 202-203.

Spirit were consistent throughout his writings, polishing his older sermons delivered in Nazianzus to match his pneumatology as he presented it later in Constantinople, and working with this same late pneumatology in mind while composing his letters and poems during his retirement. All told, when reading Gregory's works which deal with the Holy Spirit, we encounter Gregory's mature pneumatology as it had come to exist at the end of his career. The theologian whom we encounter in Gregory's works is, in essence, Gregory in retirement at Nazianzus, even when reading pieces ostensibly delivered years before or in Constantinople.

We should note that when assessing Gregory's theology, it is impossible to rely on the Theologian to use terminology with rigid consistency, to defend each of his potentially controversial positions, or to explain the reasoning behind his formulations and opinions. Gregory simply does not write with the intention of presenting a systematic treatment of any topic.<sup>19</sup> This is not to say that Gregory's writings on the Spirit are inconsistent (much the contrary as we have just explained). It is rather to note that Gregory's works are topical and occasional, that his vocabulary is fluid, and that he often ignores the potential for critique of his positions. In light of these facts, we will attempt, as much as possible, to trace patterns and consistencies in Gregory's thought without trying to make these patterns into a system. We will accept that at times it will not be possible to know why Gregory has arrived at a certain position. We will use, as often as possible, the same fluid vocabulary which Gregory uses to talk about his ideas, even at the expense of succinct English constructions. We will try to avoid importing terms into Gregory's thought which he does not himself anywhere use. Most of all, we will quote Gregory often and at length so that his voice may come through as clearly as possible.

In a similar vein, a brief word is warranted with regard to Gregory's treatment of scripture in his writings. The question of Gregory's approach to exegesis is in serious need of a full-length scholarly treatment. There can be little

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19 Norris, "Gregory Contemplating the Beautiful," *passim*, serves as an excellent assessment of the gap between modern theological and scholarly expectations and the theological approach of Gregory. Norris frames this gap as one of the key reasons for Gregory's being neglected by Western Christian theologians and scholars.

doubt in the mind of anyone who has read Gregory's works that his command of biblical literature is impressive to say the least. And yet, Gregory almost never engages in systematic exegesis of any passage in scripture, which is to say he virtually never proceeds by beginning with a direct quotation and explaining to his audience what he thinks the passage means. Yet, it appears to be the case, as the many passages quoted below will demonstrate, that Gregory has certain consistent exegetical sensibilities nonetheless. For instance, Gregory's works often reveal that he most values broad readings of scripture, and theological conclusions which are based on the bible considered as a complete and unified whole. In contrast, Gregory often characterizes his opponents as nit-pickers only interested in examining isolated proof-texts as a means of drawing conclusions about God.

Perhaps it is for the purpose of emphasizing his holistic reading of scripture that Gregory seeks to saturate everything he writes with scriptural references and allusions. At times this practice attains to so high a level that his orations and many of his poems become little more than long masterful catenas of biblical passages. Yet, while scripture is everywhere in Gregory's writings, he rarely spells out the connections which he sees between his many scriptural allusions and his pneumatology. In our treatment of Gregory's use of scripture we will attempt, as much as possible, to allow the shape of his approach to the bible to remain in tact as we comment on his theology of the Spirit. What this means for us is that scriptural allusions and quotations will be noted whenever beneficial to the reader, but may not always be discussed explicitly in any subsequent comments. In this way we hope to make clear the scriptural sources of Gregory's pneumatology in much the same way that he himself does, through allusion and reference more often than through explicit explanation.

We must note that this study will rarely treat the problem of Gregory's influence and influences. This is in part because the question of Gregory's pneumatological influences, to the extent that it has been addressed, seems to be growing more complicated all the time. For example, the question of the real relationship between Gregory's pneumatology and that of Athanasius has been reopened by Beeley's recent work calling into question Gregory's knowledge of

Athanasius' writings.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the problem of what relationship exists between Gregory's pneumatology and that of Origen remains confusing in light of the still-relevant questions raised quite some time ago by Henri Pinault regarding Gregory's use of Origen's Trinitarian works, especially as they pertain to the Spirit.<sup>21</sup> The problem of Gregory's relationship to Basil's pneumatology seems increasingly vexed, and recently scholars have tended to emphasize the differences between the two.<sup>22</sup> If this were not enough, no scholar has yet addressed the problem of the real historical impact Gregory's writings had on subsequent pneumatologies, especially in the East where Gregory “the Theologian” has been and remains arguably the most influential non-biblical author in history.<sup>23</sup> The problem of Gregory's influence and influences is extremely important, and yet this study will bypass it. In a climate in which scholarly orthodoxies are being challenged with vigour, this study will seek less to weigh in on these debates directly, and more to provide a better understanding of Gregory's pneumatology as it exists in itself. It is self-evident, after all, that Gregory's relationship to other authors writing on the Spirit can never be fully understood unless Gregory's own pneumatology is understood first.

Finally, we must note that this study will primarily follow the now well-accepted approach of Lewis Ayres in discussing the theological landscape of the late Fourth Century. As Ayres has so persuasively shown, students of early Christianity are no longer well served by approaches to the period which focus on

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20 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 281-282. Beeley's work on this subject helps to illustrate why it is so important for studies like this one to be wary of arguing for connections between Gregory's pneumatology and that of other thinkers without having firmly established a picture of Gregory's pneumatology first. As Beeley shows, the outward similarities between Gregory and Athanasius may be substantial without there being much influence of Athanasius's thought on Gregory.

21 Pinault, *Le Platonisme*, pp. 217-223. See also Junod “Basile de Césarée et Grégoire de Nazianze sont-ils les compilateurs de la Philocalie d'Origène?” *passim.*, who calls into question the often cited assumption that Gregory helped compile the *Philocalia of Origen*.

22 The traditional approach (that Basil and Gregory are nearly identical in regards to pneumatology), as summarized by Hanson, *In Search of the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 782 seems a far cry from the stark contrast drawn between the two by Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 297-301.

23 See Noret, “Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur le plus cité,” *passim.*

concepts of orthodoxy and heresy. Rather, the best available narratives of the era are those which recognize the exceptional level of diversity among all groups of Christian theologians at the time, regardless of their relationship to Nicaea or any other council or question.<sup>24</sup> Here, we embrace the scholarly consensus best exemplified by Ayres and treat Gregory, as well as the various pro-Nicene and anti-Nicene theologians whom he addresses in his writings, as distinct individuals or groups whose agreement on certain matters need not lead us to assume any level of similar agreement with regard to other theological issues. Indeed, it is precisely in a recognition of the diversity of Fourth Century theologies that this study takes root. It is this observation of theological diversity in the period which compels us to examine the pneumatology of Gregory of Nazianzus within itself, importing no *prima facie* assumptions about its relationship to other thinkers and theologies of the day, and taking as our primary task the development of an understanding of Gregory's texts, and the pneumatology described therein. As we will see by the conclusion, one of the central observations which we will make in this study is that the doctrinal disputes surrounding the Holy Spirit in the Fourth Century were even more complex than scholars have tended to assume, and that Gregory found himself deeply embroiled in these complexities even to the point of being at odds with many who were otherwise among his closest friends and allies. A close reading of Gregory's pneumatological writings reveals a keen awareness on his part of the diversity and division within the theologies around him. It is in hopes of recovering more of Gregory's perspective on this diversity that this study has been composed.

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24 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 1 and passim.

## **Part I – The Spirit, Gregory and the Church**

### *Chapter 1*

#### *Framed and Constructed by the Spirit:*

#### *The Spirit and the Church*

### **Introduction**

We have proposed in the introduction that the central pneumatological concern which dominates Gregory's discussions of the Spirit in his writings is that of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. In order to prove this basic thesis, it is important to have a sense of what Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church was. Approaching such an understanding will be the first primary task of Part I. We also noted in the introduction that Gregory's concern for pneumatological ecclesiology is not presented in abstraction in his writings, but rather that he pays a great deal of attention to his own place in the Church and his own relationship to the Holy Spirit when discussing it. An exploration of how Gregory constructs his relationship to the Spirit and the Church will constitute the second primary task of Part I.

In this chapter we will see that Gregory understands the Spirit to play an important role in structuring the Church. We will then observe, in the second section of the Chapter, that one of the primary ways in which Gregory thinks that the Spirit relates to the Church, and provides the Church with its structure, is by participating in the ordination of priests and bishops. In the third section of the Chapter we will discuss Gregory's understanding of how the Spirit participates in making both the Church and individual Christians the dwelling place of Christ. In the fourth section of the Chapter we will examine some aspects of the Spirit's role in Christian illumination as Gregory understands it. In the fifth section, we will examine a few of the details of Gregory's understanding of how the Spirit relates to good Christian pastors. In the sixth section we will explore Gregory's

understanding of the significance and meaning of Pentecost in regards to the Spirit's relationship to the Church.

### **The Spirit and the Structure of the Church**

A complete discussion of Gregory's understanding of the nature of the Church should be considered one of the primary *desiderata* in Gregorian scholarship. A full analysis of Gregory's ecclesiology is impossible here. On the question of the Spirit's relationship to the Church, however, it is fortunately not at all difficult to give a summary picture of Gregory's approach to the topic before we begin an investigation of some of the details. Gregory follows Paul<sup>25</sup> in asserting that the Church constitutes the body of Christ, made up of individual members with various gifts, and that these gifts come from the Spirit.

Gregory gives us a fairly detailed summary of his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church on this model in *Oration 32*, delivered at Constantinople in 379. Paul Gally notes Gregory's concern in this, one of his early sermons delivered at Constantinople, to establish his credibility as bishop in the capital.<sup>26</sup> Given the contentious theological atmosphere in the city at the time of Gregory's arrival, it is no surprise that one of Gregory's primary topics in the oration is that of the problem of divisions within the Church. In the context of discussing such divisions, Gregory includes an extended passage which deals with the Spirit's relationship to the Church.

For all of us are one body in Christ – the individual members of Christ and of each other [Rom 12:5]. For one group rules and serves to preside, while the other follows and takes direction. And they do not both do the same work, for to rule and to be ruled are not the same. But still they together become one in the one Christ, framed out (συναρμολογέω) [Eph 4:16] and constructed (συντίθημι) by the same Spirit.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Especially 1 Cor 12 and Rom 12:5.

26 Gally, *Discours* 32-37, pp. 10-11.

27 *Or.* 32.11.

It is important to make note of three facts about this passage. First, Gregory explicitly refers to Paul and states here that the Church is the body of Christ, and is made up of individual members. Second, Gregory states that one segment of the Church “presides” while another “is guided and directed,” presumably by those who “preside.” Third, Gregory states that those who preside and those over whom they preside are made into a greater whole “in one Christ,” and that it is the Spirit which “frames out and constructs” them in this way. The language here is architectural, a point which is important to observe since we will see Gregory use an architectural metaphor again in his discussions of the Spirit’s relationship to the Church.<sup>28</sup>

All three of the ideas about the Church which we are observing here are foundational to Gregory’s understanding of the Spirit’s relationship thereto. For Gregory, the Church is a place wherein different people play different roles. One of the key distinctions between Christians in the Church is that some are leaders, while others are guided by these leaders. Most importantly for our purposes, Gregory is clear here in saying that the Spirit is involved in the process of bringing these leaders together with those who are led by them into a single whole in Christ.

A question may arise at this juncture as to whom Gregory has in mind when he discusses Christian leaders (those who “preside”). In *Or.* 32.11, Gregory immediately provides us with an answer by way of a more detailed discussion of how he understands the various roles of the individuals who make up the Church. First, Gregory emphasizes that there is an important difference between those in the Church who are leaders and those who are not. He also notes that not all leaders are the same – there are various types.

Again, how great is the gap not only among the ruled in age, and education and training, but what disparity among their leaders too! “And the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets” [1 Cor 14:32] when Paul speaks, doubt not. “And God has appointed,” he says, “in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third pastors and teachers (ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους),” [1 Cor 12:28] the first for

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28 See p. 26.

truth (ἀλήθεια), the second for fore-shadowing (σκιὰ), the third for illumination (ἐλλάμψις) and service according to their capacity. And the Spirit is one (ἓν), but the gifts of the Spirit [1 Cor 12:1; 4] are not equal (οὐκ ἴσα), for neither are its vessels.<sup>29</sup>

This passage begins with Gregory reiterating the idea that there are leaders and non-leaders within the Church. What the passage adds to our discussion is Gregory's analysis of the different kinds of leaders in the Church in accordance with 1 Cor. 12:28. While we should not assume that Gregory sees *only* three different kinds of leaders within the Church, for the moment he does choose a tripartite model. The first two groups which he derives from Paul are the apostles and the prophets. Gregory's brief comments about the roles of these two groups are not of particular importance to us at this juncture. The group that is most important for our purposes is the third group which Gregory identifies in this passage. These are the “pastors and teachers.” What is most important about Gregory's identification of the class of “pastors and teachers” here is his assertion that this group is appointed for “illumination and service according to their capacity.” Central to Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church is the idea that Christian pastors and teachers engage in service and are involved in the process of Christian illumination. We will be able to say more about this in Chapter 2. In response to the question of whom Gregory has in mind when talking about “those who preside” in the Church, the answer is that there are a variety of such Christian leaders, but some of the most important of these are “pastors and teachers.”

The passage also shows that, for Gregory, the various ranks within the Church correspond to the “gifts of the Spirit” mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor 12:1 and 4. It is a discussion of these gifts which is the context, in 1 Cor, of Paul's comments about the Church being the body of Christ. Gregory says here that it is because the “vessels” of the gifts of the Spirit, by which he means those Christians who receive them, are unequal, so too are the gifts. This, it seems, explains for Gregory why there exists within the Church a variety of roles which

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29 *Or.* 32.11. Trans. Vinson.

individuals play. Gregory expands on the nature of these roles as he continues in *Or.* 32.11.

For to one person is given, through the Spirit, discourse on wisdom [1 Cor 12:8] and contemplation (λόγος σοφίας και θεωρίας), to another discourse on knowledge [1 Cor 12:8] or revelation (λόγος γνώσεως ἢ ἀποκαλύψεως), to another faith sure and unwavering, to another the working of wonders, mighty and high, to yet another the gifts of healing, the laying on of hands, and therefore leadership (προστασία), guidance, and therefore instruction of the flesh, many tongues, interpretation of the tongues, [1 Cor 12:8-10; 28] the better gifts and the secondary ones, according to the proportion of faith [Rom 12:6].<sup>30</sup>

Here, Gregory reads Paul as identifying various gifts given through the Spirit to individual Christians in the Church. Two of the gifts which Gregory thus identifies are most important for us to note at this time. These are the first two which he lists, that is, the “discourse on wisdom and contemplation” and the “discourse on knowledge or revelation.” Both phrases make mention of the idea of “discourse (λόγος).” The word λόγος is, of course, highly multivalent in Greek. However, what Gregory appears to mean by it in this passage is the communication, otherwise unspecified, of things like “contemplation” and “knowledge.” Whether Gregory has in mind sermons, writings, simple conversations, or any other mode of communication of these things is not evident in the passage. Moreover, there is a good chance that he is thinking of all these things when he refers to “discourse.” But, no matter what the mode of communication which Gregory has in mind, by talking about the gifts of “discourse” as he does, Gregory indicates that two of the primary gifts of the Spirit within the Church, for him, involve the communication of things like “contemplation” and “knowledge.”<sup>31</sup> We will see throughout the remainder of Part I that, for Gregory, one of the most important roles which he thinks Christian

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<sup>30</sup> *Or.* 32.11.

<sup>31</sup> Gregory draws the language of “discourse on wisdom” and “discourse on knowledge” from 1 Cor 12:8, but augments Paul’s words there with the terms “contemplation” and “revelation.”

leaders play in participating in the Spirit's relationship to the Church is in offering various forms of discourse by which they share things like “contemplation” and “knowledge.” It is important to see here that Gregory identifies the ability for some Christians to discuss these kinds of things as a gift of the Spirit given within the context of the Church.

The passage most recently quoted also contains what appears to be a reference to the ordination of Christian leaders by the “laying on of hands.” Gregory does not go into any detail in discussing ordination here, but we will see in the next section of this Chapter that the Spirit has an important relationship to ordination from Gregory's point of view. Conversely, we will see that ordination is one of the important ways in which the Spirit participates in structuring the Church for Gregory. At this juncture, it is important simply to notice that Gregory says that the ability to appoint leaders by “laying on of hands” is a gift of the Spirit within the Church.

The three passages quoted from *Or.* 32.11 in this section serve as an excellent summary of Gregory's basic understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church.<sup>32</sup> For Gregory, the Spirit plays a critical role in organizing and structuring the Church, especially with regard to Church leadership. The Spirit endows the Church with various kinds of leaders, but among the most important of these are “pastors and teachers.” Among the most important gifts given to Christian leaders stands the ability to “discourse” on things like “contemplation,” “wisdom” and “knowledge.” We now turn to examine one of the contexts in which Gregory most often discusses the Spirit's relationship to the Church, and the Spirit's work in organizing the Church and Church leadership on the model presented in *Or.* 32.11: the ordination of priests and bishops.

### **The Spirit and Ordination**

In this section we will explore Gregory's general understanding of the Spirit's relationship to ordination, including first the appointment of bishops, and then the actual ordination of bishops and priests. The lion's share of Gregory's

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<sup>32</sup> See also *Or.* 2.3 wherein Gregory uses very similar language to that discussed in this section to discuss the nature of the Church, and the Spirit's relationship thereto.

discussions of the Spirit's relationship to ordination come as he talks about his own ordination, first to the priesthood and then to the bishopric. We will take up the topic of Gregory's understanding of his own ordination in Chapter 3, and so will not discuss these passages at present. There are, however, several clear discussions in Gregory's writings of the Spirit's relationship to ordination in passages which are more general, and deal with the ordination of other priests and bishops besides Gregory. It is important to explore these first, before moving on to Gregory's approach to his own personal ordination, because when Gregory talks about ordination in relation to himself, a variety of deeply personal concerns typically come to the fore and have a significant influence on what he says. We here wish to establish some understanding of how Gregory believes the Spirit to participate in ordination generally.

For Gregory, the Spirit participates in the ordination of priests and bishops as one of a number of agents involved in the process. Gregory presents the Spirit as having substantial influence in choosing and ordaining new priests and bishops, yet he also sees human agents such as the community of Christians broadly conceived, and specific bishops already ordained, as exercising real and important forms of agency in such a way as to determine who will be ordained.

One of the places in which Gregory talks about the appointment of a bishop in general terms, and with reference to the Spirit, is in his longest autobiographical poem, *De Vita Sua*. *De Vita Sua* was written during Gregory's retirement as a deeply personal narrative account of the events which he considers to have been most important in his life. One of the events in Gregory's life which is taken up at length in *De Vita Sua* is that of the Council of Constantinople in 381, over which Gregory presided for a time. We will explore Gregory's account of the Council in some detail in Chapter 6. At the moment, however, we need to examine a brief mention of the Spirit which Gregory makes in his discussion of some of the political happenings there. A crisis faced the Council over a question of succession to the bishop's throne at Antioch.<sup>33</sup> Multiple claimants to the see had arisen, and the various parties were contending heatedly with one another. Gregory reports that he offered a possible compromise designed to help solve the

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33 On the intrigues of the Council see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 805-812.

problem. Gregory suggests that the sitting bishop be allowed to remain on the throne until his death, at which time a new bishop would be selected.

For he who dies goes to the place he has long desired / giving his spirit back to God who gave it him. / Then, with the agreement of all the people / and the wise bishops, we shall, with (σὺν) the Spirit / appoint (δίδωμι) someone else to the bishop's throne.<sup>34</sup>

Two things are important to note about the passage. First, Gregory is not discussing the appointment of a new bishop here in the abstract. Instead, he is referring to his preferred means of resolving the problem of succession at Antioch specifically. However, despite the specificity of the context, Gregory makes a very clear statement about the Spirit's relationship to the appointment of bishops generally. This statement stands as the second aspect of note in the passage. Gregory says here that the appointment of a new bishop will be carried out with the participation of three parties. First, Gregory notes that the appointment will happen “with the agreement of the people.” Second, Gregory indicates that it will also require agreement from the “wise bishops.” Third he says that “we” will appoint the new bishop “with the Spirit.” It is not obvious from the context of the passage whom Gregory has in mind when using the pronoun “we.” The simplest way of reading the passage is to assume that Gregory is thinking of the college of bishops as a whole, which would naturally include himself, as appointing the new bishop. Much more important, for our purposes, than the referent for this pronoun, however, is Gregory's statement that the appointment will be carried out “with the Spirit.”

What this passage shows is that, for Gregory, there are at least three parties which exercise agency in the appointment of a bishop. These are the community, other bishops, and the Holy Spirit. The fact that there are various agents at work in the appointment and ordination of bishops (and it will be clear in Gregory's discussions of himself that this is true of priests as well) is central to Gregory's understanding of how the Spirit participates in ordination.

Two particularly clear discussions in Gregory's writings of ordinations other than his own appear in *Oration 43*, his funeral oration to his best friend,

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<sup>34</sup> *Carm.* 2.1.11.1630-1634. Trans., White.

Basil of Caesarea. The first mention of the Spirit and ordination in the oration which we will explore concerns Basil's ordination as a bishop. The second involves Basil's ordination of some priests just before his death. These two passages, when examined together, demonstrate that Gregory is capable of emphasizing the agency of any of the parties involved in the ordination of priests and bishops, depending on the context in which he is speaking. Gregory sees the exercise of the various agencies at work in ordination, including the agency of the Spirit, in fluid terms. Yet, Gregory clearly sees a certain primacy of the Spirit's activity in appointing and ordaining bishops and priests, as opposed to the work of other bishops or the community.

In *Or.* 43.37, Gregory discusses Basil's appointment to the bishopric in Caesarea, which appointment, as Gregory reports, was somewhat controversial.

At the moment of the death of the man named “piety (εὐσεβείας)” [Eusebius], who passed away sweetly, right in [Basil's] arms, [Basil] was elevated to the high throne of a bishop – not without controversy, and certainly not without machinations and resistance on the part of the bishops of the area, along with the vilest characters in the city, who joined them. Yet, the Holy Spirit must gain the victory, and it always wins by a wide margin indeed. For it sent people from the hinterlands to anoint (χρίω) [Basil], men known for their piety and zeal, and with these men it sent the new Abraham, yes, our patriarch, which is to say, my father, in regards to whom an amazing thing happened. For he was not just failing from the number of his years, but he was also emaciated from an illness even to the point of being at his last breath, [and still] he tackled the journey, strengthened by the Spirit, in order to be of service with his vote.<sup>35</sup>

We must make two primary points about the passage. First, we should see that Gregory here brings up, in the context of ordination, which he here refers to as anointing, the work of all three of the primary agents which we identified at the start of this section as being at work, from his point of view, in appointing

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<sup>35</sup> *Or.* 43.37.

bishops. In the case of Basil's ordination, Gregory makes note that the local bishops tried to prevent Basil from being elevated. He also notes that the community in Caesarea, or at least the worst part of that community, attempted to stand in the way of Basil's ordination. But, despite this, the Spirit intervened quite directly in order to ensure that Basil would be the new bishop.

This is the second point which we must observe. For Gregory, as the passage says, “the Spirit must gain the victory” when it comes to ordaining bishops. Thus the Spirit, according to *Or.* 43.37, has the ultimate say in who should be appointed as a bishop. Yet, it is important to see how Gregory says the Spirit exercises this agency in regards to Basil. According to the passage, the Spirit works in two specific ways to help ensure the appointment and ordination of Basil to the bishopric. First, the Spirit literally “sends” bishops from afar in order to anoint Basil. Second, the Spirit strengthens Gregory's own father such that he becomes capable, through a healing which appears almost miraculous, to travel to Caesarea to help appoint Basil. Here, according to Gregory, the solution which the Spirit finds to the problem of the bishops who resist Basil's ordination is simply to send yet more bishops by whatever means necessary.

It is important to see, then, that in *Or.* 43.37 Gregory presents the Spirit in ordination as the foremost agent at work in selecting a new bishop. For Gregory, in the case of conflict over ordination, the Spirit must be victorious. But in the event of such conflict, for Gregory, the Spirit gains the victory by working through other bishops. For Gregory, the Spirit, in guiding ordination, always works *within* the Church and through the structure of the Church hierarchy, at times in spite of certain individuals. This is one of the hallmarks of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to ordination, and, indeed, the Church more generally.

The fact that, for Gregory, the Spirit works in ordination through the bishops of the Church is made even more clear in the second passage from *Oration* 43 which we need to explore. The passage comes as Gregory is describing Basil's death. Here, Gregory includes a brief narrative account which describes how Basil ordained some of his closest associates as priests at the very end of his life.

For although at that time he was nearly dead, and without breath, and with most of his life-force gone, at the moment of his departure he became more vigorous of speech, so that he might make his exit with words of piety and with the laying on of hands (χειροτονία) of his legitimate successors. He gave (δίδωμι) his hand (χεῖρα) and the Spirit, so that the public (βῆμα) would not be deprived of the priesthood of those who were his disciples and assistants.<sup>36</sup>

Gregory presents Basil as having momentarily recovered somewhat from illness just before his death in order to lay hands upon, which is to say ordain, some of those closest to him as priests. We must make two central points about the passage. First, we must note that the passage is consistent with Gregory's comment in *Oration 32*, explored in the previous section, that the Spirit has a relationship to the appointment of new Christian leaders.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that while, in *Oration 32*, Gregory mentions that the gift of “laying on of hands” comes from the Spirit, here Gregory states that Basil actually “gives the Spirit” to the new priests by laying hands on them. If, for Gregory, the Spirit is in some sense the origin of the ability of bishops to ordain new priests by laying hands on them, the Spirit is, at the same time, also a part of what new priests and bishops are given when hands are laid upon them.

The second point we must make about the passage regards the agents involved in the ordination which Gregory describes here. The account of Basil's recovery from illness is clearly designed to emphasize that Basil's momentary vigour was a significant departure from the expected course of events at the end of his life. Gregory makes this point by first placing heavy emphasis on the fact that Basil was extremely close to death, only to subsequently note that, “at the moment of departure,” he was able to recover enough to ordain his assistants. This narrative of an almost miraculous recovery for the purposes of an ordination closely resembles Gregory's discussion of his own father's recovery in *Or.* 43.37. Yet, while *Or.* 43.78 thus describes an unexpected or miraculous healing much

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<sup>36</sup> *Or.* 43.78. See also *Or.* 25.12.

<sup>37</sup> See p. 18.

like that in *Or.* 43.37, it is important to see that here Gregory does not identify divine intervention as the cause of Basil's brief recovery as he did in the case of his father's healing. The focus in *Or.* 43.78 remains primarily on Basil, his breath, words and actions. Thus, in *Or.* 43.78, Gregory's focus is on Basil's agency in ordaining these priests. Indeed, Gregory here says that Basil “gave his hand and the Spirit,” in the act of ordaining the new priests. Basil appears as subject, and the Spirit as object, in the act of ordination. And yet, while Basil is very much the principal focus in this account, Gregory by no means forgets to include the Spirit in the event.

Gregory's discussion of Basil's ordination of priests in *Or.* 43.78 thus demonstrates that Gregory can emphasize the human agency of the bishop in ordination, though not excluding the Spirit when he does so. As such, it serves to highlight the fluidity of which Gregory is capable in discussing the Spirit's relationship to ordination. Both passages from *Oration* 43 regarding the Spirit and ordination, read together, present a picture of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's role in ordination in which the Spirit's power to select new bishops and priests is primary, but in which the Spirit does not act in this capacity except through the work of the human agents involved, in this case especially bishops like Basil and Gregory's father.

In closing our discussion of Gregory's general approach to Christian ordination, and before moving on to any further discussion in Part I, we must make note that Gregory does not think that Christian leadership is the exclusive realm of the ordained clergy. For instance, it is worth noting that Gregory's way of discussing the Church in *Or.* 32.11, which we explored in the previous section of this chapter,<sup>38</sup> while it certainly refers to Christian leaders, does not identify or discuss priests and bishops explicitly at any point. This suggests that Gregory does not have the ranks of the ordained clergy exclusively in mind when talking about Christian leadership. Indeed, examples exist in which Gregory praises Christians who are not ordained in terms of their work as leaders. Two of the best come from *Oration* 8, Gregory's funeral oration for his sister. In *Or.* 8.5 Gregory describes his mother, Nonna, as a model pastor whom Gregory's father emulated in his ministry, and in *Or.* 8.11 Gregory describes his sister, Gorgonia, as an ideal

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38 See p. 14 ff.

teacher and scriptural exegete. The women in Gregory's life were not, and never could have been ordained priests or bishops, and yet he holds them up as models of leadership. For Gregory, ordination and leadership are not one and the same.<sup>39</sup> And yet, as we will see throughout Part I, it is clear that, for Gregory, those who *are* ordained do thenceforth inevitably enter the ranks of Christian leaders as described in *Or.* 32.11. In other words, Gregory sees the relationship of ordination and leadership as unidirectional. All those who are ordained are indeed meant to be Christian leaders, but not all Christian leaders are necessarily ordained.

However, in the discussions of Christian leadership which appear throughout Gregory's corpus, Gregory *usually* appears to be directing his comments at priests and bishops. This fact should be understood to arise not from a rigidly institutionalized approach to leadership on Gregory's part, but instead from the circumstances surrounding his life and writings. Gregory, after all, was an ordained bishop himself, and most of his primary interlocutors on theological topics, whether allies or opponents, were also among the ordained clergy. It is therefore little surprise that Gregory spends a considerable amount of time discussing ordained leaders specifically when he does discuss Christian leadership in his writings. However, when we refer to “Christian leaders” or “leadership” throughout the remainder of this thesis, we must keep in mind that these categories, for Gregory, are not exclusively applied to ordained priest and bishops, even if he usually has priests and bishops in mind in the passages which we will explore throughout Part I.

### **The Spirit and the Indwelling of Christ**

So far in this chapter, we have seen that, for Gregory, the Holy Spirit plays an important role in structuring and organizing the Church, and that one of the key ways in which the Spirit does so is by participating in the ordination of priests and bishops. In this section we will explore one of the important ways in which Gregory discusses the results of the Spirit's participation in the process of ordering

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39 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 19-24 frames Gregory's mother, Nonna, as the greatest spiritual influence on Gregory among his family members.

the Church. We will see that for Gregory, when Christian individuals orient themselves properly in relation to the Spirit's structuring of the Church, and when Christian leaders work in close connection to the Spirit in carrying out their duties and offices, the result is that the Church, and the individuals which make up the Church, become the dwelling place of Christ.

Gregory refers to the Church as a dwelling place of Christ with reference to the Spirit in *Oration* 19. The context is that of a simple, though extended exhortation on Gregory's part that his audience participate in the Christian life by letting go of any earthly desires to focus on following Christ,<sup>40</sup> and by offering “to God all that [each Christian] can on every occasion according to the measure of his capacity, according to the gift bestowed upon him.”<sup>41</sup> Gregory's rhetorical exhortation is, he says, for everyone in the Church, “man and woman, old and young, townsman and rustic, private citizen and public leader, rich and poor.”<sup>42</sup> Gregory draws his exhortation to a climax by referring to the Church as the dwelling place of Christ.

Let us [contribute], whether a little or a lot, to the honoured tabernacle of God, the tabernacle of the Church which the Lord, not any human being, set up [Heb 8:2], which is constructed by the various beauties of virtue, and let us all thus bring ourselves together to become a complete whole, the dwelling place (κατοικητήριον) of Christ, a holy temple, framed and erected together with each other in accordance with the architecture (ἀρχιτεκτονία) of the Spirit [Eph 2:20-22].<sup>43</sup>

Here, Gregory says explicitly that he is talking about the Church, referring to it as a “tabernacle” according to scriptural imagery taken from Heb 8:2. The metaphor is architectural, and this is the second time we have seen Gregory use architectural language to describe the Spirit's relationship to the Church.<sup>44</sup> The passage is thus

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40 *Or.* 19.6.

41 *Or.* 19.7. Trans. Vinson.

42 *Or.* 19.7. Trans. Vinson.

43 *Or.* 19.8.

44 See p. 14.

consistent with Gregory's approach to the Spirit's role in structuring the Church, which we explored in the first section of this chapter; here, as there, Gregory is discussing the Church in terms of the Spirit's work in giving the Church its structure.

We need to observe three points about the passage. First, Gregory here says that when Christians come together and contribute what they can to the Church, they become a dwelling place of Christ. Second, Gregory here brings up the agency of individual Christians in so coming together to become a dwelling place of Christ. Third, Gregory connects the Spirit to this coming together by identifying the Spirit as an architect of the tabernacle of the Church.

The first of these three points needs little further comment. Gregory invites his audience to become the tabernacle of the Church and thus the dwelling place of Christ. The second point requires a bit more discussion. It is important to see that the role to which Gregory assigns the Spirit here in making the Church the dwelling place of Christ is critical, but also depends on a human response. The Spirit, in this passage, is responsible for establishing the “architecture” of the Church. Yet, Gregory indicates that it is only when individual Christians join themselves together in accordance with that architecture that they become the dwelling place of Christ. In this respect, Gregory connects this “architecture” of the Spirit with virtue in the passage. The importance, for us, of the agency which Gregory assigns to individual Christians here is that it suggests that Gregory thinks that individual Christians, by failing to “contribute to the tabernacle” which is the Church, can in some sense compromise the Church's capacity to be a dwelling place for Christ. Obviously, Gregory does not make this negative point in the above quotation. However, in Part II in particular, we will see that Gregory does indeed appear to have a strong sense that when individual Christians, and in particular Christian leaders, do not contribute to the Church in the way in which they ought, the spiritual life of the Church can be compromised.

Much more important at the moment, however, is our third point, namely that the passage just quoted shows that Gregory understands it to be the Spirit which establishes the potential for the Church as a whole to become, in virtue, the dwelling place of Christ. Gregory also understands individual Christians to become the dwelling place of Christ in relation to the Holy Spirit. We can see this

in a passage from *Oration 2* in which Gregory makes a negative statement which assumes this positive understanding on his part. Here, Gregory offers a list of rhetorical questions in which he catalogues a series of different types of people who are missing something of the full Christian life. As he proceeds through his list, Gregory asks the following question.

Who is the one never contemplating (θεωρέω), as it is right to contemplate, the delightfulness of the Lord, never visiting his temple, or better, becoming a living temple of God and living as the dwelling-place (κατοικητήριον) of Christ in the Spirit [Eph 2:22]?<sup>45</sup>

Gregory eventually responds to this question in the oration. “No one,” he answers, “if he will listen to my judgement.”<sup>46</sup> The passage from *Or. 2.97* is thus framed negatively, but Gregory uses the negative question to make a positive point. What Gregory indicates by his answer to the rhetorical question is that, from his point of view, all individual Christians should become the “dwelling place of Christ in the Spirit.” The phrase is taken from Eph 2:22, a connection which Gregory does not draw out further.

While in *Oration 19* Gregory focuses on the role of all Christians in coming together to make the Church a dwelling place of Christ, and in *Or. 2.97* he speaks of Christ's dwelling within individual Christians, Gregory also has a sense that certain Christian leaders play a particularly important role in making the Church, and those within it, the dwelling place of Christ. Gregory indicates this in another passage from *Oration 2*. Given its length, *Oration 2* could not have been delivered orally in its current form. Furthermore, it is impossible to know precisely when and how Gregory circulated the oration in its written form.<sup>47</sup> What is clear about the oration, however, is that it was written by Gregory as a means for defending a controversial decision which he made early in his Church career. After being ordained a priest in Nazianzus (which topic we will explore in much more detail in Chapter 3) Gregory fled for some period of time to avoid his new

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45 *Or. 2.97*.

46 *Or. 2.99*. Trans. Browne and Swallow.

47 Bernardi, *Discours 1-3*, p. 30.

duties. Upon his return, Gregory saw the need to justify himself, and *Oration 2* is his most extended attempt at doing so.<sup>48</sup>

Given this context, it is no surprise that the oration deals at length with questions surrounding what it means to be a Christian priest and pastor. At the start of the text, Gregory makes it clear that his primary focus is on the role of “pastors and teachers” in the Church, a group within which Gregory now ranges himself.<sup>49</sup> He will discuss these particular Christian leaders throughout the remainder of the oration. It is in the context of this extended discussion on Gregory's part that the following passage appears.

Yet our assignment is to give wings to the soul, to take it away from the world and give it to God, to protect what is in [God's] image if it remains so, or to take it in hand if it is at risk, or to return it to us if it has been led astray – to make Christ dwell (εἰσοικίζω) in hearts [Eph 3:17] through the Spirit (διὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος), and, in sum, to make [the human being] into God (θεὸν ποιῆσαι), and to be of the joy from above, and to be one of the ranks on high.<sup>50</sup>

The context of *Oration 2* makes it clear that when Gregory talks of “our assignment” the “us” to which he refers are the priests and other pastors of the Church, including himself. Thus, the passage is a short and lovely summary on Gregory's part of what the role of a pastor is within the Church from his point of view. Gregory identifies seven central tasks for Christian pastors. The first several focus on the role of the pastor in protecting Christian souls. Gregory then says that pastors “make Christ dwell in the heart through the Spirit,” a clear allusion to Eph 3:17.<sup>51</sup>

There are two important points to make about the passage. First, the passage shows that Gregory believes that Christian pastors play an important role

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48 For more on the context of *Or. 2* see Bernardi, “Saint Grégoire de Nazianze, observateur du milieu ecclésiastique,” passim.

49 *Or. 2.1-3*.

50 *Or. 2.22*.

51 Gregory may also have Rom 5:5 in mind.

in making Christ to dwell within Christians, but that they play this role in conjunction with the Spirit. In this case, Gregory simply says that the indwelling of Christ is accomplished by pastors “through the Spirit.” Gregory provides no clarification in the passage of what, precisely, he means by this “through.” The second point which we must make about the passage is that Gregory summarizes the work of pastors by talking about the way in which they “make [human beings] into God.” Here we have a clear reference on Gregory's part to the idea of *theosis*.<sup>52</sup> We will be able to say more about the Spirit's relationship to *theosis* later on. Thus, for Gregory, pastors work through the Spirit to make individual Christians the dwelling place of Christ, and to establish the possibility of *theosis* among them.

For Gregory, part of the purpose of the Spirit's role in structuring the Church is to participate in making the Church, and the individual Christians therein, a dwelling place of Christ. In each of the passages quoted in this section, Gregory has discussed the Spirit as playing a critical role, yet one which always involves the activity of human beings within the Church as well. The Spirit appears as an architect in *Or.* 19.8, something “in” which Christians become a dwelling place of Christ in *Or.* 2.97, and that “through” which Christian leaders help make individual Christians a dwelling place of Christ in *Or.* 2.22. Gregory sees all Christians, including leaders, to participate with the Spirit in constructing the Church as the dwelling place of Christ. They also become, as individuals, such a dwelling place.

### **The Spirit and Illumination**

Another common motif in Gregory's discussions of the Spirit's relationship to Christians is illumination. When Gregory discusses the Spirit and illumination, his focus is generally on individual Christians rather than on the Church as a whole. But, as we will see in the following section, as well as in Chapter 2, Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's involvement in illumination is of importance to his broader ecclesiology as well. As such, we will explore the topic

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<sup>52</sup> Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, pp. 214-215 presents a list of the different turns of phrase which Gregory uses to refer to *theosis*, including the phrase in question here.

of the Spirit and illumination here, in a chapter on the Spirit's relationship to the Church, even though Gregory will not refer explicitly to the Church in the passages below.

What Gregory actually means when he talks about the illumination of Christians is difficult to assess. As is typical of Gregory, he nowhere details a systematic theology of illumination, nor does he define the term explicitly in his writings, nor does he even always use the same Greek words to discuss the concept.<sup>53</sup> John Egan, whose study on illumination in Gregory's writings is the most extensive to date, has connected the concepts between illumination and knowledge in Gregory's writings.<sup>54</sup> Beeley, who largely follows Egan, notes the flexibility of Gregory's approach to illumination, but focuses Egan's connection of illumination and knowledge even more sharply by saying that, for Gregory, illumination usually “refers to God's gift of the saving knowledge of himself.”<sup>55</sup> For Claudio Moreschini, illumination in Gregory's writings is very closely related to Gregory's understanding of baptism (a topic which we will explore in Chapter 2), and does indeed involve human knowledge of the divine. But Moreschini ultimately characterizes illumination in Gregory's writings as something which signifies a mystical union between human beings and God, the ultimate light.<sup>56</sup> Jean Plagnieux notes that Gregory is capable of using the term “illumination (ἐλλαμψις)” interchangeably with terms like “purification,” “contemplation (θεωρία),” “action (πρᾶξις),” “perfection (τελείωσις)” and “theosis (θέωσις).”<sup>57</sup> Plagnieux thus treats illumination as one of a variety of terms which Gregory can use fluidly to describe the dynamic human ascent to God.

The closest thing Gregory gives us to a definition of illumination is in a passage near the beginning of *Oration* 40, his most extended discussion of baptism.

Illumination (φώτισις) is brilliancy of souls, a conversion of life, a question for the conscience approaching God. Illumination is help

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53 Gregory uses the terms ἐλλαμψις and φωτισμος interchangeably to discuss illumination.

54 Egan, *The Knowledge and Vision of God*, passim.

55 Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 104.

56 Moreschini, *Discours* 38-41, pp. 62-70.

57 Plagnieux, *Saint Grégoire*, p. 83, especially n. 39.

for our weakness. Illumination is a setting-aside (ἀπόθεσις) of the flesh, a following (ἀκολουθήσις) of the Spirit, communion with the Word, correction of the imagination, a deluge [sweeping away] sin, participation (μετουσία) in light, destruction (κατάλυσις) of darkness. Illumination is a gleaming vehicle to God, a dying with Christ, a support of the faith, a completion of the mind (νοῦ τελείωσις), a key to the kingdom of heaven, a change of life, a repeal of slavery, a loosing of bonds (δεσμός), a remaking (μεταποίησις) of the compound creature (σύνθεσις).<sup>58</sup>

The passage is too rich for us to analyze in detail here. What it suffices to demonstrate, however, is that, for Gregory, illumination can mean a great number of things, and can mean them all at once. But, as multivalent a concept as illumination appears to be in Gregory's thought, it does consistently signify an approach of some kind to God – a spiritual development with many and various aspects, but in every way a good and desirable experience for Christians. For our purposes, we need observe nothing more than this about Gregory's understanding of illumination. Beyond this, we will allow Gregory to talk about illumination when and how he sees fit, rather than seeking a systematic understanding of what it really means within the scope of his thought.<sup>59</sup>

We can begin our discussion of the Spirit's relationship to illumination, as Gregory understands it, with the passage just quoted. The passage shows that, for Gregory, the Holy Spirit is associated with Christian illumination. In this case Gregory calls illumination a “following of the Spirit.” The language of “following” bears some resemblance to Gregory's approach to the Spirit's role in making the Church, and individual Christians, a dwelling-place of Christ. By talking about “following” the Spirit, Gregory here places emphasis on the agency of those Christians who do, indeed, follow the Spirit, casting the Spirit in the role of that which is followed. This resonates with Gregory's understanding that the Spirit structures the Church, but individual Christians must act in coming to live in accordance with that structure.

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58 *Or.* 40.3-4.

59 Mossay, *La mort et l'au-delà*, pp. 111-122 takes a similar approach.

When Gregory talks about the Spirit and illumination, he nearly always makes reference to Christ as well, and often the Trinity as a whole.<sup>60</sup> In the passage just quoted, Gregory makes mention of Christ immediately following his mention of the Spirit. While this alone does not do much to show the existence of a connection between the work of the Spirit and Christ in illumination from Gregory's point of view, a number of other passages show quite clearly that such a connection exists in his mind. One good example comes in one of Gregory's poems.

We bless you now at twilight, / My Christ, God's Word, God's  
brightness, / From light that knows no dawning, / And steward  
(ταμίας) of the Spirit – / You threefold radiance woven / Into one  
strand of glory!... / Our human mind you lighten / With reason and  
with wisdom (λόγω τε καὶ σοφία), / Forming in us an image / Of  
heaven's transcendent brilliance, / That we, in light, may see light  
[Ps 36:9] / And become, completely, light (καὶ γένηται φῶς  
ὅλος).<sup>61</sup>

Here Gregory first identifies Christ as “God's brightness,” and then makes mention that Christ is the “steward of the Spirit.” Gregory then immediately makes note of the “threefold radiance woven into one strand,” a clear reference to the Trinity. Gregory strongly connects the role of the Spirit in illumination to the role of Christ and the Trinity.

Gregory's focus in discussing illumination in this passage is on the human mind in particular. He says that Christ, and perhaps the threefold radiance as well, enlightens the human mind and thus form an image of the brilliance of heaven. It is important to note Gregory's statement that Christ illumines the Christian mind “with reason and with wisdom.” The dative construction can be taken in one of two ways, as either instrumental or as a dative of material. We thus either read that Christ illumines Christians by way of Christ's reason and wisdom, or that the illumination of Christians, given by Christ, is actually constituted of reason and wisdom. If the latter reading is preferred, Gregory's

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60 See Abrams-Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, pp. 81-82.

61 *Carm.* 1.1.32 Trans. adapted from Daley.

words serve as an indication that Christian illumination amounts to the development in the Christian mind of reason and wisdom. The context of the passage suggests this interpretation. The locational focus of the lines surrounding Gregory's mention of reason and wisdom is the mind of the individual Christian. Gregory is emphasizing the “formation” in such Christian minds of an “image of heaven's transcendent brilliance.” Thus, it is most natural to read the lightening of the human mind “with reason and wisdom” with particular attention to the human mind, and the transformation therein which Gregory is discussing.

We should pay special attention to the fact that Gregory calls Christ the “steward of the Spirit” when talking about Christ's illuminating Christian minds. While this makes it clear that Gregory has some sense of the Spirit as involved in Christian illumination, the Spirit's role here is not brought to the fore, and Gregory does not make the nature of that role clear in the poem. But Gregory's reference to Ps 36:9 at the end of the passage may be of some help if we are to explicate the Spirit's relationship to illumination in Gregory's works. This is because references to Ps 36:9 appear at least two more times in Gregory's writings with reference to the Spirit and Christian illumination.

The first of these two references appears in *Oration 40*, which is devoted to the topic of baptism. The passage is part of a series of exhortations on Gregory's part that the members of his audience should receive baptism right away, rather than putting it off.

Do not cover your ears against the teaching of the Lord and his warning like an asp does in the face of magic. If you are blind and unilluminated (ἀφώτιστος), enlighten your eyes lest you one day sleep in death. In the light (φώς) of the Lord, see light [Ps 36:9] – in the Spirit of God be made brilliant [by] the Son (τὸν Ὑιόν), the triple and indivisible light.<sup>62</sup>

Here, Gregory invites his audience to be illumined, using a reference to Ps 36:9 in order to make the invitation. After citing the psalm, Gregory expands on its meaning by noting that his audience should “in the Spirit of God be made brilliant [by] the Son.” He then invokes the Trinity, as he did in *Carm.* 1.1.32.

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<sup>62</sup> *Or.* 40.34.

As he did in that poem addressed to Christ as light, Gregory here ascribes the work of illumining Christians primarily to the Person of the Son, and once again he includes the Spirit more secondarily in the process, noting the Trinity as a whole as well. In the case of *Or.* 40.34, however, Gregory refers to the Spirit as that “in” which Christians receive illumination. The spatial language is interesting. While illumination here comes from the Son, the Person of the Trinity presented by Gregory as spatially closest to the Christian undergoing illumination is the Spirit. Indeed, Gregory's placement of the Spirit as the person of the Trinity closest to Christians in the context of a spatial language is not unique to this passage. Gregory speaks of the Spirit's role in illumination in much the same way in *Oration* 31, his famous sermon on the Holy Spirit. Early in his discussion of a variety of objections levelled at him by opponents, he declares that he intends boldly to address all three Persons of the Trinity, including the Spirit, using the same name, in order to show that they are all one God. Gregory addresses each of the Persons as “light.”

“He was the true light, which enlightens everyone, coming into the world” [John 1:9], the Father, “He was the true light, which enlightens everyone, coming into the world” [John 1:9], the Son, “He was the true light, which enlightens everyone, coming into the world” [John 1:9], the other Paraclete. “Was,” and “was,” and “was” - but one thing was (ἀλλ' ἓν ἦν). “Light,” and “light,” and “light” - but one light and one God. This is something that was first realized by David who said, “In your light we will see light.” [Ps 36:9] And now we behold and we declare: from the light which is the Father we receive the light which is the Son in the light which is the Spirit (ἐν φωτὶ τοῦ Πνεύματι) – a concise and straightforward theology of the Trinity.<sup>63</sup>

Gregory here describes “the light which is the Spirit” as that “in” which Christians receive the “light which is the Son.” Once again, Gregory's spatial language places the Spirit closest to Christians who are receiving light. Unlike in *Or.* 40.34, Gregory notes here that the “light which is the Son” is “from the light

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63 *Or.* 31.3.

which is the Father.” The passage is thus more deeply Trinitarian in nature.<sup>64</sup> In *Or.* 31.3, each Person of the Trinity plays a distinct role in Christian illumination as Gregory is presenting it, and any hint of a truly subordinate role for the Spirit which may appear in the previous two passages quoted in this section is gone. The question of the relationship between the Father and the Son in Gregory's thought need not preoccupy us here. What is important for us is that, once again, Gregory's language has a spatial aspect to it which places the Spirit particularly close to those who Gregory says are receiving illumination.

In all of the passages quoted in this section, Gregory links the Spirit's relationship to illumination very closely to Christ, as well as the Trinity as a whole. It is important to see that, for Gregory, the Spirit does not play a highly delineated role in illuminating Christians. Illumination, for Gregory, is the work of the whole Trinity, the Spirit included. Yet, insofar as Gregory does distinguish the Spirit from the other two Persons when discussing illumination, it is by using spatial language which presents the Spirit as more immediately present than the other two Persons to those who are being illumined. The distinction is subtle, but it is also consistent in Gregory's writings. As such, we will need to keep it in mind through the remainder of this thesis.

### **The Spirit and the Pastors and Teachers**

For Gregory, one thing that can contribute to Christian illumination is a good discourse on theology which is inspired by the Spirit in conjunction with the other Persons of the Trinity. He makes a comment which reveals this near the beginning of *Oration 28*, one of his *Theological Orations*, and the primary oration in which Gregory discusses the qualities which theologians must have in order to think and talk about God.

All right, then, let us get into some discussions (λόγος) on theology (θεολογία) right away, bringing to the fore of the discourse

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64 On Gregory's approach to the monarchy of the Father see Beeley, “Divine Causality,” passim.; Cross, “Divine Monarchy,” passim.; McGuckin, “Perceiving Light,” passim.; Meijering, “The Doctrine of the Will,” passim.

(λόγος) the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, on whom our discussion (λόγος) will focus, in order for the first [the Father] to be pleased, the second [the Son] to work with us, and the third [the Spirit] to inspire (ἐμπνέω) us, or, more, in order for one illumination to come from one God, singly various and multiply unified, a paradox indeed.<sup>65</sup>

There are two important points to observe about the passage. First, Gregory says that the purpose of the discussions in which he wants to engage is, ultimately, to bring about illumination from God. Gregory does not specify to whom the illumination is to come, though lacking any further qualification, it is fairly safe to assume that he means illumination for himself and his audience. Regardless, the passage shows clearly that, for Gregory, discourse on the Trinity can lead to illumination. The second point which is important in Gregory's statement here is that he says explicitly that he wants the Spirit to “inspire” the discourse in which he is about to engage. This inspiration from the Spirit does not take place, according to the passage, independently of the other Persons of the Trinity, but the term “inspiration” is ascribed to the Spirit in particular here. For Gregory, the Spirit plays an important role in inspiring the best Christian pastors when they speak. It is to a discussion of the Spirit's work in this capacity that we now turn. In this section, we will explore one extended passage from Gregory's writings in which a number of these themes come together. The purpose of the section is to shed some light on the way in which leadership, illumination, discourse, the Church and the Spirit are all interconnected in Gregory's thought.

For Gregory, the Spirit has a particularly close relationship with a specific group of Christian leaders. These are those leaders who engage in discourses on topics like “knowledge” and “contemplation.”<sup>66</sup> We identified this group in the first section of this chapter as one of the most important groups of Christians leaders within the Church from Gregory's point of view. For the sake of simplicity, we will refer to them here as “pastors,” another term which, in this first section of this chapter, we observed Gregory to use in identifying the different

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65 *Or.* 28.1.

66 See p. 14.

types of leaders in the Church.<sup>67</sup> In this section, we will discuss how Gregory understands the Spirit to relate to these pastors. We will see that, for Gregory, in order to teach and discourse correctly, pastors must be specially connected to and inspired by the Spirit.<sup>68</sup>

One of Gregory's finest discussions of the Spirit's relationship to Christian pastors is found in *Oration* 43, Gregory's funeral oration for Basil, as he describes his friend's exceptional ability to teach on and discuss theological matters. Here, he lauds Basil's skill in talking about theology in a long passage in which the Spirit features prominently. Gregory begins by presenting a list of some of the special qualities which allowed Basil to discuss God and theological issues.

Who cleansed (καθαίρω) himself more fully by the Spirit [than Basil] and rendered himself worthy to describe (διηγέομαι) godly things? And who, moreover, was illuminated (φωτίζω) more fully by the light of knowledge (φῶς γνώσεως) and broke through (διακόπτω) into the deep things (βάθος) of the Spirit [1 Cor 2:10] and with God examined the things of God? And yet more, who had a voice better suited to explicating ideas without tripping in either direction, as so many do, either by not having the right expression for an idea, or by presenting an expression which failed to capture his thought?<sup>69</sup>

Here, Gregory does not explicitly identify Basil as a “pastor” of the Church. He does, however, indicate that Basil was a person who was “worthy to describe godly things.” The content of this language is very similar to that observed in Gregory's way of describing leaders who are capable of engaging in “discourse” on theological matters in *Oration* 32, explored in the first section of this chapter.<sup>70</sup> In both passages, Gregory emphasizes the ability to communicate an

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<sup>67</sup> See p. 16.

<sup>68</sup> Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, pp. 56-60, may provide some insight into the possible background of Gregory's understanding of the importance of inspiration of the Spirit in Christian teaching.

<sup>69</sup> *Or.* 43.65.

<sup>70</sup> See p. 14 ff.

understanding of spiritual and theological topics. As such, the passage just quoted allows us to read Basil as an exemplary Christian “pastor” from Gregory's point of view.

Gregory indicates that among the qualities which made Basil able to “describe godly things” were his illumination by the light of knowledge, and the simple fact that Basil had a gift for coming up with the right way to articulate ideas. More importantly for our purposes, however, Gregory connects the Spirit to Basil's ability to “describe godly things” twice in this passage. First, Gregory asks a rhetorical question: who has ever been as “purified” by the Spirit as Basil? The connection between the Spirit and purification in Gregory's thought is a topic which we will take up in Chapter 2, and, for the moment, it is sufficient to observe that Basil's purification, which Gregory says leads to his ability to talk about “godly things” is accomplished in some sense by the Spirit. The second reference which Gregory makes to the Spirit here is more important for us at this time. Here Gregory says that Basil “broke through into the deep things of the Spirit.”

Two aspects of this statement on Gregory's part are striking. First, it is important to see that Gregory casts Basil as exceptional in regards to the degree to which he “broke through into the deep things of the Spirit.” Gregory does this by way of the rhetorical question in which the phrase appears, in which question Gregory asks what other person has ever actually achieved this feat of breaking into the “deep things of the Spirit.” Second, Gregory alludes to 1 Cor 2:10, but in doing so changes Paul's words somewhat. Paul's statement reads, in full: “these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” Gregory has instead written: “deep things of the Spirit.” Gregory then indicates that Basil “broke through into” these depths, and says that, therefore, “with God” Basil “examined the things of God.”

There is, of course, no doubt that Gregory believed that “the Spirit is God.” Here, in *Oration* 43, he appears to read Paul's words in light of his assumption that this is true. Seeing the Spirit as God, Gregory is able to interpret Paul's indication that the Spirit searches the depths of God to mean that God searches the depths of God, or, as he puts it “God examined the things of God.” What is important for us to see at this juncture is that Gregory inserts Basil into the process by which Gregory thinks that God searches the depths of God. He

does so by saying that Basil “broke through into the deep things of the Spirit.” Gregory explains what he means by this somewhat more clearly as he continues.

To “search out all things, even the deep things of God” [1 Cor 2:10] has been ascribed to the Spirit. This is not because of ignorance on its part, but because it revels in contemplation (θεωρία). Indeed, all the things of the Spirit were worked through by [Basil], and from these things he gave instruction regarding all questions of human character, and taught of the transcendent, and turned away from things present to look forward to things to come.<sup>71</sup>

Here, Gregory quotes Paul more precisely than in the earlier passage from *Or.* 43.65. Gregory then states explicitly that Basil drew on an understanding of the “things of the Spirit” in order to teach on the topics of “human character” and “the transcendent.”

Gregory is not very specific here in regards to what he means by saying that Basil drew from the “things of the Spirit” in order to teach. What the two passages just quoted show, however, is that Gregory thinks that Basil's ability to discuss “godly things” and teach about “the transcendent” developed, at least in part, out of an exceptionally close connection which Gregory claims to have existed between Basil and the Spirit. Basil managed to “break into” the depths of the Spirit more than other Christians, and because he was able to draw so close to the Spirit, he was able to teach other Christians how to live. Gregory tells us, in *Or.* 43.65, that there are a number of reasons why Basil was such a good Christian pastor, but among the most important was Basil's exceptional relationship to the Spirit. The idea that good Christian pastors must have a particularly close relationship to the Spirit is central to Gregory's ecclesiological pneumatology, as we will continue to see in Chapters 2 and 3.

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71 *Or.* 43.65.

## **Pentecost**

For Gregory, the Church's complete relationship to the Holy Spirit, as we have described it so far in this chapter, comes to be at Pentecost. He makes this clear in one of the most important texts in his corpus on the topic of the Spirit: *Oration 41*, a sermon on the meaning of Pentecost. In *Or.* 41.11-17 Gregory provides a narrative of the work of the Spirit after the ascension of Christ. His goal is to walk his audience through the history of the Spirit's interactions with creation. As he does so, Gregory ultimately summarizes his entire understanding of how and why the Holy Spirit relates to Christians as it does.

Gregory's first topic with regard to the Spirit's relationship to creation, taken up in *Or.* 41.11, is the process by which he understands the Spirit to have come to “dwell in (συμπολιτεύω)” Christians. Gregory walks his audience through the stages of the Spirit's working in creation, beginning with the Spirit's relationship to the angels, and continuing through the ways in which the Spirit works in the Old Testament prophets, and finally the disciples of Christ. For Gregory, the “illumination (ἐλλαμψις)” and “completion (τελείωσις)” of the angels are the work of the Spirit, as are the ability of the Old Testament prophets to see both God and the future. Gregory's discussion of the disciples focuses on the three stages of their own reception of the Spirit. These three stages are indicated for Gregory thus.

The first stage which makes [the Spirit] manifest is the purification of diseases and spirits, which obviously cannot come to pass apart from the Spirit. Next, according to economy, was the breathing upon [the disciples], this obviously being a more divine form of inspiration. Now comes the dividing of the tongues of fire which we are celebrating. But the first made [the Spirit] visible dimly (ἀμυδρός), the second more clearly (ἐκτυπος), and the current one even more completely (τέλειος), [the Spirit] being present not just in energy (ἐνεργεία) as previously, but in essence (οὐσιωδῶς), if I can say it that way, existing with us and being as a fellow-citizen (συμπολιτευόμενον). For it was proper after the Son was amongst

us bodily (σωματικός), that [the Spirit] also should appear bodily, and after Christ returned to his place, that [the Spirit] should come down to us. It is a coming as Lord, yet a sending as one who is not contrasted with God.<sup>72</sup>

For Gregory, the event of Pentecost is a major turning point in the history of the Spirit's relationship with the world. Rather than simply *working* in human beings and angels, as the Spirit did before the time of Christ according to *Or.* 41.11, the Spirit, since Pentecost, now “exists with” and is a “fellow citizen” of Christians. The Spirit's presence among Christians is much more immediate after Pentecost than it was previously. This suggests that, for Gregory, the full relationship of the Spirit to the Church which informs nearly all of his pneumatological thought came to be at Pentecost specifically. Gregory also makes a point, in *Or.* 41.11, of focusing on the words of the Gospel of John with regard to the coming of the Spirit, stating that the combination of “coming” and being “sent” are indicative of the Spirit's divinity within a Trinitarian framework. Thus, for Gregory, the event of Pentecost constitutes a change in the relationship between human beings and the Spirit which can by no means be interpreted, he thinks, to indicate that the Spirit is anything less than God.

For Gregory, every element of the event of Pentecost is symbolically significant. In *Or.* 41.12, Gregory explains his interpretation of the important symbols which he observes in Luke's account of the event. In particular, Gregory remarks that it is important that the Spirit came to an upper chamber, just as Christ initiated communion in an upper chamber, to symbolize the need for God to bridge the gap created between God and human beings at the fall.

As long as [God and humanity] remain distinctly in their own place, the one on the summit, the other below, their goodness is unmixed (ἄμικτος), and philanthropy is unrealized, and a great and unbridgeable chasm is between them, dividing not just the rich man from Lazarus and the longed-for embraces of Abraham, but also the generate and fluctuating nature from the ingenerate and

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72 *Or.* 41.11.

unchanging one (τὴν γενητὴν φύσιν καὶ ῥέουσιν τῆς ἀγενήτου καὶ ἔστηκυίας).<sup>73</sup>

For Gregory, the coming of the Spirit to the Church at Pentecost is as central a part of God's work in overcoming the fall as was the work of Christ, for instance, in initiating communion. In *Or.* 41.13 Gregory offers his scriptural defence of the ideas presented in *Or.* 41.12. He cites a series of passages from the Old Testament to show that the Spirit does indeed descend upon human beings and dwell with them. Included are the examples of Isaiah, Elijah and David among others,<sup>74</sup> and finally Jesus who, Gregory notes, is both glorified by and gives glory to the Spirit.<sup>75</sup>

Gregory now asserts that the Spirit “shares with the Son in working both the creation and the resurrection,” and explains that this is why all Christians must develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Gregory talks about the need for Christians to be “cleansed” by the Spirit, and then presents several examples of what he considers to be the results of this kind of cleansing, each example being drawn from scripture.

No one can see or receive the kingdom who is not born from above in the Spirit [Jn 3:5], and purified (καθαίρω) in regards to the first birth, which is a mystery of night, by the recasting in the day and the light by which everyone individually is recast. This is how the Spirit is – for it is very wise and philanthropic – if it takes hold of a shepherd, it makes a psalmist, trampling evil spirits, and creates him king of Israel. If it takes hold of a goatherd trimming sycamore trees, it produces a prophet.<sup>76</sup>

The series of examples which Gregory offers is extensive, and so we will leave a few out. Gregory moves eventually from the example of the prophets to that of the Apostles.

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73 *Or.* 41.12.

74 Is 63:10; 2 Kgs 2:16; Ps 143:10.

75 Jn 16:14.

76 *Or.* 41.14.

If [the Spirit] finds fishermen, it catches them for Christ, so that they gather the whole world in the net of the word (λόγος). Take Peter and Andrew and the sons of thunder, for example, thundering spiritual things (τὰ πνευματικὰ βροντήσαντας). If [the Spirit] finds tax collectors, it collects them for discipleship and puts them to work as merchants of souls. Matthew is the example: yesterday a tax-collector, today an evangelist (εὐαγγελιστής).<sup>77</sup>

In the two passages immediately quoted above, it is easy to notice a trend in Gregory's way of talking about the transformation which he believes to have been effected by the Holy Spirit in the individuals whose examples he has drawn from scripture. In each case, Gregory highlights the transformed state of each individual especially in terms of their status as people proclaiming certain truths. Psalmist, prophet, thunderer of spiritual things, evangelist – each of these descriptive titles revolves around the notion of communicating and proclaiming something of the truth. Thus, for Gregory, Pentecost marks a change in the relationship between the Spirit and the Church one key result of which includes the transformation of individual human beings into proclaimers of the truth.<sup>78</sup> Gregory now invites his own audience to participate in precisely this kind of transformation.

Well, then, let us prove by trial that [the Spirit] is kind, not angry. Let us confess (ὁμολογέω) its glory and flee blasphemy (βλάσφημος). And let us not wish to see [the Spirit] become angry beyond calming. [The Spirit] made even me a bold herald (κῆρυξ) for you today – if I do not suffer as a result, then thanks be to God – yet if I do suffer, the same thanks anyway.<sup>79</sup>

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77 *Or.* 41.14.

78 This reading of Gregory's approach to Pentecost differs slightly from that of Gilbert, "Person and Nature," p. 305. There is no need to assume that Gregory thinks that Pentecost marks the beginning of human understanding of the Spirit's divinity – Gregory does not say it does. But it is clear that, for Gregory, Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church's work in *proclaiming* that divinity.

79 *Or.* 41.14.

Here, Gregory invites his audience to join him in confessing the Spirit's glory, emphasizing his role as a “bold herald” to his listeners.

The passages quoted above in which Gregory describes the meaning of Pentecost, when read together, demonstrate that, for Gregory, Pentecost marks the beginning of the Church's complete relationship to the Spirit. Among the effects of this presence are Christian illumination, the bridging of the gap between human beings and God, and a greater ability on the part of Christians to proclaim certain truths – in sum, all the key aspects of the Spirit's relationship to the Church highlighted in this chapter.

### **Conclusions**

In this chapter we have sketched an outline of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. The most important points which we have made are as follows. 1) For Gregory, the Church is structured by the Spirit so as to become the body of Christ. 2) One of the key ways that the Spirit participates in structuring the Church is in the context of the appointment and ordination of bishops and priests. 3) The Spirit's structuring of the Church allows the Church and individual Christians to become a dwelling place of Christ. 4) The Spirit plays a role in Christian illumination in which Gregory casts the Spirit as very close to Christians who are being illumined. 5) In order to engage in good theological discourse, pastors must have a close relationship to the Spirit. 6) The Spirit's complete relationship to the Church comes to be at Pentecost. As we have made each of these points, we have frequently observed that Gregory maintains a fluid approach to the complex ways in which human agency and the work of the Spirit interact in the Church. It is certain, however, that, for Gregory, the Church cannot be the dwelling place of Christ or a place in which illumination occurs without the work of both the Spirit and human beings.

Ultimately, for Gregory, the Church is something structured by the Spirit as a place of leaders, and those who are led, in which illumination, the indwelling of Christ, and, as we noted briefly, *theosis* can occur. But at this, the conclusion of Chapter 1, it is still quite unclear how and why, for Gregory, this is so. Perhaps the biggest reason for which we have not been able to say more already is that we

have not yet addressed the two most important contexts in which Gregory talks about the Spirit's relationship to the Church, namely, baptism, and his own ecclesiastical career. We will turn to these subjects in the next two chapters.

**Chapter 2:**  
***Of Water and the Spirit:***  
***The Spirit and Baptism***

**Introduction**

Baptism is a topic on which Gregory focuses some concerted attention in his writings. It is the primary subject in two of Gregory's orations, *Orations* 39 and 40, both of which he delivered around Epiphany in 381. Gregory's depth of interest in baptism may stem in part from his own experience of it. Gregory received baptism rather late in life, and only after narrowly escaping the dangers of a storm at sea, a close encounter with death which seems to have motivated Gregory against any further delay in being baptized.<sup>80</sup> One of Gregory's biggest pastoral concerns in his writings, and especially in *Oration* 40, is to persuade his audiences not to follow his example by putting off baptism, but rather to receive it right away. One gets the impression that Gregory deeply regretted his own choice to delay baptism, and is quite seriously concerned to prevent others from making his mistake. This background to Gregory's approach to baptism is important, mainly because it serves to illustrate that Gregory does not usually think or talk about baptism abstractly, but rather his focus when discussing it is generally pastoral.

In this chapter we will explore Gregory's understanding of the Holy Spirit's relationship to baptism. We do so for two reasons. First, the topic of baptism, as we have noted, is prominent in Gregory's writings, and he frequently mentions and discusses the Spirit in relation to baptism. Therefore, it is essential to have a grasp on Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship thereto in order to understand his pneumatology. Second, and no less importantly, Gregory's understanding of baptism, and particularly of the importance of doctrinal confession upon receiving baptism, has a very significant impact on

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<sup>80</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 47-55.

Gregory's understanding of his own place in the Church, and his relationship to the Spirit therein.

However, before we enter into a discussion of the Spirit and baptism in Gregory's writings, we must spend some time laying the groundwork for that discussion. In the first section of this chapter, therefore, we will discuss Gregory's understanding of the Fall and *theosis*. Gregory's approach to both of these concepts is important to his understanding of baptism. With a brief summary of Gregory's understanding of the Fall and *theosis* in hand, we will, in the second section of the chapter, explore Gregory's understanding that the Spirit is the divine element in baptism without which baptism cannot be considered complete, and which allows baptism to be efficacious. In the third section of the chapter, we will explore one of the primary ways in which Gregory talks about the Spirit's work in baptism, this being Gregory's association of the Spirit at baptism with fire. Finally, in the fourth section of the chapter, we will explore the importance, for Gregory, of Christians confessing a correct doctrine of the Trinity, including a correct doctrine of the Spirit, at baptism. In this section we will see that, for Gregory, if all three Persons of the Trinity are not confessed as fully divine at baptism, the efficacy of baptism is entirely compromised.

### **Gregory on the Fall and *Theosis***

In this section we will discuss Gregory's understanding of the Fall and *theosis*, relying especially on Donald Winslow, whose work on both topics remains authoritative and foundational to that of all subsequent scholars. It is important to have a sense of how Gregory understands the Fall and *theosis* before discussing baptism more specifically because, for Gregory, baptism is, in large part, a central means by which Christians overcome the ramifications of the Fall and become capable of *theosis*.

Winslow has done excellent work in fleshing out Gregory's basic understanding of the Fall and its ramifications.<sup>81</sup> In general, Winslow follows Gregory's own outline of the Fall and its consequences laid out in *Oration 38*. Winslow begins by observing the profound dualism with which Gregory typically

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81 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, pp. 45-71.

discusses human beings.<sup>82</sup> Gregory's dualistic approach to human beings has its roots in his understanding of creation. For Gregory, human beings were created by God as composite creatures.<sup>83</sup> “God, he says, *first* created the spiritual world, *then* the material, and *finally* the human, which is a combination of, or rather a 'formation' out of, the first two.”<sup>84</sup> Having thus created human beings, God provided them with law by way of forbidding them to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. In so doing, God designed human beings with the potential for spiritual growth, but also with the potential for failure.<sup>85</sup> After the transgression of Satan, and subsequently of mankind, this potential to fail was realized, leaving human beings in their current fallen state. This state, for Gregory, is marked in large part by mortality,<sup>86</sup> but even more than this, it also marks the inception of a dualistic warfare within human beings between the flesh and the spirit.<sup>87</sup>

For Gregory, the dualistic conflict of flesh and spirit within human beings created by the fall results in deep pain and spiritual alienation.<sup>88</sup> Human flesh

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- 82 Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 21-23 notes that in general, Gregory's anthropology treats human beings as a composite of soul (ψυχή/πνεῦμα) and body (σῶμα/σάρξ). However, she also observes that Gregory at times uses tripartite and even four-partite systems in his works. These, however, are less common and seem not to reflect Gregory's primary method of discussing his anthropology. See also Richard, *Cosmologie et théologie*, pp. 267-270.
- 83 Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 67-73 discusses some of the reasons for which Gregory indicates God created humans in this way. See also Althaus, *Die Heilslehre*, pp. 20-32.
- 84 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, p. 46 with reference to *Or.* 38.9-12. Emphasis in original. Winslow makes note that this idea is not found in the way in which Gregory presents it in any of his predecessors, concluding that it is therefore impossible to trace the origins of Gregory's beliefs on this point; pp. 46-47.
- 85 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, p. 60 with reference to *Or.* 38.12. See also Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 43-44; 53.
- 86 *Carm.* 2.1.45.55-70. See Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 52-54.
- 87 *Or.* 2.91; 8.14; 14.6; 38.12. *Carm.* 1.2.10.90-130; 1.2.14.65; 1.2.18; 1.2.34; 2.1.45.55-70; 2.1.49. For a summary discussion of the views of various scholars on Gregory's understanding of the fall, see Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 62-66.
- 88 Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 29-30, attributes this situation at least in part to what she calls the 'inverted order' of soul and body for Gregory, whereby the soul has lost its status as the ruler of the human being.

becomes an enemy to human spirit, dogging what is higher in humanity, and dragging it down into the depths. Gregory captures his understanding of this new, fallen condition of humanity over and over in his poetry wherein he frequently bemoans his own suffering as a result of the fall in terms deeply personal and rife with emotion.

But you, flesh, long past treatment, kindly / enemy, and one never  
broken by struggle. / You, predator sharply fawning,<sup>89</sup> freezing  
fire, you marvel! / Great marvel if you were kind to me in the  
end! / Soul (ψυχή), to you then the rest will be said, as is fitting. /  
What, whence, or why are you? And who set you / To corpse-  
carrying, and bound you in the loathsome shackles of life /  
Weighed down completely, to the earth? How do you mix / spirit  
with materiality, with flesh the mind, and ease with burden?<sup>90</sup>

Gregory's poetical characterization of humanity's fallen state is bitterly beautiful, and as is typical in his poetry he dwells on the intangible and emotional results of this condition. In reading certain passages of Gregory's poetry in isolation from the rest of his writings, it is possible to risk seeing Gregory as a committed dualist who sees the human flesh as the ultimate and eternal enemy of human spiritual development.<sup>91</sup>

But, Gregory is not a dualistic thinker in this sense – quite the contrary, in fact. Gregory does not see warfare between the human body and the human spirit as a part of the created order as it was meant to exist, which is to say, as it was originally created by God. Though human beings were created, for Gregory, as composite creatures, combining flesh and spirit,<sup>92</sup> it is *only in the fallen state* that these two elements of the human creature come into conflict.<sup>93</sup> Human beings, for Gregory, were created as a composite of two good elements, flesh and spirit, but

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89 Gilbert, *On God and Man*, p.134 seems to read σαίροντι in place of the more difficult σαίλοντι from PG. The more difficult reading is consistent with the contrasting images which Gregory is using to describe the life of the flesh, and has been here preserved.

90 *Carm.* 1.2.14.59-67 See also *Carms.* 1.1.4.92; 1.1.8.1; 1.2.10.90-130; 1.2.18; 1.2.34.201; 2.1.45.60; 2.1.49; 2.1.81.

91 Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man*, pp. 36-37, sees Gregory as drawing some of this tendency from Platonic influences.

this composite creature has become a dualistically divided one only as a result of the fall. This understanding on Gregory's part, if not always evident in his poetry, is easy to see in his more sober Orations. Despite the acute and continual pain which Gregory believes that human beings suffer after the fall, the spirit and flesh are not, even in man's fallen state, simply enemies of one another, and nothing more, for Gregory. Instead they remain in a complex state of symbiosis.

How I am coupled with this body, I do not know (or how I am both the icon of God and kneaded in with clay) – this body which both does battle when healthy, and is attacked by distress – this body which I both love as my fellow slave, and flee as my enemy – this body which I escape like a ligature and also feel obliged to as a fellow heir.<sup>94</sup>

Here, Gregory openly ponders over how his body can both struggle against him, and yet be his “fellow slave.” Even after the fall, the body is a real, and ultimately a good, part of human beings for Gregory. The new, unnatural relationship between the flesh and the soul (or spirit)<sup>95</sup> which Gregory is describing here is the primary, most immediate and most troubling consequence of the fall from his point of view. From here forward, we will refer to this aspect of Gregory's understanding of the Fall as “fallen dualism.”

Winslow observes that for Gregory, the incarnation of Christ is God's key work in solving the problem of the Fall.<sup>96</sup> Though God is clearly active, for

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92 See Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, p. 220. Wesche, “The Union of God and Man,” pp. 90-91 discusses some of the impact which Gregory's understanding of human beings as composite creatures has on his Christology, especially in relation to that of Appollinaris.

93 See Norris, “Gregory Contemplating the Beautiful,” p. 24. Oosthout, “La vie contemplative,” pp. 264-265, argues that this conflict is primarily epistemological for Gregory, with the flesh preventing the ascent of the soul to God rather than the flesh causing evil in an ethical sense.

94 *Or.* 14.6.

95 Gregory uses both the terms ψυχή and πνεύμα when discussing the non-material element of human beings. See Ellverson, *The Dual Nature of Man* p. 21.

96 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, pp. 179-199, goes so far as ultimately to define “salvation” in Gregory as this universal work of Christ rather than as the achievement of *theosis*, though he is very clear in pointing out that the two are totally interlaced for Gregory. Winslow once again draws heavily from *Or.* 38.12-13.

Gregory, throughout the whole of biblical history, thanks especially to the continued increase of sin despite God's work, ever more became required, and God ultimately provided the incarnation of the Λόγος as the ultimate response to sin.<sup>97</sup> For Gregory, one of the key consequences of the Fall is that human beings enter a state in which their physical bodies and their souls or spirits are in dualistic conflict, and it is the incarnation which is God's most essential work in overcoming this fallen state. Gregory's understanding of baptism, and the Spirit's relationship thereto is built on these two assumptions.

The second concept which we must explore as background to Gregory's discussions of the Spirit's relationship to baptism is *theosis*. The concept of human divinization is central to Gregory's thought as a whole, and his understanding of what *theosis* means heavily informs his approach to baptism. Winslow argues that, for Gregory, *theosis* is fundamentally a metaphor about the human relationship to God, one which is simultaneously spatial, visual, epistemological, ethical, corporate and social.<sup>98</sup> Russel concurs with this aspect of Winslow's assessment.<sup>99</sup> *Theosis*, while itself not a systematically defined theological category for Gregory, is, Winslow argues, a kind of master metaphor<sup>100</sup> used by Gregory to discuss the human approach to God. In this sense, there is a great deal of overlap between Gregory's use of the term *theosis* and his use, for example, of the metaphor of illumination, which we have already explored to some extent in Chapter 1.

For Winslow, Gregory's vision of *theosis* is about the establishment of a dynamic relationship between human beings and God.<sup>101</sup> It is critical to note that Winslow argues that, for Gregory, *theosis* was always intended by God to be the purpose of human life. Human beings, in their pre-fallen state, were meant to

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97 *Or.* 38.13.

98 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, pp. 192-199.

99 Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, p. 224.

100 Tollefsen, "Theosis According to Gregory," p. 259 is quite right to point out that treating *theosis* as a metaphor within Gregory's thought should not be done reductively, as though the idea of human beings in some sense becoming God is only a figure of speech for Gregory. As Tollefsen says, "if [*theosis*] is a metaphor, it would be wrong to speak of it as 'no more than that.'"

101 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, pp. 187-188.

undergo *theosis*.<sup>102</sup> Yet, in their Fallen condition, human beings are precluded from the kind of growth into *theosis* for which they were originally created. For Gregory, the incarnation of Christ, because it entails the deification of Christ's human flesh,<sup>103</sup> makes *theosis* once again possible for human beings. Through the incarnation, human beings return to the pre-fallen state of Adam, a state in which *theosis* is possible.

For Gregory, baptism is a sacrament<sup>104</sup> which effects the Christian return to the pre-fallen state of Adam because, as Russell puts it, in baptism human beings “appropriate the deified humanity of the Son.”<sup>105</sup> In *Oration 39*, Gregory says that through the incarnation human beings return to the state of Adam. Gregory opens the sermon with what amounts to a basic summary of his understanding of what is actually accomplished for Christians in the event of baptism.

Therefore approach him and be enlightened (φωτίζω), and let not your faces be ashamed [Ps 34:4-5], being signed with the true light (τῷ ἀληθινῷ φωτί). It is a season of new birth (ἀναγεννήσις), let us be born again (γεννηθῶμεν ἄνωθεν). It is a time of reformation (ἀναπλάσις), let us receive again the first Adam. Let us not remain what we are, but let us become what we once were.<sup>106</sup>

It is common for Gregory to refer to baptism simply as “enlightenment,” as he does in the passage above by referring to Ps 34:4-5.<sup>107</sup> Here, when Gregory calls on his congregation to “be enlightened” he means to indicate that they should be baptized. The “him” to which Gregory says his congregation should approach in the passage is Christ, whom Gregory explicitly identifies as the referent for the

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102 Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, pp. 59-60.

103 Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, p. 220.

104 He uses the term μυστήριον, which we are here translating as “sacrament,” in explicit reference to baptism in *Or. 39.2*. See Lampe.

105 Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, p. 223.

106 *Or. 39.2*. Trans. Browne and Swallow.

107 Elm, “Inscriptions and Conversions,” p. 17, comments that for Gregory, “baptism both *demands* purification and illumination and *is* also both.” Emphasis in original.

pronoun slightly earlier in *Or.* 39.2. Thus, Gregory exhorts his congregation to receive baptism, and thereby be restored to their original, pre-fallen state.

This passage allows us to concur with Winslow when he says that Gregory views baptism as the event wherein “the 'universal salvation' wrought by Christ becomes the 'particular salvation' of the individual person.”<sup>108</sup> We will see throughout the remainder of this chapter that, for Gregory, there is a close connection between the incarnation of Christ and baptism, and that Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to baptism is built in large part on Gregory's understanding of the way in which baptism does indeed bring particular individual Christians into the universal salvation achieved in the incarnation, a salvation which overcomes fallen dualism and restores the human creature to the original pre-fallen state of Adam wherein *theosis* is possible.

### **The Spirit as the Divine Element in Baptism**

In this section we will observe that, for Gregory, baptism cannot be complete or efficacious without the presence of the Spirit. For Gregory, just as human beings are composite creatures suffering from fallen dualism, so must baptism have a dual nature, consisting of water and the Spirit,<sup>109</sup> in order to effect a return to the pre-fallen state. The dual nature of baptism, for Gregory, reflects the dual nature of the incarnate Christ, in whom the divine and the human are mingled into one.

For Gregory, the Spirit must be a part of a complete Christian baptism. Gregory says this explicitly in *Oration 39*, one of his two orations which focus almost exclusively on the topic of baptism. In the course of comparing the baptism instituted by Jesus, which includes the Spirit, to two other forms of baptism described in scripture, Gregory says that baptism without the Spirit is not complete.

Moses did baptize, but in water, and, previous to this, in the cloud and in the sea. This was typological (Paul thinks so too) [1 Cor

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<sup>108</sup> Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, p. 131.

<sup>109</sup> See Jn 3:5.

10:1-3], the sea [a type] of the water, the cloud of the Spirit, the manna of the bread of life, the cup [a type for] the cup of God. John, too, baptized, though not at all like the Jews, for it was not only in water, but also into repentance [Acts 19:4] – yet, it was not yet fully spiritual, for the “in the Spirit” was not added. Jesus too baptizes, but in the Spirit. This is complete (τελειότης).<sup>110</sup>

Gregory seems to read Paul's exegesis of Exod 13:21 and 14:22, which exegesis appears in 1 Cor 10:1-3, to include an understanding of the cloud as representative of the Holy Spirit. If so, Gregory has probably derived this connection from reading Paul's use of the word “spiritual” several times in 1 Cor 10:3-4 as a reference to the Holy Spirit. Regardless of this perhaps somewhat forced reading on Gregory's part, the point of the passage from *Or.* 39.17 is to indicate that baptism without the Holy Spirit is, in Gregory's eyes, always fundamentally incomplete. In the case of Moses, the complete Christian baptism is typified by the inclusion of the presence of the cloud representing the Spirit. In the case of John the Baptist, John's baptism is certainly good, but it is not, like the baptism of Jesus, complete. What ultimately makes baptism perfect in Gregory's mind is the addition by Jesus of the words “and in the Spirit,” found in the baptismal formula according to Matt 28:19.

The passage from *Oration* 39 illustrates two points important to understanding how Gregory views the relationship between the Spirit and baptism. First, Gregory explicitly declares here that without the Spirit, baptism is incomplete. Second, for Gregory, the words of the baptismal formula are of the utmost importance to the question of whether baptism is complete. Gregory's interest here in the specific words of the baptismal formula is probably related to his concerns about Christians correctly confessing the Trinity at baptism, a topic which we will explore in the fourth section of this chapter. For Gregory, upon being baptized, Christians must confess the divinity of the Spirit, as well as Father and Son.

We have thus observed that, for Gregory, baptism without the Spirit is always in some sense incomplete. We will now observe a key reason why this

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<sup>110</sup> *Or.* 39.17.

should be so. One place in which Gregory discusses the need for the Spirit in baptism in clear terms is, again, in *Oration 39*, in a segment of the oration in which Gregory discusses the biblical account of Jesus' baptism. Before we can discuss Gregory's exegesis of the baptism of Jesus, though, we must observe that, just before providing this exegesis, Gregory brings up the incarnation, discussing it as a mixing of divine and earthly things in the person of Christ.

[In the incarnation] insoluble things are mixed together; God is mixed with birth, with flesh (σάρξ), mind (νοῦς), with time, the eternal, with limit, the uncircumscribed, but not only all that, birth is mixed with virginity, and dishonour with one even higher than honour itself, the dispassionate is mixed with suffering and the immortal with the perishable.<sup>111</sup>

Gregory then explicitly states that the purpose of the mixing of elements in the incarnation is to save human beings from their fallen state.<sup>112</sup> We should note here that Gregory's use of the word “mind” in *Or.* 39.13 is clearly designed to signify something more than a human “mind.” This is evident from the rest of the list which Gregory presents regarding what is mingled in the person of Christ. In every case, Gregory discusses Christ as the mingling of one divine element with one created or human element. The mingling of “mind and flesh” which Gregory says occurs in Christ cannot be read as an exception. Browne and Swallow read Gregory's use of “mind” here, which they translate as “spirit,”<sup>113</sup> to “denote the Divine and Spiritual, taken in the highest and purest sense, in which it is lifted above the σάρξ and generally above all that is material.”<sup>114</sup> Gallay states that “mind” here indicates the “divine mind” itself.<sup>115</sup> Thus, for Gregory, Christ is the mixing of “mind and flesh” in a sense in which the term “mind” indicates something of Christ's divine nature.<sup>116</sup> Regardless of this detail, Gregory's point in

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111 *Or.* 39.13.

112 *Or.* 39.13.

113 Gallay, *SC* vol. 358, p.179 also translates the word νοῦς as “spirit.”

114 NPNF Vol. VII, p. 356, note δ. Capitalization in original.

115 Gallay, *SC* vol. 358, p. 178, n. 1.

116 For a much fuller discussion of Gregory's Christology than is possible here, see Wesche, “Mind' and 'Self,'” *passim*.

the passage is to make clear that in the incarnate Christ elements of the divine and the human are mixed.<sup>117</sup>

Indeed, for Gregory, the Spirit's descent upon Christ in the form of a dove at Christ's baptism is expressly meant to bear witness to this mixing.

So, then, Jesus rises out of the water. For he carries up with him the universe, and he sees the heavens parted which Adam closed to himself and all those after him, just like paradise [was closed] by the flaming sword. And the Spirit witnesses to [Christ's] divinity, for it approaches one like itself (τῷ ὁμοίῳ), and the voice from the heavens [witnesses too] for it is from there that the one so witnessed [comes]. And the Spirit appears as a dove, for he honours [Christ's] body (σῶμα) by being seen bodily, for this [Christ's body] also is God by way of *theosis* (θεώσις).<sup>118</sup>

For Gregory, the Spirit's appearance in the form of a dove at Christ's baptism serves as a crucial witness of Christ's divinity, including the conferred divinity of Christ's physical body. Gregory's logic is built on his understanding that the Spirit is God. For Gregory, the coming of the Spirit as a dove amounts to God descending upon God, as he indicates in the passage, in order that the truth about Christ might be known. What the Spirit as a dove accomplishes at Christ's baptism, according to *Or.* 39.16, is to bear witness to the real divinity of Christ, and the mingling of this divinity with Christ's human body to the point that Christ's body itself becomes divine. The Spirit accomplishes this witness, for Gregory, by entering the world in bodily form itself, specifically the bodily form of a dove.

The way in which Gregory's understanding that in Christ the divine and the human are mixed relates to his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to baptism becomes clear in a passage from *Or.* 39.15 wherein Gregory discusses the narrative account of Jesus' baptism from Matt 3.

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117 See Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, pp. 220-223 on the relationship between Gregory's use of the term "mind" in this and similar contexts and his concerns with regard to Apollinarianism.

118 *Or.* 39.16.

John baptizes, Jesus arrives, maybe to sanctify (ἀγιάζω) the baptist, but clearly in order to bury the old Adam entirely in the water, and before these things and because of these things, [to sanctify] the Jordan; just as he is spirit (πνεῦμα) and flesh (σάρξ), so does he consecrate (τελέω) by the Spirit (Πνεύμα) and water (ὕδωρ).<sup>119</sup>

Here Gregory says that Christ “buries” the “old Adam” in the waters of baptism. At the start of the oration, Gregory talks about baptism as a “new birth” by which Christians attain to the original pre-fallen state of Adam, and in *Or.* 39.13, Gregory presents Christ as a “new Adam” who saves the “old Adam” by the incarnation. Thus, by “the old Adam” here, Gregory means to indicate human fallen nature. Gregory is therefore saying that in Christ's baptism, fallen human nature undergoes death and “burial.” Gregory says that Christ sanctifies the Jordan “for the sake” of accomplishing this “burial.” The river in which Christ is baptized, for Gregory, undergoes a process of sanctification which allows it to be the place in which Christ “buries” Adam's fallen nature.

What is important for us to observe about the passage is that Gregory links Christ's mingling of the “spirit and flesh” to this sanctification of the Jordan.<sup>120</sup> Thus, in the passage just quoted, Gregory is saying that it is somehow because of Christ's dual nature that he “consecrates” Christians by both the Spirit and water. There is a connection in Gregory's mind between the Holy Spirit's relationship to baptism, and the dual nature of Christ. At this point Gregory does not spell out the nature of that link explicitly.

In *Oration* 40, however, Gregory sheds a great deal of light on the question of why he sees a connection between the Spirit's presence at baptism, and the mingling of divine and human in the person of the incarnate Christ.

That is the grace and power of baptism, not a world-wide flood (κατακλυσμός) like long ago, but the reception of purification from sin for us all individually (τῆς δὲ τοῦ καθ' ἕκαστον ἁμαρτίας κάθαρσιν ἔχουσα), a total cleansing of the stains or

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119 *Or.* 39.15.

120 See *Or.* 39.13, quoted above.

frustrations which have been brought on us by [doing] wrong. We are double (διπτῶν δὲ ὄντων), that is to say, from soul (ψυχὴ) and body (σῶμα), the former nature seen, the latter unseen, and the purification (κάθαρσις) is double (δισσός), because it is of water and the Spirit, I mean, the former received comprehensibly and bodily, the latter unbodily and incomprehensibly, occurring at the same time, the former typological (τυπικός), the latter true (ἀληθινός) and purifying the depths (τὰ βάθη καθαίροντος). This serves as a help to the first birth; it produces people new (καινός) rather than old, divine rather than being as they are now, recasting without a furnace, remaking (ἀνακτίζω) without destruction.<sup>121</sup>

Gregory here states explicitly that, for him, the Spirit must be present in baptism because of the double nature of human beings. Human beings have a visible and bodily element, which is cleansed by the physical water of baptism, as well as a “soul,” or invisible element, which is cleansed, in turn, by the Spirit. Gregory suggests that the reason for the presence of both water and the Spirit in baptism is that by so doubly cleansing human beings, God is able to “create us anew without *destroying* us.”

For Gregory, baptism which includes the Spirit, therefore, is efficacious for human beings because of the dual nature of human beings. Both the invisible, spiritual aspect of the human creature, and the visible, physical aspect must be accounted for in baptism. This understanding on Gregory's part of the need for baptism to be double in nature in order to heal both the physical and spiritual element of human beings may help us to interpret the connection between the mingling of the divine and human in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in baptism which Gregory discussed in *Or.* 39.15 above. There, Gregory said that in undergoing baptism himself, Christ sanctifies the baptismal waters, and because in Christ are mingled the divine and the human, this sanctification incorporates the Spirit into baptism. Gregory's words in *Or.* 40.7-8 allow us to suggest that the dual-nature of baptism in water and the Spirit is efficacious for fallen human

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<sup>121</sup> *Or.* 40.7-8.

beings at least in part because the dual nature of baptism is an extension of the dual nature of Christ. According to *Or.* 39.15, the same combination of divinity and humanity which Gregory sees in Jesus is infused into Christian baptism when Jesus receives baptism from John. In *Or.* 40.7-8, Gregory notes that baptism in the Spirit is thus able to purify both the spiritual and physical elements of human beings. While the baptism of John the Baptist was done in water for repentance, as Gregory says in *Or.* 39.17, Christian baptism, for Gregory, is in both the water and the Spirit in order to purify the whole human being, both body and soul. Just as the divine needed to be present in Christ in order for humanity's pre-fallen state to be restored, so must the divine be present in baptism if the sacrament is to restore individual Christians to the original state. Thus, the Spirit is, for Gregory, the divine element in baptism which allows baptism to be efficacious for human beings in their fallen dualism.

Perhaps this is why Gregory says in *Or.* 40.8 that the water of baptism is a “type,” while it is the cleansing of the Spirit which is “real” in baptism. Indeed, for Gregory, the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism is highly privileged over and against any outward, physical sign of the sacrament. While the water is clearly important for Gregory, for him it is the work of the Spirit in baptism which is most essential to the renewal which takes place therein. Gregory makes this clear in *Oration* 8, in a short passage in which he talks about the baptism of his sister, Gorgonia.

She recently had received the benefit of purification (κάθαρσις) and completion (τελειώσις), the benefit which is the common gift and the foundation of a second life which we have, all of us, received from God. Or, better, all her life was her purification and completion. She got the former from the regeneration (ἀναγεννήσις) of the Spirit [Titus 3:5], the latter was secure for her from her previous way of living. And perhaps only with her, I dare to say, the sacrament was a seal (σφραγίς), but not a gift (χάρισμα).<sup>122</sup>

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122 *Or.* 8.20.

Here, as Marie Calvet-Sebasti notes, Gregory is referring to his sister's baptism when he mentions the “benefit of cleansing and perfection.”<sup>123</sup> For Gregory, because of Gorgonia's exceptional virtue, baptism served as a “seal” of what was already hers. The term “seal (σφραγὶς)” in Greek most traditionally indicates the mark from a signet ring and comes to signify confirmation of something, such as an event which has already happened.<sup>124</sup> In the passage above, Gregory is referring to his sister's purification and perfection as the things which are “sealed” or confirmed by baptism in her case. While Gorgonia's perfection is accomplished by her own personal virtue, she receives the purification which precedes her baptism in the form of the “regeneration of the Holy Spirit” according to Gregory. Thus, Gregory here frames the regenerating effect of baptism as coming from the Holy Spirit. In Gorgonia's case, and evidently in few others, Gregory sees the work of the Holy Spirit in purifying and regenerating his sister as preceding the “seal” which was her baptism in water.<sup>125</sup> This shows that, for Gregory, it is the Spirit's work in regenerating and purifying Christians which is fundamental in baptism, or as he described it in *Or.* 40.8, “real,” while the physical act of baptism in water, while still important even in the case of Gorgonia (she does undergo the physical rite, after all), is a “type” of the real regeneration and purification being received from the Spirit.

There seems to exist, then, a tension in Gregory's approach to the physical water involved in baptism as contrasted to the work of the Spirit therein. In Gorgonia's case, the water of baptism appears only to confirm a regeneration from the Spirit already accomplished. Yet, Gregory is insistent in the passages from *Orations* 39 and 40 quoted above that baptism must be in both the Spirit and in water because human beings are both body and soul, and Christ is both divine and human. Gregory makes this even more clear in *Oration* 40 in a passage in which he seeks to build up his congregation's courage in the face of the “persecutor and tempter of the light.”

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123 Calvet-Sebasti, *SC* vol. 405, p. 290, n. 1.

124 *LSJ*.

125 See also Hägg, “Playing with Expectations,” p. 145.

Do not fear the battle. Send in the water, send in the Spirit, in which all the arrows of the Evil One, arrows set aflame (πυρέω), will be put out. It is merely the Spirit...yes, the very mountain-breaker! It is merely water...yes, the very quencher of fire!<sup>126</sup>

In the face of temptations, Gregory encourages his congregation to fall back on both the water and Spirit of their baptism. This contrasts with the passage on Gorgonia in which Gregory seems to privilege the work of the Spirit in baptism over the importance of the water.

What we must therefore observe about the connection between water and the Spirit in Gregory's understanding of baptism is that he maintains a flexible approach to their relationship, rather than a systematic one. Gregory appears to be able to stress the work of the Spirit in baptism when he wants to, as, for instance, when he wishes to highlight his sister's virtuous life as the most important source of her regeneration. In other cases, as when talking about the “fiery darts” of adversity, the significance of the water receives more emphasis, probably owing to its usefulness within the scope of the metaphor which Gregory is using to describe the challenges of Christian life. Given Gregory's flexible approach to the interplay between the physical and the divine aspects of baptism, it is important, as we proceed, not to over-work the link which Gregory clearly sees between the work of water and the Spirit in the sacrament. As with so many elements of Gregory's pneumatology, the connection between water and the Spirit is consistent in his writings, but never completely systematic.

The principal point which we have made in this section surrounds the connection which Gregory makes in *Or.* 39.15 between the mixing of the divine and physical in the incarnate Christ, and the presence of the Spirit at baptism. By emphasizing this connection, Gregory implies by analogy that the presence of both the Spirit and water at baptism is, like the presence of both divine and human elements in Christ, part of God's response to the the fall. Indeed, Gregory says explicitly in *Or.* 40.7-8 that baptism, like Christ, must have a divine and physical aspect, namely the Spirit and water, if it is to restore human beings, owing to the fact that human beings are both physical and spiritual creatures.

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<sup>126</sup> *Or.* 40.10.

## The Spirit as a Consuming Fire in Baptism

We have not yet approached the question of the Spirit's function in baptism from Gregory's point of view. We have noticed in *Or.* 40.7-8 that Gregory says that by being constituted of both water and the Spirit, baptism becomes able to remake both the physical and spiritual aspects of human beings. But in what sense does the Spirit serve to heal human beings? Beyond Gregory's assertion that there is a connection between the Spirit in baptism and the spiritual aspect of the human creature, what is missing from baptism if the Spirit is not present?

Gregory gives at least some indication of his point of view on this question in his writings. The passage in which he does so most clearly involves his exegesis of John the Baptist's words spoken at the baptism of Jesus according to Matt 3:9-12. The Baptist is reported to say that the one coming after him, by which he is understood to mean Christ, “will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” Gregory interprets John the Baptist's words analogically.

And what is the winnowing fork? The purification (κάθαρσις). And what is the fire? The burning up of what is insubstantial (τοῦ κούφου δαπάνη), and the boiling heat (ζέσις) of the Spirit. And what is the axe? The chopping out of the incurable soul after [trying to] fertilize it [first]. And what is the sword? The incision of the Word which divides the inferior from the superior and draws a distinction between the believer and the unbeliever (τὸν πιστὸν καὶ τὸν ἄπιστον).<sup>127</sup>

Gregory treats the Baptist's words as prophetic and symbolic of the meaning of baptism for Christians in Gregory's own time, and thus uses them to illustrate his own understanding of baptism to his congregation. It is in Gregory's comment regarding the “boiling heat of the Spirit” in the “burning up of what is

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<sup>127</sup> *Or.* 39.15.

insubstantial” that he provides us with some insight into how he thinks the Spirit works in baptism.

In order to understand what Gregory means by connecting the Holy Spirit to the “unquenchable fire” which John the Baptist describes according to Matthew, we must explore the relationship between the Holy Spirit and fire which Gregory presents elsewhere in his writings. Gregory connects the Holy Spirit to fire at least six times in his corpus, and thus fire must be considered an important theme in Gregory's pneumatology.<sup>128</sup> The first passage which will help us to read *Or.* 39.15 comes from *Oration* 41. Here, Gregory is discussing the tongues of fire at Pentecost.

And [the Spirit came] in tongues because of its affinity with the Word. And [they were] fiery, perhaps because of purification (κάθαρσις) first, (for our scripture (ὁ λόγος ἡμῶν) indeed acknowledges purifying fire (πῦρ καθαρτήριον), as any person who wants to can learn from plenty of examples), or because of its substance (οὐσία). For our God is fire, even a fire devouring (καταναλίσκος) [Deut 4:24] wickedness....<sup>129</sup>

Alluding to Deut 4:24 and referring to the narrative of Pentecost from Acts 2, Gregory asserts in *Or.* 41.12 that there exists a scriptural connection between fire and purification.

It is, however, Gregory's second point in *Or.* 41.12, regarding fire and the Spirit's *ousia*, which sheds most light on the connection which Gregory sees between the Holy Spirit and fire, which connection is important to his exegesis of the baptism of Jesus. In the passage, Gregory asserts that God is a “devouring fire” according to scripture, and that it may be because God is fire that the Spirit appeared at Pentecost in tongues of fire. What Gregory is doing here is beginning from his assumption that the Spirit is God in order to posit that, since scripture talks about God as a “devouring fire,” the Spirit, being God, is also thus naturally connected to fire, thus explaining its appearance in the form of fire at Pentecost.

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<sup>128</sup> *Ors.* 32.4; 39.15; 40.10; 41.10; 41.12; 45.16.

<sup>129</sup> *Or.* 41.12.

The idea that the Spirit is a sort of “devouring fire” is critical to Gregory's exegesis of the words of John the Baptist in *Or.* 39.15. He says in *Or.* 39.15 that the fire of which the Baptist speaks is symbolic of the “burning up of what is insubstantial, and the boiling heat of the Spirit.” Thus in *Or.* 39.15, and in *Or.* 41.12, Gregory links the Spirit with fire insofar as fire consumes and burns up. But what does Gregory mean by saying that the fire to which John alludes, which is the boiling heat of the Spirit, burns up what is “insubstantial”? We will be able to provide some insight into this question if we examine another passage wherein Gregory talks about God as a “consuming” fire and relates this fire to the Spirit. The passage is from *Oration* 32, delivered within the first month of Gregory's time in Constantinople.<sup>130</sup> Early in the sermon, Gregory addresses the highly contentious atmosphere in the capital at the time of his arrival, and the destructive impact which certain “passionate and strong-willed” people have on the Church. Gregory appears to have in mind those people who most vehemently argue about matters of doctrine and theology. He says that such people create divisions within the Church, and then describes the resulting state of Christian individuals due to these divisions.

[We become] like lunatics who claw at their own flesh, [we do] not even sense what we are doing but actually relish the pain more than others do their serene existence and reckon our distress a gain, and suppose that fragmentation offers service to God. We distinguish ourselves from others (though this kind of distinction carries with it not praise but condemnations), and become fired up (ἐμπίπρημι), though with a fire that does not purify (καθάρσις) but destroys (ὀλέθριος). For the word that is sharp, the sword of Christ, does not divide believers from non-believers, nor is fire (πῦρ) cast or kindled (that is, the boiling heat (ζέσις) of the Spirit and the faith (πίστις) that eats and consumes (δαπανῶσα καὶ ἐσθίουσα) the muck (ῥύλις)) but instead, we are sundered and devoured as never before.<sup>131</sup>

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130 Moreschini, *SC* vol. 318, pp. 10-11.

131 *Or.* 32.4. Trans. adapted from Vinson.

Gregory is arguing that the types of divisions which the Church is experiencing as a result of “passionate and strong-willed” people in Constantinople have become so strong that many have begun to mistake the divisions and arguments within the Church for Christian virtue. Gregory argues that while Christians try to distinguish themselves, such distinction actually only leads to condemnation, and that Christians now become “fired up” but with a fire that actually destroys rather than purifying them. It is important to see that Gregory's statements to this end are only sensible if Gregory is challenging the expectations of his congregation. This is to say that Gregory assumes that his audience will think of “distinction” and spiritual “fire” as good things which would normally meet with Gregory's praise. But the kinds of distinctions and fire now present within the Church, Gregory argues, lead instead to destruction.

Gregory then contrasts destructive distinction and destructive fire to their spiritually beneficial counterparts. In doing so, Gregory uses language which mirrors that which we find in the passage from *Or.* 39.15 quoted above. There, we will recall, Gregory stated that the “sword” which John the Baptist promised would be brought by Christ according to the Gospel of Matthew symbolizes the division which Christ creates between the “faithful and the unbeliever.” In *Or.* 32.4, Gregory reads the sword of Christ in the same way, as a positive form of division which should separate the Church from those outside the Church. In the case of *Or.* 32.4, however, Gregory's point is that the divisions *within* the Church which he is observing in *Oration 32* do *not* constitute the type of praiseworthy division between the faithful and unbelievers which is brought by Christ. Gregory makes a similar point with regard to the question of fire. Here, Gregory equates spiritually positive fire with the “the boiling of the Spirit.” This “boiling” in the Spirit Gregory now connects to “faith that eats up and consumes that which is material.” The phrase uses two verbs “eats up” and “consume” which are very close in meaning to “devour,” the verb which Gregory previously used to describe God as fire in *Or.* 42.12, quoted above, as well as “burn up” the verb used by Gregory in *Or.* 39.15. Thus, in both *Or.* 32.4 and *Or.* 42.12, Gregory links the Holy Spirit to fire with an emphasis on the power of fire to consume or devour. What is consumed is, in the first passage, wickedness, and, in the second, what Gregory terms “muck.” What we may conclude from *Or.* 42.12 and *Or.* 32.4,

then, is that, for Gregory, discussing the Spirit in relation to fire is often meant to emphasize the Spirit's role in consuming that which is evil and, in the sense of being base, that which is earthly, which is to say, “muck.”

This observation allows us to return to *Or.* 39.15, wherein Gregory talks about the fire promised by John the Baptist as symbolic of the “heat of the Spirit” which “burns up that which is insubstantial.” It is probable, given the connection between the Spirit and fire which Gregory establishes in *Ors.* 32.4 and 41.12, that Gregory means this phrase to indicate the same type of “devouring” and “consuming” of the wicked and earthly which he discussed in *Or.* 32.4, in conjunction with the kind of “purifying fire” which he connects with the Spirit in *Or.* 41.12 as well. In the case of *Or.* 39.15, the “insubstantial” to which Gregory refers would thus most likely represent the fallen earthly element of human beings which must be overcome by the purifying fire of the Spirit in baptism. That we should read this as the earthly aspect specifically of human beings is simply an effect of the fact that Gregory is explicitly talking about baptism in *Or.* 39.15. It is natural to assume that when Gregory talks of the effects of baptism, he is thinking of its effects on the people who receive baptism. Thus, the Spirit's relationship to baptism in Gregory's mind has something to do with “devouring” or “consuming” that which is wicked and earthly in each human being. If this reading is correct, then what Gregory is indicating in *Or.* 39.15 is that he believes that it is central to the type of baptism which John the Baptist, according to the Gospel of Matthew, promises Christ will perform, that the Holy Spirit be present at baptism in a capacity which serves to overcome the problem of the Fall by consuming what is wicked in people. The Spirit, the divine presence in baptism, works on the effects of sin by burning them away. The result of this burning we mentioned already in our discussion of *Or.* 40.7-8. There, Gregory said that baptism, when the Spirit is present, serves to “remake [human beings] without destruction.” It is the “wicked” element of human beings, evidently existent because of the human Fall, that the Spirit devours at baptism, leaving the real human creature, as God meant it to exist, fully intact.

This, then, allows us to comment on Gregory's understanding that the Spirit must be present in baptism for baptism to be complete, which understanding on his part we established in the previous section. While Gregory acknowledges

other forms of baptism, as we saw, for him, it is only Christian baptism, as instituted by Jesus, that is capable of truly returning human beings to their pre-fallen state. One reason that Gregory gives for this, indeed, the most important reason, is that only Christian baptism involves the Holy Spirit. Because, for Gregory, it is the Holy Spirit in baptism which consumes human wickedness, it is natural to expect that he would not accept as fully efficacious any baptism not including the Spirit.

### **Confessing the Spirit at Baptism**

It may be recalled that we noted very briefly in the second section of this chapter that, according to *Or.* 39.17, including the phrase “in the Spirit” in the Christian baptismal formula is critical for Gregory if baptism is to be complete. We suggested that this hints at an interest on Gregory's part in the question of what, precisely, a Christian confesses at the point of baptism. It is to the question of the importance of Christian confession at baptism, especially confession of the Spirit's divinity, in Gregory's thought that we now turn. We will see that, for Gregory, a correct confession of the Trinity is critical for baptism to be effective,<sup>132</sup> and that this confession must include a confession of the Spirit's divinity.

For Gregory, the doctrine which Christians confess at the point of their baptism is crucial to the efficacy of baptism.<sup>133</sup> This becomes clear in Gregory's writings in a series of passages taken from near the end of *Oration* 40. First, a brief note on the context of the passages which we will explore. Throughout most of *Oration* 40, Gregory presents an extended series of exhortations that his congregation should be baptized immediately rather than putting the sacrament off. Gregory's words to this end are not very theologically dense; his strategy is to persuade his congregation to undergo baptism by critiquing some of the

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132 See Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, pp. 593-594, and Moreschini, “Il battesimo,” *passim*.

133 For Gregory, baptism is also a confirmation of a certain confession of faith. As Moreschini, “Il battesimo,” p. 79 puts it, “Il battesimo, duque, conferma la professione di fede e la professione di fede garantisce la pienezza e la validità del battesimo.”

motivations for putting off the sacrament which he has apparently encountered over time. For example, those involved in public affairs might put off baptism lest their careers sully its effect,<sup>134</sup> or others might prefer to live a life of pleasure first, and receive baptism only later.<sup>135</sup> When his exhortations simply to receive baptism are complete, and as the sermon nears its end, Gregory begins to direct his audience to be mindful of their confession of the Trinity when they do receive baptism.

In addition to everything I have said, and above all, guard, please, the good deposit, for which I live, for which I battle, and which I take as a companion; with which I endure every painful thing and spit on all pleasure, namely the confession (ὁμολογία) of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. I entrust this to you today; in this I will baptize you together, and by this I will raise you up together. I give you this as a companion and guardian throughout your whole life, the one divinity and power found singly in three and the three separately gathered, not inconsistent in essences (οὐσία) or natures (φύσις), and neither augmented nor diminished by excesses or shortfalls.<sup>136</sup>

We need to make two observations about the passage. First, Gregory says that it is “in the confession” of the Trinity, which he “entrusts” to his congregation, that he will baptize those listening to him. This emphasizes the importance of confession at the point of baptism from Gregory's point of view, a point which we will expand on shortly. Second, Gregory seems to imply in the passage that by entrusting his congregation with a correct confession of the Trinity, he is actually in some sense “giving” them the Trinity itself. He does so by way of a subtle shift of referents to a series of relative pronouns in the passage. After mentioning the confession which he is entrusting to his congregation, Gregory uses the word “this” four times in quick succession. The first such pronoun clearly refers to the confession of the Trinity, and the second and third seem most naturally to refer to

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134 *Or.* 40.19.

135 *Or.* 40.20.

136 *Or.* 40.41.

“confession” as well. But the referent for the last “this” seems to follow, rather than precede it, namely, the Trinity itself. Gregory's sequencing of his statements creates a very blurry line, in the passage, between the Trinity which a Christian confesses, and the Trinity which is actually present to them as a “companion and guardian.”

This may seem unimportant at first glance. But the passage is a good illustration of an important aspect of Gregory's approach to Trinitarian theology. As McGuckin puts it, “for Gregory, theology (and particularly trinitarian theology) is wholly confessional, that is, doxological, in character and soteriological in its import.”<sup>137</sup> McGuckin goes on to explain in detail.

For Gregory, the Trinity is a dynamic and soteriological experience, the beauty of God experienced in the liturgy of prayer and expressed in the Church's confession of praise. It is a saving mystery which draws the soul on in an ascent whose range and power ever increases, but whose formularies do not ever increase, but, on the contrary, become fewer in accordance with their interiorized profundity of communion with the object of their vision.<sup>138</sup>

While McGuckin does not bring up the question of baptism here, it is easy to see a connection between the observation which he is making and Gregory's emphasis on confession at baptism. Trinitarian theology, for Gregory, is not merely or even primarily something to be considered philosophically and logically. Rather, it is something that is fundamentally lived by Christians. It seems that, for Gregory, baptism marks the inception of the kind of lived experience of the Trinity which McGuckin construes as fundamental to his entire theological enterprise.<sup>139</sup> Given

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137 McGuckin, “Perceiving Light,” p. 18.

138 McGuckin, “Perceiving Light,” p. 18.

139 Papaioannou, “Gregory and the Constraint of Sameness,” *passim*, may be making much the same observation. Papaioannou suggests that, for Gregory, discourse is in some sense the beginning point from which human beings become that which is signified in their discourse. For Gregory, what a person thinks and says become realities into which they enter in a substantive way. Ideas and confessions, for Gregory, are a form of reality, not merely reflective of something existent outside themselves.

this fact, it is no surprise that Gregory places a great deal of importance on the form of the Trinity into which Christians are baptized.

This sensibility on Gregory's part is reflected elsewhere in his corpus as well, and McGuckin's observation of it makes it much easier to see why it appears that, for Gregory, baptism into a wrong Trinitarian confession could compromise *theosis* itself.

Just as the Son is ranked below the Father by people who are base and writhing on the ground, so too is the Spirit ranked after the Son in glory, in order that God and creation might be scorned by this novel theology. Nothing of the Trinity, friends, is a slave (δοῦλος) – nothing a created being (κτιστόν) – nothing is alien (ἐπίσρακτος), as I heard one of the sophists saying once. “If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ,” the godly apostle says [Gal 1:10]. If I was at any point giving worship to a created being, or if I was baptized into a created being, then I never began to undergo *theosis* (ἐθεούμην), nor was I remade after my first birth.<sup>140</sup>

Here Gregory says that if he were baptized “into a created being,” the result would be that he would never undergo *theosis* or be remade by baptism. As we saw in the passage from *Or.* 40.41, for Gregory, the Trinity “into” which a Christian is baptized is the one which a Christian confesses at baptism. Thus, this passage demonstrates that, for Gregory, the risk of holding to an incorrect Trinitarian theology at the point of baptism is nothing short of a failure of *theosis* itself.

For Gregory, Christian baptism has an impact on Christian worship. Being a Christian is about more than merely bearing the name, it is about offering proper worship to God. What this means for Gregory, in part at least, is that considering any of the Persons of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit, as created beings, precludes offering worship to God. People who do so thereby direct their worship to creatures, and this, for Gregory, causes their baptism to be in vain.

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<sup>140</sup> *Or.* 40.42.

Look at the people who hurry down to the race-track, who are identified by their colours and the sides that they root for. You even know the names without me ever telling you. If you are known as a Christian in this kind of way, it is a small thing, that label, even if you are proud of it. If you have accepted [Christ] as God, show that you have accepted this by way of what you do. If God is a created being, then even now you offer worship to a created being, rather than the creator. If the Holy Spirit is a created being (κτίσμα), you were baptized in vain (μάτην), and are in a sense healthy in two respects, but really not even in these [two respects], while on one account you are completely in danger (κινδυνεύω).<sup>141</sup>

This passage thus highlights again the connection, for Gregory, between ideas and confessions, and the realities into which Christians are baptized. For Gregory, if Christians believe that Christ is a creature, then they are worshipping a creature. Gregory creates a direct parallel in this passage between this statement and his assertion that if Christians are baptized considering the Spirit to be a creature, their baptism is in vain. For Gregory, the Persons to whom Christians offer worship and into whom they are baptized must be God, otherwise Christians are worshipping and being baptized into creatures in a real sense. Whatever such Christians call themselves, for Gregory, they are worshippers of creatures, and are baptized in vain.

We are left to ask, then, what Trinity Gregory believes his congregation should be baptized into such as to allow for *theosis* and a remaking of the human creature? It almost goes without saying that, for Gregory, the Trinity confessed at baptism must include a confession of the Father and the Son. But, for our purposes, what is important to observe is that, for Gregory, Christians must confess the full divinity of the Spirit at baptism. This fact is unambiguous in his writings. Gregory makes it clear in at least two places in his corpus. The first which we will examine is from *Oration* 34, delivered in 380. McGuckin sees the sermon as coming before the Maximus affair during a time when a group of

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<sup>141</sup> *Or.* 37.18.

Egyptian sailors had started attending Gregory's church.<sup>142</sup> As McGuckin says, the sermon “is designed to show Gregory as a 'good Alexandrian,’”<sup>143</sup> and thus Gregory spends a significant amount of time in the speech on an explication of his own doctrine of the Trinity. It is in such a context that Gregory brings up the Holy Spirit in relation to baptism.

And I respect the equal honour of the Spirit – and I fear the threat set forward against those who blaspheme it. And it is blasphemy (βλασφημία), not theology, to sever (ἀλλοτριώω) [the Spirit] from the Divinity. Note here that the one blasphemed was the Lord, and the one avenged was the Holy Spirit, apparently as Lord. I cannot stand to be unenlightened (ἀφώτιστος) after illumination (φώτισμα), miscasting any one of the three into which I have been baptized, and so to be put in my grave (ἐνθάπτω) by the water, and to be consecrated not into rebirth (ἀναγέννησις), but into death.<sup>144</sup>

Here, Gregory interprets Christ's admonition about “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit [Matt 12:31; Mark 3:29; Luke 12:10]” as referring to the act of separating the Holy Spirit from the other Persons of the Trinity theologically. He makes a direct contrast between blasphemy and theology as though the two are obvious antonyms. In so doing, Gregory indicates that he thinks that a Christian who separates the Holy Spirit from divinity at baptism converts that baptism into an act not of rebirth, but, in fact, of death. In *Oration* 33, Gregory exhorts his congregation to declare the full divinity of the Spirit at the point of baptism, along with the Father and the Son.

I will not endure, after having been taught the spoken words of faith, to be educated as a faithless man, to confess (ὁμολογέω) truth and to enter amid lies, to go down as one about to be made complete (τελέω), and to come up unfinished (ἀτελέστερος), to be baptized as one who lives, and to be killed in the water, like a still-

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142 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 269-273.

143 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 270.

144 *Or.* 34.11.

born baby, receiving death along with birth. Why do you make me joyful and in the same moment miserable, enlightened anew and unenlightened, divine and godless, to the point that I may run even the hope of my remaking aground? A brief word on this: remember the confession (ὁμολογία). Into what were you baptized? Into the Father? Lovely; but – still Jewish. Into the Son? Lovely – no longer Jewish, but not yet complete. Into the Holy Spirit? Excellent – this is complete (τέλειος). Now, was it merely into these, or also some common name of theirs? Yes, a common name. What was it? Obviously – that of “God.”<sup>145</sup>

Here, Gregory talks about wrongly *confessing* the Trinity at baptism as once again amounting to baptism not only failing to produce new birth and enlightenment in him as a Christian, but, in fact, as turning baptism into a form of death. He emphasizes that all three Persons of the Trinity must be confessed as God at baptism, and that Christian confession is not complete or perfect until it includes a confession of the Holy Spirit, one which attributes the word “God” to all three persons of the Trinity, including the Spirit.

Gregory makes a similar point in a passage from *Oration 23*. While the passage does not make any direct reference to baptism, Gregory does discuss the importance of confession to *theosis* and rebirth here.

To dishonour or separate any one of the three is to dishonour our confession (ὁμολογία) of faith, that is, our rebirth (ἀναγέννησις), our Godhead (θεότητα), our *theosis* (θέωσις), our hope (ἐλπίδα). You see how gracious the Holy Spirit is to us when we confess him as God (θεολογέω) and how he punishes us when we deny him? I will not speak of the fear and the wrath (τὸν φόβον καὶ τὴν ἡπειλημένην) that threatens, not those who do him honour, but those who dishonour him.<sup>146</sup>

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145 *Or.* 33.17.

146 *Or.* 23.12. Trans. adapted from Vinson.

For Gregory, to separate any one of the Trinity from the other two is to dishonour *theosis*. It is interesting to see here that Gregory talks about the Spirit's punishment of those who deny it. Most important for our purposes, though, the passage once again demonstrates the strong connection which exists in Gregory's mind between confessing the Trinity as a whole, and in particular "confessing the Spirit as God," as he puts it here, to *theosis* and rebirth.

We have already seen that, for Gregory, baptism cannot be efficacious without the presence of the Holy Spirit therein. We have now seen that, for Gregory, baptism can also by no means be efficacious without a complete confession of all three Persons of the Trinity as God, including the Holy Spirit. In accordance with the work of Papaionnou,<sup>147</sup> what Gregory may well be assuming in the passages quoted in this section is that a failure to confess the divinity of any of the Persons of the Trinity, certainly including the Spirit, precludes that Person from being truly present in Christian baptism. Thus, for Gregory, if baptism must involve the Spirit to be complete because the Spirit stands as the divine element in baptism, and serves, like a fire, to consume the fallen earthly elements in human beings at baptism, then baptism must involve the *confession* of the Spirit as equal to Father and Son in order for the Spirit to be present within it. One thing is certain: for Gregory, the Trinity which Christians confess when they are baptized must be the complete and correct Trinity for baptism to be able to lead to *theosis*. The fact that, for Gregory, a failure to correctly confess the Trinity at baptism, including a confession of the full divinity of the Spirit, has the potential to compromise Christian *theosis* is foundational to Gregory's understanding of his own role in the Church, and his relationship to the Spirit in that context, as we will see.

## Conclusions

In this chapter we made the following key points about Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to baptism. 1) For Gregory, the Spirit must be present in baptism for baptism to be complete because of the double nature of fallen human beings. 2) The presence of the Spirit and water in baptism

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<sup>147</sup> See note on p. 70.

reflects the dual nature of the incarnate Christ as divine and human. 3) The Spirit is, for Gregory, the divine presence in baptism and consumes the fallen elements in human beings. 4) For Gregory, if a Christian does not confess the Spirit's divinity at baptism, such a baptism cannot lead to *theosis*.

### *Chapter 3*

#### *A Stream Forced to Flow Uphill:*

#### *The Spirit and Gregory's Church Career*

#### **Introduction**

So far we have explored the relationship in Gregory's writings between the Holy Spirit and the Church, and that between the Holy Spirit and baptism. One important function of the first two chapters of this study, which examined these topics, is to provide the background for this chapter, in which we will explore the ways in which Gregory constructs and discusses his own relationship to the Holy Spirit. As we will see, Gregory's perceived relationship with the Spirit informs nearly everything he says about the Spirit in his writings.

In the first section of this chapter, we will explore Gregory's discussions of the Spirit's relationship to his ordinations, first as a priest, and then as a bishop. Gregory claims that it was never his own desire to be ordained, and yet, he associates the Spirit closely with his ordination, and once he does become an ordained leader, he sees it as critical that he submit himself to the will of the Spirit. In sections two and three of the chapter we will explore the ways in which Gregory talks about his feelings of being caught between a life which he desires and the life which he thinks the Spirit wills for him. To this end, in the second section of the chapter, we will explore the nature of the life which Gregory says he really wants, namely, a life of private illumination in the Spirit. In the third section we will explore how Gregory talks about the life which he thinks the Spirit wills for him, namely, a public life of service to the community, marked by pastoral teaching, in which Gregory publishes his illumination. In the fourth section of the chapter, we will examine Gregory's discussions about coming to terms with the life of public ministry which he thought was the Spirit's will for him. We will see that Gregory attempts to pursue a middle way between the life which he desires, and the one which the Spirit wills. In section five we will observe that Gregory sees a close connection between the Spirit and his discourse,

which connection Gregory often refers to by citing Ps 119:131. For Gregory, the Spirit is ultimately the agent which determines if and when he will speak. In the sixth section of the chapter we will see that, for Gregory, by leading a life of public ministry he understands that the Spirit binds him to his congregation. One of the important ways in which Gregory serves his congregation in the context of this bond is through discourse. In the seventh and final section of the chapter, we will discuss Gregory's understanding of his role with regard to the Spirit at the baptism of the individual Christians who make up his community. Gregory understands it to be his duty, by working in conjunction with the Spirit, to baptize individual Christians into the correct confession of the Trinity as he understands it.

### **The Spirit and Gregory's Ordinations**

Gregory underwent two major ordinations in his life. The first, at the demand of his father, was to the priesthood, occurring in 361.<sup>148</sup> The second was to the bishopric in 372, and occurred in part thanks to Basil's attempts that year to seat as many friends and allies as bishops around Caesarea as possible.<sup>149</sup> In this section we will explore some of Gregory's discussions of the Spirit's relationship to these ordinations.

A natural place to begin an examination of Gregory's understanding of any part of his life, including the Spirit's relationship to his ordination to the priesthood, is his autobiography, the poem *De Vita Sua*. The word "Spirit" appears in the poem only eight times, and in some cases refers to the human spirit or evil spirits rather than the Holy Spirit. In total, Gregory brings up the Holy Spirit as a means for constructing his autobiography only three times in the poem.<sup>150</sup> This paucity of references to the Holy Spirit is important. While Gregory is a deeply self-reflective author, his understanding of his life as presented in this, his most extended account of it, is only rarely couched in terms

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148 McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 99-100.

149 McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp.187-192.

150 Gregory mentions the Spirit two more times in the poem outside the context of his autobiography. See, for example, *DVS* 1630-1634, on p. 20 and *DVS* 1514-1524, on p. 187.

of the work of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, of the three fully autobiographical mentions of the Holy Spirit in *De Vita Sua*, two come in the context of Gregory's discussion of his original ordination to the priesthood, while the third serves as an indication that Gregory sees the Holy Spirit as actively involved in appointing him to preach in Constantinople.<sup>151</sup> In *De Vita Sua*, Gregory presents the Spirit's work in his own life exclusively in terms of his ordination or appointment to an office in the Church. As this fact suggests, Gregory, in his writings, most often frames the Spirit's relationship to his life in the context of his career in the Church.

The first of Gregory's clear references to the Holy Spirit in *De Vita Sua* comes in line 342.<sup>152</sup> Gregory has just recounted his return home to Cappadocia from his studies in Athens. He reports that he finds himself caught between two potential ways of leading a Christian life, one a life of public ministry, the other a private life. Gregory describes the first of these two ways of life as “practical” (πρακτικὸς) and the second as a “withdrawal” or “being away” (ἐκτὸς ὄντας) from the world.<sup>153</sup> The first of these ways of life he equates with the priesthood, and he indicates his respect for the priestly office.<sup>154</sup> But Gregory also remains insistent that he would prefer a life of philosophical isolation for himself.<sup>155</sup> He discusses this second way of life in terms of a private approach to God.<sup>156</sup> In *De Vita Sua* Gregory insists that he personally desires only the life of solitude and withdrawal, but is also very clear in his indications that he feels pulled into the “practical” life of public ministry despite his will.

According to *De Vita Sua*, Gregory's father, the bishop of Nazianzus, ultimately pushed him finally and forcefully away from the contemplative life and towards the life of active service, which Gregory equates in the poem with the priesthood. Gregory reports that his father “forced” (κάμπτω) him to take on the

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151 DVS 595-599. We will explore this passage beginning on p. 95.

152 Gregory uses the word “spirit” (πνεύματος) slightly earlier than this, at *Carm.* 2.1.11.297, but the context indicates that this is not in reference to the Holy Spirit, but rather to Gregory's own, human spirit and its illumination by the act of reading scripture.

153 DVS 300-309.

154 DVS 324-326.

155 DVS 300-335.

156 DVS 305-309.

priesthood, and that he, the younger Gregory, gave in.<sup>157</sup> At Christmas in 361, Gregory was ordained a priest against his will by his father.<sup>158</sup> Gregory's immediate reaction to this ordination, as he indicates in *De Vita Sua*, was to flee in a panic to Pontus to spend some time with his friend Basil in monastic seclusion.<sup>159</sup> It is in describing his forced ordination to the priesthood, and explaining his subsequent departure to Pontus, that Gregory first brings up the Spirit in *De Vita Sua*.

While I was considering all this,<sup>160</sup> a terrible dilemma arose for me, for my father, although completely aware of my attitude on the subject, sat me by brute force (βίαιως) on the [priest's] chair. I do not know why [he did it]...but, terrible (δεινός) is love alongside power, and perhaps he was driven by paternal love to bind (κατέχω) me with the shackles (πέδη) of the Spirit (τοῦ πνεύματος) and honour me with what he considered the better aspects of [the two ways of life in question]. I was so agonized by this tyranny (τυραννίς) - for I cannot call it anything else (may the divine Spirit forgive me for thinking this way) that all at once, friends, parents, home-land – I cut ties with them all, and I went, like oxen driven by a goad do, to Pontus.<sup>161</sup>

The first observation which we should make about the passage involves the question of agency. Gregory's focus in discussing his ordination here is on the agency of his father. Gregory reports that his father made him become a priest “by brute force,” and he mentions his father's “power” with regard to Gregory's ordination. Yet, the Holy Spirit is also central to Gregory's account of his ordination to the priesthood. Gregory brings up the Holy Spirit in referring to his ordination by calling it a binding with “shackles of the Spirit.” The phrase here simply refers to Gregory's becoming a priest. This is easiest to see in the Greek.

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157 *Carm.* 2.1.11.337-344.

158 Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 32.

159 *Carm.* 2.1.11.350-352.

160 The referent is the conflict which Gregory feels between public and private life.

161 *Carm.* 2.1.11.337-351.

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅθεν, ἴσως δὲ φίλτρῳ πατρικῷ κινούμενος...ὥς ἂν κατάσχοι ταῖς πέδαις τοῦ πνεύματος.<sup>162</sup>

Thus, the Spirit appears in connection with Gregory's ordination to the priesthood here, though little, if any, active agency is applied to the Spirit in this particular passage. This is in accordance with the flexibility with regard to emphasis on the particular agents of ordination which we observed in Gregory's thought in Chapter 1. One thing is absolutely clear in the passage above: Gregory does not, himself, wish to be ordained a priest. It is only “by brute force” that he is made a priest by his father. Gregory is ordained against his own will, according to *De Vita Sua*, and we must keep this fact in mind throughout the remainder of this chapter.

A second question arises from the passage which we must explore here. This question again involves the phrase “shackles of the Spirit. The nature of the link between the “shackles” of which Gregory speaks and the Spirit, is not self-evident in the passage. In using the genitive τοῦ πνεύματος Gregory produces an important ambiguity in the resulting phrase “shackles of the Spirit,” which ambiguity is also clear in the English translation above. The genitive here can be read to indicate that the “shackles” which symbolize Gregory's ordination either *belong to* the Spirit (possessive genitive) or that the Spirit in some sense actually *constitutes* them (genitive of substance). The first reading is the simplest, and if the phrase is taken this way, we are led to conclude that Gregory understands his ordination, symbolized by shackles, to belong to the Holy Spirit in a possessive sense. But the second reading is not mutually exclusive with the first, and may well be intended by Gregory as well, in order to indicate that the Holy Spirit is itself, in some sense, the binding agent which connects him to his ordination. Either of the two possible readings of the genitive τοῦ πνεύματος draws a very close connection between the Spirit and Gregory's ordination.

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162 Gregory uses the optative in this type of final clause frequently, as shows Henry, “The Late Greek Optative,” pp. 74-83. Henry argues that in these contexts Gregory uses the optative with no regard to sequence and its use reflects a “potential in the main clause but with an element of will more or less foreign to the potential,” p. 83. This example, which Henry herself cites, is obviously in line with her conclusions.

The phrase “shackles of the Spirit” is of interest for us because it illustrates two of the most important motifs in Gregory's discussions of the Spirit's relationship to his own ordination. First, by referring to his ordination as a set of “shackles,” Gregory emphasizes how little he personally desired to be ordained. But, and this is our second point, Gregory does not merely see ordination as a set of “shackles,” rather he identifies them as the “shackles of the Spirit” specifically. The Spirit thus possesses and perhaps even constitutes the unwelcome bond which exists between Gregory and his ordained office. Gregory sees his ordination to the priesthood in deeply pneumatological terms which serve to emphasize the Spirit's involvement in binding Gregory to his office while also insisting on Gregory's own lack of desire for that office.

We must make a third and final observation about the passage from *De Vita Sua* just quoted. This observation involves Gregory's turn to the Spirit to ask for forgiveness which appears near the end of the passage. Gregory makes it clear that he seeks the Spirit's forgiveness for using the word “tyranny” to describe his father's behaviour in ordaining him. Gregory obviously feels a pang of guilt upon insinuating that his father is some kind of tyrant. What is interesting about Gregory's reaction, for us, is that he turns to the Spirit specifically to seek forgiveness, rather than, for example, his father, or God more generally. Gregory's turn to the Spirit for forgiveness is important for us for two reasons. First, it serves to emphasize the degree to which Gregory associates the Spirit with his ordination. Second, Gregory's language in turning to the Spirit for forgiveness is highly emotional. Gregory's emotionality here is important because, we will see in the second section of this chapter in particular, emotional language emphasizing Gregory's misery at the prospect of being ordained, presented in connection with the Spirit, appears frequently in Gregory's discussions of his understanding of his own role in the Church.

One text in which Gregory discusses his ordination to the bishopric at length is *Oration 9*. The oration is part of a series of four sermons by Gregory which deal with the topic of his ordination as bishop, collected now as *Ors. 9-12*. The series of orations, including *Oration 9*, was probably delivered at Nazianzus in 372. Calvet-Sebasti posits that Gregory delivered *Oration 9* just before his

actual consecration as bishop.<sup>163</sup> Regardless of the precise timing of its delivery, there is no question that the sermon focuses on the topic of Gregory's ordination as bishop. As a result, the several references to the Holy Spirit which appear in the sermon are quite important for us. At the start of the sermon, he expresses his emotional state upon receiving ordination even more clearly than he does in the passage of *De Vita Sua* which we just explored, and mentions the Spirit as he does so. Here he says, “the Spirit and the chrism (χρῖσμα) are upon (ἐπι) me again (πάλιν) [Luke 4:18]; and again I make my way bowed down and in mourning [Ps 35:14] (πενθῶν καὶ σκυθρωπάζων).”<sup>164</sup> Here, Gregory asserts the Spirit's presence in his ordination, as he did in *De Vita Sua*. But Gregory's mention of the Spirit and chrism is immediately followed by an allusion to Ps 35:14, used by Gregory to indicate that he is now bowed down as a result of becoming a bishop. The Spirit and the chrism of ordination, as they are “upon” Gregory, seem almost to be the cause of his bowed head in the passage, as if they are heavy weights upon him. The result of it all, Gregory makes clear, is “mourning.”

Gregory provides a reason why he feels this way in *Oration 9*. He says that he is worried that he will fail to submit himself fully to the Holy Spirit now that he is an ordained bishop.

I do not find any fault with my worry or my gloom. For as the sun exposes the fatigue of one's eye, God, when present, exposes the weakness of the soul. To some, He is light, to some fire. He is to each according to that person's internal make-up and condition. What do we understand about Saul? For he was anointed (χρίω) and participated (μετέχω) in the Spirit [1 Sam 10:1-10], and was from then on a spiritual man (πνευματικός) – I would never say anything otherwise about him... Yet, when he did not surrender (ἐμπαρέσχω) himself in full to the Spirit [1 Sam 15], he was not changed with purity (καθαρός) into another man, as had been

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163 Calvet-Sebasti, *Discours 6-12*, pp. 88-89.

164 *Or.* 9.1.

predicted, but he kept a bit of the ancient, bitter spark, and of the seed of evil (πονηρός).<sup>165</sup>

We need to make two observations about the passage. First, Gregory indicates that, upon ordination, Saul “participated in (μετέχω)” the Spirit. The verb indicates an association of parties or concepts which maintains individual identifiability while generating a greater whole, or an entirely new thing.<sup>166</sup>

In Gregory's case, the verb “participate” is applied to Saul's anointing.<sup>167</sup> The verb implies that Gregory sees a particularly close connection between Saul and the Spirit at the point of Saul's anointing, even to the degree that a greater whole is formed by the participation of Saul in the Spirit. Gregory is probably identifying this greater whole when he says that Saul, after his anointing and participation in the Spirit, became a “spiritual man.” By talking of Saul's “participation” in the Spirit, then, Gregory draws an extremely close connection between the anointed Saul and the Spirit.

Yet, as close as this connection between Saul and the Spirit upon Saul's anointing is, from Gregory's point of view, something remained amiss with Saul. This is our second key observation about the passage. Gregory says that Saul did not “surrender himself fully” to the Spirit, and that this resulted in Saul failing to be changed completely into another man, and that some element of evil remained in him. Gregory now goes on to explain that Saul's example illustrates the reason for which he is so afraid of becoming an ordained leader.

These are the reasons that I was afraid, that I was overcome with bitterness and despair, and this was why my experience (πάσχω) was like that of lightning to children, who become a mix of thrill and terror at the sight: I loved (ἀγαπάω) and at the same time feared (φοβέω) the Spirit.<sup>168</sup>

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165 *Or.* 9.2

166 *LSJ.* See, for instance, Aristotle *Metaphysics* ζ.12; H.6; 1 Cor 10:17.

167 See Tollefsen, “*Theosis* According to Gregory,” p. 270.

168 *Or.* 9.3.

The referent for the relative pronoun at the start of this quotation is the possibility which exists in Gregory's mind of actually falling further away from God as a result of receiving some kind of gift from God. This possibility is exemplified, Gregory is saying, by Saul's retaining the "seed of wickedness" as described in the quotation from *Or.* 9.2 above.<sup>169</sup> Gregory's point in the passage is to explain the complex and highly emotional state in which he finds himself at the prospect of becoming a bishop. Gregory highlights his turmoil using the imagery of lightning, and bringing up two highly contrastive emotional terms in relation to the Spirit, namely "love" and "fear."

All of this, Gregory has said in the lines leading up to the quotation from *Or.* 9.3 above, derives from Gregory's fear that he will follow Saul's example by failing to "fully surrender" himself to the Spirit. Gregory makes two important assumptions here which allow him to declare his simultaneous "love" and "fear" of the Spirit. First, Gregory assumes that an ordained bishop should surrender himself to the Spirit. Second, he assumes that it is possible for any ordained bishop, including himself, not to do so. Saul's anointing produced, by participation, a spiritual man, but Saul's own agency allowed him not to submit fully to the Spirit. Saul did, in fact, fail to do so, and this resulted in Saul coming into a spiritual state which Gregory finds frightening. For Gregory, becoming an ordained bishop demands of him a submission to the Holy Spirit to such a degree that Gregory is afraid he will not be able to meet the standard he expects of himself.

### **Gregory's Desire: the Spirit, Private Illumination and Silence**

In this section we will explore in more detail the nature of the life which Gregory claims he would have preferred for himself in place of a life as an ordained priest and bishop. We will see that the life which Gregory claims to desire is one marked by private illumination in close connection to the Holy Spirit, and one in which Gregory remains largely silent.

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<sup>169</sup> *Or.* 9.3.

We begin with a passage from *Oration 12*. The oration is the last in the series of four on the subject of Gregory's ordination,<sup>170</sup> and is one of the most pneumatologically rich orations in Gregory's corpus. In the oration, Gregory describes himself as caught between his own desire and the Spirit.

I have been subjected to tyranny, friends and brothers, and even if I did not previously, nonetheless I will now ask your help. I have been subjected to tyranny by the old age of a father and (let me say this delicately) by the goodness of a friend (φίλος). Help me, if even one of you can, and give a hand to a man oppressed and torn between desire (πόθος) and the Spirit.<sup>171</sup>

The context of the oration, which we discussed in the previous section, makes it clear that Gregory is talking here about his ordination as bishop. Gregory explicitly identifies his father as well as a friend (clearly Basil) as the cause of the “tyranny” of his ordination. We have seen Gregory talk this way about ordination before, describing it in *De Vita Sua* as tyranny, as he does here.<sup>172</sup> What is important to observe about that passage at the moment is that Gregory here presents a dichotomy between “desire” and “the Spirit.” What Gregory means by this is not entirely evident from this passage alone. However, what the passage makes clear is that, with respect to the question of ordination as a Christian leader, Gregory sees his own desires to be in conflict with the Spirit.

In order to understand why this is so for Gregory, and why it is important that he thinks this way, we first need to have a clear understanding of what Gregory means when he refers to his “desire” in the above passage and others like it. Gregory talks about the nature of the Christian life he desires quite clearly in *Oration 2*. As we established in Chapter 1, the bulk of the oration is devoted to discussions of Gregory's understanding of the nature of the priesthood, and his own personal reactions to becoming a priest. Near the beginning of the oration, Gregory defends his decision to run away to Pontus after being ordained a priest, and tries to explain his mental state at the time to his audience. Part of this

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170 See p. 82.

171 *Or.* 12.4.

172 See p. 82.

explanation includes a description of the kind of life which seemed appealing to Gregory at the time.

For nothing seemed to me so desirable as to close the doors of my senses, and, escaping from the flesh and the world, collected within myself, having no further connection than was absolutely necessary with human affairs, and speaking (προσλαλέω) to myself and to God, to live superior to visible things, ever preserving in myself the divine impressions pure (καθαρός) and unmixed with the erring tokens of this lower world, and both being, and constantly growing more and more to be, a real unspotted mirror [1 Cor 13:12] of God and divine things, as light is added to light (φωτὶ προσλαμβάνοντα φῶς), and what was still dark grew clearer, enjoying already by hope the blessings of the world to come, roaming about with the angels, even now being above the earth by having forsaken it, and stationed on high (ἄνω τιθέμενον) by the Spirit.<sup>173</sup>

We must make four key observations about the passage. First, Gregory defines the life which he desires here in large part in terms of a separation from human affairs. Gregory wants to close himself off, he says, to anything worldly in this way. Second, the life which Gregory desires is marked by a connection with God, a connection Gregory describes with the word “speaking” in the passage. Third, Gregory uses the image of light and illumination to describe the kind of growth into the divine which he desires. He alludes to 1 Cor 13:12 to present himself as a “mirror” of God,<sup>174</sup> with light being added to him continuously. Fourth, Gregory completes his description of the life he desires by using spatial imagery to describe it as a life in which he is “stationed on high by the Spirit.”

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173 *Or.* 2.7. Trans. Browne and Swallow. Most of the passage is repeated by Gregory in *Or.* 20.1, though *Or.* 20.1 does not contain the mention of the Spirit here present. See the discussion of Egan, *The Knowledge and Vision of God*, pp. 44-46.

174 See Egan, *The Knowledge and Vision of God*, pp. 73-98 for a thorough discussion of Gregory's use of the image of the mirror in relation to human knowledge of God. See also Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 149-150.

By making these four points, Gregory indicates to his audience first and foremost that he has no desire to become a priest. The life which Gregory describes here is one of complete seclusion, with no connection to anything outside himself other than God. More than this, however, Gregory makes it clear that the life which he wishes to lead is, for him, a life of illumination in particular. Yet, the life which Gregory desires is one of *private* and not *public* illumination. It is important to notice here, though, that Gregory makes mention of the Spirit with regard to this private life. He does so at the end of the passage, when he compares the life which he desires to being placed above the earth, indicating that it is the Spirit which so “stations” him “on high.” This may seem somewhat surprising given Gregory's comment from *Or.* 12.4, quoted above,<sup>175</sup> in which he describes himself as feeling “torn between desire and the Spirit.” Reading *Or.* 2.7, one gets the impression that the Spirit is active, from Gregory's point of view, in the life of private illumination which he desires. Indeed, another passage from *Oration 12* bears out the fact that there is a connection in Gregory's mind between the Spirit and private illumination.

[My desire] brings to mind retreats and mountains and deserts, and peacefulness (ἡσυχία) of soul and body, and that the mind (νοῦς) turn back into itself (ἀναχωρέω) and move inward (συστρέφω), away from perceptible things, so as to enter into God without stain (ὁμιλεῖν ἀκηλιδότως Θεῷ), and be purely illumined (καθαρῶς ἐναστράπτεισθαι) by the bright rays (αὐγή) of the Spirit, without any intermixing of anything muddied, or any breakdown in the divine light (φώς), until we come to (ἔρχομαι) the source of the light pouring forth, and both passion and desire cease, while our mirrors [1 Cor 13:12] are dissolved by the truth.<sup>176</sup>

Here Gregory identifies the source of the private illumination which he desires as being the “bright rays of the Spirit.” It is clear, therefore, that, for Gregory, the Spirit is certainly present in the private illumination which he desires. Indeed, the

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<sup>175</sup> See p. 86.

<sup>176</sup> *Or.* 12.4.

Spirit is a key source of this illumination. How, then, are we to read Gregory's comment in *Or* .12.4 that he is “torn between desire and the Spirit”?

We are forced to conclude that when Gregory mentions being torn between “desire and the Spirit” he is referring, by the word “Spirit” to what he understands to be the Spirit's will regarding how he personally is to lead a Christian life. The life which Gregory desires is itself marked by illumination from the Spirit, but the Spirit, as we will see in the next section very clearly, does not, Gregory thinks, will that he live such a life. In Gregory's case, something else is required, and this creates, for him, a sense of being torn. Gregory's conundrum is not a universal one. His conundrum is, from his point of view, specific to the Spirit's particular will for him.

Before we move on to a discussion of what Gregory, in fact, thinks the Spirit wills for him, a discussion we will engage in the next section, we should make one more observation about how Gregory understands the life which he claims to desire for himself. For Gregory, this life is marked by silence, as contrasted to public discourse.

Nothing is stronger than old age, and nothing is revered over friendship. Because of these things I have been brought to you, as one bound (δέσμιος) in Christ, not having been bound by chains of iron (ἀλύσεισι σιδηραῖς), but by the unbreakable bonds (ἀλύτοις δεσμοῖς) of the Spirit. For a long time, I used to think that I was someone strong (ἰσχυρὸς) and unconquerable (ἀήσητος), and (oh the absurdity!) I wouldn't give discourses (λόγος), even to these, my dear friends and brothers. [I did this] in order that I might have leisure, and to philosophize in peace (φιλοσοφεῖν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ), leaving all [other] matters to those interested, and communing (προσλαλέω) with myself and the Spirit.<sup>177</sup>

The context of *Oration* 10 alone would make it clear that Gregory is here talking about his ordination as a bishop,<sup>178</sup> but Gregory also makes this evident by referring, in the passage, to his being overcome by old age and friendship, and his

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<sup>177</sup> *Or*. 10.1.

<sup>178</sup> See p. 82.

being bound in the “bonds of the Spirit.” We have seen Gregory use similar language before – the phrase “bonds of the Spirit” is very close in meaning to the “shackles of the Spirit” of which Gregory speaks in *De Vita Sua*.<sup>179</sup> What is important about the passage for us at the moment, however, is the way in which Gregory contrasts silence with speech here.

Gregory explains that back when he thought he could not be conquered,<sup>180</sup> he used to refuse to engage in discourse, even with those closest to him. What Gregory means here is that in the days when he thought he could avoid becoming an ordained Christian leader, he would not engage in discourse with anyone. Gregory makes it clear that he is talking about the time before he was an ordained leader by contrasting the period when he thought he was strong with the fact that he has now been “prevailed upon” by his father and Basil – a clear reference to his becoming a bishop. Importantly for us, Gregory explains that during the period in which he remained silent, in other words, the period before he was ordained, he held his tongue to “philosophize in peace” and hold communion with the Spirit. These phrases bear an important resemblance to Gregory's discussions of private illumination in the Spirit from *Or.* 2.7 and *Or.* 12.4. In all three passages, Gregory notes that the life he desires is marked by isolation from others, and close connection with the Spirit.

Only in *Or.* 10.1, of the passages which we have explored in this section, however, does Gregory explicitly identify a refusal to speak as important to facilitating such a life. What *Or.* 10.1 shows, therefore, is that, for Gregory, the life which he desires is best pursued in silence as contrasted to discourse. It is indeed a life led in close connection with the Spirit – but this connection is best cultivated, for Gregory, without words.<sup>181</sup>

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179 See pp. 80-82.

180 Calvet-Sebasti, *SC* 405, p. 309, nt. 6, observes that the term “unconquerable (ἀήττητος)” and related language is applied at least five times in the Gregorian corpus in relation to Gregory's ordination.

181 Gregory nearly always values knowledge attained in silence over that which is presented in discourse. As Otis, “The Throne and the Mountain, p. 159 succinctly puts it, “[Gregory] was sure that the best knowledge is inarticulate.”

### **The Spirit's Will for Gregory: the Public Life of a Pastor**

Despite his desire for a life of private illumination, Gregory believes that the Spirit wills that he lead a public life which is of benefit to others. He says this explicitly in *Oration 12*. As we have already noted, the oration is devoted to the topic of Gregory's ordination as bishop. Near the middle of the short sermon, just after explaining the life of private illumination which he really desires to lead, Gregory brings up the life which he thinks the Spirit wills for him instead.

But [the Spirit] wills (βούλομαι) me to enter the fray, and bear fruit (καρποφορέω) for the community – and for [the Spirit] to be helped by [me] helping others, and publishing (δημοσιεύω) the illumination (ἔλλαμψις) and bringing to God a chosen people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood (βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα) [1 Pet 2:9], the image purified (καθαίρω) among many people.<sup>182</sup>

There are three key observations for us to make about the passage. First, Gregory says explicitly that the Spirit wills him to “enter the fray” in order to be of benefit to the community. In the context of *Oration 12*, Gregory is contrasting this life “in the fray” directly with the life of private illumination which he has said is his real desire. The second element of the passage which is important for us is Gregory's mention that in leading such a public life, he actually helps the Spirit by helping other people. This comment should be read in light of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church as we discussed it throughout Chapter 1. There we saw that the Holy Spirit, for Gregory, continually works in conjunction with Christian leaders, as well as the community as a whole and the individuals within it which make up the Church, to make the Church the dwelling place of Christ, a place where illumination and *theosis* are possible. Gregory does not, as we saw in Chapter 1, see the Spirit to work within the Church without the participation of all members of the Church, especially ordained leaders, pastors and teachers. What Gregory probably means by mentioning that his leading a public life helps the Spirit is that, by leading such a

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<sup>182</sup> *Or.* 12.4.

public life, Gregory sees himself to be participating in the Spirit's relationship to the Church in a way which facilitates the Spirit's structuring and guidance of the Church.

The third, and most important, aspect of the passage which we must observe is Gregory's mention of "publishing illumination." This comment on Gregory's part is particularly interesting in light of our discussion of Gregory's approach to illumination in the previous section. There we saw that Gregory claims that he desires a life of private illumination, which illumination he connects closely to the Holy Spirit. Here, in the passage from *Or.* 12.4, Gregory says that the Spirit wills that he make a similar kind of illumination public. Gregory's statement here is important because it helps to explain how Gregory probably conceives of the difference between a life of private illumination from the Spirit, and the public life which he thinks the Spirit wills for him. Gregory's comment about publishing illumination suggests that he sees the public life which the Spirit wills for him as one in which his personal and private illumination becomes beneficial to those around him, rather than just to himself.<sup>183</sup> Gregory makes it more clear that this is his view as he continues in *Oration* 12 saying that one of the reasons for which the Spirit wills him to live a public life is that, "to God, restoring the whole Church is better than setting one man right."<sup>184</sup> The difference, for Gregory, between the private life which he desires, and the public life which the Spirit wills for him centres on the question of who will benefit from Gregory's illumination in the Spirit – Gregory alone, or the rest of the Church too.

In *Oration* 10, Gregory indicates that his friend Basil of Caesarea also sees it to be the Spirit's will that Gregory lead a public life. *Oration* 10 is from the series which, as we have noted,<sup>185</sup> was probably delivered at Nazianzus in 372 on

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183 See Abrams-Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, pp. 81-95 for a discussion of the connection between illumination and the act of preaching specifically as it appears in Gregory's poetry. Abrams-Rebillard, p. 82, asserts that Gregory uses the metaphor of light to symbolize his preaching most especially with regard to his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Elm, "The Diagnostic Gaze," p. 86 asserts that Gregory sees the private life of contemplation as a kind of training for the life of public ministry.

184 *Or.* 12.4.

185 See p. 82.

or around the occasion of Gregory's ordination as bishop.<sup>186</sup> The oration is short and devoted entirely to the topic of Gregory's ordained ministry as a bishop. Near the end of the oration, Gregory addresses Basil, bringing up the topic of why Basil chose to make Gregory a bishop.

You refused to prefer our friendship to the Spirit: although you favour us over anyone else, still, in your eyes, the Spirit is far more precious than we. You refused to let the talent lie buried and hidden in the ground [Matt 25:18]. You refused to let the lamp, by which you mean my light and my mission (ἐργασία) in life, remain concealed under the bushel for long [Luke 11:33]. You sought someone to play Barnabas to your Paul [Gal 2:1]. You sought a Titus to complement Silvanus and Timotheus in order that your charism might course through those who are genuinely concerned for you and you might fully preach the Gospel from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum [Rom 15:19]...This is why you anoint me high priest (χρίεις ἀρξιερέα), dress me in the robe, and place the mitre upon my head; why you escort me to the altar of the spiritual (πνευματικός) offering, offer the calf of perfection (τελειώσις), and consecrate my hands in the Spirit; why you lead me to the Holy of Holies for initiation and make me a minister of the true tent, which is set up not by man but by the Lord [Heb 8:2].<sup>187</sup>

At the start of the passage, Gregory contrasts his friendship with Basil to “the Spirit.” *Or.* 10.1 allows us to interpret what Gregory means here. In *Or.* 10.1, a passage which we explored in the previous section,<sup>188</sup> Gregory discusses the kind of private life which he wishes to lead. Gregory contrasts this life, in *Or.* 10.2, to the public life with which he has now been charged as a bishop. What Gregory

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186 See Calvet-Sebasti, *SC* vol. 405, pp. 89-91 who assumes, along with several others, that the event of Gregory's elevation to the rank of bishop was the occasion for the sermon, delivered either before or after his consecration. Mossay, “Le discours 10,” *passim*. argues that the oration was composed in Gregory's retirement. Even if this is the case, the implied context is still, without doubt, Gregory's ordination.

187 *Or.* 10.4. Trans. Vinson.

188 See p. 89.

almost certainly means by contrasting Basil's interest in their friendship to Basil's devotion to the Spirit is that Basil preferred to do the Spirit's will in appointing Gregory bishop rather than allow his friend Gregory to live the life which he really wanted. Gregory makes this more clear as he continues in the passage, presenting four scriptural allusions as metaphors for what Basil has done in making Gregory a bishop. The first two allusions here, both to parables of Jesus, emphasize the making public of first the talent,<sup>189</sup> and then the lamp.<sup>190</sup> Gregory's use of the image of a lamp under a bushel resonates particularly well with his comment about "publishing" his illumination from *Or.* 12.4. Thus, in the passage, Gregory ascribes to Basil the same understanding of the Spirit's will for his (Gregory's) career that he ascribes to himself in *Or.* 12.4.

According to *Or.* 10.4, one of the effects of Gregory's taking on of the public life which the Spirit wills for him is to help his friend Basil in the latter's work in the Church. Specifically, Gregory says that Basil sought to make him bishop at least in part in order to help facilitate Basil's preaching of the Gospel. Gregory's mention of Basil's "charism" flowing through people like Gregory so that the Gospel may be preached around the world suggests that Gregory is framing his own personal preaching as an extension of Basil's in the passage. Where one man could never preach the Gospel everywhere, through people like Gregory, Basil's teachings are spread far and wide. Gregory's attitude to Basil's teaching here bears upon an important aspect of his understanding of the Spirit's will for his life. Gregory's ability to preach and engage in discourse is one of the most important reasons for which Gregory thinks the Spirit wills that he lead a public life. Gregory says this in a section of *De Vita Sua* in which he discusses his coming to Constantinople, probably at the invitation of Meletius of Antioch, to begin preaching his pro-Nicene doctrines there.<sup>191</sup> In his account of his summons to the capital, Gregory says that it is the Holy Spirit which ultimately led him there, and makes mention of the reasons for which he in particular was selected.

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189 Matt 25:14-30; Luke 19:12-27.

190 Matt 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16.

191 McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 236-239.

To these [the orthodox congregation of Constantinople] the grace (χάρις) of the Spirit sent (πέμπω) me, summoned by many pastors and their flocks, as a helper of the people and an assistant to the word (λόγος), for I was honoured as someone well known for his life in God and for his speech (λόγος), although I always did lead a rural life.<sup>192</sup>

We should make two observations about the passage. First, it is worth noting that here Gregory highlights the work of “pastors and their flocks” in “summoning” him to the city, but he ultimately reports that he is sent there by the “grace of the Spirit.” In Chapter 1, we saw Gregory emphasize each of these different agents in his understanding of how leaders are ordained and appointed within the Church. Thus, Gregory's report here of his coming to Constantinople reflects the same dynamic understanding of how the Spirit and the community work to structure the Church which we discussed previously. In the case of this passage, Gregory places emphasis on the agency of the Spirit in bringing him to Constantinople, but is quick to mention the bishops and community as well.

The second observation we must make is the more important at this juncture. Gregory identifies his life and his speech as the specific reasons for which he, in particular, was chosen to come to Constantinople. In mentioning his “rural life,” Gregory makes it out to be surprising that his lifestyle and eloquence became so well known, a contrast which only serves, in the poem, to further emphasize Gregory's qualities of speech. In the passage, then, Gregory makes clear that he thinks he has been brought to Constantinople by the Spirit in part because of his rhetorical skill.

Gregory defines his public life in large part in relation to his teaching as a pastor. Gregory makes this evident in a beautiful passage from *Oration 9*.

Let the Spirit gain the victory in purity (καθαρός) and keep me in order to have me for its ministry and its liturgy, for the restoration of this people, for the guidance of their souls, for teaching (διδασκαλία) them in word (λόγος) and action (ἔργον) and example, with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and

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192 DVS 595-599.

for the left [2 Cor 6:7], for a good pastor's life (ποιμαντικός), for taking them out from the world and giving them over to God, for the consuming of their bodies, for adding them to the Spirit, for their flight from darkness, for their rejoicing in light (φώς), for sending away predators, for guarding against pitfalls and desert places, for marching them up mountains and heights.<sup>193</sup>

Here, Gregory discusses the life of “ministry” for which the Spirit “keeps” him. There are four aspects of Gregory's description of this life which we must observe here. First, the ministry which Gregory is describing is clearly oriented towards the public. Second, Gregory brings up the importance of guidance and teaching in the passage, saying that the Spirit keeps him in order to provide such guidance and teaching in word, deed and action. Third, Gregory says that the Spirit keeps him for a “good pastor's life.” Gregory's understanding that his work in the Church is in large part marked by pastoral teaching and discourse is central to his understanding of his relationship to the Spirit. Fourth, Gregory here discusses the results of his ministry with reference to light, and various other images of ascent and protection. Among these, the most important for our purposes is Gregory's comment that his ministry should result in the “adding” of his community to the Spirit.

In this section, we have established that Gregory has a clear understanding that the Spirit wills that he lead a public life as a pastor and teacher. We have also noted that Gregory ascribes the same understanding to his friend Basil with regard to the Spirit's will for Gregory. For Gregory, the life which the Spirit wills for him is marked by publishing his illumination such that it is of benefit to those around him, rather than to himself alone. One reason for which Gregory thinks he has been chosen by the Spirit to lead such a life is his rhetorical skill. The purpose of this public life, for Gregory, is to help ensure that individual Christians in the Church can grow spiritually, be protected from spiritual danger, and, especially critical for us, be “added to the Spirit.” Part of the way in which Gregory serves the community to this end is by his teaching as a pastor. In sum,

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<sup>193</sup> *Or.* 9.3.

Gregory thinks of himself as a Spirit-appointed ordained Christian pastor and teacher of exceptional rhetorical skill.

### **Gregory Makes Peace: The Spirit and the Middle Way**

From the previous two sections, it is clear that, for Gregory, there exists a tension between the life which he says he desires for himself, and the public life which he thinks the Spirit wills for him. Gregory often reports in his writings that his ultimate decision, in light of this tension, is to lead a life somewhere between public ministry and private illumination. As Ruether puts it, Gregory decided to proceed “by contributing a certain share of his energies to the work of letters and the Christian ministry, while trying to live the life of contemplation and keep some of the monastic routine of prayer, vigils, and fasting within the semi-seclusion of his home.”<sup>194</sup>

In a passage from *Oration 12*, Gregory says that this is his planned course of action.

These are the delusions of desire (τῆς ἐπιθυμίας τὰ πλάσματα), but the instructions (δίδαγμα) of the Spirit are what they are. Being right between my longing (πόθος) and the Spirit, and not sure to which I should yield (χαρίσομαι), I will present what strikes me as the best and safest plan...to take a middle way between longing and fear (δειλία), and give in to *both* desire, *and* the Spirit.<sup>195</sup>

The phrase “delusions of desire” which Gregory mentions at the beginning of the passage refers to his description of the life of private illumination which he desires for himself, the kind of private life which we have already seen him describe.<sup>196</sup> The phrase “instructions of the Spirit,” refers to his description of the

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<sup>194</sup> Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 33.

<sup>195</sup> *Or.* 12.4-5.

<sup>196</sup> See p. 88.

public life “in the fray.” We have already explored some of Gregory's descriptions of this life “in the fray” as well.<sup>197</sup>

In *Or.* 12.4-5, Gregory indicates that he sees a possible life for himself in which he engages in the life which he really desires, as well as the one which he says the Spirit wills for him. This may be somewhat surprising in light of how often Gregory is capable of emphasizing his sadness and mourning at the prospect of a public Christian life. But Gregory himself reports that his emotions were only this strong at the point of his initial reaction to the idea of living the public life. In *Oration* 9, he says that he merely needed some time to come to an acceptance of the Spirit's will.

I needed time to collect my thoughts and compose myself, to regain my strength and self-confidence, in order that, once what troubled me fell away, like tares in the sowing, and my mean thoughts yielded to better ones, the Spirit might prevail (νικάω) and keep me (με λαβόν) in order to have (ἔχω) me for its service (διακονία) and ministry (λειτουργία).<sup>198</sup>

By the time Gregory wrote or delivered *Oration* 10, he says, he had had a complete change of heart on the matter.

My anger (ὀργή) is now a thing of the past – let the afflicted hear and be glad [Ps 34:2] – and I look kindly upon the hand that played the tyrant, and I laugh (προσγελῶ) in the Spirit, and my heart is at peace (καθίστημι), and good judgement has returned, and friendship, like a flame that has died down and gone out, has been rekindled from a tiny spark.<sup>199</sup>

Here, Gregory claims a complete reversal of his attitude towards his public ministry. He does so by making mention of the “hand that played the tyrant.” In *Or.* 10.1, as well as in *De Vita Sua*, Gregory clearly identifies his father as a

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197 See p. 91.

198 *Or.* 9.3. Trans., Vinson.

199 *Or.* 10.2. Trans., Vinson.

“tyrant” in light of his forcing Gregory to become a priest.<sup>200</sup> Gregory certainly means his father here as well when he mentions the “hand of the tyrant.” Gregory is thus saying that he has come to accept his father's actions. This acceptance, Gregory says, results in him “laughing in the Spirit.” Gregory does not explain what he means by the phrase, but given the clear connection in Gregory's mind between the Spirit and his public life, the positive emotional state which the idea of laughing captures seems likely to mean that Gregory has come to some peace with regard to the Spirit, and not just his father, in light of his acceptance of a public life.

In his concluding remarks in *Oration 12*, Gregory says again that because he has realized that he can take a middle way between his desires and the will of the Spirit, he has come to accept the public life to which he has been appointed. Gregory says that he will take on some of his father's pastoral duties after all. He will accept his place in his father's church, as the Spirit wills him to do.

For this reason, I am willing to take on some responsibility with my good father, just as a nestling, barely capable [of flying] accompanies a great and lofty eagle – from now on, I will give my wings to the Spirit to take them wherever it wants, however it wants, no one either pushing or pulling me away after [the Spirit] expresses its will (βουλεύω).<sup>201</sup>

Gone are Gregory's fears that he may not be able to submit himself to the Spirit's will, and thus may fall into the state of Saul after his anointing. Gone is the resentment which Gregory bears towards his father, whom he now pictures as an eagle soaring, guiding the younger Gregory on the path. Gone is Gregory's feeling of being torn between his desire and the Spirit. Instead, the Spirit now is the very wind holding the new flying eaglet, Gregory, aloft, to the whims of which wind Gregory submits himself entirely. The passage is a beautiful summary of Gregory's ultimate acceptance of what he perceives to be the Spirit's will for him.

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200 See pp. 89; 82.

201 *Or.* 12.5.

### **Ps 119:131: Gregory Draws in the Spirit and Speaks**

We have noted that Gregory understands one important element of his life as a Spirit-appointed pastor and teacher to be the work of “teaching by word.”<sup>202</sup> Indeed, for Gregory, speaking and offering discourse is central to his personal ministry in relation to the Spirit. In this section we will explore how Gregory constructs the relationship between the Spirit and his discourse, paying particular attention to Gregory's use of Psalm 119.

For Gregory, good Christian discourse has certain prerequisites established by the Spirit. Gregory says this in *Oration* 6. Gregory delivered the sermon after his return from Pontus following his ordination to the priesthood. The oration, probably from 364, addresses the community at Nazianzus following a historically minor doctrinal conflict between some area monks and Gregory's father.<sup>203</sup> At the outset of the sermon Gregory explains why he had not weighed in on the conflict earlier.

Then I set a guard (φυλακή) over my lips, which were not inclined to discourse anyway, for I considered the procedures of the Spirit to be first to purify (καθαίρω) oneself by active philosophy (τῆ δι' ἔργων φιλοσοφία), then, opening the mouth of the intellect, to draw in the Spirit [Ps 119:131], then to give a good word (λόγον ἀγαθόν) and to speak the complete wisdom (σοφίαν τελείαν) of God among the [spiritually] complete (ἐν τοῖς τελείοις).<sup>204</sup>

We must make two observations about the passage. First, Gregory says he is talking about the “procedures of the Spirit” which lead ultimately to speaking “complete wisdom.” Gregory's turn of phrase here reveals that he sees a process behind wise Christian discourse, in which certain prerequisites are important, a process established by or connected to the Spirit. Here, Gregory is explaining that he did not comment on the schism at Nazianzus sooner because he thought that

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202 See p. 95.

203 Calvet-Sebasti, *Discours 6-12*, pp. 19-32.

204 *Or.* 6.1.

there was a certain procedure to be followed before he could engage in any wise discussion. The implication is that it took Gregory some time to follow this procedure of the Spirit, and that he is only now prepared to speak. The second observation which we must make is that Gregory indicates that one of the prerequisites of wise discourse is a “drawing in” of the Spirit. In making this point, Gregory cites the Septuagint version of Ps 119:131.

Ps 119:131 is a particularly important biblical passage for Gregory when talking about the Holy Spirit. He cites Ps 119:131 at least four other times in his orations, and in each case he does so in much the same context as here in *Oration 6*. One such passage is found in *Oration 2*. Near the end of the sermon, Gregory talks about what is required for an individual to be worthy of the priesthood, and offers a discussion of his own feelings of being unworthy to accept the office. In so doing, Gregory brings up the Holy Spirit, alluding again to Ps 119:131.

How could I dare to offer to [God] the external sacrifice (ἔξωθεν), the antitype of the great mysteries,<sup>205</sup> or clothe myself with the garb and name of priest (ἱερέυς), before my hands had been perfected (τελειόω) by holy works; before my eyes had been accustomed to gaze safely upon created things, with wonder only for the creator, and without injury to the creature; before my ear had been sufficiently opened to the instruction (παιδεία) of the Lord, and he had opened my ear to hear without heaviness, and had set a golden earring with precious sardius, that is, a wise man's word in an obedient ear; before my mouth had been opened to draw in the Spirit [Ps 119:131], opened wide to be filled (πληρόω) with the Spirit of speaking mysteries (μυστήριον) and doctrines (δόγμα); and my lips bound (δέω), to use the words of wisdom, by divine perception, and, as I would add, loosed in due season: before my

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205 Gregory is probably referring to the Eucharist here, though the earlier context of the passage allows the phrase “outward sacrifice” to be read as any outward expression of contrite spirit which, Gregory says, is the “only sacrifice required of us.” Browne and Swallow, *NPNF* vol VII, p. 223, n. t, take the “great mysteries” to which Gregory refers to mean Christ's death.

tongue had been filled with exultation, and become an instrument (πλῆκτρον) of divine melody.<sup>206</sup>

Gregory is explaining his worry at the prospect of becoming a priest, and in so doing he lists a series of what he considers to be conditions for the office. Among these, Gregory lists the “drawing in of the Spirit” from Ps 119:131. Gregory then augments his reference by connecting this “drawing in” of the Spirit with “being filled with the Spirit of speaking doctrines and mysteries.” Thus, as in *Or.* 6.1, Gregory connects the “drawing in of the Spirit” from Ps 119:131 to Christian discourse, and once again presents it as one of a number of prerequisites of such discourse.

Gregory reads Ps 119:131 in much the same way again in *Oration* 16. The sermon was delivered in 373, following an earthquake in Nazianzus. The sermon is addressed to the worried people of Gregory's congregation, and offers Gregory's version of the Christian response to disaster and suffering. However, Gregory begins by apparently chastising his own father for choosing not to speak on the occasion, assigning Gregory to do so instead.<sup>207</sup> In criticizing this decision by the Elder, Gregory contrasts his preaching to that of his father.

The fluent speech is not more profitable than the wise (σοφός).  
For the one, though it perhaps gave a slight pleasure, passes away,  
and is dispersed as soon, and with as little effect, as the air on  
which it struck, though it charms with its eloquence the greedy ear.  
But the other sinks into the mind (νοῦς), and opening wide its  
mouth, fills (ἐπληρώω) it with the Spirit [Ps 119:131], and,  
showing itself nobler than its origin, produces a rich harvest by a  
few syllables (συλλαβή).<sup>208</sup>

The context of the passage, in which Gregory rebukes his father for refusing to preach, makes it clear that Gregory is here holding up his own preaching as that

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206 *Or.* 2.95. Trans. adapted from Browne and Swallow.

207 For a discussion of the circumstances of the oration, and the possible motivations for the silence of Gregory the Elder see Holman, *The Hungry are Dying*, pp. 169-177.

208 *Or.* 16.1. Trans. Vinson.

which is merely eloquent, while asserting that his father's preaching, while less eloquent, is the wiser.<sup>209</sup> Gregory says that wise preaching produces a “rich harvest,” by which Gregory means spiritual gain for the community. Gregory makes it clear that this is the sense of the symbol of the “rich harvest” slightly earlier in *Or.* 16.1 when he compares his and his father's preaching styles to a heavy rain and a gentle shower respectively, saying that at times the gentle shower is better for making things grow and benefiting the farmer. Thus, in the passage quoted from *Or.* 16.1, Gregory is saying that just a few wise words from his father would have had a more positive impact on the community at Nazianzus than many eloquent words from Gregory himself.

What is important for us to observe here is the way in which Gregory characterizes the type of wise preaching which produces a rich spiritual harvest. He does so by indicating that wise preaching is produced when the speech, in some sense, “opens its mouth” and “fills it with the Spirit.” Gregory's allusion to Ps 119:131 by way of making this point about his and his father's skill in preaching implies that the key difference between wise preaching and that which is merely eloquent arises from the connection between wise preaching and the Spirit which Gregory sees illustrated in the passage from the Psalm. For Gregory, wise preaching is that which has been improved from an inferior state by a breathing in of the Spirit, such that it “shows itself nobler than its origin.”

*Oration* 28, one of Gregory's famous “Theological Orations,” presents yet another reference to Ps 119:131 on Gregory's part, one which provides further insight into Gregory's way of thinking about the connection between the Holy Spirit and wise Christian discourse. The passage follows a section of the oration in which Gregory has offered one possible proof of God's existence. Gregory says that God can be seen to exist because of the “law of nature,” and the beauty of creation. Gregory says that observing creation is like observing a lute – one cannot help but think of the luthier, even if one does not see him.<sup>210</sup> But after offering this argument, Gregory turns back again to emphasize that even this form of argument, while compelling, does not genuinely prove the existence of God.

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209 For some comments on Gregory's rhetorical humility see Elm, “The Diagnostic Gaze,” pp. 92-93.

210 *Or.* 28.6.

But God is not that which we imagined or set up in our minds or that which reason described. And, even if someone somehow came into understanding (περινοία) of [God] to any degree, what is the proof? Who has somehow reached the totality of wisdom (σοφία)? Who has ever been found worthy of such a grace? Who has somehow opened the mouth of his intellect (διάνοια) and drawn in the Spirit [Ps 119:131] so that by the one searching and knowing all things, even the depths of God [1 Cor 2:10], [that is] by the Spirit, he might grasp God, and no longer need anything further, having (ἔχω) the final object of desire already, towards which the whole career and intellect (διάνοια) of the highest person strives (σπεύδω)?<sup>211</sup>

Here, Gregory is challenging his audience by sarcastically asking who, if anyone, has established such a strong connection with God that they can be certain of God's existence. The implied answer to Gregory's question is “no one.” All human beings, Gregory is saying, are to some degree ignorant of God. To “understand” God's existence with certainty would require an “extremity of wisdom” and would constitute a state in which the knower would no longer need to progress, having already attained the perfect end and literally “possessed” God in full.

What is important for us in the passage is that Gregory describes this complete approach to God wherein the Christian understands God's existence with certainty as resulting from, among other things, the “drawing in of the Spirit,” referring again to Ps 119:131. While Gregory is arguing in *Oration 28* that no one has “drawn in the Spirit” to possess God completely, we have also already seen Gregory to have implied, in *Oration 6* that he himself has “drawn in the Spirit” on the model of Ps 119:131 at least to some extent; below, we will see him say explicitly that he has done so.<sup>212</sup> Thus, we cannot read Gregory to mean that it is impossible for Christians to “draw in the Spirit” to any degree whatsoever. Gregory's argument in *Or. 28.6* must therefore be taken to show that for Gregory,

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211 *Or. 28.6*.

212 See pp. 100; 105.

no Christian has *completely* “drawn in the Spirit” to possess a full knowledge of God or God's existence, not to say that no Christian has “drawn in the Spirit” at all.

The primary point which we should note about this passage regarding Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to his discourse is that it shows that the “drawing in of the Spirit” which we have already seen to be, for Gregory, a prerequisite of wise preaching according to *Or.* 16.1, involves, at least in part, the establishment of a degree of “understanding” of God and “wisdom” about God. Gregory says that the Christian who might know God completely would “draw in the Spirit so that...he might grasp God.” Drawing in the Spirit, then, has something to do with coming to an understanding about the divine. Building from this assumption, Gregory indicates in the passage that the importance of “drawing in the Spirit” to develop understanding derives from the fact that, according to 1 Cor 2:10, the Spirit “searches the deep things of God.” In 1 Cor 2:9-11 Paul argues that “no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God.”

In *Oration* 12, Gregory says explicitly that he himself has “drawn in” the Spirit in accordance with Ps 119:131, and connects this “drawing in” with his ministry and speech.

I opened my mouth and I drew (ἐλκυσσα) in the Spirit (Πνεῦμα) [Ps 119:131], and I give (δίδωμι) everything that is mine, and even myself, to the Spirit – deed (πράξις) and word (λόγος) and inaction (ἀπραξίς) and silence (σιωπή) – only let it have (ἔχω) me, and lead (ἄγω) my hand and mind and tongue where needed and where it wills (βούλομαι) – and let it lead them back again when needed and when it is the better thing.<sup>213</sup>

What is most important about the passage for our purposes is the way in which Gregory describes the result of his “drawing in” of the Spirit. Here, Gregory says that by so drawing in the Spirit, he gives himself over entirely to the Spirit. In particular, Gregory emphasizes his “hand and mind and tongue,” the acting,

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213 *Or.* 12.1.

thinking and speaking parts of himself, as being directed by the Spirit, now that he has drawn the Spirit in.

The idea that by “drawing in the Spirit” Gregory gives himself over to the will of the Spirit is important to notice if we are to understand how Gregory sees the relationship between the Spirit and his discourse. Gregory sees his discourse as something directed by the Spirit, as the passage just quoted suggests. In fact, Gregory goes so far as to say, in a passage from the beginning of *Oration 12*, that he is little more than an instrument of the Spirit when it comes to his preaching and speech.<sup>214</sup> The Spirit, Gregory says, ultimately decides when he will offer up discourse.

I am a divine instrument (ὄργανόν), a rational (λογικός) instrument, tuned and strummed by the good craftsman (τεχνίτης), the Spirit. Did he work silence yesterday? Then I pondered how not to speak. Does he strum my mind today? Then I will give a discourse and I will ponder how to sound [my voice]. I am not so garrulous as to want to speak when it is working silence, nor so quiet or foolish as to set a guard at my lips [Ps 141:3] when it is time for discourse.<sup>215</sup>

Here, Gregory calls himself a “rational instrument.” The construction is interesting in that it heavily emphasizes the Spirit's control over Gregory without going so far as to deny Gregory any mental agency whatsoever. What is most important for us to observe about the passage, though, is that Gregory here ascribes his decision regarding whether to offer a discourse or not to the Spirit. It is the Spirit, Gregory says, which orders him to speak or remain silent. The decision to speak is not in the sphere of Gregory's own agency or will. Gregory does not see his discourse as entirely, or even mostly, belonging to himself – he sees it as something which belongs essentially to the Spirit, and which is delivered through him as though he is a “rational instrument.”

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214 For more on Gregory's use of the term “instrument,” see Abrams-Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, pp. 180-181.

215 *Or.* 12.1-2.

In this section we have seen that Gregory understands it to be important that he “draw in the Spirit,” in reference to Ps 119:131, prior to offering discourse. Gregory connects the importance of “drawing in” the Spirit to the Spirit's complete knowledge of God, which Gregory sees mentioned in 1 Cor 2:10. We have seen that Gregory thinks of himself as a man who has “drawn in” the Spirit in this way. Finally, we have seen that Gregory connects this “drawing in” of the Spirit to his giving of himself entirely to the Spirit. Gregory compares himself to an instrument played by the Spirit, emphasizing that it is the Spirit's agency which determines whether he speaks or remains silent in a given moment. When engaging in the public work which he frames as essential to his life as a Christian, Gregory sees himself as doing so by way of “drawing in the Spirit” first.

### **The Chain which the Holy Spirit Forges**

Gregory speaks emotionally about the bond he sees between himself and the congregations to which he is assigned as a Spirit-guided leader. One place in which he does so is *Oration 26*. In the oration, Gregory addresses his congregation in Constantinople after having fled temporarily to the country. In Gregory's absence, his former ally, Maximus the Cynic, attempted to take control of the orthodox congregation at Constantinople in a coup which would trouble Gregory for the rest of his life. Gregory tells his congregation that, in the face of Maximus's actions, he has been impelled to return by the Holy Spirit.

I missed you, Oh children, and you missed me just as much, I am convinced. And if it is necessary to add an assurance to what I have said, then it is my boasting of you – a boast that I make in Christ Jesus our Lord [1 Cor 15:31]. For the Holy Spirit has made this oath along with me, by which [Spirit] I have been driven to you in order that we might prepare a chosen people for the Lord. See what an assurance this is: I persuade you of my feelings, and declare yours just as much. And this is no wonder. For those who have the Spirit in common (κοινός) also have a common

experience; and, for those whose experience is the same (ἴσος),  
faith is also the same.<sup>216</sup>

Gregory's rhetorical goal in the passage is to assure his congregation that he has missed them while away, and in order to emphasize the point, Gregory employs the words of Paul from 2 Cor 15:31. In that passage, Paul is in the process of making the point that without Christ's conquering of death, there is no sense in the Christian community's risking death for their message. Paul compares his confidence in the face of risking death every day to his confidence in his congregation. Citing Paul's words here serves Gregory as a means for making the point that he is utterly confident that he and his congregation have missed one another equally; his confidence about this fact is equal to Paul's confidence in his congregation. Gregory's mention of the Holy Spirit grows from the fact that, in this passage, Gregory attributes the words of 2 Cor 15:31 to himself, implicitly to Paul, and especially to the Holy Spirit, the three voices merging into one. The same Holy Spirit that spoke the words Gregory has just quoted, and thus has in essence "made this oath" along with Gregory, has "impelled" Gregory back to the people of Constantinople. Later, Gregory will make a similar point about the fact that, for him, it is the Spirit which brings him back to the capital. Here he talks about his own desire *not* to return, but indicates that he was forced back, "the Holy Spirit leading the way as though I were a stream that has to be forced to flow uphill, but needs no encouragement to rush the other way."<sup>217</sup>

We need to make two observations about the long passage from *Or.* 26.1 just quoted. First, Gregory explicitly states here that the Spirit has driven him back to his congregation. He says the reason for this is to "prepare a chosen people for the Lord." Gregory uses the same phrase, "chosen people," drawn from 1 Pet 2:9, in *Or.* 12.4 to describe the reason for which the Spirit wills that he should lead a life of public ministry.<sup>218</sup> Gregory's comment here reflects his strong sense that the Spirit has assigned him to the congregation at Constantinople which he is here addressing. Our second observation is the more important at this

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216 *Or.* 26.1.

217 *Or.* 26.2. Trans. Vinson.

218 See p. 91.

juncture. Gregory says in the passage that his confidence in his congregation is unsurprising because he shares the Spirit in common with his flock. Gregory further indicates that this “sharing in common” generates a “common experience” between him and his congregation. For Gregory, being a Christian leader involves sharing the Spirit in common with those whom he leads. Gregory repeats this idea in *Oration 34*.

My people, for you are mine, even if we are far apart – for we are divinely (θεϊκῶς) united, in a different way from material things. For bodies are united by placement (τόπος), but souls (ψυχή) are bound together by the Spirit (Πνεύμα).<sup>219</sup>

Here Gregory says that, regardless of possible distance, his soul is bound together with those of his people by the Spirit. The word “Spirit” in the dative in this context can be read either to indicate that the Spirit is the agent of this binding, or is, in fact, the instrument by which Gregory and his congregation are bound together – in essence, the substance of the bond. The grammatical ambiguity is similar to one which we observed in Gregory's language in *De Vita Sua*.<sup>220</sup> As there, it is important to note in relation to the current passage that Gregory may well intend the ambiguity which is contained in his turn of phrase to indicate that the Spirit is both the agent and the instrument of his being bound to his congregation. Regardless, the passage shows clearly that, for Gregory, there exists a powerful bond in the Spirit between him and the congregations to which he has been assigned.

In *Oration 36*, Gregory compares his connection to his congregation in the Spirit to a chain. The passage is revealing with regard to Gregory's pneumatology. The oration was delivered in 380, shortly after Gregory's appointment by Theodosius to the see of Constantinople.<sup>221</sup> Previous to Theodosius' ascent, Gregory was serving the marginal pro-Nicene congregation in the city. Now, Gregory would be, in the eyes of the Empire, the official bishop of the Eastern capital. Gregory's tone is one of astonishment, whether real or

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<sup>219</sup> *Or.* 34.6.

<sup>220</sup> See pp. 80-82.

<sup>221</sup> Moreschini, *Discours 32-37*, pp. 40-41.

feigned, at the prospect. He begins with a passage that emphasizes his work in offering discourse, and the relationship of this work to the Church.

I am stunned...how is it possible that you are affected by my discourses (λόγος), and how are you overcome by my words (φωνή) (the words of a foreigner, certainly pithy, and possessing no beauty) to such an extent that you seem to me to be pulled to me as iron tools are pulled to a magnet? For you are linked to me, and then to each other, one clinging to the next, and all are linked to God, from whom are all things and to whom are all things [1 Cor 8:6]. Oh, the wonder of the chain (ἄλυσις) which the Holy Spirit forges, joining it together with unbreakable (ἄλυτος) links.<sup>222</sup>

Gregory begins the passage by focusing on his discourses and words. It is difficult to tell whether Gregory's self-deprecating comment about the quality of his speech is merely a rhetorical device, or does, in fact, grow from the feelings of its author. Regardless, Gregory now says that by way of his words and discourses, his congregation in Constantinople has been attached to him like pieces of iron connected to a magnet.<sup>223</sup>

What is important about the passage for us is the image of the chain which Gregory introduces here. Gregory compares his relationship to his congregation to a “chain which the Holy Spirit forges.” Two aspects of the image are central to our discussion. One is that Gregory associates the chain forged by the Spirit with the connection which exists between his congregation and God through him, and in particular through his discourse. Gregory's congregation is linked to him, and then each other – Gregory placed at the metaphorical centre. Gregory thus emphasizes his own role as a pastor and teacher in forming the chain. This suggests that Gregory sees it as an important aspect of his serving as the focal-point of this chain that he offer discourses, humble as he may make himself out to be with regard to his rhetoric. The second significant aspect to note about the image of the chain here is that Gregory says that the chain which the Spirit forms from him and his congregation is formed with “unbreakable links.” The bond

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<sup>222</sup> *Or.* 36.1.

<sup>223</sup> On the Socratic pedigree of the image see Vinson, “A Socratic Response,” p. 257-258.

which Gregory sees between himself and his congregation is strong indeed, and it is a bond forged, he thinks, by the Spirit itself, and maintained especially through Gregory's discourse.<sup>224</sup>

### **Gregory Baptizes in the Spirit**

One of the most important responsibilities which Gregory takes upon himself in his life of public ministry is to ensure that the individuals within his congregation properly confess the Trinity at the point of baptism. In Chapter 2 we explored Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to baptism, and we established there that, for Gregory, a correct confession of the Trinity at the point of baptism is crucial if Christians are to undergo *theosis* and illumination. But Gregory does not see it as the sole responsibility of individual Christians to ensure that they are correctly confessing the Trinity when they are baptized. Instead, with respect to his own congregations, Gregory actually takes more responsibility upon himself to ensure that those whom he baptizes are confessing correctly. Gregory associates this responsibility on his part with the Holy Spirit. Gregory makes this very clear in a series of passages at the end of *Oration 40*, his most extended discussion of baptism.

All of the passages which we will explore here come in quick succession at the very end of *Oration 40*. In order to understand them properly, we must first quote a passage which we have already examined in Chapter 2.

Just as the Son is ranked below the Father by people who are base and writhing on the ground (κεῖμαι), so too is the Spirit ranked after the Son in glory, in order that God and creation might be scorned by this novel theology. Nothing of the Trinity, friends, is a slave (δοῦλος) – nothing a created being (κτιστόν) – nothing is alien (ἐπείσρακτος), as I heard one of the sophists saying once. “If I were still pleasing people, I would not be a servant of Christ,” the godly apostle says [Gal 1:10]. If I was at any point giving worship to a created being, or if I was baptized into a created being, then I

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224 See Abrams-Rebillard, *Speaking for Salvation*, pp. 128-129.

never began to undergo *theosis* (ἐθεούμην), nor was I remade after my first birth.<sup>225</sup>

This passage immediately precedes the passages which we are about to explore. The reason we have quoted it a second time here is to make it clear that when, in the passages to follow, Gregory talks about the doctrine of the Trinity into which he intends to baptize the members of his audience, he is explicitly discussing the doctrine of the Trinity which he describes in this passage. One of the hallmarks of this doctrine is that the Spirit is of equal rank to the Father and the Son. Gregory's interest, in the concluding sections of *Oration* 40, is in ensuring that his audience members will be baptized into a doctrine of the Trinity in which none of the Persons, including the Spirit, is subordinate in any way.

Shortly following the passage just quoted, Gregory takes a moment to assure his audience regarding some worries they might have about the confession into which he proposes to baptize them. His comments to this end are revealing with regard to how Gregory understands his own role in relation to baptism.

But are you worried about being accused of tritheism? Hold on to the good, to the oneness in the three, and leave the battle to me. Allow me to be the ship-builder, you use the ship. And if another person is your ship-builder, accept me as the architect of the house – you inhabit that house with safety, even if you did not do any work to build it. You will not profit any less as a merchant, or be any less the inhabitant of the home than me, the one who set everything up, even if you have put no effort into them. Do you see how great a kindness (εὐγνωμοσύνη) this is? Do you see the goodness (χρηστότης) of the Spirit? Mine shall be the war – yours the triumph.<sup>226</sup>

There are two key things we need to observe about the passage. The first is that Gregory here takes on almost complete responsibility for ensuring that his audience members are correctly confessing the Trinity. Gregory indicates that he

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<sup>225</sup> *Or.* 40.42.

<sup>226</sup> *Or.* 40.43.

will take on the problem of conflicts which may arise over his doctrine of the Trinity, and his audience members can leave off worrying about such things. Gregory uses the metaphors of a ship-builder and an architect to emphasize the point. The second important point to observe is that, near the end of the passage, Gregory associates his work in this matter with the Spirit. He invites his congregation to behold the goodness of the Spirit. The “goodness” to which Gregory refers can only be the fact that he will serve as their metaphorical ship-builder and architect. What this implies is that Gregory sees it as in some sense a gift of the Spirit that his congregation is in a position to rely on him to do the hard work of building the ship of doctrine. It is by the Spirit's kindness, it seems, that Gregory and his congregation have been brought together in such a way as to allow Gregory to ensure that they correctly confess the Trinity.

It is a central aspect of Gregory's approach to the confession of doctrine at the point of baptism that he does not think that it is important for the members of his congregation to be able to defend and construct this doctrine themselves. Gregory sees it as his work, as the leader of the congregation, to impress this doctrine upon them. Gregory compares his work in this regard to the work of a calligrapher writing upon the souls of his audience members.

What is the point in drawn-out discussions on my part? For it is the season for teaching, not debate. I bear witness in front of God, and the chosen angels: you will be baptized with this faith. If you are written upon other than as my doctrine requires, come and be re-written. I am not an untalented calligrapher of such things, for I write what has been written on me, and I teach what I have learned and what I have guarded from the beginning up to this old age. Mine is the danger, and mine is the return for being the administrator of your souls, and the one who completes (τελειοῦντός) you through baptism.<sup>227</sup>

Here, Gregory calls himself an administrator of the souls of those in his audience. Those listening to Gregory need only accept his “writing” upon them of a correct

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227 *Or.* 40.44.

doctrine – the rest can be left to Gregory himself.<sup>228</sup> In this respect, Gregory says, he is a teacher, teaching things which he himself has already learned.

As long as his audience members are willing to be baptized into the doctrine of the Trinity which Gregory has proposed wherein none of the Persons are subordinated in any way to the others, Gregory is willing to baptize them.

If you would be baptized in this way and according to this teaching, indeed, I will not restrain my lips – see, I give my hands to the Spirit. Let us speed salvation (σωτήριος); let us rise towards baptism; the Spirit craves it, the consecrator (ὁ τελειωτής) is willing, the gift is ready.<sup>229</sup>

What is important to observe about this passage is that Gregory here does not actually ascribe the baptism of his audience members to an act on his part. Instead, he ascribes the work of their baptism to the Spirit. Gregory merely “gives his hands” to the Spirit, a phrase which implies that it is the Spirit doing the real work of baptism by way of Gregory's hands. Indeed, the Spirit “craves” the baptism of Gregory's audience members, so long as they are to be baptized into the correct doctrine of the Trinity.

Gregory, then, sees himself as a facilitator of baptism whose work is done by way of teaching his congregation the correct doctrine of the Trinity. The real work of the sacrament itself is done, for Gregory, by the Spirit, with Gregory lending his hands. His congregants need not take on the work of developing or defending this doctrine. But so long as those in Gregory's congregation are willing to accept his doctrine, he will participate in the Spirit's work of baptizing them.

## **Conclusions**

Throughout this chapter, we have examined how Gregory constructs his relationship to the Spirit and the Church. The most important points and observations which we have made are as follows. 1) Gregory sees the Spirit's

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<sup>228</sup> See Elm, “Inscriptions and Conversions,” *passim*.

<sup>229</sup> *Or.* 40.44.

activity in his life primarily in terms of his career in the Church. 2) Gregory prefers a private life of illumination in the Spirit, but is prevailed upon by his father, Basil, and especially the Spirit to receive ordination and live a life of public ministry. 3) This public life which Gregory thinks the Spirit wills for him is marked by pastoral teaching and discourse. 4) Gregory believes that in order to discourse with wisdom, he must draw in the Spirit on the model of Ps 119:131. 5) Gregory sees a critical role for himself in teaching his congregation to confess a correct doctrine of the Trinity at baptism, according to which doctrine none of the Persons of the Trinity, including the Spirit, is subordinate in any way.

## Conclusions to Part I

In Part I we explored a number of elements of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. In Chapter 1, we explored Gregory's understanding of how the Spirit relates to the Church in general terms. In Chapter 2, we discussed how Gregory understands the relationship of the Spirit to baptism. In Chapter 3, we explored Gregory's manner of constructing his own relationship to the Spirit in the context of his ecclesiastical career.

Our exploration of Gregory's works will take a somewhat different approach in Part II. There, we will explore a number of Gregory's most pneumatological texts more or less *in toto*. The purpose will be to understand Gregory's more strictly doctrinal and traditionally theological discussions of the Holy Spirit – discussions like those in *Oration 31*, for example. It is these texts which have received the vast majority of attention from scholars interested in Gregory's pneumatology. What we will discover is that Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church and to himself inform his approach to pneumatological doctrine in the texts which we will take up in Part II.

We have seen that Gregory understands himself to be a pastor and teacher appointed by the Spirit in part to instruct individual Christians in Trinitarian doctrine through his discourse such that *theosis* and illumination is possible for them, their baptism is efficacious, and the Church can become the dwelling place of Christ. In the texts which we will explore in Part II, we are, in effect, observing Gregory's attempts to do precisely this. It is Gregory's understanding of his own relationship to the Spirit in the Church which impels him to speak on doctrinal matters, including those surrounding the Holy Spirit. And, as we will see, it is Gregory's understanding of how the Spirit works within the Church which dictates the types of pneumatological issues which Gregory casts as most important, and which structures the ways in which he responds to those issues.

It is important to draw attention at this point to the discussions of agency which have arisen over the course of Part I. For Gregory, human agency has a real and meaningful effect on the life of the Church. While, for Gregory, the Spirit structures the Church, ultimately appoints certain leaders, and even decides

when Gregory will speak and when he will remain silent, the real influence of human agents is never forgotten from his point of view. This observation will be important to recall as we proceed through Part II. As Gregory makes clear in his discussions of Saul, and his own worries about submitting to the Spirit, he sees a real possibility among Christian pastors, teachers, priests, bishops and laity, of failing to do the Spirit's will. In the end, Gregory's concern that many of the Christian leaders around him are failing precisely to do this is perhaps the most important driving force behind Gregory's doctrinal discussions of the Holy Spirit. "Cet évêque [Gregory] est moins préoccupé par les fidèles que par les pasteurs et, s'il publie, certains de ses sermons, c'est sans doute pour contribuer à la formation des évêques à leur tâches."<sup>230</sup> So concludes Bernardi regarding Gregory's orations in general. Nowhere is this interest in leaders and their leadership more evident in Gregory's writings than in those texts in which he deals with the question of the Holy Spirit. When it comes to pneumatology, Gregory's primary objectives are to work, through his discourse, to make the truth as he understands it crystal clear, and to push back against those who, in his mind, stumble in following the Spirit's will that this truth be made public.

Gregory concludes his discussion of his ordination in *Oration 12* in a remarkable way – by making mention of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

This is my sermon to you, gentlemen, given simply and with all good kindness – and this is the mystery of my intellect (διανοίας μυστήριον). Let that which is meant to be, for you and for me both, win the day; the Spirit is guiding our affairs (for my sermon comes back again to this point), [the Spirit] to which I have given myself (δίδωμι), and my head anointed with the oil of consecration (τῷ ἐλαίῳ τῆς τελειώσεως), in the almighty Father, and the only-begotten Word, and the Holy Spirit – [who is] indeed God. For how long are we going to cover up the candle with a bushel and keep the complete Divinity from others?<sup>231</sup>

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230 Bernardi, *Le prédication*, p. 258.

231 *Or.* 12.6

Here, Gregory assures his audience that the Spirit is guiding their affairs – the very same Spirit, he says, to which he has given himself as an ordained leader. As Gregory closes his invocation of the Trinity, an invocation which is almost universal at the end of his sermons, he pauses for a moment. Arriving at “the Holy Spirit,” he notes that the Spirit is “indeed God.” Then he asks how long the candle is to remain under a bushel.

It will be clear by the close of Part II that the symbolic candle to which Gregory refers in the passage is the very phrase which he utters here, “the Spirit is God.” What is more, there is no doubt at all that Gregory would not let the candle stay hidden any longer. With boldness he would declare the divinity of the Spirit, even in the face of attacks, as he says he will in one of his poems written in retirement.

Listen! Again I declare that the Spirit is God / To me, you [Spirit]  
are God, I shout it a third time: God! / It is God! Go ahead,  
[enemies], take aim and cast your stones at me. / I stand a fixed  
target in the truth.<sup>232</sup>

Seeing himself as ordained by the Spirit, Gregory taught the Spirit's divinity with unwavering devotion. We turn now to the extant texts through which he did so.

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232 *Carm.* 2.1.14.34-37.

## **Part II – Preaching the Spirit as God: Gregory and His Opponents**

### **Introduction to Part II**

Over the course of Part I, we have observed that Gregory of Nazianzus sees himself as a Christian leader guided by the Holy Spirit one of whose key responsibilities is to ensure, especially through his discourse, that his congregations profess correct doctrinal views, especially, though not exclusively, at baptism and particularly with regard to the Trinity. Gregory's explicit discussions of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in his writings are constructed by him with this understanding of his place in the Church and relationship to the Spirit in mind.

In Part II we will explore Gregory's doctrinal pneumatology as it is presented in his writings. We use this phrase, “doctrinal pneumatology,” mainly to distinguish the types of pneumatological discussions which we will explore below from those which we investigated in Part I. Whereas we focused attention on Gregory's autobiographical and ecclesiological writings to this point, we will now direct most of our attention to those passages and texts in which Gregory talks about the Spirit not as an influence on his personal life, or on the Church, but as a topic of theological and doctrinal enquiry and reflection.

We need to make two points about Gregory's doctrinal discussions of the Spirit in advance. First, as we will observe throughout Part II, Gregory's approach to pneumatological doctrine is only rarely theologically constructive. We mean this in the sense that Gregory does not typically put forward arguments building from an agreed upon premise towards a positive presentation of his own position regarding the Spirit. In the case of Gregory's famous Oration 31 specifically, Beeley has observed that Gregory's entire project in the sermon is defensive in nature,<sup>233</sup> and this observation can easily be generalized to the rest of Gregory's works dealing with the Spirit as well. Gregory's goal when he discusses the

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233 Beeley, “The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen,” *passim*.

doctrine of the Spirit is to convince his audience, by whatever rhetorical means are expedient, that his doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the correct one.

The second point we need to make here is that, as we noted in the Introduction, the idea at the centre of nearly all of Gregory's doctrinal discussions of the Holy Spirit is that "the Holy Spirit is God." While Gregory will address a few other doctrinal formulations about the Spirit in the course of his works, his discussions of other aspects of pneumatological doctrine tend to be tangential to a broader conversation which is nearly always focused on the Spirit's divinity as the primary concern.

Gregory's strategy in his writings of focusing on theologically defensive arguments centred on proving the full divinity of the Spirit probably grows from his understanding of his own relationship to the Spirit and the Church as we discussed it in Part I. Gregory does not see his role as being that of a systematic or constructive theologian whose task is to compose a complete and thoroughly argued treatise on the nature of the Holy Spirit. Instead, Gregory sees himself as a Spirit-guided pastor whose purpose is to persuade his congregations to a correct confession of the doctrine of the Trinity. For Gregory, what was most glaringly absent from the pneumatological doctrine of the various Christian communities around him, including his own, was a declaration of the Spirit's divinity. Gregory set out to correct this problem as a pastor, the "Spirit's advocate," as he says in the poem which serves as the epigraph to this study.

As we have said, one of Gregory's preferred rhetorical strategies for persuading his listeners and readers on the topic of the Spirit is to dismiss arguments against his theology levelled at him by various opponents. When he approaches the topic of the Holy Spirit doctrinally, Gregory typically has one of two primary groups of opponents in mind whose position on the Spirit he wishes to dismiss. The latter of these two groups, whom we will call the "non-proclaimers," have gone largely unobserved by historians of Trinitarian doctrine, and we will need to establish Gregory's understanding of their position and his objections to it. As such, we will discuss them second in order as Part II proceeds, taking them up in Chapters 5 and 6. The first primary group of pneumatological opponents against whom Gregory seeks to defend his position have, in contrast, been very much discussed by scholars both of Gregory

specifically and of Trinitarian doctrine more generally. These are known as the “pneumatomachians” or “Macedonians.” We turn now to a discussion of Gregory's most extended rebuttal of the position of the Pneumatomachians, namely, *Oration 31*.

## *Chapter 4*

### *Gregory and the Pneumatomachians:*

#### **Oration 31**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter we will discuss Gregory's responses to a Fourth Century group known as the “Macedonians” or, as we will refer to them from here forward, the “pneumatomachians,” or “Spirit fighters.” While the pejorative connotations of the term “pneumatomachian” make it less than ideal for the historian, the term “Macedonian” is even more problematic in that it can easily be mistaken to refer to individuals from the region of Macedonia, with which region this group of theologians has no particular connection.<sup>234</sup> Moreover, as “pneumatomachian” contains the root for the word Spirit, using the term makes it more clear that the question of the Spirit is the one which demarcates this group historically.

Ayres presents the pneumatomachians as an institutionally identifiable, but small group of Christians in the late Fourth Century whose theology was distinct in that they refused to identify the Holy Spirit as divine.<sup>235</sup> The group included some who found themselves able to affirm the original Nicene creed, while still maintaining what Ayres calls a “subordinationist theology of the Spirit.”<sup>236</sup> Frederick Norris notes that by 370, the apparent leader of the group was Eustathius of Sebaste, whom he identifies as a *homoiousion* theologian. Norris divides the pneumatomachian party into two branches: those who applied *homoiousion* language to both the Son and the Spirit, and those who applied it

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234 The name “Macedonian” derives instead from one of the supposed original leaders of the group. Scholars should be sensitive to the potential for misunderstanding with the term “Macedonian,” especially in light of recent controversies over the question of the church of Macedonia today, and therefore avoid its use in this context.

235 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, pp. 214-215. Sozomen, *Historia Ecclesiae*, 8.1, reports that the pneumatomachians were operating without bishops by the reign of Constantius II.

236 Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy*, p. 215.

only to the Spirit, while assenting to the term *homoousios* when applied to the Son.<sup>237</sup> Hanson's discussion of the pneumatomachians is the most detailed, and emphasizes the degree of variance in pneumatomachian thought, framing them as a loosely defined group with no unifying theology.<sup>238</sup>

Whether or not they were wholly unified, the theology of the pneumatomachians was a cause for serious concern on Gregory's part, and their basic position with regard to the Spirit forms the background for most of Gregory's most famous pneumatological sermon: *Oration 31*. The last of the "Theological Orations,"<sup>239</sup> *Oration 31* constitutes Gregory's most extended discussion of his doctrine of the Holy Spirit.<sup>240</sup> In particular, the oration is designed to persuade Gregory's audience that "the Holy Spirit is God."

Gregory has two primary goals in *Oration 31*. First, he wishes to dismiss a series of arguments levelled at him by his opponents on the topic of the Spirit. Second, he wishes to call into question the personal spiritual status of the pneumatomachians themselves. These goals, we will argue in the conclusion of this chapter, are related for Gregory. This is because *Oration 31* is a text written by Gregory as a pastor and teacher concerned about the *theosis* and baptism of his audience. Gregory believes that the pneumatology of the pneumatomachians compromises Christian *theosis* and baptism, and he therefore wants to persuade his audience to follow his own doctrine instead. Gregory's concern, in *Oration 31*, is thus never to explain his own doctrine of the Spirit in any detail, but rather to persuade his listeners and readers away from the doctrine of the pneumatomachians by whatever rhetorical means are most efficacious. In the case of *Oration 31*, Gregory chooses to do this primarily by dismissing several

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237 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 68.

238 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp.760-772.

239 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 183 notes that while the oration is traditionally grouped with the other four "Theological Orations," it is impossible to be certain whether it was delivered along with them or merely connected to the other four in the later manuscript tradition.

240 *Carm.* 1.1.3 rigidly parallels the content and argumentative progression of *Or.* 31. The difference between the pieces is one of genre, rather than substance. As such, we will not treat *Carm.* 1.1.3 independently in this study. It is, however, one of Gregory's finest theological poems.

objections to his own theology, and by challenging the character of the pneumatomachians themselves.

Our Chapter is generally organized around *Oration 31* itself. This is convenient because, as we will see, *Oration 31* can be fairly easily broken up into sections in which Gregory focuses on making certain kinds of points about either his opponents' objections to his theology, or about his opponents themselves. In the first section, we will discuss Gregory's introduction to *Oration 31*, which comprises paragraphs *Or.* 31.1-6. Here we will establish Gregory's opponents, objectives and proposed strategies in the oration. In the second section, we will explore how Gregory deals with some minor objections levelled at his pneumatology in *Or.* 31.7-10. In these paragraphs, Gregory introduces the terms "procession" and "*homoousios*" as applied to the Spirit into his discussion. We will examine the nature of his use of these terms in the oration. In the third section, we will explore *Or.* 31.11-13, a section of the oration in which Gregory focuses his critique of his opponents on their personal character. In the fourth and final section, we will explore Gregory's responses to the most important objection levelled at him by his opponents according to *Oration 31*, namely, that scripture does not call the Spirit "God" explicitly. We will see that Gregory responds by insinuating that it is his opponents' lack of the right kind of relationship with the Holy Spirit which prevents them from seeing the Spirit's divinity in scripture. For Gregory, this is because it is the Spirit which teaches Christians of the Spirit's divinity. The sections in this chapter, unlike those in Part I, have been subdivided for further clarity.

### **Gregory's Introduction: *Or.* 31.1-6**

#### *Gregory's Topic: The Silence of Scripture*

In this sub-section we will explore *Or.* 31.1-3. In this first portion of the oration, Gregory outlines the oration as a whole in three important ways. First, Gregory identifies the primary opponents whose arguments he will attempt to dismiss in *Oration 31*. These are the pneumatomachians. Second, Gregory

presents the central position of the pneumatomachians which he wishes to dismiss in the oration. This is the idea that scripture does not apply the term “God” to the Holy Spirit. Third, Gregory identifies what he believes to be the real reason for which the pneumatomachians oppose his pneumatology. This is the fact that they are, in Gregory's view, “impious.”

Gregory begins the work of persuading his congregation to accept his views on the Spirit in *Oration 31* by constructing an introduction to the sermon in which he articulates the basic objection to his theology to which he wants to respond. Gregory quotes an objection from a group of opponents. “But what do you say,' they ask, 'about the Holy Spirit? Where did you get this strange, unscriptural “God” you are bringing in?’ This is the view of people fairly sound so far as the Son is concerned.”<sup>241</sup> Observing this opening question is critical for three reasons. First, the stated objection to his theology which Gregory intends to address implies that the central doctrinal concept which he intends to defend is the idea that the Spirit is God. Second, Gregory's unnamed opponent is presented as sarcastically calling the Spirit an “unscriptural God.” This implies, and the rest of the oration confirms, that the primary objection to his thesis that the Spirit is God which Gregory wishes to discuss is that scripture, in the view of his opponents, does not anywhere indicate the Spirit's divinity. Third, Gregory identifies his chief opponents in *Oration 31* as a group whom he considers to be “fairly sound so far as the Son is concerned.” Norris notes that Gregory must be referring to a group of pneumatomachians here.<sup>242</sup> If this is the case, Gregory is indicating that the opponents whom he has in mind are among that group of pneumatomachians accepting of the Nicene approach to the Son, but opposed to extending similar notions of divinity to the person of the Holy Spirit. It is important to note, as Norris does, however, that Gregory does have other opponents in mind during his discussions in *Oration 31*, including the Eunomians, as well as some of Gregory's allies who are hesitant to declare the Spirit's divinity. We will mention the Eunomians as necessary in this chapter, and discuss the non-proclaimers in Chapters 5 and 6.<sup>243</sup>

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241 *Or.* 31.1. Trans. Wickham.

242 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 184.

Having established the basic project of the sermon, Gregory goes on in *Or.* 31.2 to discuss for a moment what he does *not* intend to do with his preaching in *Oration* 31.

We leave to others a careful, critical analysis of the many different senses in which “spirit” and “holy” are used in scripture, with the texts that bear upon the enquiry. We leave too the additional problem of the particular sense resulting from the combination of the terms – I mean “Holy Spirit.” Others have benefited themselves and us, as we too have benefited them, by systematic studies (φιλοσοφείω) here. We, though, shall now turn to a further stage in the discussion.<sup>244</sup>

This passage is important for understanding Gregory's own view of his place within the scope of the debate with the pneumatomachians in which he is about to engage in the sermon in two ways. First, it shows that Gregory does not consider it his task in the sermon to engage in a “systematic study” of the words of scripture which relate to the topic of the Holy Spirit. Norris locates Gregory's language about such “systematic studies” in the Aristotelian tradition, and says that “for Nazianzen and his circle the philosophical, logical analysis of Christian doctrine involved philology and grammar as much as anything else, because those linguistic tools allowed the truth of Scripture to be uncovered.”<sup>245</sup> Gregory is indicating here that he intends *not* to engage in this kind of “philological” or

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243 Norris, “Gregory Nazianzen's Opponents in *Oration* 31,” *passim*. Norris argues that the Eunomians are Gregory's chief opponents in the text, but appears to do so on the basis that Eunomian positions inform several of the longest sections of the oration. Yet, as we will see below (especially n. 289 on p. 151), Gregory often takes a great deal of time in *Oration* 31 to respond to points which are quite tangential to his declared central purpose in the text. Thus, Norris's argument from the volume of text apparently devoted to Eunomian positions is not compelling. This does not, however, necessarily invalidate Norris's thesis, based on *Oration* 31, that the Eunomians “refused to worship the Spirit,” p. 124. Lim, “Knowledge and Community in Constantinople,” *passim*, argues that Gregory's primary opponents in all of the “Theological Orations” amount to any Christians, regardless of their orthodoxy from Gregory's point of view, who engage in too much dialectical questioning.

244 *Or.* 31.2. Trans. Wickham.

245 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 185.

“linguistic” discussion. His reasons for this amount to the second important point which we should observe about the passage from *Or.* 31.2 above. This is that Gregory explicitly notes his debt to previous authors who have already written on the topic of the Holy Spirit. Norris sees Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and Amphilocius of Iconium as the thinkers to whom Gregory alludes here, but is quick to note that scholars ought not to be overly concrete in identifying which authors Gregory has in mind.<sup>246</sup> Regardless of their identity, however, it is critical to see that Gregory understands *Oration* 31 as an augmentation of certain arguments about scripture which have already been made by others.

What, then, is the nature of the contribution to the debate with the pneumatomachians which Gregory wishes to make with *Oration* 31? In *Or.* 31.3, Gregory begins to provide an answer by first characterizing his opponents.

Yes, some people, very eager to defend the letter, are angry with us for introducing a God, the Holy Spirit, who is a stranger (ξένος) and an intruder. They must understand that “they are afraid where no fear is.” [Ps 13.5] They must recognize clearly that their love for the letter (γράμματος) is a cloak for impiety (ἔνδυμα τῆς ἀσεβείας), as shall be proved presently when we refute their objections.<sup>247</sup>

There are two important things to observe about the passage. First, Gregory says here that the opponents whom he has in mind are particularly interested in defending the “letter,” i.e. the exact wording of scripture on the topic of the Spirit. Gregory will present his arguments against this way of reading scripture later in the oration. Second, in discussing his opponents' concern for “the letter” in *Or.* 31.3, Gregory reiterates the basic objection to his position on the Spirit's divinity which he has already presented earlier in the oration. This is the idea that scripture nowhere says that “the Spirit is God.” In *Or.* 31.3, Gregory presents his opponents as arguing that Gregory himself is “introducing” this “stranger” of a God. Thus, their argument goes that the source of Gregory's belief in the Spirit's divinity is Gregory himself, rather than scripture. But now, Gregory makes an

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<sup>246</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 185.

<sup>247</sup> *Or.* 31.3. Trans. adapted from Wickham.

important assertion about the opponents from whom he has drawn this objection. Gregory says that their concern for the issue of the silence of scripture is actually only a “cloak for *impiety*.”

What Gregory is asserting here is that the argument about the silence of scripture which his opponents are presenting is not the genuine source of their objections to Gregory's theology. The real source, Gregory is saying, is their “*impiety*.” This assessment of what really motivates his opponents in their objections to his pneumatology is very important for understanding *Oration 31* as a whole. In order to understand why, we need to establish what Gregory means by the term “*impiety*” in *Or. 31.3*. We will do this in the next sub-section.

#### *Gregory on Impiety and the Spirit*

In this section, we will explore in brief what Gregory means by using the term “*impiety*” in *Or. 31.3*. We will do so by examining a passage from *Oration 25* in which Gregory speaks about the nature of *impiety* in relation to the Holy Spirit in a way which will help us to interpret *Oration 31*. After this exploration of *Oration 25* we will return, in this section, to our discussion of *Or. 31.3*, and comment on the importance of Gregory's assertion there that his opponents are genuinely motivated by *impiety* rather than real concerns about scripture.

*Oration 25* is addressed primarily to Maximus the Cynic, and was delivered prior to the severe falling out which would occur between him and Gregory. Over the course of the sermon, Gregory praises Maximus' many virtues, casting him as a true philosopher and Christian in every way. As Gregory draws these praises to a conclusion, he takes up the topic of how he thinks Maximus ought to approach questions of Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>248</sup> Gregory encourages Maximus to maintain courage in the face of doctrinal opponents, and not to worry about being perceived as incorrect by some people in Constantinople. At the end of a long list of such encouragements, Gregory makes mention of the topic of the

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248 Beeley, “Divine Causality,” p. 204 describes this section of *Oration 25* as “the most straightforward, and probably the most significant” of Gregory's statements on Trinitarian doctrine.

Spirit's divinity, and in this context, tells Maximus what he actually *should* worry about when it comes to matters of doctrine.

*Do* worry about estrangement (ἀλλοτριώσις) and the ominous fate that lies in store not for those who acknowledge (θεολογέω) the divinity of the Spirit, but for those who blaspheme (βλασφημέω) the Spirit. Neither show a perverse reverence for divine monarchy by contracting or truncating deity, nor feel embarrassed when you are accused of worshipping three gods. Someone else is equally liable to a charge of worshipping two. For you will either manage to rebut the charge in common with him or you will be in common difficulty; or else his deity will founder along with his arguments while yours will remain intact. Even if your powers of reasoning are not up to the task, it is still better to falter with rational arguments guided (ὀδηγία) by the Spirit than to adopt easy but impious (ἀσεβέω) solutions out of indolence.<sup>249</sup>

Gregory is warning Maximus to take courage primarily in the face of objections from the pneumatomachians. Gregory shows this by saying that Maximus should not fear any accusation of tritheism, because his accusers are just as much liable to ditheism. The group to whom an attribution of ditheism, but not tritheism would be at all sensible in this context can only be the pneumatomachians who assented to Nicaea's formulations regarding the Son, but did not acknowledge the Spirit's divinity. Gregory's encouragement of Maximus here amounts to saying that such opponents are really no more immune to accusations of polytheism than those who confess the divinity of the Spirit.

What is more important about the passage for our purposes, however, is the way in which Gregory discusses the pneumatomachians and their theology. First, near the beginning of the passage, Gregory connects pneumatomachian theology with “blasphemy,”<sup>250</sup> and warns cryptically of an “ominous fate” awaiting any who hold such a theology. Second, near the end of the passage,

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<sup>249</sup> *Or.* 25.17-18. Trans. adapted from Vinson.

<sup>250</sup> Quite possibly a reference to Matt 12:31 etc., though Gregory does not draw out the connection.

Gregory contrasts “impious” arguments with those which are “guided by the Spirit.” Here, Gregory counsels Maximus that it is better to be guided by the Spirit, even if that means losing an argument, than to be “impious.” Thus “impiety,” in *Oration 25*, appears to involve some degree of departure from the guidance of the Spirit, which departure, in turn, is connected to an “ominous fate” and amounts, in some sense, to “blasphemy.”

It is important to observe here that Gregory admits to Maximus that the arguments of the pneumatomachians may actually prove more compelling than those of Maximus himself. At the end of the passage, Gregory introduces the possibility that Maximus will stick to arguments which are “guided by the Spirit” and yet falter, while the “impious” arguments of the pneumatomachians will win the day. For Gregory, then, there exists a possibility that the pneumatomachians may present persuasive arguments for their position – even arguments which are more persuasive than those of theologians like Maximus. Yet, it is equally clear from the passage that, for Gregory, this does not change the fact that the pneumatomachians are “impious” and “blasphemous” owing to their theology of the Spirit.

This observation allows us to shed some light on what Gregory means when he mentions in *Or.* 31.3 that his opponents' arguments about scripture are a “cloak for impiety.” Gregory shows in *Or.* 25.17-18 that, for him, the real problem with the pneumatomachians is not that their arguments are not persuasive, but rather that they are “blasphemous” and are not “guided by the Spirit.”<sup>251</sup> The same understanding probably lies behind Gregory's accusation in *Or.* 31.3 that his opponents' arguments are “cloak for impiety.” Persuasive as they might be, for Gregory, the arguments of the pneumatomachians merely cover over something much deeper – the “blasphemy” of the pneumatomachians, and their lack of guidance from the Spirit. Moreover, and perhaps most important of all, for Gregory an “ominous fate” awaits those who follow a pneumatomachian theology.

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251 Beeley, “The Pneumatology of *Oration 31*,” p. 161 observes something similar when he describes Gregory as maintaining a “hermeneutic of piety” when it comes to discussions of the Spirit. Gregory's characterization of his opponents in *Or.* 31.3 amount to Gregory focusing on what happens when thinkers do *not* maintain this hermeneutic.

As we will see throughout the remainder of this chapter, it will be one of Gregory's central goals in *Oration* 31 to remove the “cloak” covering the pneumatomachian “impiety” in the eyes of his audience. In the end, it is just as important for Gregory that his audience see the pneumatomachians for what he thinks they are as it is that the arguments of the pneumatomachians be dismantled on logical and scriptural grounds.

*Gregory's Position: The Spirit is God*

In *Or.* 31.3 Gregory articulates his own theological position in the boldest terms possible. “For our part we have such confidence in the godhead of the Spirit that, rash though some may find it, we shall begin our theological exposition by applying identical expressions to the three.”<sup>252</sup> Gregory goes on to apply the term “true light” to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit alike as a means for articulating his belief that all three are God. The assertion of his doctrine in this way is designed by Gregory to communicate to his audience that there is absolutely no doubt about the eventual outcome of his discussions of the objections levelled at his position by the pneumatomachians. Gregory thereby implies that by merely fending off the arguments of his opponents, Gregory's own position will be left standing and thus be accepted as true. This allows Gregory to employ a defensive strategy throughout the sermon in which, rather than building up positive arguments for his own position, Gregory seeks only to take down the arguments of his opponents. Beeley has observed the defensive nature of Gregory's arguments in *Oration* 31 very clearly.<sup>253</sup>

Gregory says in *Or.* 31.3 that, no matter how much opposition he faces, it is his intention to preach the Spirit's divinity boldly.

Let the rejecter reject! Let the detractor detract! As for us, what we have come to know – we will preach it indeed. We will ourselves ascend upon the high mountain, and we will shout aloud, if we are not being listened to on the ground. We will exult the Spirit, we will not be made to fear. Indeed, if we are ever made

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<sup>252</sup> *Or.* 31.3. Trans. Wickham.

<sup>253</sup> Beeley, “The Pneumatology of *Oration* 31,” passim.

afraid, it will be when we are silent (ἡσυχάζω), not when we are preaching (κηρύσσω).<sup>254</sup>

Here, Gregory says that he actually fears the prospect of being silent in regards to the Spirit's divinity. Unfortunately, Gregory does not explain why he should be afraid of such silence. Nonetheless, it is clear from the passage that Gregory intends to preach the Spirit's divinity openly in *Oration 31*.

What is important about the passage is Gregory's boldness in presenting himself as a man about to preach on the Spirit's divinity. This is important in that it contrasts what Gregory has already said about his opponents being motivated primarily by “impiety” in their arguments against him. Just as Gregory attacks his opponents' character by way of such a statement, he here promotes his own boldness in preaching. Gregory wants to appear courageous and strong, even if the rejecter rejects him and the detractor detracts his arguments.

Thus, in the face of opponents whom Gregory identifies primarily with reference to impiety, Gregory says in *Oration 31* that he will preach the divinity of the Spirit boldly no matter what. The stage is set for a contest between the courageous Gregory's position that “the Spirit is God” and the “impious” position of his detractors.

#### *The Pneumatomachian Threat to Theosis*

*Or. 31.4* constitutes an apparent break in the flow of the sermon as a whole which almost seems to come as an aside given the close connection which we will see in a moment between *Or. 31.1-3*, and *Or. 31.5 ff.* We will see in this section, however, that *Or. 31.4* has an important function in the sermon which requires it to appear here, at the beginning. In *Or. 31.4*, Gregory presents the stakes of his debate with the pneumatomachians. He wishes to warn those listening to or reading the oration that the position of the pneumatomachians cuts off the Spirit from any involvement in *theosis*.

Gregory begins in *Or. 31.4* by presenting one of the only theologically constructive (rather than defensive) passages in the oration. Here, Gregory argues

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<sup>254</sup> *Or. 31.3*.

for the Spirit's divinity on the grounds that without the Holy Spirit, the Trinity would be incomplete. He begins with the language of previous Arian objections to the divinity of the Son.

If there was when the Father was not, there was when the Son was not. If there was when the Son was not, there was when the Spirit also was not. If the one was from the beginning (ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς), so also the three.<sup>255</sup>

Gregory goes on to focus on the Holy Spirit specifically, and argues that without the Holy Spirit, God would be incomplete.

For what benefit is there in an incomplete Divinity (θεότητος ὄνησις)? And, moreover, what is divinity if it is not complete (μὴ τελεία)? And how is something complete which is lacking something of completion? [The Divinity] is lacking in some way if it does not have holiness – and how could it have holiness unless it has [the Spirit]? For either holiness is something else besides [the Spirit] (and whoever thinks so, let him say something), or, if [the Spirit and holiness] are one and the same, how could [the Spirit] not be from the beginning?<sup>256</sup>

For Gregory, the Holy Spirit is the holiness of God. He declares explicitly in *Or.* 25.16 that the Holy Spirit “is holiness in the absolute (ἀποαγιότης).”<sup>257</sup> His argument in *Or.* 31.4 is that since there is no sense in which God can be conceived without God's holiness, and since the Holy Spirit is God's holiness, the Spirit must be coeternal with Father and Son. Gregory does not defend his assumption that the Spirit is God's holiness, though he does invite possible objections. Finding none, he simply assumes that his position can be taken for granted.

Gregory's argument about the Spirit as holiness functions by first grouping the objections of the pneumatomachians with those of previous Arian objections to the divinity of the Son. This is a clever rhetorical move given that at least some

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<sup>255</sup> *Or.* 31.4.

<sup>256</sup> *Or.* 31.4.

<sup>257</sup> *Or.* 25.16. Trans. Vinson.

of Gregory's pneumatomachian opponents were in agreement with Nicene theology on the topic of the Son. Gregory is insinuating that the pneumatomachians are on the question of the Holy Spirit what the Arians were on the question of the Son. Gregory is probably trying to draw his audience into seeing the pneumatomachians as guilty by association with the Arians.

This is probably why *Or.* 31.4 appears in this position early in the sermon. If one of Gregory's goals in the paragraph is to connect the pneumatomachians with the Arians, then the question of the Spirit as the holiness of God may have little more function in the sermon than to allow Gregory to do so. Indeed, the idea that the Spirit is the holiness of God will not reappear in *Oration* 31, and does not come to the fore in any other text in his corpus either, a fact which suggests that Gregory is really not particularly concerned with this feature of his own pneumatology.

Connecting his opponents with the Arians allows Gregory to come to the real point of *Or.* 31.4.

If [the Spirit] was not from the beginning, then it has been placed in the same rank as me, even if it is just a little above me. For we are separated from God by time. If [the Spirit] is placed in the same rank as me, how does it make me God (πῶς ἐμὲ ποιεῖ θεόν), or how is it linked with Divinity (συνάπτει θεότητι)?<sup>258</sup>

Having connected the pneumatomachian theology of the Spirit with the Arian theology of the Son, Gregory here summarizes what he believes to be the potential consequences of the pneumatomachian error by way of a rhetorical question, “how does it make me God?” The question serves to make two points at once. First, it implies for anyone in Gregory's audience who accepts *prima facie* that the Spirit is involved in *theosis* that it must be evident from this assumed fact that the Spirit is coeternal with Father and Son. Second, Gregory's rhetorical question conversely implies that if one does, in fact, place the Spirit “in the same rank” as human beings, then the Spirit cannot serve to effect *theosis*.

It is for the purpose of making this second point that Gregory probably places his comments in *Or.* 31.4 here at the start of the sermon. Gregory is

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<sup>258</sup> *Or.* 31.4.

insinuating that the theology of his pneumatomachian opponents is closely related to that of previous Arians. As such, he is further implying that their pneumatology thus cuts off the Spirit from any involvement in *theosis*. What Gregory appears to want his audience to understand is that the pneumatomachians threaten Christian *theosis* for the same reasons that the Arians do. Norris sees Gregory's arguments in *Or.* 31.4 as operating both ontologically and soteriologically,<sup>259</sup> but our observations about the passage preclude the possibility of giving equal consideration to the ontological aspect of Gregory's words here. While Gregory's argument begins with what is certainly an ontological consideration on the surface, namely that the Spirit is the holiness of God and thus coeternal, *Or.* 31.4 is not fundamentally about ontology in the end. Gregory's ontological argument works primarily to associate his opponents with the Arians. Gregory's main purpose in *Or.* 31.4 is to ask rhetorically how the Spirit can be involved in *theosis* if it is of the same rank as human beings.

Thus, *Or.* 31.4 is best read as the passage in which Gregory introduces what he considers to be the stakes of the debate between him and the pneumatomachians. Gregory is arguing that if his audience embraces the pneumatology of his opponents, they will, by so doing, cut the Spirit off from their *theosis*. Gregory's concerns in *Or.* 31.4, therefore, appear to be very similar to those which Gregory expressed about doctrinal confession at baptism.<sup>260</sup> While Gregory does not mention baptism in *Or.* 31.4, his basic concern that an incorrect doctrine or confession of the Trinity precludes *theosis* is on display for his audience here. Gregory wants his audience to know that the decision to follow the “impious” pneumatomachians would cut off the Spirit from their *theosis*, almost certainly with the implication that *theosis* would thus be impossible for them.

#### *The Pneumatomachian threat to Baptism*

In *Or.* 31.6, Gregory sets up the stakes of his debate with the pneumatomachians a second time. Whereas in *Or.* 31.4, Gregory emphasized the

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259 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, pp. 187-188.

260 See pp. 68-75.

threat of the pneumatomachian theology to *theosis*, in *Or.* 31.6, he brings up the threat which he thinks their theology poses to baptism. This comes as little surprise given the close connection between baptism and *theosis* which we explored in Part I.

Prior to this discussion of baptism, in *Or.* 31.5, Gregory reiterates the fact that it is the pneumatomachians with whom he is primarily concerned in the oration. He does so by listing several errors which have been made about the Spirit historically from his point of view. He mentions the Sadducees who, he claims, did not believe in the Holy Spirit's existence at all. Next he mentions an unnamed group of Greek philosophers, who, he argues, had a sense of the Holy Spirit as the “mind of the universe.”<sup>261</sup> Gregory then turns to identifying different Christian attitudes towards the Holy Spirit, saying that among various Christian “scholars (σοφῶν), one group understands [the Spirit] to be an energy (ἐνέργεια), another group to be a created being (κτίσμα), and another understands it to be God (θεὸν), while still others do not claim to know either way.”<sup>262</sup>

Gregory says in *Or.* 31.6 that he is uninterested in debating with anyone who does not believe in the Spirit's existence. He will, instead, argue with those who do believe in the Spirit but who argue that the Spirit is in some sense divided from the Godhead, which is to say the pneumatomachians. For our purposes at the present juncture, *Or.* 31.5 is thus important only insofar as Gregory makes it clear by way of *Or.* 31.5 that it is the pneumatomachians to whom he is addressing *Or.* 31.6. In response to them, Gregory says that if the Spirit exists, it must be either a “substance” or an “activity.”

If he is an activity (ἐνέργεια), clearly he must be put in operation, because he has no active power and ceases with the cessation of his production – that is the kind of thing an activity is. How comes it then that he does act? [1 Cor 12:11] He says things [Acts 13:2], he decrees [Acts 13:2], he is grieved [Eph 4:30] he is vexed [Isa

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261 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p.188 places this group of philosophers within the Platonic tradition, listing Plato, Aristotle, Anaxagoras and Hermetimus Claxomenus as possible sources for Gregory's reference here.

262 *Or.* 31.5.

63:10], all of which belong to a being with motion, not in the process of motion?<sup>263</sup>

Here, Gregory responds defensively to an implied objection on the part of the pneumatomachians that the Spirit is less divine than the other Persons. Gregory frames the question of the Spirit's divinity in terms of two Aristotelian categories of existence, namely substance and activity, and then turns to the data of scripture to provide evidence for his conclusion that the Spirit is a substance rather than an activity. Because scripture refers to the Spirit as acting, and not merely being acted upon, the Spirit must be a substance.

Gregory's main point in 31.6, however, is to prove that the Spirit is not only a substance, but is, in fact God. To this end, Gregory argues that if the Spirit is a substance it must be either a created being, or it must be God. Gregory flippantly dismisses any notion that something between the two categories can ever be conceived.<sup>264</sup> Then Gregory asks his opponents why they would be baptized “in” the Holy Spirit if the Spirit is a creature. “But if he is a creature why do you believe in him, why are we baptized in him?”<sup>265</sup> To believe “in” the Spirit, Gregory argues, is very different from simply believing something “about” the Spirit, and one would never believe “in” a mere creature to the degree of being baptized in its name.<sup>266</sup> As with his rhetorical question regarding *theosis* in *Or.* 31.4, Gregory's question here functions in two ways. First, for those Christians who accept baptism “in” the Spirit, it serves as an argument that they therefore must logically assent to the Spirit's divinity. Second, for those who consider the Spirit to be a creature, Gregory's question serves to challenge the validity of their baptism in the Spirit. This latter point is probably the more important for Gregory. We have already seen that, for him, if Christian baptism does not

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263 *Or.* 31.6. Trans. Wickham.

264 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, pp. 190-191, points out that Gregory's opponents probably would not have accepted the logic here, and would have been happy to posit an intermediate category between divinity and creature. The actual effectiveness of Gregory's arguments is not, however, a primary concern for us, though it is for Norris throughout his commentary.

265 *Or.* 31.6, Trans. Wickham.

266 *Or.* 31.6.

include a full confession of the Spirit's divinity, that baptism is insufficient. Gregory here asserts this to the audience of *Oration 31*. The assertion, by way of rhetorical question, thus serves Gregory in much the same way as *Or. 31.4*. Gregory here calls into question the baptism of his opponents, the pneumatomachians. Once again, Gregory's audience is presented with what Gregory sees as the stakes of the debate between him and his opponents. Just as their theology stands as a challenge to the *theosis* of those listening to and reading *Oration 31*, so does their theology undermine baptism as well.

### *Summary*

By the end of *Or. 31.6*, then, Gregory has completed his introduction to *Oration 31*. Over the course of *Or. 31.1-6*, Gregory has established his own position. Gregory will boldly and without hesitation declare the divinity of the Spirit. He has established which opponents of this belief he wishes to address primarily in the oration, namely, the pneumatomachians. He has identified the key argument of the pneumatomachians to which he wishes to respond, namely, the argument from the silence of scripture. He has characterized his opponents as motivated by impiety, and has cast himself as a courageous advocate of the right position. Finally, he has established what is at stake for his audience, from his point of view, namely, the involvement of the Spirit in their *theosis* and the validity of their baptism. Gregory is now ready to begin the work of responding to several objections levelled at him by his opponents.

### **Responses to Minor Objections: *Or. 31.7-10***

In this section we will discuss *Or. 31.7-10*. In these paragraphs, Gregory responds to a series of objections from his opponents, dismissing them one by one. Some commentators have suggested that in the remainder of the oration, Gregory may be responding *ex tempore* to hecklers actually shouting out these objections from his audience.<sup>267</sup> Whether this is the case historically must remain a mystery, but the possibility of this reading of *Oration 31* does help to emphasize

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<sup>267</sup> For example, Freeman, *AD 381*, p. 87; McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 303.

the structure of Gregory's argumentation from *Or.* 31.7 onwards. From here until the end of the sermon, Gregory will construct his sermon around the ostensible dismantling of specific and clearly identified arguments from his opponents, taking them one by one. The arguments which Gregory takes on in *Or.* 31.7-20 are, in general, fairly tangential to his main point regarding the silence of scripture (which problem Gregory addresses in *Or.* 31.21 ff.) By way of dismissing some of them, however, Gregory brings up some important terms and ideas related to his pneumatology. He does so especially in *Or.* 31.7-10, paragraphs we will explore here. In the first subsection we will examine Gregory's use of the term "procession" in the context of the Spirit "proceeding" from the Father. In the second, we will explore the term "homousios" as Gregory applies it to the Spirit.

*The Spirit Proceeds from the Father*

The argument with which Gregory begins in *Or.* 31.7 is that the Holy Spirit is "either wholly ingenerate, or begotten. And if, on the one hand, it is ingenerate, there are two unoriginates. But if it is begotten, there are now two subcategories: either [the Spirit] is from the Father or from the Son. And if it is from the Father, there are two sons – brothers, even!"<sup>268</sup> Gregory responds to this argument sarcastically, saying "make them twins if you like!" and, "if he is begotten from the Son, then our God apparently has a grandson!"<sup>269</sup> Gregory's sarcastic remarks lead him to a brief point about the fallacy of making too much of corporeal ways of talking about God. But this is not Gregory's primary response to the objection of his opponents in *Or.* 31.7. Instead, that response comes in *Or.* 31.8.

For where do you place "procession (ἐκπορευτόν)," tell me,  
which appears to be a medium between your distinctions, and is  
brought in by a greater theologian than you, our saviour, that is?  
Unless you excised this word from your own Gospels while  
[coming up with] your own Third Testament, then [you still have],  
"the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father [John 15:26]."

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<sup>268</sup> *Or.* 31.7.

<sup>269</sup> *Or.* 31.7. Trans. Wickham.

Given that [the Spirit] proceeds from there, it is not a created being; and given that it is not begotten, it is not the Son, and given that there is thus a medium between ingenerate and generate, [the Spirit] is God.<sup>270</sup>

Thus, Gregory's basic solution to the dilemma of the Spirit needing to be considered either ingenerate or generate is simply to introduce another term, taken from John 15:26 which, in his opinion, allows the Spirit to be neither, while still being God. After making this point, Gregory immediately responds to an implied request to explain what the term “proceeding” means in this context. “You explain the ingeneracy of the Father,” he says, “and I will give you a biological account of the Son's begetting and the Spirit's proceeding.”<sup>271</sup>

It is important to see that in *Or.* 31.8, Gregory's introduction of the term “procession” is a means for responding to a specific objection levelled at Gregory by the pneumatomachians. Gregory is arguing that scripture uses the term in relation to the Spirit, and therefore it is acceptable to use the term to describe the Holy Spirit's relationship to the Father. For Gregory, the term procession is a scriptural means of talking about the “particular character” of the Holy Spirit, just as ingeneracy and generation are used to talk about the “particular character” of Father and Son respectively. Gregory explains this in *Oration* 39.

The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, going forth (πρόειμι) from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by generation but “processionally” (ἐκπορευτῶς) (since I must coin a word for the sake of clearness);<sup>272</sup> for neither did the Father cease to be unbegotten because of his begetting something, nor the Son to be begotten because he is of the unbegotten (how could that be?), nor is the Spirit changed into Father or Son because he proceeds, or because he is God – though the ungodly do not

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270 *Or.* 31.8.

271 *Or.* 31.8. Trans. Wickham.

272 In NPNF vol. VII, p. 356, Browne and Swallow note that Gregory is only coining the adverbial form of the term “procession” which he uses here.

believe it. For [the Persons'] particular character (ἰδιότης) is unchangeable.<sup>273</sup>

Here Gregory applies the term “procession” to the Holy Spirit as a means of indicating the difference between the relationship of origin which the Spirit has with the Father and that which the Son has with the Father. Gregory's purpose, as he states, is to show that the Spirit does *not* come from the Father in the same way the Son does. Instead, “procession” is the term Gregory uses to describe the “particular character” of the Spirit.

Gregory states this explicitly in *Oration 25*, but adds an important caveat to his discussion about the “particular character” of each of the Persons.

The particular character (ἰδιότης) of the Father is the ingeneracy, that of the Son is the generation, that of the Spirit is the procession (ἐκπεμψις). If you are wondering as to how this is, just drop the subject. It is for them alone to know one another and to be known by one another, and also for those of us who will be enlightened (ἐλλάμπω) by them one day.<sup>274</sup>

In *Or. 25.16*, Gregory insists that Christians should not delve deeper into the question of the “particular character” of each individual person of the Trinity, including the Spirit, than the application of specific terms to delineate this “particular character.” What is notable about *Or. 25.16* is the reason Gregory provides in this passage for why Christians should not proceed beyond the application of these terms. Gregory indicates that further understanding of the “particular character” of the persons is left to the understanding of the Persons of the Trinity *and* to “those of us who will one day receive illumination from on high.” Thus, Gregory here opens up the possibility that at least some human beings actually *can* seek more about the “particular character” of the Spirit than the term “procession” only. But this further seeking is for those “illuminated from on high,” and is placed by Gregory in the future. What Gregory is thus saying is that, for most in his audience, the application of the right words to describe the

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<sup>273</sup> *Or. 39.12*. Trans. adapted from Browne and Swallow.

<sup>274</sup> *Or. 25.16*.

particular character of the Persons of the Trinity is enough, while for a small group of Christians a fuller illumination will become available at some point.<sup>275</sup>

Gregory is relying on much the same assumption in *Or.* 31.8 when, in response to the implied question of what “procession” really means, he dismisses his opponents by asking them to “explain the ingeneracy of the Father” before he will explain the nature of procession. Gregory assumes that his opponents will be able to provide no further insight into the term “ingeneracy,” and this assumed inability on their part lets Gregory take himself off the hook on the question of “procession.” Gregory thus implies that neither he nor his opponents are capable of articulating anything more than the word “procession” itself to the end of describing what Gregory elsewhere calls the Spirit's “particular character” in relation to the other Persons of the Trinity. This concludes Gregory's response to the objection that the Spirit must be either “ingenerate” or “generate.”

Thus, Gregory has defended his position by using scripture to supply the term “procession,” a word which provides him a response to the specific argument about ingeneracy and generacy that his opponents have presented. For Gregory, the term “procession” distinguishes the Spirit's relationship with the Father from that of the Son, but does virtually no other theological work of any kind, either in *Or.* 31.8, or elsewhere in his writings. In this sense, Gregory introduces the term in an argument which is once again fundamentally defensive in nature. Procession, for Gregory, is important insofar as it is different from generation, but nothing more. For Gregory, then, the Spirit clearly proceeds from the Father, but what the nature of this procession actually is never becomes a topic of enquiry in his writings.

#### *The Spirit is Homoousios*

After a short comment in *Or.* 31.9 in response to the idea that the Spirit is somehow less than the Son, Gregory presents, in *Or.* 31.10, three extremely short responses to three objections from his opponents.

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<sup>275</sup> Gregory may be thinking of the afterlife here, but this is not explicit in the passage.

“What – the Spirit is God, then?” Absolutely. “Well, what now, is it *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιος)?” If indeed it is God! “Give me a two,” they say, “from the same source, the first a Son, the second not a Son, yet *homoousios*, and I have a God plus a God.” Well, *you give me* those two, and another God to boot, and the nature (φύσις) of God, and I will give you the Trinity itself, with the same names and facts about the Persons.<sup>276</sup>

Here, Gregory sets up three accusations against his theology in order to agree with them completely. The Spirit is God, the Spirit is *homoousios*, and the fact that the Son and Spirit both have the same source *does* mean that they are “a God plus a God.” The structure of the passage from *Or.* 31.10 allows Gregory to assert his theological position on the question of the Spirit's divinity and the *homoousios* of the Spirit in the boldest terms possible. By presenting these theological positions first as objections, Gregory emphasizes his own total lack of hesitancy in articulating them.

We have already explored the function, in *Oration 31*, of Gregory's bold assertion that “the Spirit is God.” What we need to discuss at this juncture is Gregory's assertion that the Spirit is *homoousios*, presumably with the Father, and probably with the Son (though Gregory does not say this in the above passage). What it is important for us to observe here is the actual function of Gregory's use of the term *homoousios* in *Or.* 31.10. The term's Nicene pedigree could not have been lost on Gregory's audience. Applying the term to the Holy Spirit with so little hesitancy may thus suggest that Gregory is attempting to imply that the obvious ramifications of Nicene orthodoxy include the Spirit's divinity. Indeed, in *Epistle 102* Gregory states explicitly that he believes the divinity of the Spirit is the natural extension of Nicene orthodoxy.

I never have and never can honour anything above the Nicene faith, that of the holy fathers who met there to destroy the Arian heresy; but am, and by God's help ever will be, of that faith; completing in detail that which was incompletely said by them concerning the Holy Spirit; for that question had not then been

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<sup>276</sup> *Or.* 31.10.

mooted, namely, that we are to believe that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are of one Godhead, thus confessing the Spirit also to be God.<sup>277</sup>

Here, though Gregory explicitly claims his theology to be the natural extension of Nicaea, he does not use the term *homoousios* specifically. Gregory does, however, give a much more explicit indication that he considers the *homoousios* of the Spirit to be the position of Nicaea and its hero Athanasius in his funeral oration to the same.

[When many] were falling ill on the topic of the Son, and even more were doing so on the topic of the Holy Spirit, in regards to which to be at least *less* impious was considered as piety (ἦττον ἀσεβεῖν εὐσέβεια ἐνομίσθη), and when only a few people were healthy on both topics, [Athanasius] was the first and only one, or at least one among very few, to wisely and distinctly honour the truth in this matter by confessing (ὁμολογέω) the one Divinity and *ousia* of the three (τῶν τριῶν μίαν θεότητα καὶ οὐσίαν) in writing. And he, by a last inspiration (ἐμπνέω), presented to the Emperor a gift indeed befitting a king: the same [theology/doctrine] regarding the Holy Spirit as had first been given to a great number of Fathers regarding the Son.<sup>278</sup>

Here, Gregory promotes Athanasius as an advocate for the complete oneness of the “Divinity and *ousia* of the three.” This passage again does not contain the term *homoousios* directly, but makes reference to the three having one essence. The terms are closely related, and the idea is almost certainly the same, given Gregory's willingness to openly use the term *homoousios* with respect to the Holy Spirit in *Or.* 31.10. Regardless of his usual lack of rigidity in terms of vocabulary, in *Or.* 21.33, Gregory certainly lays claim to the legacy of

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<sup>277</sup> *Ep.* 102. Trans. adapted from Browne and Swallow.

<sup>278</sup> *Or.* 21.33.

Athanasius' pneumatology, as he also claims his pneumatology to be the natural conclusion of Nicene theology in *Ep.* 102.<sup>279</sup>

Gregory is probably attempting to make a similar claim in *Or.* 31.10 to that which he makes in *Ep.* 102 and *Or.* 21.33, albeit more subtly. By declaring the Spirit to be *homoousios* without hesitation, Gregory associates himself, in his audience's mind, with Athanasius and Nicaea. One possible implication is that Gregory is the real heir of Nicaea over and against any of his opponents. Conversely, Gregory implies in *Or.* 31.10 that Athanasius' use of the term *homoousios* as applied to the Spirit is an obvious indication that the Spirit is, in fact, God.

In this way, then, *Or.* 31.10 can well be read to present a challenge on Gregory's part to the status of his pneumatomachian opponents more than it presents anything approaching a systematic discussion of the theology of the Spirit. Here, by simply declaring the Spirit to be *homoousios* with Father and Son, Gregory subtly claims himself to be a Christian leader in the mould of Athanasius and Nicaea, and by extension implies that those unwilling to apply this same term to the Spirit maintain a theology which amounts to a break with Athanasius and Nicene thought. Gregory's response to the question of whether the Spirit is *homoousios*, then, is clearly and simply, "yes." But, as with his use of the term "procession," there is very little exploration in *Oration* 31 about what it means, for Gregory, that the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father. Instead, Gregory uses the term to turn the tables on his opponents in *Or.* 31.10. Where he casts his opponents as attempting to challenge him by asking if the Spirit is *homoousios*, Gregory, by boldly saying that it is, rhetorically seizes the banner of Nicaea, leaving his opponents dissociated from the Fathers there, including Athanasius. In *Oration* 31, at the very least, Gregory's use of the term *homoousios* is probably more about connecting himself with the other people who used it, than any theological work which the term does for him.

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279 On the question of what real connections exist between Gregory's pneumatology and that of Athanasius, see especially Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, p. 220-223.

### **Gregory on the Impiety of his Opponents: *Or.* 31.11-20**

In this section we will explore *Or.* 31.11-20. In these paragraphs of *Oration* 31, Gregory continues to bring up specific objections levelled at him by his opponents. However, in this portion of the oration, Gregory's dismissals of his opponents arguments begin to focus heavily on the spiritual character of those opponents, as well as Gregory's own character. In these paragraphs, Gregory's goal seems to be, in general, to show that he is a worthy Christian teacher and pastor, and that his opponents are not.

#### *Gregory's Spiritual Understanding*

In *Or.* 31.11, Gregory makes an important comment about how he understands himself to perceive the pneumatological and theological truths he discusses in *Oration* 31. The paragraph begins when Gregory appears to notice a potential objection to his assertions that, first, the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father, and, second, all three Persons maintain a “particular character.” The question Gregory notices is that of how two different things of the same substance can have one source. Gregory provides what he considers to be an example of exactly this, taken from Gen 2:21-23 and 4:25. Gregory argues that Eve had her source in Adam, but of course was not his son, while Seth had his source in Adam and was indeed his son.<sup>280</sup> Gregory thus concludes that things of the same substance can be differentiated despite having the same source.

It is confessed (ὁμολογέω), then, that even things different in respect to *hypostasis* can be accepted to be of the same substance (οὐσίας). I say this not maintaining that the Divinity is plastic, or chopped-up, or that it is something which is bodily in nature – no way will I be taken to task again by the nit-pickers. But [I say this] contemplating these spiritual realities like a scene in the theatre (ἐπὶ δὲ τούτων θεωρῶν, ὡς ἐπὶ σκηνῆς, τὰ νοούμενα). For this

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<sup>280</sup> *Or.* 31.11.

is not the kind of thing which can be conjured up like an image,  
nor is the whole truth ever totally apprehended.<sup>281</sup>

Gregory's point here is to insist that while the nature of the analogy of Adam, Eve and Seth as applied to the Trinity may seem to imply a serious division between the individual Persons, any implication of this kind of division only arises due to the insufficiency of this or any analogy in describing the Trinity.

What is most important for us about Gregory's response to the problem of how two things can have the same source and yet be different, however, is his mention of “contemplating spiritual realities.” Here, Gregory is insisting on the insufficiency of his own words, while remaining completely firm in saying that his formulation and confession of the Trinity is the correct one. His explanation of how this tension can exist in his thought is that he himself “contemplates” these realities in a way which he compares to watching a play in the theatre. Gregory is asserting that although the words he is using to describe the Trinity, and the Spirit's place therein, may fall short, nonetheless he himself has seen a real truth which cannot be described.

What is important about this assertion is that it makes clear that Gregory's point in *Or.* 31.11 is much more about himself than about his response to the problem of how two things can be different, and yet from the same source. In *Or.* 31.11, Gregory invites his audience to accept his position because he has a correct vision of the truth, not because his argument is actually compelling in and of itself. Gregory thus ascribes a special and particularly clear understanding of theological questions to himself. As he continues in the sermon, he will focus frequently on the lack of such understanding on the part of his opponents.

#### *The Character of Gregory's Opponents*

*Or.* 31.12 brings in a new objection from Gregory's opponents. “Where is the scriptural authority for worshipping or praying to [the Spirit]?”<sup>282</sup> The implication of the question seems to be that if scripture does not authorize

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281 *Or.* 31.11.

282 *Or.* 31.12. Trans. Wickham.

worship of the Spirit, then the Spirit cannot be God as Gregory is claiming. The objection, therefore, amounts to a form of the basic objection on the grounds of the silence of scripture with which Gregory opened the sermon, and which he will take up again in full a little later on. Gregory's response to the objection that scripture does not authorize prayer to and worship of the Spirit is to provide three scriptural texts which he believes give authorization for such prayer and worship.

[Scripture] says, "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." [John 4:24] Again: "for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." [Rom 8:26] Again: "I will pray with the Spirit, but I will pray with the mind also" [1 Cor 14:15] - that is, *in* our mind and *in* the Spirit. To worship the Spirit or to pray to the Spirit seems to me to be nothing other than it offering prayer and worship to itself. Who among the godly and those of right understanding would not concur that the worship of the one is the same as worship of the three, because of the equal honour of all three in respect to glory and Divinity?<sup>283</sup>

It is remarkable to note that none of the passages which Gregory employs here to dismiss the objection of his opponents are actually explicit in authorizing prayer "to" the Spirit. While all three do associate the Spirit with prayer, none actually provide Gregory with an explicit proof that prayer "to" the Spirit is acceptable. In fact, Norris makes note that one of the verses Gregory has employed here in an attempt to prove that worship of and prayer to the Spirit are authorized by scripture is also used by Eunomius as a means of actively disproving Gregory's position on the deity of the Spirit. This is John 4:24, which Eunomius cites in order to highlight that God is the one worshipped, according to the verse, and the Spirit the one "in whom" God is worshipped. For Eunomius, this proves that the Spirit is not divine since the preposition implies a distinction between God and the Spirit.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> *Or.* 31.12.

<sup>284</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, pp. 196-197.

Gregory, however, seems to notice the fact that his chosen scriptural texts do not authorize prayer “to” the Spirit. He goes on to say that in Christian prayer the idea of praying “in” the Spirit indicates that the Spirit is praying to and worshipping itself. This is an odd argument on the surface. Gregory's opponents have objected that scripture nowhere authorizes prayer “to” the Spirit, and Gregory has provided three texts which themselves do not authorize such prayer, but rather discuss prayer “in” the Spirit. Gregory's solution is to say that prayer “in” the Spirit is also directed “to” the Spirit, but the texts do not say this explicitly. In this sense, Gregory appears to be merely asserting for no explicit reason that prayer “in” the Spirit is the same as prayer “to” the Spirit. If this is going to be Gregory's response, one wonders why he would engage in the argument at all.

But Gregory actually addresses the problem with his argument in the passage from *Or.* 31.12 when he sarcastically asks whether “any godly man” could possibly disagree with him. Though Gregory has not provided explicit scriptural evidence for his position, he asserts that his opponents ought to be able to see that the evidence which he has supplied really does address their objection. Thus, to address the apparent gap between the explicit language of the verses of scripture which he has chosen to use in his defence, and the point he is actually trying to make, Gregory claims that any “godly” person will understand that these scriptural verses do, in fact, prove his point thus insinuating that his opponents are not thus “godly” people. This language of “godliness” is similar in meaning to Gregory's language of “piety” earlier in the oration. What Gregory is therefore arguing here in *Or.* 31.12 is not that scripture openly declares his position to be true. Instead, Gregory is making an *ad hominem* critique of the shortcomings of his opponents in order to assert that these verses of scripture prove his point. What is at issue is not the language of scripture, but the character of its interpreters.

Gregory responds to the next objection which he takes on in *Or.* 31.12 in similar fashion. The argument against Gregory is that the Spirit cannot be divine because, according to Gregory's opponents, “all things were, according to scripture, made by the Son, [John 1:3] the Spirit being one of the things included

in the 'all.'"<sup>285</sup> Gregory dismisses this on the grounds that “what scripture says is that all things *which were made*, were made by the Son, [John 1:3]” and thus, if the Spirit is not actually something made, John 1:3 does not need to present a problem for Gregory's theology at all. Gregory then berates his opponents for “giving a false dignity to the Father” at the expense of the other Persons of the Trinity.

Never cut into the one nature, equally revered, for whichever of the three you destroy, you are destroying all three equally, or, rather, you have turned your back (ἐκπίπτω) on the whole. It is better to maintain an insufficient picture (μικρὰν φαντασίαν) of the oneness (τῆς ἐνώσεως) than to start into full-on blasphemy.<sup>286</sup>

Here, Gregory points to the key problem which he sees in the theology of his opponents in terms which closely resemble those which he used to characterize them in *Or.* 31.3 and *Or.* 25.17-18.<sup>287</sup> Notably, Gregory comments in *Or.* 31.12 that an “insufficient” conception of the Trinity is better than complete “blasphemy.” The comment implies two important things about Gregory's opponents. First, it implies that his opponents are verging on complete “blasphemy” with regard to the Spirit. The word is quite obviously derisive, especially in light of Jesus's words according to Matt 12:31 that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is the only unforgivable sin. Second, the comment implies that Gregory's opponents have reached the verge of such blasphemy by reaching too far in theological matters. They would be better off to settle for an “insufficient” understanding, than risk blasphemy as they are now doing.

Thus, Gregory characterizes his opponents, in *Or.* 31.12 as cutting off the Holy Spirit from the Trinity in such a way that they verge on blasphemy and turn their backs on God. What is very important about Gregory's comments in *Or.*

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285 *Or.* 31.12. Trans. Wickham. The argument appears in Origen, who posits that the Spirit is something created by the Son precisely on the grounds which Gregory describes here. It is possible that the argument comes to Gregory indirectly. See Origen, *Commentaire sur Saint Jean*, II §73-76: pp. 256-259.

286 *Or.* 31.12.

287 See pp. 128-130.

31.12, which we have now seen are centred primarily on the spiritual shortcomings of his opponents, is that Gregory declares, after making these comments, that he has arrived at the “fundamental point” of his oration.

Our sermon has reached the fundamental point. Though I lament the re-opening now of a long dead enquiry which had yielded to faith, we must nonetheless make a stand (ἵσταναι) against babblers and not allow the case to go by default.<sup>288</sup>

Gregory's comment about reaching the “fundamental point” in his sermon at this juncture is surprising if one focuses on the actual objections to which Gregory has responded so far. At the beginning of the sermon, Gregory indicated that the main objection to which he wants to respond in *Oration* 31 is that of the silence of scripture on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, Gregory will indeed focus on addressing this objection in the last part of the sermon. Yet, here in *Or.* 31.13, though not having discussed this key objection at any length yet, Gregory declares that he has arrived at his fundamental point.<sup>289</sup> By calling this the “fundamental point” of his sermon, Gregory cannot mean that he has made his fundamental argument. What other fundamental point can he be referring to?

The reason that Gregory thinks of *Or.* 31.12 as the fundamental point of his sermon may well be the fact that in *Or.* 31.12, Gregory has brought into focus what he considers to be the real motivation behind his opponents' arguments against him as he identified it in *Or.* 31.3: their “impiety.” As we saw on pp. 128-130, Gregory associates “impiety” and “blasphemy” with the separating of any Person of the Trinity from the others, and warns against it. In *Or.* 31.12, Gregory characterizes his opponents precisely as cutting off the Spirit from the Trinity, and

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<sup>288</sup> *Or.* 31.13. Trans. Wickham.

<sup>289</sup> For Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 197, the problem of the possibility of “three Gods,” a question Gregory will take up next, is, in Gregory's mind, the essential objection of his opponents, and this is why Gregory here remarks that he has arrived at his fundamental point. However, this reading defies Gregory's way of introducing his sermon, wherein Gregory does not even hint at the issue of how three can be one. Moreover, as we will see, Gregory's treatment of the question of how three things can be one focuses largely on logical minutia, and does not, as Norris implies, make the problem of threeness and oneness essential to the overall argument of *Oration* 31.

connects their so doing with “blasphemy.” Gregory's fundamental point in *Oration 31* is that his opponents are “impious” and “blasphemous” and he has now shown it, he thinks. While Gregory has yet to deal with the most important argument against his position which his opponents have levelled at him, he has done the “fundamental” work of exposing them for what he thinks they are: “impious” theologians.

In *Or.* 31.10-12, then, Gregory focuses on asserting his own exceptional insight into questions of Trinitarian doctrine, and then derides his opponents for their impiety. Gregory appears to refer to this as the “fundamental point” of his sermon. This fact is important for us to observe for one basic reason. Here, Gregory makes clear that he considers his work in *Oration 31* to be just as much about establishing who is really equipped to talk about pneumatology, as it is to respond to specific objections to his own position on the Spirit. Gregory's opponents are not just wrong, they are impious, so he presents them to his listeners. Gregory is not just right, he is a man of exceptional insight, so his audience is meant to believe.

### **On the Silence of Scripture: *Or.* 31.21-30**

We will not explore *Or.* 31.14-20 in detail in this study. Here, Gregory presents his response to the basic objection of how there are not three Gods within his system, and whether things of one substance must be counted together. Gregory's comments on these objections are both self-explanatory, and surprisingly unimportant to his pneumatology. In these sections, Gregory really is focusing on the problems presented by numbers and substances – logical puzzles which Gregory attempts to solve with very little comment on the Spirit at all.

#### *Illumined Exegetes See the Spirit's Divinity*

Gregory returns to the issue of the Spirit in *Or.* 31.21. Here, Gregory finally comes to his discussion of the objection from his opponents which he said in *Or.* 31.1 would be central to his sermon. This is the argument from his opponents that the divinity of the Spirit is not explicitly articulated in scripture.

Gregory begins his response to this problem by arguing that the divinity of the Spirit has already been shown by previous authors.

[The Spirit's divinity] has been shown already by many of the people who have taken up the question, which people did not somehow pore over the holy scriptures lazily or as an afterthought, but tore open the words and gazed within. They were thought fit to see the beauty [of the texts], cached away, and were set aglow by the light of knowledge (τῷ φωτισμῷ τῆς γνώσεως).<sup>290</sup>

It is important to observe that in this passage, Gregory deliberately connects his pneumatology to people whom he characterizes as “set aglow with the light of knowledge.”<sup>291</sup> The imagery is reminiscent of Gregory's use of light to describe the characteristics of the good Christian pastor, Basil, in Chapter 1.<sup>292</sup> Gregory is associating his pneumatology here with the very best Christian exegetes, those marked off by their exceptional illumination. Gregory thus begins his discussion of the problem of the silence of scripture on the topic of the Spirit's divinity by emphasizing the spiritual quality of the people who, he says, concur with his pneumatology, rather than by focusing on dismissing the argument directly.

*True Things which are Unsaid in Scripture*

Gregory goes on in *Or.* 31.21 to say that “if the mere fact that 'God' is not plainly written [in reference to the Spirit], nor is it often called 'God,'” is the root of his opponents “blasphemy (βλασφημία),” then “we will set you free from harm by way of a short [list] of facts and names, philosophizing particularly on

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290 *Or.* 31.21.

291 It is not possible to be certain whom specifically Gregory has in mind here. Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, p. 203, suggests that Gregory is alluding in part to Origen. Gregory's previous move, in *Or.* 31.10, to connect himself with Athanasius may suggest that Gregory also has Athanasius in mind. Basil's work on the topic of the Holy Spirit, and Gregory's friendship with him, may also suggest that Gregory is thinking of Basil as well. None of these possibilities is exclusive of the others.

292 See p. 38.

scripture's typical usage.”<sup>293</sup> This construction of his opponents' position is in contrast to Gregory's accusations of impiety in *Or.* 31.3. Here, instead of insinuating that his opponents are *not* really driven to their denial of the Spirit's divinity by an interest in the biblical text, Gregory concedes that if his opponents really are being genuine in their complaints, then he has a good response for them. Gregory probably takes up this more expansive attitude towards his interlocutors in *Or.* 31.21 for rhetorical purposes. Giving his opponents real credit for their concerns, at least momentarily, provides Gregory with the opportunity to dismiss these objections on their own merits.

In *Or.* 31.22, Gregory begins a conversation about how Christians should understand various types of statements made in scripture. He does so by listing four categories of statements and their relationship to scripture: (1) Statements in scripture which are not factual; (2) Statements which are factual but not mentioned in scripture; (3) Statements that are not factual and not mentioned in scripture; (4) Statements that are factual and stated in scripture.<sup>294</sup> Gregory's strategy from here will be to discuss how Christians must go about understanding scripture in light of these four categories. The first step is to talk about those “things that are not facts, yet which are mentioned [in scripture].”<sup>295</sup> For Gregory, scripture is capable of making statements, especially about God, which are not literally true. These serve instead, he says, to build up ideas in the mind drawn from human experience.<sup>296</sup> Gregory goes into some detail in describing several examples of such language, drawn especially from the Psalms. Included are terms ascribed to God in scripture such as “sleep,” “anger,” “flight,” and so on. What Gregory is attempting to show is that scripture is capable of speaking in human terms about the divine, but that these terms should not be taken literally.

Gregory presents his essential response to the problem of the silence of scripture on the divinity of the Spirit, however, in *Or.* 31.23. Here, Gregory discusses the second category of statements as related to scripture, namely those things which are true but not mentioned in scripture. The point of Gregory's

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293 *Or.* 31.21.

294 *Or.* 31.22.

295 *Or.* 31.22.

296 *Or.* 31.22.

argument is to assert that the phrase “the Spirit is God” falls into this category. Gregory makes this point by showing that his opponents also use terms to describe God which do not explicitly appear in scripture. He focuses on the terms “ingenerate” and “unoriginate.” These terms are central to Eunomian thought in particular. Gregory also includes the term “immortal,” a term which is probably meant to resonate with any pro-Nicene listener or reader, including any pro-Nicene pneumatomachians. If these pneumatomachians consent to the idea that God the Son is immortal, then they have already agreed to use non-scriptural language in talking about God. What Gregory is saying, therefore, is that whether pro-Nicene or anti-Nicene, all of his potential opponents on the topic of the Spirit ascribe at least some terms to God that do not appear explicitly in scripture.<sup>297</sup> And, for Gregory, this is no problem at all. He describes why in *Or.* 31.24.

Supposing you mention “twice five” or “twice seven” and I infer from your words “ten” or “fourteen,” or supposing from your mentioning a “rational, mortal animal” I draw the conclusion, “man,” would you allege that I was talking rubbish? How could I be? I am saying what you said!<sup>298</sup>

Gregory then argues that the point of any expression in language is the “meaning rather than the words.” Thus, Gregory concludes, the fact that scripture does not say “the Spirit is God” in those exact terms can by no means be taken as a reason to disbelieve the statement. As Beeley points out, Gregory's argument here is again defensive.<sup>299</sup> Gregory neither proves, nor tries to prove in *Or.* 31.24, that the Spirit is God. Instead, he seeks to dismiss the objections of his opponents, leaving the possibility of his own position open.

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297 Noble, “Gregory Nazianzen's use of Scripture,” p. 115 sees the influence of Athanasius on Gregory's argument here.

298 *Or.* 31.24. Trans. Wickham.

299 Beeley, “The Pneumatology of *Oration* 31,” p. 155.

*Progressive Revelation of the Spirit*

In *Or.* 31.25, however, Gregory takes a step beyond this defensive argument and seeks to explain why God would have left the phrase “the Spirit is God” out of scripture. Unlike nearly all the rest of Gregory's arguments in the oration, his discussion beginning in *Or.* 31.25 does not commence by first citing an objection from his opponents. Instead, Gregory launches directly into a response to a problem which he evidently saw as obvious in light of his own arguments regarding the silence of scripture in *Or.* 31.24. Gregory begins his explanation of this silence by discussing the human transition first from worshipping idols to the covenant of the law, then from the covenant of the Law to the Gospel. Gregory explains that God guided human beings through this kind of progressive shift from one covenant to the next for good reason.

It was in order that we would not be forced (βιάω), but rather persuaded (πείθω). For certainly something involuntary has no staying-power; instead it is like a stream or plant inhibited by force. Something voluntary has more staying power, and is more steady. The involuntary is the tool of the one who operates by force, the voluntary is used on us. The latter is an effect of God's fairness (ἐπιείκεια), the former of the power of tyranny. Never did He think it right to do good to any unwilling person, but only to work the good for the willing (ἐκόν).<sup>300</sup>

Here Gregory describes the concept of divine *paidea*. Norris sees this as central to Gregory's thought, as well as to Cappadocian thought more generally.<sup>301</sup> Indeed, Gregory seems to take the idea that God operates through *paidea* largely for granted in 31.25, arguing simply that it would be a bad idea for God to force truth upon human beings, and that it is better for all if people are instead persuaded to see such truth. In *Or.* 31.26, Gregory argues that it is the same

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300 *Or.* 31.25.

301 Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, pp. 17-39.

principle of persuasion and *paidea* on the part of God which accounts for the lack of any explicit declaration in scripture that “the Spirit is God.”

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father clearly, but the Son less distinctly. The New Testament revealed the Son and sketched out (ὕποδεικνυμι) the Divinity (θεότητα) of the Spirit. But now the Spirit is our own compatriot (ἐμπολιτεύω), and thus provides us with a clearer explanation of itself. For it was not safe (οὐ ἀσφαλές), back when the divinity of the Father was not confessed, to proclaim the Son explicitly, nor, without the Son being accepted, for the Holy Spirit to be piled on like an extra weight, if I can be so bold as to say it that way.<sup>302</sup>

For Gregory, it is the danger of burdening human beings with too much information all at once which explains why God withheld the phrase “the Spirit is God” from scripture. But in *Or.* 31.26, Gregory declares that the Spirit “is our compatriot” in the sense of living among Christians, and thus provides a “clearer explanation of itself.” Gregory will expand on what he means by this in a moment. First, however, he comments that “by progressive additions, or 'goings-up,' as David says, and by movements and advances from glory to glory, the light of the Trinity shines on those who are more radiant than the rest.”<sup>303</sup>

It is not clear whom Gregory has in mind when he talks of those “more radiant than the rest.” He may mean all Christians who are, from his point of view, orthodox, or he may mean specially illuminated pastors and teachers like Basil,<sup>304</sup> or perhaps the illuminated exegetes whom he mentioned in *Or.* 31.21.<sup>305</sup> Whatever group it is, however, it is clear that he thinks that now that the Spirit is a “compatriot” of Christians, the best sort of Christians have come to understand the divinity of the Spirit in spite of the silence of scripture, and through persuasion rather than force.<sup>306</sup> Gregory now seeks to prove that scripture witnesses to the progressive revelation of the Spirit's divinity. Gregory points out, in *Or.* 31.26,

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302 *Or.* 31.26.

303 *Or.* 31.26.

304 See p. 38.

305 See p. 153.

that the Spirit made “his home in the disciples in gradual stages proportionate to their capacity to receive him.” He explains that these stages include the disciples' early miracles, followed by Christ's breathing upon them after his resurrection, finally culminating in the tongues of fire at Pentecost.

*The Spirit Teaches the Spirit's Divinity*

Thus having ostensibly proved that scripture affirms a progressive revelation of the Spirit, in *Or.* 31.27, Gregory expands on the idea, alluded to in *Or.* 31.26 and quoted above, that “at the present time” the Spirit gives a “clearer manifestation” of itself to Christians. In doing so, Gregory presents perhaps the most important passage in his corpus on the topic of pneumatology.

[Our Saviour said] that all things would be taught to us by the Spirit dwelling in us (ἐνδημέω). I consider one of these things to be the very Divinity (θεότητα) of the Spirit itself, which was clarified later on, when the time was right and a capacity for such knowledge was well established, that is, after the ascension of the Saviour, when [this truth] would no longer be rejected in astonishment. For what did he promise or the Spirit teach (διδάσκω) that could possibly be greater than this?<sup>307</sup>

Here Gregory states explicitly the principle under which he has been operating throughout the sermon. It is the Holy Spirit that teaches the Spirit's own divinity to Christians. A natural question arises when we see Gregory saying this. How, for Gregory, does the Spirit guide Christians to knowledge of the Spirit's divinity?

In essence, we have established an answer to this question throughout Part I. For Gregory, the Holy Spirit works in the Church, often through pastors and

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306 We should note with Noble, “Gregory Nazianzen's use of Scripture,” p. 118-122, that Gregory probably does not mean that the Spirit now reveals its divinity apart from scripture through a new revelation of some sort. Gregory's subsequent arguments imply that the Christian recognition of the Spirit's divinity in the third stage of revelation comes to be by way of the Spirit guiding Christians to a fuller understanding of the meaning of scripture, not by any extra-scriptural revelation.

307 *Or.* 31.27.

teachers like him, to guide and teach Christians. Recalling Gregory's understanding that it is through the Church that the Spirit guides and teaches Christians helps to explain much of Gregory's strategy in *Oration 31*. In particular it helps to explain why, for Gregory, the question of his own character, as well as the issue of his opponents' "impiety" and "blasphemy," is so important. Gregory believes, he says in *Or. 31.27*, that the Spirit guides Christians to see the Spirit's divinity. Because Gregory understands the Spirit to teach in conjunction with the agency of pastors and teachers in the Church, the question of the character of particular Christian teachers is of the utmost importance to Gregory. Gregory's attacks on his opponents are not merely arguments *ad hominem*, though they are that. Instead, for Gregory, questions about the character and status of particular Christian leaders are, given his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church, genuinely material, from his point of view, to the problem of the pneumatomachians. Given that Gregory clearly understands himself to be a Spirit-guided pastor and teacher, as we established in Chapter 3, it is thus little surprise that immediately after asserting that the Spirit guides Christians to see the Spirit's divinity, Gregory turns to the topic of himself one more time.

Well, that is what I maintain in regards to these things, and I pray that I, and anyone beloved by me, may remain able to worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three in terms of their particular character (ἰδιότης) – one Divinity, in glory and in honour, and in essence, and in royalty, undivided, as one of the god-bearers (τις τῶν θεοφόρων) not long ago philosophized. Whoever does not hold to such a belief, or is a slave to fashion, thinking one way, then the other, and taking his own awful advice about things of significance, may that person not see the morning-star rising [1 Pet 1:19], as scripture says, nor the glory of its splendour. For if [the Spirit] is not worshipped, how does it bring me to *theosis* through baptism (πῶς ἐμὲ θεοῖ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος)? And if it is worshipped, why not revered? And if it is revered, how is it not God? One is linked to the next, like a chain indeed, a golden and saving chain. Yes, our regeneration

(ἀναγέννησις) is from the Spirit, and from that regeneration comes our remoulding (ἀνάπλασις), and from that remoulding comes the full knowledge (ἐπίγνωσις) of the one who works us into our new form.<sup>308</sup>

Here, Gregory offers a summary of *Oration 31*, and the key arguments which he has made up to this point in defending his doctrine of the Spirit's divinity. First, Gregory once again constructs himself as standing boldly in his belief, unmoving and proud. Gregory then attributes his doctrine to an unnamed “god-bearing saint.” In so doing, he again constructs himself as the heir to a previous (though here unnamed) tradition developed by rightly-guided Christian leaders. Next, Gregory emphasizes the failures of his opponents, paying particular attention to the imagery of light as he does so. Having positioned himself in relation to his opponents as the godly voice in the debate, Gregory calls back to his audience's mind that it is really *theosis* and baptism which are at stake in his debate with the pneumatomachians.

Having thus summarized his oration, Gregory now tells his congregation that with the question of the silence of scripture dealt with, they will now see that scripture presents a “swarm of proof-texts...at least to those not utterly dense or alien to the Spirit.”<sup>309</sup> Here, Gregory emphasizes the importance of a person's relationship to the Holy Spirit if that person is to be able to interpret scripture's message about the Holy Spirit correctly. The obvious implication of Gregory's comment is that he himself has this kind of relationship to the Spirit, and thus he can see the Spirit's divinity in scripture whereas those “alien to the Spirit” cannot. To prove this, Gregory now compiles a massive list of scriptural quotations about and allusions to the Spirit, more than sixty in all drawn especially from the New Testament as well as Genesis, the Psalms and Wisdom of Solomon. Gregory concludes this list of references by focusing yet again on the question of Spirit-guided leadership.

[The Spirit] is all powerful, all seeing, saturating all other intellectual and pure and fully denuded spirits – I mean angelic

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308 *Or.* 31.28.

309 *Or.* 31.29. Trans. Wickham.

powers, and, just as much, prophets and apostles – all at once, even though they are not in the same place, having been sent out hither and yon. From this it is clear that [the Spirit] is not circumscribed. Now, those speaking and teaching these things, and moreover, calling [the Spirit] “another comforter,” that is, another God – those who know that blasphemy against [the Spirit] is the only unforgivable thing – the ones who so frighteningly inveighed against Ananias and Sapphira as “liars to God, not man” [Acts 5:1-11] when they lied to the Holy Spirit – which of the following do you think people like this are preaching? That the Spirit is God, or something else? How completely and utterly dense you are, and how divorced from the Spirit (πόρρω τοῦ Πνεύματος), if you are not sure about this and need to be taught the answer.<sup>310</sup>

Here, Gregory caps a long list of texts which he thinks demonstrate the Spirit's divinity in some way by paying special attention to the question of what the apostles really taught about the Spirit. The implication is that Gregory is teaching the same thing about the Spirit as has already been taught by previous Church leaders whose authority Gregory's audience takes for granted. Indeed, Gregory then tells his audience that they could only possibly fail to see that he is in the same pneumatological tradition as the Apostles if they are “divorced from the Spirit.”

For those who have a relationship to the Spirit, Gregory argues in *Or.* 31.29-30, it is obvious that scripture and the Apostles are really teaching the Spirit's divinity, even if they do not apply the word “God” to the Spirit. The problem of the silence of scripture, for Gregory, centres on the relationship of any Christian seeking to interpret the Bible with the Spirit. Those who are “divorced” from the Spirit are capable of missing the fact that the Spirit's divinity is attested in scripture using different words. But those who, like Gregory, are not “divorced” from the Spirit can see the Spirit's divinity clearly in scripture. In his final analysis, then, Gregory implies that the real problem with his opponents is

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310 *Or.* 31.29-30.

that they do not have the right kind of relationship with the Spirit, and therefore cannot see the Spirit's divinity in scripture.

What, then, will Gregory do in the face of “impious” teachers like the pneumatomachians, people who are “divorced” from the Spirit and thus incapable of seeing pneumatological truth? Gregory gives an answer at the conclusion of the oration.

In the end, therefore, I figured that the best thing for me would be to let go the mental images and shadows which are deceptive and fall far from the truth,<sup>311</sup> and, keeping more pious concepts in my mind, relying on only a few words, giving myself to the Spirit as my guide (ὁδηγία), protecting to the very end this illumination (ἔλλαμψις) which I received from [the Spirit] as from a true comrade and partner, to make my way as one cutting a path across this life to persuade (πείθω) all others, as much as I am able, to worship the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, the one Divinity and power.<sup>312</sup>

Gregory's ultimate response to the “impiety” of the pneumatomachians, he says here, is to make his way through life trying to “persuade” all others to worship the Trinity. The word “persuade” is the same as that which Gregory used to describe the way in which he believes God reveals the divinity of the Spirit through *paidea*.<sup>313</sup> The illumined Gregory, it seems, will attempt to persuade Christians of the Spirit's divinity as well, in face of the “impious” teachers who deny it. In this endeavour, Gregory says, the Spirit is his “guide.”<sup>314</sup> Gregory's language here is highly reminiscent of his many discussions of his Church career as we observed them in Chapter 3. Gregory's key response to the pneumatomachians is not, in

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311 Børtnes, “Rhetoric and Mental Images in Gregory,” pp. 52-53, presents Gregory's comments here as an acknowledgement on Gregory's part of the limits of verbal imagery in discussing God, which limits demand, for Gregory, an eventual transcendence of all such imagery in favour of an understanding of God attained in human *theosis*.

312 *Or.* 31.33.

313 See p. 156.

314 See Norris, “Gregory Contemplating the Beautiful,” pp. 29-30.

essence, his arguments against their positions, but in the end it is his own career of discourse in the Church as a Spirit-guided leader.

## **Conclusions**

What we have seen throughout our exploration of Oration 31 is that, for Gregory, the key issue at hand in his debate with the pneumatomachians is Gregory's perception that the pneumatomachians constitute a group of “impious” theologians who do not have the kind of relationship with the Spirit required to recognize the Spirit's divinity. Because they separate the Spirit from the divinity, for Gregory, the theology of the pneumatomachians compromises theosis and baptism, in accordance with our discussion in Chapter 2. Gregory does not, in Oration 31, ever explain to his audience why the theology of the pneumatomachians is a threat to theosis and baptism, and unfortunately for us he does not enter into such a discussion elsewhere in his writings either. His goal in Oration 31 is only to protect his audience from this threat.

Thus, Gregory has two key rhetorical goals in Oration 31. The first is to dismiss the objections of his opponents in order to make room for his confession. As we have seen, this objective on Gregory's part is pastoral in nature. By dismissing his opponents' objections, Gregory seeks to open up the possibility of his own confession of the Spirit's divinity for his audience. The second, and the more important objective of the oration is to associate Gregory and his teaching on the Spirit with other illuminated Christian teachers, and to construct his opponents as unenlightened, impious and divorced from the Spirit. Those Christian who are guided by the Spirit, Gregory asserts throughout Oration 31, have been guided by the Spirit to recognize the Spirit's divinity. Gregory, quite obviously, thinks of himself as just such a Christian. Thus, Gregory concludes, it is his mission, with the Spirit as his guide, to persuade the world to confess his point of view.

What this ultimately means for us is that Oration 31 must be understood as a fundamentally pastoral and rhetorical document which, instead of providing us with any kind of complete or systematic discussion on Gregory's part with regard to the Spirit, gives us instead a window into the work of one Christian leader as he

attempted to carry out what he understood to be his role in the Spirit's guidance of the Church. Oration 31 tells us far more about the various strategies which Gregory attempted to use in his career to guide his congregations away from potential error and toward what he understood to be the truth about the Spirit than it does about what Gregory personally thought about the Spirit and why.

## *Chapter 5*

### *Gregory Faces the Non-Proclaimers:*

#### *Letters to Basil; Oration 42; De Vita Sua*

### **Introduction**

Most of Oration 31 is focused on Gregory's response to the pneumatomachian position on the Holy Spirit. As we saw in the previous chapter, Gregory does not consider the pneumatomachians to be Spirit-guided leaders of the Church, and he thinks that their doctrine of the Spirit compromises theosis and baptism for Christians. But during his lifetime, Gregory also found himself in conflict with thinkers whom he considers basically orthodox on the Nicene standard, but whose theology of the Spirit troubled him nonetheless. For Gregory, this group certainly included his close friend Basil, and seems to have included the bishops of the Council of Constantinople in 381, often referred to as the “Second Ecumenical Council.” In this chapter, we will establish the existence and basic nature of Gregory's disagreements about the Spirit with Basil and the Council. By doing so, we will pave the way for Chapter 6 in which we will explore Gregory's fullest rhetorical and theological responses to the non-proclaimers, namely those found in Oration 31 and especially Oration 41.

Gregory's disagreements with Basil and the Council on the topic of the Spirit are substantially different from those in which he engaged with the pneumatomachians. For Gregory, Basil and the Council fall short not in regards to what they believe about the Spirit, as the pneumatomachians do, but rather in their refusal to confess publicly the idea that “the Spirit is God.” It is for this reason that we have termed this group the “non-proclaimers.” In this chapter, we will explore how Gregory constructs the problem which he sees in Basil's and the Council's pneumatology. We will find that Gregory's concern about Basil's and the Council's position grows from his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. Gregory's understanding of the need for Christian pastors and teachers to work with the Spirit in order to guide their congregations to what he

believes to be a correct confession of the Trinity causes him to feel deeply concerned when any Christian leader who actually believes in the divinity of the Spirit will not preach it openly. Where the problem with the pneumatomachians was, for Gregory, their wrong confession of the Spirit arising from their not being Spirit-guided leaders, the problem with the non-proclaimers is their failure to carry out their obligation as Spirit-guided leaders to bring their congregations to a right confession of the Spirit.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first, we will explore several texts in which Gregory addresses or talks about Basil with regard to the latter's refusal to declare openly that “the Spirit is God.” In the second section, we will examine some of Gregory's accounts of the Council of Constantinople, with an eye toward understanding Gregory's responses to the pneumatological concerns which were brought up there.

### **Basil as Non-Proclaimer**

Gregory's conflict with Basil on the topic of pneumatology is well documented within the writings of both men. Both Basil and Gregory remain famous for their extensive collections of letters, many of them written to one another on topics ranging from travel plans to political intrigue to questions of theology and doctrine. One of the most important of these letters for our purposes is Gregory's Ep. 58, written to Basil in 372 or 373. The letter discusses in vivid detail a drinking party recently attended, or perhaps hosted by Gregory, at which the topic of the Holy Spirit became the centre of conversation.<sup>315</sup> Evidently the party was attended by a monk with particularly strong feelings in regards to Basil and the question of the Spirit. Gregory begins by introducing the monk's criticism of Basil.

“What is this that everyone is saying?!” [the monk], quite worked-up, was shouting. “What complete liars and flatterers you are! Let these people be praised for other things, if you want, and I will not

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315 For a discussion of the nature of this symposium and its possible guests see McLynn, “Among the Hellenists,” pp. 229-233.

say a word. But I do not grant you the most important thing in regards to them: orthodoxy (ὀρθοδοξία) – something which is falsely ascribed to Basil and just as falsely to Gregory. The first abandons the faith (πίστις) by way of what he preaches, the second follows right along by way of what he doesn't say.”<sup>316</sup>

Gregory then presents the content of the monk's arguments against both himself and Basil.

“I have come just now from the memorial celebration for the martyr Eupychius,” he said, and it was true, “and there I heard the great Basil speak about the divinity (θεολογέω) of the Father and the Son perfectly and completely and like no one else really can – but he glossed over the Spirit...But see here, admirable one,” he said, looking at me [Gregory], “you already do speak clearly of the Spirit's divinity (θεολογέω),” and he recalled some comments of mine wherein, speaking about God at a busy synod, I ascribed to the Spirit the now famous word<sup>317</sup> (well, how much longer are we going to hide the candle under a bushel?). “But, the other man [Basil] whispers indistinctly and dances around the word (λόγος) – he does not speak the truth openly...”<sup>318</sup>

We must make two observations about Gregory's account of the monk's words at this point. First, while Gregory claims at the beginning of the letter that the monk's objections were levelled at both himself and Basil, the actual account of the monk's complaints contains criticism of Basil only, while implicitly praising Gregory for his willingness to speak the truth and say openly that “the Spirit is God.” Second, while making reference to the sermon which was apparently pleasing to the angry monk, Gregory inserts a short but telling phrase asking, “how long shall we hide the candle under a bushel?” The aside can have

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316 *Ep.* 58.

317 Gregory will make it clear a few lines later, in a passage quoted below, that he means the phrase “the Spirit is God.”

318 *Ep.* 58.

only one purpose – Gregory is subtly joining the monk in criticizing Basil. Gregory, the passage implies, has brought the truth out into the open in accordance with Jesus' words from the Gospel. Basil, in contrast, is implicitly painted as hiding the candle – a strong critique indeed. This insertion places Gregory squarely on the side of the angry monk within the scope of the conflict between the monk and Basil, and Gregory's voice is thus implicitly joined to that of the monk at this point in critiquing Basil's position on the Spirit.

Still, as the letter continues, Gregory insists that he defended Basil against the audacious monk. Gregory says that he responded by making note of the contentious political climate in which Basil found himself embroiled, stating that a single misstep could easily cost Basil the bishop's throne. In light of the political risks, Gregory explains, Basil has no choice but to use caution when speaking.

For it is no problem for us to come to know that the Spirit is God (θεὸς)<sup>319</sup> from other phrases that amount to the same thing (for [Basil] does not put the truth in the sound, but rather the meaning of what he says) yet what a great harm to the Church it would be for the truth to be driven out because of one man.<sup>320</sup>

Gregory's interlocutor and the others at the party, he relates, did not accept his logic.

Those present rejected this explanation (οἰκονομία) as being a day late and a dollar short (ἔωλον καὶ παίζουσαν αὐτοῦς), and then they started shouting at me for offering excuses for cowardice rather than an explanation of doctrine (λόγος). For it is much better to guard our own by way of the truth than, being of no use to them anyway, to even fail to win over anyone else thanks to a bunk explanation.<sup>321</sup>

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319 Here Gregory shows us that this phrase was the one referred to earlier in the letter.

320 *Ep.* 58.

321 *Ep.* 58.

Gregory concludes the letter with a request to Basil: “But you teach me, godly and wonderful leader, the extent to which it is acceptable for me to talk of the Spirit as God (τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος θεολογίας).”<sup>322</sup>

Gregory's jab at Basil in the letter is thinly veiled to say the least. Despite his claims to have defended Basil to the point of uncharacteristic anger, Gregory's basic agreement with the position of the monk is designed to be easily visible just below the surface. Gregory's open derision of his own explanation for Basil's hesitancy in describing the Spirit as divine clearly indicates that he himself does not really buy this logic. In addition, Gregory's final request for advice is presented in a tone of mock respect which carries on the project of accusation set up by Gregory in his comment about hiding the candle under a bushel. The strongest evidence that this was Gregory's intent is, in fact, Basil's own reaction to the letter, a reaction which is extant. Basil begins by describing his initial emotional response to Gregory's comments.

In terms of how I was affected [by your letter], I know you have no serious doubt. But, on reflecting, I chose to prioritize my love for you over all the pain caused. I accepted everything, as was proper, and I began praying to the holy God during the days since, and even in the past few hours, to be made steadfast in the same attitude towards you as I had in the old days.<sup>323</sup>

Basil alludes to how Gregory's letter affected him emotionally, saying that the letter caused him pain, and that it was only after giving it some time that he could get back to seeing Gregory as a friend. Indeed, in the passage, Basil quite literally prays that his hurt feelings will not destroy his relationship with his old friend Gregory – a sure sign that Basil himself picked up quickly on the implied attack in Gregory's *Ep.* 58. Basil goes on to reject the accusations of the monk as reported in Gregory's letter. His tone is designed to intimate righteous indifference toward the monk and others like him.

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<sup>322</sup> *Ep.* 58.

<sup>323</sup> Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 71: *Lettres*, pp. 166-167.

Look, if I, somehow, have not yet given this man's brotherhood a demonstration of my inclination regarding God, then I have nothing to say now in my defence. For my many years have not persuaded them – how will a brief letter do so? If a mere letter is enough, then what my accusers are saying is hogwash.<sup>324</sup>

Basil concludes by saying that he is concerned that he and Gregory have been too long apart, indicating that this is a cause of the problem now arising between them. This may be Basil's way of responding to Gregory's final somewhat mocking request for guidance on the topic of the Spirit, or perhaps a method of politely refusing to engage with Gregory's implicit critique. Either way, over the course of the letter, Basil again avoids any direct statements about the Spirit's divinity.<sup>325</sup>

This response was not, evidently, entirely acceptable to Gregory, a fact demonstrated by Gregory's answer to Basil's defence, found in Gregory's *Ep.* 59. Here, Gregory claims to have meant nothing malicious by his first letter on the topic of the Spirit, and in a rather more genuine tone he shoulders the blame for the conflict between himself and his old friend. But, in doing so, Gregory still makes certain to include a brief critique. “Yet, I think it would be much better indeed to set the record straight about yourself, rather than to get defensive towards people who give you advice.”<sup>326</sup> Gregory is saying that Basil's defensiveness, and choice to take his critiques about pneumatological doctrine personally are the wrong response given the circumstances. Gregory still craves an open declaration of the Spirit's divinity from his friend – a declaration which would never come.

It is important to note that Gregory's basic critique of Basil here is directed towards the latter's refusal to affirm openly the divinity of the Spirit. The audacious monk of *Ep.* 58, and by extension, Gregory, who relays his words and implicitly consents to them, do not actually accuse Basil of failing to *believe* that

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324 Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 71: *Lettres*, pp. 166-167.

325 For more on Basil's response to Gregory and its context see Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, pp. 31-34. There is probably no connection between Basil's *Ep.* 71 and his *Ep.* 7, though the two are often grouped together. See McLynn, “Gregory Nazianzen's Basil,” pp. 188-189.

326 *Ep.* 59.

the Spirit is God, but rather of failing to *declare* this truth. Gregory communicates this by way of his brief remark about hiding the candle under a bushel, again by way of his mocking request for advice from Basil about how far to go in declaring the divinity of the Spirit, and yet a final time in his assertion that Basil should have set matters straight rather than mount a personal defence in the face of these critiques. Every one of these comments attacks Basil's hesitancy rather than any element of his underlying doctrine as Gregory understands it. The problem with Basil's pneumatological position, Gregory implies, is not that he does not believe that the Spirit actually is God, but that he is not willing to say so. Indeed, Gregory's final remarks in *Ep.* 58 imply that he assumes without doubt that Basil believes in the Spirit's divinity. Here Gregory says, “for if I were to need to be taught this fact even now, I who, more than anyone else, know you and your ideas and frequently give as well as receive reassurance about them, then I would be sorrier and more stupid than anyone.”<sup>327</sup> Gregory has no doubt that he and his friend are of the same belief, and yet his consternation at Basil's resistance to saying so springs off the pages of their correspondence.

Gregory appears never to have fully accepted Basil's refusal to declare the divinity of the Spirit openly. This can be seen in his treatment of Basil's pneumatology in his funeral oration for Basil, delivered some time after Basil's death in 379.

[Our opponents] were lying in wait for the open application of a certain word to the Spirit, namely, the word “God.” While it is true, they understood it to be impious, as did the awful instigator of their own impiety (ἀσεβεία). They wanted to banish [Basil], along with his acumen for speaking about God, from the city, leaving them in possession of the church, and thus making it a base for their vile operations so they could make inroads, from such an acropolis, into the rest of the churches. So, in different scriptural words, by unequivocal testimonies and by drawing out inferences,

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<sup>327</sup> *Ep.* 58.

[Basil] applied more and more pressure to his opponents until they could not withstand it.<sup>328</sup>

Gregory's words here amount to a defence of Basil very similar to the one which he reports himself to have given to the angry monk of *Ep.* 58. Two things about this defence of Basil's pneumatology are important to observe. First, Gregory casts the conflict between Basil and the enemies against whom Gregory says that Basil was fighting in terms of "impiety." In the previous chapter, we saw Gregory accusing his pneumatomachian opponents of being motivated by impiety to deny the divinity of the Spirit.<sup>329</sup> Here, Gregory casts Basil as a leader whose theological instruction was seen as a threat by some of the "impious." This is important because it shows that, for Gregory, the problem with Basil's pneumatology is not that it amounts to the kind of "impiety" which we saw in the last chapter to be, in Gregory's mind, the hallmark of pneumatomachian thought. Instead, by saying that Basil was perceived by the impious to be an enemy, Gregory implies Basil to be, by contrast, a Spirit-guided Christian leader. Indeed, as we saw in Chapter 1 in another passage from *Oration* 43, Gregory is willing to go so far as to describe Basil as the quintessential illuminated and Spirit-guided leader.<sup>330</sup>

But, and this is our second observation, Gregory's manner of defending Basil's pneumatology reveals a persistent lack of real acceptance of his friend's refusal to declare the Spirit's divinity. In the first place, the mere fact that Gregory seemingly feels it necessary to bring up Basil's pneumatology in a funeral oration indicates how conscious he remained, even after his friend's death, of the power of Basil's opponents (such as the angry monk) on the matter. But much more important here is the actual structure of the defence which Gregory offers. Gregory argues that despite appearing to be silent on the Spirit's divinity, Basil not only believed such a doctrine, but really did teach it openly after all. Though Gregory was himself unsatisfied with Basil's silence while Basil remained alive, in his funeral oration for his friend he goes so far as to deny the real

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328 *Or.* 43.68.

329 See pp. 128-130.

330 See p. 38.

existence of this silence at all. Though Basil did not use the phrase, “the Spirit is God,” he obviously meant and taught it, Gregory says. As such, Gregory gives Basil a pass on the question of whether to declare the Spirit's divinity, but he does so entirely on his own [Gregory's] terms.<sup>331</sup> That Basil really did believe the Spirit to be God may well have been the case historically, especially considering Basil's own way of defending himself in his *Ep.* 71, already cited above and written in response to Gregory's *Ep.* 58.<sup>332</sup> But precisely what Basil thought privately about the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not, in fact, the critical issue in understanding Gregory's approach to Basil's pneumatology. What is important instead is to observe that while Basil remained alive, Gregory felt himself at odds with his friend over the issue of *declaring* the Spirit's divinity, while after Basil's death, Gregory felt he could only clear his friend's name insofar as he was able to posit that Basil really did openly teach the Spirit's divinity after all, even if not in so many words.

Gregory's treatment of Basil, therefore, reveals that for him there is no sense in which a pneumatology can be entirely acceptable which refuses to proclaim publicly the divinity of the Spirit. If the personal considerations of his friend's death forced Gregory to expand slightly the list of acceptable ways to make such a declaration so as to include statements which imply rather than openly state the Spirit to be God, this shift is entirely cosmetic. Gregory, it seems, really does agree with the bald statement of the monk of *Ep.* 58: to refuse to declare fully the Spirit's divinity in some way compromises orthodoxy.

Gregory's correspondence with Basil on the topic of the Holy Spirit is important for this study for two reasons. First, the fact that Gregory argued, through correspondence, with Basil on the issue of proclaiming the Spirit shows that, from Gregory's point of view, the non-proclaimers constitute a real, identifiable group including at least one person whom he knew personally. This is important in that it shows that at least some if not all of Gregory's responses to the non-proclaimers which we will explore in the next chapter grow out of direct interaction with representatives of the group. Second, it shows that Gregory does

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331 See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, p. 184.

332 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 818 is more circumspect on this point.

not see the non-proclaimers as posing the same problem for Christians as the pneumatomachians do. Gregory shows this when he portrays Basil as a Spirit-guided teacher like himself. As we saw the question of the Spirit's guidance in contrast to impiety to be Gregory's central concern in regards to the pneumatomachians in the last chapter, this acceptance of Basil's status as a teacher precludes Gregory considering Basil to be guilty of the same error as the pneumatomachians. Thus, while not declaring the Spirit's divinity certainly compromises something for Gregory, it does not do so in the same way that theologies which actively deny this divinity, such as that of the pneumatomachians, do.

### **Gregory and the Council of Constantinople, 381**

Yet, Basil is not the only non-proclaimer in the world, from Gregory's point of view. It appears that, for him, the bishops forming the Council of Constantinople in 381 were also among the non-proclaimers. The Council of Constantinople is difficult to assess historically due to a lack of extant canons or proceedings. The most important historical sources regarding the Council are the texts of Sozomen's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, Socrates' *Historia Ecclesiastica*,<sup>333</sup> Gregory's own writings, especially *De Vita Sua* and *Oration 42* which we will discuss here, and finally the creed attributed to the council, almost certainly authentic, and now known as the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed by historians.<sup>334</sup> While specific details of the decisions made by the Council are hard to come by,<sup>335</sup> we nonetheless possess a good understanding in broad strokes of the issues faced by the bishops there and their basic approach to solutions. It is clear that the Council was made up exclusively of pro-Nicene bishops meeting in

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333 For a summary of the council paying special attention to Gregory's role, see McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, pp. 350-369.

334 The conclusions of Ritter, *Das Konzil von Konstantinopel*, pp. 182-208, remain authoritative on the question of the Creed's link to the Council. See also Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 322-331 and Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 812-820 who both follow Ritter.

335 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 805-812 contains the fullest discussion in recent scholarship.

large part to discuss the project of carrying out a recent imperial edict demanding that only pro-Nicene leaders serve as bishops in the East.<sup>336</sup> Among the bishops present for the start of the council were at least some pneumatomachian bishops who were nonetheless able to affirm the original creed of Nicaea.<sup>337</sup> As such, the council consisted largely of Gregory's theological allies, with a small infusion of those whom he would have found to be pneumatologically lacking in accordance with our discussion in the previous chapter. There were two primary problems evidently addressed by the Council. The first was political and involved a controversy between Meletius (the Council's first president) and Paulinus over who should be considered the rightful bishop of Antioch.<sup>338</sup> Gregory reports that he weighed in on this controversy, and appears to have felt a certain amount of consternation about it, especially regarding how much divisiveness arose at the Council over the question.<sup>339</sup> At least one statement made by Gregory regarding the Antioch issue has some pneumatological significance, as we will see below, but beyond this, Gregory's approach to this particular piece of Church political intrigue is secondary for our purposes. The second problem faced by the Council appears to have been doctrinal in nature, and, judging especially from the creed left by the Council, evidently primarily pneumatological. The key problem seems to have been the theology of the pneumatomachians, though it is probable that those pneumatomachian bishops present at the start of the Council were long departed by its conclusion.

The political intrigue of Constantinople is at times almost melodramatic, and is at the very least too complex to discuss in detail here.<sup>340</sup> Over the course of the Council, its first president, Meletius, himself embroiled in the problem at Antioch, died, and his death led to serious new complications for everyone involved. Among these complications was Gregory's rise to the presidency of the

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336 McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 350. For more on the law of January 381, see Freeman, *AD 381*, pp. 92-94.

337 Sozomen, *H.E.* 7.7. Socrates, *H.E.* 5.8. See also Cummings, "A Critical Edition of the *Carmen De Vita Sua*," pp. 157-162.

338 On the problem at Antioch see Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, pp. 33-36. On the intrigues of the Council see Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 805-812.

339 *DVS*, 1591-1679.

340 See Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 805-812.

Council, a position which he would ultimately resign in utter frustration. As the Council proceeded, new bishops would arrive from Egypt, Gregory would leave only to return and give a resignation speech, and the Council would ultimately adjourn after long deliberation. On the question of the Holy Spirit, however, little of the drama of Constantinople is of great importance. What matters for us instead is Gregory's approach to Constantinople's theology, and the way in which he chooses to discuss the pneumatological issues which were evidently taken up there.

Gregory's writings strongly suggest that he spoke to the council regarding the question of the Holy Spirit, though Gregory leaves us with nothing approaching a transcript of what he said. In a moment we will demonstrate that despite this lack of a direct account of his words, Gregory's writings can tell us a great deal about the nature of what he argued for in Constantinople and why. J. N. D. Kelly has argued persuasively that the Council took up the topic of the Holy Spirit, and produced or at least discussed its creed some time during Gregory's tenure as president. He has also noted that Gregory was clearly unhappy with the pneumatology of the creed and its apparent placation of the pneumatomachians.<sup>341</sup> Kelly does not, however, go into much further detail in explicating why Gregory was so unhappy with the proceedings on this matter, or why it should have bothered him that the Council would appear to want to produce a creed inclusive of pneumatomachian theology. Bernardi, however, offers one possible answer. In his view, which he bases on the evidence of *De Vita Sua*, Gregory advocated for the Council to affirm that the Holy Spirit is *homoousios* with Father and Son.<sup>342</sup> Francis Gautier disagrees with Bernardi and argues, also on the basis of *De Vita Sua*, that it was the idea that the Spirit is fully divine that Gregory advocated at Constantinople, not that the Spirit is *homoousios*.<sup>343</sup> These two positions are not, however, mutually exclusive, and it is altogether conceivable that Gregory advocated the application of the term *homoousios* to the Spirit as well as a declaration that “the Spirit is God” at the Council. What Kelly, Bernardi

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341 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 327-328. See also Hanson, *In Search of the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 815-819.

342 Bernardi, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, p. 227; 297.

343 Gautier, *La retraite et le sacerdoce*, p. 393.

and Gautier all agree on, however, is that Gregory took issue with the Council on the topic of pneumatology. We will argue here that his writings show that he did indeed do so, and that Gregory treats the bishops of the Council in his poetry and orations as non-proclaimers.

It is necessary, however, to draw up a summary of Gregory's position in advance in order to approach his writings on the Council with clarity. In essence, Gregory's stand before the Council of Constantinople amounts to an almost identical response to an almost identical set of issues as those which informed Gregory's more personal controversy with Basil, as discussed above. As the bishops took up the topic of the Holy Spirit, Gregory seems to have advocated for an open declaration of the Spirit's divinity on the part of the Council. And while Gregory's specific arguments to this end are lost to history, the response of the bishops at the Council is not. Constantinople resulted in a creed whose pneumatological content hints at, but never fully declares, the divinity of the Spirit. Moreover, the creed does not state that the Spirit is homoousios with the Father, the Son, or both. In effect, the Council rejected Gregory's position.<sup>344</sup> Gregory's writings, discussed below, indicate that he saw, prior to his resignation, that such an outcome was possible, and objected to it vehemently. But the defeated Gregory would not be in the president's chair when the Council adjourned, and the theology of others would prevail.

The two most important texts in Gregory's corpus regarding the Council are his autobiographical poem, *De Vita Sua*, and *Oration 42*, his farewell speech upon resigning as president of the Council. While Bernardi doubts that *Oration 42* was ever delivered at the Council, and argues that it was instead written well after the fact, his arguments are less than completely persuasive.<sup>345</sup> Bernardi's observations may point to a concerted editorial effort on Gregory's part, but need not lead us to conclude that no part of the oration was actually presented to the Council. Regardless, even if Bernardi is entirely correct, *Oration 42* certainly presents Gregory's take on the council and its proceedings, even if it was written later on. *De Vita Sua* was certainly written in Gregory's retirement, and thus,

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344 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, p. 368 sees the rejection of Gregory's pneumatology in the creed as so clear cut that he calls it a "studied rebuttal" of Gregory's theology.

345 Bernardi, *Discours 42-43*, pp. 7-17.

when it deals with the Council, it serves as a reflection on Gregory's part on what happened there. What both texts present us with, therefore, is Gregory's personal analysis of, and reaction to the Council and its proceedings. Both texts take up a number of issues surrounding the Council, not least among them the question of the Council's approach to pneumatological doctrine. Gregory's words about the Council's take on doctrinal issues are, however, less than completely transparent. In both *De Vita Sua* and *Oration 42*, Gregory talks about the Council's approach to doctrine in critical terms, yet he does not declare explicitly in either text what the doctrinal problems with the Council were from his point of view.

Gregory begins *Oration 42* by addressing his fellow bishops in terms that make it clear that he considers them to be Spirit-guided leaders like himself.

How do my affairs seem to you, beloved pastors (ποιμήν) – fellow-pastors (συμποιμήν), I should say, whose footsteps are timely on the threshold, since you have come spreading the news of peace and goodness? Yes, the sound of your footsteps is just in time for me to whom you have come at present, not so that you might track down a stray lamb, but so that you might join with a fellow shepherd (ποιμένα συνέκδημον). What do you think of my departure, and this, its fruit, or rather the fruit of the Spirit in me (ἐν ἡμῖν), by which I am always moved (κινέω) and now have been moved?<sup>346</sup>

Here, Gregory talks of his upcoming departure from the Council, and “this, its fruit,” a phrase which can only be read to indicate the oration which Gregory is in the process of delivering. This oration, Gregory attributes to the Spirit working in him, thus explicitly constructing himself here as a Spirit-guided Christian “pastor.” But Gregory also refers to the other bishops at the council as “fellow-pastors.” This willingness to refer to himself, here cast quite explicitly as a Spirit-guided pastor, and the other bishops with the same term demonstrates that for Gregory the problem he faces with the bishops at the council, like the problem he saw in Basil's pneumatology, is not a question of outright “impiety,” as it is with the pneumatomachians.

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<sup>346</sup> *Or.* 42.1.

But Gregory does have theological concerns related to the council, and a careful examination of what Gregory says about the council in *Oration 42* makes it possible to reconstruct, to some extent, what his objections to the Council's decisions really were. Gregory could not accept the Council's refusal to declare publicly the Spirit's divinity. We only need to scratch a little below the surface of *Oration 42* to see that pneumatology is very much on Gregory's mind in the oration. After his greeting, quoted above, Gregory gets into the question of Trinitarian doctrine, making what is quite probably, though not explicitly, a reference to the key pneumatological problems which he believes are facing the Council.

So, among those who philosophize (φιλοσοφῶ) about God, since I am not speaking here about the completely ignorant (ἀγνώμων), some keep their piety (εὐσέβεια) totally hidden, holding it in. Others are close to the moment when their ideas will come out into the open – they do flee from impiety (ἀσεβής), but they do not openly declare (παρρησιάζονται) anything pious (εὐσεβής), either. They proceed either with a sense of economy (οἰκονομία) in regards to the word, or they flee from it out of cowardice. They make their own intellect healthy, as they say, and do not help to heal the people, as if they were charged to be leaders of themselves, and not anyone else. Finally, some actually publish their treasure, not holding back from exposing their piety, nor considering the act of saving themselves only to be any salvation (σωτηρία) if it does not pour the good down upon others. With these I rank myself, and anyone with me who dares upon what is right and noble – that is, to confess (ὁμολογέω) our piety (εὐσέβεια).<sup>347</sup>

The passage begins by indicating that Gregory is here talking only about Christians whom he considers to be orthodox, doing so by dismissing those who are “utterly misguided.” Gregory then proceeds to divide the orthodox into two basic groups: those who believe the truth but do not profess it, and those who

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<sup>347</sup> *Or.* 42.14.

confess it openly. Gregory is in the second camp. Gregory defines these two groups by their relationship to “piety,” saying that some among the pious share this piety, while others do not.

Three considerations strongly suggest that those to whom Gregory refers here as marked by an unwillingness to speak their piety are the non-proclaimers. First, Gregory's way of defining the three groups to which he refers in *Or.* 42.14, based on the question of piety, echoes his focus on the question of impiety as the real source of the pneumatomachian error as we explored it in the previous chapter. Here, Gregory indicates that he is *not* addressing any group marked by impiety, which, we recall, he sees as the root of pneumatomachian heresy, and his comment to this end rules out the possibility that he is addressing any pneumatomachian bishops at the Council. Second, Gregory's comments in *Oration* 42 closely parallel those which he expressed regarding Basil's silence on the matter of the Spirit. In the case of Basil, Gregory's concerns centred on the question of proclaiming the Spirit as God, and so it is not unreasonable to assume that this same belief is what Gregory means to signify by referring to the “piety” which he sees going unexpressed by some bishops at Constantinople. Third, the major content of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed which was added by the Council deals with the subject of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, as we have already noted, Kelly concludes that Gregory was indeed involved in some form of discourse with the council regarding the creed and its pneumatology.<sup>348</sup> Given that Gregory's involvement in such a discussion at the council is nearly certain, it is reasonable to read pneumatological concerns into the categories which Gregory establishes in *Or.* 42.14. This paragraph from the oration is therefore best read to be an indication that, for Gregory, the key issue at Constantinople is pneumatological. Yet, it is not, for him, about the question of *whether* the Holy Spirit is God, but rather whether the Council should *declare* the divinity of the Holy Spirit as Gregory himself does.

It is important to note that, in *Or.* 42.14, Gregory gives us a brief indication of why he might be concerned about the question of whether to “speak out” on the topic of the Spirit's divinity. He indicates here that those who simply

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<sup>348</sup> Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 327-328. See also Hanson, *In Search of the Christian Doctrine of God*, pp. 815-819.

hold their beliefs within, and fail to teach their congregations properly, in some sense deny salvation to their congregations by doing so. Gregory does not discuss this idea any further in *Or.* 42.14, but in light of Part I of our discussion, it is easy to see why there could exist, in Gregory's mind, a connection between the idea of the “pious” proclaiming the Spirit's divinity, and the salvation of other Christians. Gregory's concern about the connection between proclamation and salvation is consistent with his understanding of how the Spirit guides the Church. For Gregory, teachers and pastors like him have a responsibility to exercise their agency properly in accordance with the will of the Spirit in order to guide their congregations to what he considers a correct confession of the Trinity, including a correct confession of the Spirit. Indeed, it is the idea of a “confession of the truth” which Gregory highlights at the end of *Or.* 42.14 as defining his position thus drawing a connection between himself and those whom he considers to be in his camp.

Gregory begins *Or.* 42.15 by exploring the question of how the Church proclaims the Trinity, and what the Church proclaims about the Trinity.

One concise declaration of my doctrine, an inscription comprehensible to everyone, is this very people, the real worshippers of the Trinity. They would sooner be cut off from this life than they would cut off any one of the three from the Divinity. They are a people single-minded, one in worship, holding firm to a single doctrine (ἐνὶ λόγῳ), to one another, to me, and to the Trinity.<sup>349</sup>

Here, Gregory talks about “this people,” by which he means either Christians in general or the bishops listening to him in the audience, as a metaphorical “proclamation” of his teaching. The question of whether Gregory is thinking of all Christians whom he considers orthodox in saying this, or just those bishops listening to him at the time he delivered *Oration* 42, is not of central importance. Either way, Gregory is referring to a community of Christians as a “proclamation.” Gregory expands on what he means by calling the community in question a “proclamation” for three reasons. First is the community's worship of

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<sup>349</sup> *Or.* 42.15.

the Trinity, second the community's unwillingness to separate doctrinally any one Person of the Trinity from the divinity, and third the community's unity with itself and with Gregory. For Gregory, this unity of worship and doctrine within the Christian community to which he is referring is apparently reflective of his own teaching on the Trinity. What Gregory probably means by this is that as the Trinity, for him, is one and united, so is the Christian community which he has in mind united, and in this sense, the community serves as a “proclamation” of Gregory's own teaching. What is more, Gregory's language here regarding the connection between the people to himself, and thereby to the Trinity, is reminiscent of his description of the Church as a “chain forged by the Spirit” in *Or.* 36.1.<sup>350</sup> For Gregory, the unity of the Church which results from the work of the Spirit is itself a proclamation of the unity of the Persons of the Trinity including the Spirit. This metaphorical description on Gregory's part of the community as a “proclamation” will be important in a moment.

Gregory now says that he will give a brief overview of the Trinitarian doctrine which he sees reflected by the Christian community. To this end he offers a concise formulation of the Persons of the Trinity, saying, “that which is without beginning, and is the beginning and is with the beginning, is one God.”<sup>351</sup> Here Gregory is referring to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in order, and proceeds in the following lines, to make this explicit.<sup>352</sup> The emphasis here is on the unity of the three Persons. Gregory then notes, in *Or.* 42.16, that he believes that the approach to the Trinity which he summarized in *Or.* 42.15 avoids the problems of both Sabellianism and Arianism because it neither denies the three Persons (as Gregory thinks the Sabellians do) nor denies the unity of the Persons (as Gregory thinks the Arians do).<sup>353</sup>

Gregory's summary of his Trinitarian doctrine, which he sees in a sense “proclaimed” by the unity of those Christians who agree with him, does not focus any particular attention on the question of the Holy Spirit. However, the next section of *Oration* 42 suggests that Gregory's primary concern in this section of

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350 See p. 110.

351 *Or.* 42.15. Trans. Browne and Swallow.

352 *Or.* 42.15.

353 *Or.* 42.16.

the sermon is still centred on pneumatology, as it seems to have been in *Or.* 42.14. As he proceeds, Gregory presents a summary of what he believes his doctrine accomplishes which Sabellian and Arian views of the Trinity do not. He does so in a way which subtly highlights pneumatological concerns.

We who walk the middle way, indeed, the royal way, in which the foundation of virtue was placed (as it is said by those with a strong sense of such things), we believe in Father and Son and Holy Spirit, *homoousios* (ὁμοούσιος), and conglorified (ὁμόδοξος), in whom baptism attains completion (τελείωσις) both nominally and in fact (you, the initiated, know that), it being a rejection of atheism and a confession of Divinity (θεότης).<sup>354</sup>

Two aspects of this passage from *Or.* 42.16 suggest that pneumatological concerns are primary in Gregory's mind while addressing the Council here. The first is Gregory's use of the term *homoousios*. Gregory applies the term here to all three Persons of the Trinity, including the Holy Spirit. This is interesting because the Nicene Creed, to which all of the bishops at Constantinople apparently assented, did not ascribe this term to the Holy Spirit. In *Or.* 42.16, Gregory is thus building on language which his audience already readily ascribed to the Son, such as to apply this language to the Spirit as well. In applying the term *homoousios* to the Son, Gregory is simply affirming a belief which he knew himself to share with the bishops at the council. But applying the term to the Spirit may well have been more controversial, and at the very least would have been much more noticeable. In this sense, while Gregory's words do not single out the Spirit for consideration in *Or.* 42.16, the context of the council highlights Gregory's ascription of the term *homoousios* to the Spirit much more than his ascription of the term to the Son.

It is important to see that this ascription of the *homoousios* to the Holy Spirit subtly connects the Holy Spirit to an important Nicene term. We saw Gregory do much the same in *Oration* 31. An element of what Gregory is doing in *Or.* 42.16, therefore, seems to be that he is implying that his pneumatology is indeed fully Nicene in nature. We will return to this possibility in a moment.

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<sup>354</sup> *Or.* 42.16.

The second aspect of the passage from *Or.* 42.16 which suggests that Gregory is thinking primarily of the question of the Holy Spirit is Gregory's focus on baptism. Here, Gregory says that he affirms the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit...in whom baptism is completed." We saw in Chapter 2 that Gregory argues that baptism which lacks the Spirit, while it may actually be beneficial, is not "complete," the same term which appears in reference to baptism here. Gregory's choice to emphasize the concept of baptism's "completion" thus suggests the possibility that his doctrine of the Spirit is in the front of his mind when composing this section *Oration* 42.

As Gregory continues to summarize his doctrine, a subtle focus on the Spirit remains apparent. In the next section of the sermon, Gregory addresses the question of whether any of the three Persons of the Trinity can be understood to be created.

If one [of the Persons of the Trinity] is God, it is not a created being, for a created thing is the same as one of us, and we are not gods. If that Person is a created being, it is not God, for it began within the scope of time. And anything which began – there was when that thing was not. And if before everything, this Person was not, it really *is* not, in the complete sense of the word "is." And something that *is* not, in the complete sense (τοῦτο οὐ κυρίως ὄν) – how is that something God? None of the three, then, is a created being – not one.<sup>355</sup>

Gregory's argument here is that none of the Persons of the Trinity can be seen as a creature. His language calls to mind the Arian controversy by saying that if one of the Persons should be considered a creature, then there "was when he was not." But Gregory is not talking about the Son only in arguing against any of the Persons being created – he is talking about the Father and the Holy Spirit as well. Moreover, we must again recall that Gregory is addressing a group of pro-Nicene bishops in *Oration* 42, who were certain to have rejected the idea that there "was when the Son was not" just as Gregory does in this passage. Thus, Gregory seems again to be including the Holy Spirit in a Trinitarian formula which, when applied

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<sup>355</sup> *Or.* 42.17.

to the Son, would almost certainly have been taken for granted as a settled question by the bishops of the Council. Gregory's connecting the Spirit to an uncontroversial theological statement about the Son thus mirrors his way of subtly claiming that the Spirit is *homoousios* in *Or.* 42.16.

Gregory completes his summary of his Trinitarian doctrine by warning against sophism in talking about God and by noting that proofs for his doctrine have been constructed already by others. Then, Gregory declares that he has only gone into the topic of doctrine so that the Council will know where he stands on the matter.<sup>356</sup>

Well, not to put too fine a point on it, but this is my doctrine (λόγος). Now, I have gone over these things not in order to take a swipe at my adversaries – for I have already had it out with them many times, even if temperately – but in order that I might show you the character of what I teach (δίδαγμα), so you can see whether I am not in the same regiment as you, standing against those whom you are against, and for those whom you are for.<sup>357</sup>

Here Gregory focuses on the idea that he shares common enemies with the other bishops at the Council. In two passages quoted above, we have seen Gregory draw attention to, and reject, Arian theology. This makes it easiest to see the “enemies” to whom Gregory is referring here as the Arians. As such, Gregory appears to be making a claim for the Nicene pedigree of his thought, as well as that of the bishops at the Council, by suggesting that both his theology and theirs oppose the same people, most probably the Arians.

Yet, the emphasis which Gregory places on the unity of doctrine between himself and the bishops at the Council in *Or.* 42.18 seems far removed from the strong words which Gregory has for the Council as the sermon continues. “I can't stand your horse-races and theatres, and your crazy waffling between extravagance and zeal,” Gregory says, and continues on to say, “playing various parts we carry out our rivalry. We become bad judges of character and witless

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<sup>356</sup> *Or.* 42.18.

<sup>357</sup> *Or.* 42.18.

leaders of human affairs.”<sup>358</sup> Even more importantly than these rather harsh criticisms of the character of the Council, Gregory declares that he does not “on most points agree with the majority, and cannot bear to walk in the same way.”<sup>359</sup>

What explains the apparent gap between the words of *Or.* 42.18 and *Or.* 42.22 is probably Gregory's approach to the issue of the non-proclaimers. If we are correct in seeing the non-proclaimers as the group which Gregory is most concerned to address at the Council, as we concluded from our reading of *Or.* 42.1, then Gregory's ambivalence about the Council may well come from the same source as his ambivalence about Basil's pneumatology. We saw in our exploration of Basil as a non-proclaimer that, for Gregory, there is no sense in which Basil can be construed as anything but a Spirit-guided Christian leader. Yet, Gregory remains deeply concerned about Basil's silence on the divinity of the Spirit. Gregory appears to treat the Council of Constantinople much the same way. Such an approach to the council is consistent with Gregory's concerns about the non-proclaimers, and thus suggests that some failure to declare the Spirit's divinity is on Gregory's mind when talking about Constantinople. Indeed, this is Hanson's assessment of Gregory's attitude towards the Council's proceedings on the Spirit.<sup>360</sup>

What, then, is Gregory's response to the non-proclaimers at the Council? To understand this, we must keep in mind that in *Or.* 42.14 Gregory divides his audience into just two groups: those who believe the truth but do not declare it, and those who both believe and declare the truth. We must then recall that Gregory's summary of his Trinitarian doctrine, the subtext of which, we have seen, is pneumatological, serves as an integral part of his final declaration to the council.

Gregory's goal in *Oration* 42, therefore, is probably to set an example for those who believe in but are unwilling to declare the divinity of the Spirit. What Gregory is probably trying to communicate is (1) that he absolutely stands among those who proclaim the divinity of the Spirit, but also (2) he stands just as squarely among the bishops at the council on the fundamental questions of

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358 *Or.* 42.22.

359 *Or.* 42.22. Trans. Browne and Swallow.

360 Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, p. 819.

doctrine, despite his frustration over what appears to have been their refusal to declare the Spirit's divinity, and finally (3) that he and his theology are the natural extension of Nicaea such that the pro-Nicene bishops of the Council ought to gravitate towards Gregory's pneumatology.

Similar concerns about the Council, and a similar response to those concerns on Gregory's part are also evident in his fullest account of the Council, found in his autobiographical poem, *De Vita Sua*. Gregory's focused discussion of the Council extends across 400 lines in the poem, one of the largest sections in this, Gregory's largest poetical work. Gregory's account of events there is basically chronological, though the real focus of this portion of *De Vita Sua* is not the narrative, but rather Gregory's own impressions of the Council. The Holy Spirit is rarely mentioned anywhere in *De Vita Sua*, but the issue of the Council of Constantinople declaring pneumatological doctrine, though rarely addressed explicitly, appears just under the surface of the text in much the way it does in *Oration 42*.

Gregory brings up the Holy Spirit in the context of the Council at the start of his account in his expansive discussion of the Council's first president, Meletius of Antioch.

Their president [Meletius] was a most pious man / with a simple, guileless manner, filled with God; / a man of serene countenance, striking those who saw him / with his blend of confidence and modesty, a field of the Spirit [1 Cor 3:9], / Who has failed to recognize this man whom my account reveals, / the leader of the church at Antioch / who was what he was called and was called / what he was? For 'of honey' was his name and nature. / Many things did he endure for the sake of the Spirit of God (πνεύματος Θείου) / (even if he was somewhat deceived at the hands of strangers), / washing away his error (πλάνη) by means of splendid struggles.<sup>361</sup>

Gregory begins his praise of Meletius by referring to him as “pious” and then alluding to the language of 1 Cor. 3:9 to call him a “field of the Spirit.” With this

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361 DVS 1514-1524. Trans. adapted from White.

language, Gregory is constructing Meletius as a Spirit-guided Christian leader, opposing him to “impiety” and directly linking him to the Spirit by calling him a “field of the Spirit.” Gregory then says that Meletius endured a great deal “for the sake of the Spirit of God.” It is not entirely clear what Gregory means by the phrase. But what is clear from Gregory's comment about Meletius suffering for the sake of the Spirit is that Gregory is casting the presidency of Meletius here in a positive light, doing so by making two clear references to the Spirit. If Gregory has pneumatological opponents at Constantinople, in *De Vita Sua* we are not meant to see Meletius as one of them.<sup>362</sup>

But Gregory does mention that Meletius was “deceived” by some “strangers” in this passage. Gregory is once again not clear about whom he has in mind, but by suggesting the presence of a group of deceivers at the Council, Gregory reveals that, in his eyes, while the first president of the Council may have been a “field of the Spirit,” not everyone there was such a shining example.

Gregory's second reference to the Spirit in his discussion of the Council in *De Vita Sua* confirms that many of the bishops at the Council were, in Gregory's eyes, much less to be admired than Meletius, though he considers all to be Spirit-guided leaders. Setting up the backdrop for the conflicts at the council which he is about to discuss, Gregory disdainfully describes the bishops there with reference to the Spirit.

For the leaders and teachers of the people, / the bestowers (δοτήρ)  
of the Spirit, from whose high thrones / the word of salvation is  
poured forth, / they who always proclaim (κηρύσσω) peace to all /  
in ringing voices from the midst of their churches, / these men  
were raging against each other with great bitterness.<sup>363</sup>

Here, Gregory describes the bishops at Constantinople in much the way that he did in *Or.* 42.1 by calling them “bestowers of the Spirit.” As such, as he did in *Or.* 42.1, Gregory here indicates to his readers that the bishops of the Council are indeed Spirit-guided Christian leaders. Given our discussions in the last chapter

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362 This is unsurprising given that, as Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, p. 35 notes, “Meletius and his followers confessed the Spirit to be one in being with the Father and the Son around 370.”

363 *DVS* 1546-1551. Trans. White.

about Gregory's approach to the pneumatomachians, this means that, according to *De Vita Sua*, any doctrinal problems present at the Council can only include those into which, from Gregory's point of view, Spirit-guided Christian leaders can fall.

Gregory eventually comes to a non-specific discussion of the particular doctrinal failings of the Council which would ultimately contribute to his resignation. Without ever making the content of these doctrinal issues explicit, Gregory nonetheless drops enough hints to see that he is again speaking of the pneumatological problems which he discusses somewhat more openly in *Oration* 42. Gregory says of the doctrinal disputes at the council that “the official line (κήρυγμα), being moderate (ἐν μέσῳ), seemed pious (εὐσεβής)/ despite being an offspring completely unlike its parent,”<sup>364</sup> and then goes on to say that “rather will streams change their nature and flow upwards / and fire move in the opposite direction / before I betray any part of my salvation (σωτηρία).”<sup>365</sup> The two comments should be read in light of one another. In the first, Gregory is very probably referring to the creed formulated at Constantinople, just as Kelly concludes he is doing.<sup>366</sup> If this assessment is correct, then what Gregory is probably saying in *De Vita Sua* 1754-5 is that while the creed of Constantinople seems to be a good compromise on pneumatological questions, meeting the standard of “piety,” it is not, from his point of view, acceptable at all.<sup>367</sup> Moreover, it in some sense compromises salvation, he thinks. Yet, we have established that Gregory's concerns as expressed in *De Vita Sua* are not consistent with his approach to the pneumatomachians, who disbelieve in the divinity of the Spirit. Thus we cannot read Gregory as arguing that the creed of Constantinople contains the kind of active denials of the Spirit's divinity which the pneumatomachians professed, and indeed it does not.<sup>368</sup> As such, we are left to read Gregory's concerns in light of the non-proclaimers. Gregory is concerned about what the creed of Constantinople fails to say, not what it says, about the Spirit. For Gregory, the nature of the shortcomings of the “official line” at

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364 *DVS* 1754-5. Trans. White.

365 *DVS* 1774-6. Trans. White.

366 Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, pp. 327-328.

367 Gautier, *La retraite et le sacerdoce*, pp. 391-393 also concludes from these and other passages in *De Vita Sua* that the creed was unacceptable to Gregory.

368 See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, p. 181.

Constantinople compromise salvation. This should lead us to wonder why Gregory feels that a creed which simply fails to proclaim something about the Spirit's divinity explicitly, while not containing actively incorrect statements about the Trinity, might actually compromise salvation for Christians, a question we will take up in the next chapter.

It may be asked why Gregory would not, in *De Vita Sua*, be more explicit in addressing the non-proclaimers. It is impossible to be certain as to why any author might remain silent on a given topic, but at least two important issues are worth noting on this question. Bernardi presents Gregory as trapped between two undesirable options when it comes to the Council's pneumatology. Gregory had either to consent to an insufficient formula or to alienate his friends. It was better for Gregory, Bernardi argues, to talk around the issue a bit rather than cause a stir.<sup>369</sup> At least two other possibilities exist, however. First, Gregory may simply assume that his readers will be familiar with the issues debated at Constantinople, and as such he may see no need to talk about the actual contents of the debates in any detail. The Council, after all, was a very recent piece of history at the time when Gregory composed *De Vita Sua*. If Gregory's statements appear somewhat vague from the point of view of the modern historian, this may not have been the case for his contemporary readers. Second, and perhaps more likely, some of the internal evidence which we have already examined suggests that Gregory may not have wanted to go too far in challenging the council or its creed because he genuinely thought the council to have been attended by Spirit-guided Christian bishops, wrong as he thought they were in failing to declare the Spirit's divinity. Regardless of his reasons, Gregory chose to take on the Council in his writings, but in subtle ways. Still, careful reading reveals that Gregory expresses serious reservations about the Council of Constantinople, reservations which closely parallel those he expresses more explicitly to Basil. From Gregory's point of view, it would appear, the Council failed to proclaim the divinity of the Spirit sufficiently.

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369 Bernardi, *Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, p. 227.

## Conclusions

Gregory's account of the Council of Constantinople in *De Vita Sua* reveals very similar concerns on his part to those which he expressed about Basil's pneumatology in *Ep.* 58, and *Or.* 43 as well as the Council's pneumatology in *Oration* 42. When it comes to the non-proclaimers, Gregory is concerned that their position may compromise Christian *theosis*, baptism and salvation not by actively denying the Spirit's divinity, but by refusing to proclaim that divinity openly. Before asking why he thinks that such an omission is so important, we should summarize what we have been able to conclude from this chapter. First, we have identified at least two concrete entities, Basil of Caesarea and the Council of Constantinople 381, with whom Gregory saw himself to be in disagreement over the question of preaching the Spirit's divinity. In the case of Basil, Gregory's disagreement is presented fairly explicitly in his writings, while in the case of the Council we have assembled an extensive circumstantial case for seeing Gregory as concerned that the Council has failed to proclaim the Spirit. Second, we have seen that Gregory's concerns in the face of the non-proclaimers do not involve their status as Spirit-guided leaders. In this sense, the non-proclaimers are not at all the same as the pneumatomachians for Gregory, and are instead, in every case we have seen, constructed by him as Spirit-guided leaders just like Gregory himself. Third, the error of the non-proclaimers does or can compromise Christian salvation in some way from Gregory's point of view.

In the next chapter, we will explore two texts, *Oration* 31, which we will revisit, and especially *Oration* 41, in which Gregory presents responses to the non-proclaimers. From these, we will be able to see with more clarity why Gregory was so concerned with their position. We will also pay special attention to Gregory's interactions with the non-proclaimers in our Conclusion, which will follow the next chapter. This is because Gregory's disputes with the non-proclaimers constitute a neglected, but historically important Fourth Century Christian theological conflict in their own right.

## *Chapter 6*

### *Gregory Answers the Non-Proclaimers:*

#### **Oration 31 Re-examined; Oration 41**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter we will explore two of Gregory's orations, paying close attention to the responses which he provides to the non-proclaimers in them. These are *Oration 31*, which we will revisit here, and *Oration 41*, a text which deals primarily with the problem of the non-proclaimers. Our discussion of *Oration 31* will differ from that presented in Chapter 4 in that here we will focus on a few sections of the oration in which Gregory addresses the problem of the non-proclaimers, whereas in Chapter 4 we examined the greater part of the oration, in which Gregory deals primarily with the pneumatomachians. Our examination of *Oration 31* in this chapter will make two basic points about the text as it relates to the non-proclaimers. First, Gregory is concerned to address some of the objections of the non-proclaimers. In particular, Gregory is concerned in the oration to dismiss the possibility that the fact that scripture does not say “the Spirit is God” could be construed as a defence of the position of the non-proclaimers. Second, we will observe that *Oration 31* shows that Gregory's concerns about the non-proclaimers are centred on his ecclesiology. Gregory believes that it is the duty of the Church to reveal the Spirit's divinity to all Christians, and that the time has come to do so openly, by proclaiming that “the Spirit is God.”

### ***Oration 31 Revisited***

As much as the pneumatomachians are Gregory's primary interlocutors in *Oration 31*, they are not the only group to which Gregory wants to respond. Indeed, as we mentioned in Chapter 4, Gregory is concerned with Eunomian

theology in Oration 31 as well. But there is yet one more group to which Gregory responds at least on occasion in Oration 31, namely the non-proclaimers.

As we observed in Chapter 4, Oration 31 begins with an introduction wherein Gregory identifies the key argument against his pneumatology to which he intends to respond in the oration.<sup>370</sup> This is the objection that scripture does not say that “the Spirit is God.” We also saw that Gregory identifies the “impious” pneumatomachians as the key group to whom he is responding in the oration. But Gregory makes clear from the very beginning of Oration 31 that, while the pneumatomachians are in the front of his mind, the opponents who are complaining about the silence of scripture are by no means monolithic.

“But what do you say,” they ask, “about the Holy Spirit? Where did you get this strange, unscriptural 'God' you are bringing in?” This is the view of people fairly sound so far as the Son is concerned. You find roads and rivers will divide and join up again, and the same thing occurs here because there is such a wealth of impiety (ἀσεβεία). People elsewhere divided concur on some points and the result is that it is impossible to get a clear idea of where they agree, and where they disagree.<sup>371</sup>

In Or. 31.1, Gregory explicitly states that the objection to his belief that “the Spirit is God” on the grounds of the silence of scripture comes from a diverse group of opponents. We will see in a moment that the non-proclaimers are clearly among the groups to whom Gregory intends to respond on the question of the silence of scripture.

As we saw in Chapter 4 Gregory's next step, in Or. 31.3, is to present his belief that “the Spirit is God” in the boldest possible terms. To do so, Gregory presents an explicit declaration of the Spirit's divinity, followed by a declaration of his own refusal to remain silent on the topic. While this bold assertion of the Spirit's divinity is certainly designed as part of Gregory's response to the pneumatomachians as we saw in Chapter 4, it is important to look again at Or. 31.3, as it also contains material related to the problem of the non-proclaimers.

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<sup>370</sup> See pp. 124-138.

<sup>371</sup> Or. 31.1. Trans. adapted from Wickham.

Let the rejecter reject! Let the detractor detract! As for us, what we have come to know – we will preach it indeed. We will ourselves ascend upon the high mountain, and we will shout aloud, if we are not being listened to on the ground. We will exult the Spirit, we will not be made to fear. Indeed, if we are ever made afraid, it will be when we are silent (ἡσυχάζω), not when we are preaching (κηρύσσω).<sup>372</sup>

In this passage from Or. 31.3, Gregory talks explicitly about the problem of silence with regard to proclaiming the Spirit's divinity. Part of Gregory's reason for emphasizing his preaching of the Spirit's divinity is probably to gain a rhetorical edge over the pneumatomachians by implying that he has no doubt whatsoever that his own theological position on the Spirit is correct. But it is also possible that Gregory has the non-proclaimers in mind as well when declaring his fear of silence in Or. 31.3. If so, then Gregory's response to the non-proclaimers at this juncture seems to be simply to lead by example, and declare his belief in the Spirit's divinity openly.

If there should be some doubt that Gregory's words in Or. 31.3 can be read to be directed at least in part at the non-proclaimers, it can be almost completely dismissed by the time we reach Or. 31.5. Here Gregory goes through a brief summary of a number of pneumatological positions with which he disagrees – a fairly simple exercise in identifying his opponents on the topic of the Spirit. As the list proceeds, Gregory first dismisses some non-Christian opponents, including the Sadducees and the Greek philosophers, neither of which group will prove important in the remainder of the oration. He then turns to his fellow Christians, the group that he really intends to address in the sermon, breaking them down into three basic groups.

In terms of our own scholars (σοφός), one group understands [the Spirit] to be an energy (ἐνέργεια), another group to be a created being (κτίσμα), and another understands it to be God (θεός), while still others do not claim to know either way, for the sake of respecting scripture, they say, since scripture does not explicitly

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<sup>372</sup> Or. 31.3.

clarify (σαφῶς δηλωσάσης) the point one way or the other. And because of this, they do not revere [the Spirit], nor dishonour it. In a sense, they sit on the fence regarding the subject, or maybe it is better to say they sit quite miserably on the fence. Now, some of those who understand [the Spirit] to be God are pious only in mind, while others venture to be pious (εὐσεβέω) also with their lips.<sup>373</sup>

Or. 31.5 ultimately identifies four groups of Christian thinkers based on their attitudes towards the Spirit, and subdivides one of these groups, those who believe that the Spirit is God, into two categories based on whether they are willing to express their belief openly. The group unwilling to express their belief in the Spirit's divinity is, without question, the non-proclaimers.<sup>374</sup> Gregory's major focus in Oration 31 is to respond to those Christians who do not even believe that the Spirit is God. However, his explicit identification of the non-proclaimers here makes it obvious that he does have them in mind, at least in part, while crafting his sermon.<sup>375</sup>

It is in addressing what he has identified to be the primary objection levelled against him in the oration, the silence of scripture, that Gregory will develop his response to the problem of the non-proclaimers. When Gregory comes to the question of scripture, late in the oration, it is quickly evident that he is fighting a battle on two fronts with his arguments. The first group which Gregory needs to dismiss on the question of the silence of scripture comprises those theologians who use this silence as a reason to reject any belief in the Spirit's divinity. These are mainly the pneumatomachians, and we have explored Gregory's responses to the problem of scripture as it pertains to them in Chapter 4. The second group which Gregory wants to set aside in his treatment of the silence

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<sup>373</sup> Or. 31.5.

<sup>374</sup> Noble, "Gregory Nazianzen's use of Scripture," p. 105 also makes notes that the problem of the silence of scripture is aimed at those who believe but do not declare the Spirit's divinity.

<sup>375</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, p. 189 argues that in Or. 31.5 Gregory is thinking of Basil and the Council of Constantinople, whom we identified in the last chapter as among the non-proclaimers from Gregory's point of view. However, Norris does not proceed to any further analysis of the importance of this group in Gregory's construction of the oration, or in his thought more generally.

of scripture are the non-proclaimers. The clearest passage in which Gregory's double project can be seen is Or. 31.24. Gregory's immediate point in the passage is to argue that it is the meaning of the words of scripture, not the particular choice of vocabulary, which is important for understanding the bible.

Supposing from your mentioning a “rational, mortal animal” I draw the conclusion a “man,” would you allege I was talking rubbish? How could I be? I am saying what you said. The words belong just as much to the man who gives the logical grounds for using them as their actual user. In the examples I have just given I should be considering meanings rather than words, and so, in the same way, if I hit upon something meant, though not mentioned, or not stated in clear terms by scripture, I should not be put off by your quibbling charge about names – I should give expression (ἐκφώνησις) to the meaning. This is how we shall make our stand against people whose views are only half right!<sup>376</sup>

Gregory's emphasis on “giving expression (ἐκφώνησις)” to the meaning of the words of scripture can serve as a dismissal not just of those who do not “express” the Spirit's divinity because they do not believe it, but also of those who may believe that “the Spirit is God” but not say so. The underlying argument to which Gregory's words here respond is that Gregory should not be attributing terms to the Spirit which are not directly used by scripture. In the context of the oration as a whole, of course, the particular issue is whether Gregory can appropriately call the Spirit “God.” All of Gregory's opponents, including the non-proclaimers, are cast here as arguing that he should not do so because scripture does not do so. As such, Gregory's opponents are presenting an argument which is primarily about outward declarations regarding the Spirit, rather than about the problem of whether the Spirit really is God after all. Gregory's response is not only to demonstrate that scripture can imply that the Spirit is God without saying it, but to take one more step forward in arguing that such implied meaning must actually be “given expression (ἐκφώνησις).”

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<sup>376</sup> Or. 31.24. Trans. Wickham.

Gregory's arguments about scripture are therefore focused on an implicit objection directed not just at his theology, but at his obvious willingness to preach the Spirit's divinity openly, and are thus best read as a way of addressing both a group of pneumatomachians and the non-proclaimers. Nowhere is this more true than in Gregory's next argument in the oration, which, in Chapter 4 we identified as his most famous contribution to Christian pneumatology: the concept of the stages of revelation progressing from Father to Son to Holy Spirit. Gregory's reason for going into his discussion of the progressive stages of revelation is, he indicates, for the purposes of showing why scripture does not openly state that the Spirit is God.<sup>377</sup> As such, his entire presentation of the stages of revelation is designed to augment his argument against those who see the silence of scripture as reason not to believe or not to express the Spirit's divinity. Gregory's explanation for the silence of scripture is fairly simple. God revealed the truth about the Spirit gradually, Gregory says, so that “we would not be forced (βιάζω), but rather persuaded (πείθω)” to see the truth.<sup>378</sup> Gregory summarizes the matter saying that it was not safe “without the Son being accepted, for the Holy Spirit to be piled on like an extra weight, if I can be so bold as to say it that way.”<sup>379</sup>

Perhaps more than any other argument in Oration 31, Gregory seems to think that his discussion of the stages of revelation has serious implications for his non-proclaimer opponents. Gregory makes this clear as he summarizes his point of view.

Look at the light, illumining us progressively. Now look at the proper procedure (τάξις) for talking about God (θεολογία), a procedure which we also are better off to observe (τηρέω), not saying everything out loud (ἐκφράινω) all at once, but not hiding anything to the very end either. The first course of action would be unskilled, the second would be Godless – yes, the first course could break those around us, but the second might estrange our own people.<sup>380</sup>

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377 *Or.* 31.24.

378 *Or.* 31.25.

379 *Or.* 31.26.

380 *Or.* 31.27.

Gregory's argument here is that the Church must teach according to the trajectory laid out by God in the stages of revelation leading to the recognition of the Holy Spirit's divinity. He indicates this when he says that there is an order in doctrine which "we had better observe." Gregory's use of the first person plural pronoun may be meant as a reference to himself only (Gregory commonly uses the plural in this way) or it may refer to Gregory and other Christian leaders together, or to Gregory and his entire community. Regardless, Gregory is saying at least that Christian teachers like him must themselves follow the order of theology set forth by God. Gregory then indicates that to follow this order means to reveal the truth gradually, but also to be certain to reveal the truth eventually rather than keep it hidden forever.

Given Gregory's frequent assertions of the divinity of the Spirit in *Oration* 31, it is obvious that, for Gregory, the time to declare the Spirit's divinity has come. This portion of Gregory's argument for the stages of revelation is therefore a serious critique of the position of any non-proclaimers who might argue that their own silence is justified by the silence of scripture. The underlying reason for scripture's silence, Gregory indicates, is actually to achieve a more effective revelation of the Spirit's divinity by not revealing too much too soon. The purpose of the silence of scripture is absolutely not, for Gregory, to conceal the Spirit's divinity forever – indeed, the complete opposite is true. Gregory's response to the non-proclaimers in the oration is, like his response to the pneumatomachians, built on his understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church. For Gregory, Church leaders like him must follow the "order of theology" which God uses, and this, he believes, means revealing the Spirit's divinity at some point.

Gregory will make a final argument which has implications for the non-proclaimers as he closes his discussion of the problem of the silence of scripture. He does so by asserting that the apostles taught the same thing about the Spirit as he does.

Now, those [the Apostles] speaking and teaching these things, and moreover, calling [the Spirit] "another comforter," that is, another God – those who know that blasphemy against [the Spirit] is the

only unforgivable thing [Matt 12:31-32] – the ones who so frighteningly inveighed against Ananias and Sapphira as “liars to God, not man” [Acts 5:1-11] when they lied to the Holy Spirit – which of the following do you think people like this are preaching? That the Spirit is God, or something else? <sup>381</sup>

We have already examined Gregory's statement in Or. 31.30 as it pertains to the pneumatomachians.<sup>382</sup> But it is important to see that the passage also has implications for the non-proclaimers. This is because Gregory once again does not stop at the question of belief when arguing that the Apostles taught the same doctrine as he [Gregory] does – he asserts that the Apostles actually “preached” the Spirit's divinity. When examined from a purely logical point of view, this argument is actually incompatible with Gregory's admission that scripture does not openly proclaim the divinity of the Spirit. This is to say that Gregory has already granted to his opponents the fact that none of the authors of scripture, including the Apostles, actually declared as he does that “the Spirit is God” in these exact terms. And yet, here, Gregory argues that the Apostles not only believed but “preached” that “the Holy Spirit is God.” Gregory's words must be read as either a breakdown in his own logic, or as a rhetorical move very similar to that which Gregory used to exonerate Basil's view of the Spirit in his funeral oration for his friend. As we saw in the previous chapter, Gregory argues in the funeral oration that while Basil did not use the words “the Spirit is God,” he did in fact teach that truth using different terminology.<sup>383</sup> Here in Or. 31.27, Gregory appears to be arguing the same thing with regard to the Apostles. While he has already admitted that they do not use the words “the Spirit is God,” Gregory is positing that they preached as much in various other ways.

The fact that Gregory frames the Apostles as preachers of the Spirit's divinity here has perhaps even more implications for the non-proclaimers than it does for the pneumatomachians. If the Apostles were actually “preaching” that the Spirit is God, from Gregory's point of view, any argument that such a

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381 *Or.* 31.30.

382 See p. 160.

383 See p. 171.

declaration should not be openly made on the grounds that scripture does not state it explicitly falls apart utterly. In this sense, Gregory's statements here parallel almost completely his argument about the order of theology which the Church must observe, which we discussed a moment ago.

In sum, in his analysis of the silence of scripture in *Oration 31*, Gregory addresses his non-proclaimer opponents by arguing, first, that it is the meaning of words, rather than their outward form, which is important in understanding scripture; then, by showing that the purpose of scripture's silence is actually to affirm more effectively the divinity of the Spirit; next, by stating that the Church must follow God's "order of theology" by eventually proclaiming the Spirit's divinity; and finally, by claiming that the Apostles themselves preached the divinity of the Spirit according to this order, albeit in different terms. Thus, Gregory's response to the non-proclaimers in *Oration 31* indicates that Gregory's key concern with regard to the non-proclaimers centres on his understanding of the role of the Church in revealing the Spirit's divinity. It does so by focusing on the need of the Church to follow God's "order of theology" and by presenting the Apostles as a supposed precedent for preaching that "the Spirit is God." But Gregory does not say very much in *Oration 31* about why he is concerned, on ecclesiastical grounds, about those who do not openly proclaim the divinity of the Spirit. To see the reason more clearly we must examine *Oration 41*, Gregory's second longest discussion of the Holy Spirit, and one which, insofar as it deals with doctrinal concerns, centres almost entirely on the problem which Gregory sees with the position of the non-proclaimers.

#### ***Oration 41***

*Oration 41* constitutes the most important treatment of the non-proclaimers in the Gregorian corpus. The relatively short oration was apparently

delivered on Pentecost,<sup>384</sup> and serves as an analysis of the meaning of the feast. It is therefore unsurprising that a discussion of the Holy Spirit comprises the bulk of the oration.

In this section we will first observe Gregory's direct responses to the non-proclaimers. We will examine how Gregory frames his concerns regarding the non-proclaimers, as well as his proposed solution to the problems which they present. Second, we will examine Gregory's discussions of the meaning of Pentecost with an eye to understanding the connection which exists in his mind between the non-proclaimers and the feast. Here, we will see that, for Gregory, Pentecost seems to mark the beginning of a new kind of relationship between the Spirit and the Church after which the proclamation for the Spirit's divinity becomes imperative.

#### *The Problem of the Non-Proclaimers*

After an introduction to his sermon which we will discuss below, Gregory begins *Oration* 41 with a discussion of several concerns he has about the approach of particular groups to the doctrine of the Spirit, especially with regard to the divinity of the Spirit.

Those who categorize the Holy Spirit among created beings are people out of control (ὕβριστής), awful servants indeed – really the worst of the worst. For it is a trait of bad servants to ignore authority and to rise up against lordship and to turn a free man into a slave along with themselves. But those who consider (νομίζω) [the Spirit] to be God have God within them (ἐνθεοί) and are

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384 There is some debate about the year in which *Or.* 41 was delivered. See Haykin, *The Spirit of God*, pp. 202-204 for a summary. Haykin dates the oration to 379, where others have placed it in 381. Haykin's argument for dating the oration to 379 is predicated on the assumption that Gregory is addressing the pneumatomachians in the sermon. Haykin argues that in *Or.* 41 Gregory presents a milder approach to the pneumatomachians than he does in *Or.* 31, for example, and thus *Or.* 41 must be dated prior to *Or.* 31, known to have been delivered in 381. However, Gregory is not primarily addressing the pneumatomachians in *Or.* 41, as this section will show, and thus Haykin's argumentation need not be accepted, though his proposed date may still be correct.

radiant (λαμπρός) in intellect. And those who *say it* (ὀνομάζω), if to people of sound mind, are elevated even higher.<sup>385</sup>

In *Or.* 41.6, Gregory identifies three groups of Christians in terms of their approach to the Holy Spirit. The first are those who do not consider the Spirit to be God. The second are those who do believe in the Spirit's divinity, but apparently do not declare it openly. The third are those who believe and declare the Spirit to be God. While Gregory wholly dismisses the position of the first group, calling them the “worst of the worst,” the second two groups of Christians are placed within a kind of spiritual hierarchy. Gregory grants that those who believe the Spirit to be God have the Spirit in them, but he asserts an even higher status for those who actually *say* that the Spirit is God.

There is no question that those who believe but do not declare that the Spirit is God are members of the group which we have termed “non-proclaimers.” What the passage shows, then, is that Gregory does indeed consider the non-proclaimers to have a real relationship with the Holy Spirit – they are not presented here as different in kind from people like Gregory who declare the Spirit's divinity. Yet, those who do proclaim that the Spirit is God are a level above the non-proclaimers. As we observed in the previous chapter, for Gregory the non-proclaimers are Spirit-guided leaders indeed, yet they are leaders who fall short, from his point of view.

But in what way, according to *Oration* 41, do the non-proclaimers fall short, exactly? In *Or.* 41.7, Gregory gives some indication of why he thinks the position of the non-proclaimers is unacceptable.

For it is shameful (αἰσχρός) – shameful and totally irrational (ἄλογος) to nit-pick about phonology (ῥῆχος) when your soul is actually in good health, and to hide your treasure (θησαυρός) as though grudging it to others, or maybe fearing that you might actually make your tongue holy in addition to your soul.<sup>386</sup>

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385 *Or.* 41.6.

386 *Or.* 41.7.

Here, Gregory says that it does not make sense for people who, like the non-proclaimers, actually believe the truth about the Spirit to refuse to proclaim that truth. Gregory says that doing so amounts to “hiding the treasure” from other Christians, and “grudging it to others.” These two short phrases reveal much about how Gregory understands the problem of the non-proclaimers. The term “treasure” here can only be read to refer to some kind of spiritual benefit, though Gregory does not say much about its nature. Still, for Gregory, the non-proclaimers, by not declaring the divinity of the Spirit, are in some sense failing to share this “treasure” with other Christians. Gregory makes this clear by mentioning that the non-proclaimers are “grudging [their treasure] to others.” For Gregory, the non-proclaimers fall short in not providing spiritual benefit to those around them. They do not, themselves, lack such spiritual “treasure;” rather, they fail to share it. In this sense, the problem which Gregory seems to have with the non-proclaimers here mirrors one of the questions which we saw, in Chapter 3, that Gregory faces regarding his own public ministry in the Church. While Gregory sees private illumination in the Spirit as the life he desires, he also sees himself as compelled by the Spirit to publish this illumination, and fears the possibility of failing to do so. It is a similar type of failure to make public their “treasure” which marks the essential shortcoming of the non-proclaimers from Gregory's point of view.

Yet, we should not conclude that, for Gregory, the non-proclaimers do not also lack something in themselves by not confessing and proclaiming the Spirit's divinity. In the above quotation, Gregory teases that the non-proclaimers might be afraid to make their tongue holy along with their soul. This implies that, for Gregory, something is indeed lacking for the non-proclaimers themselves, and Gregory makes this clear as the oration continues. In *Or.* 41.8, Gregory invites the non-proclaimers to receive the Spirit by confessing its divinity.

I will say this about you in whom I see a bit of vitality, who are in good condition regarding the Son. While I am impressed by your life, I do not accept your doctrine (λόγος) completely. You already have the things of the Spirit – now receive the Spirit as well so that you may not just compete, but compete according to the rules,

from which competition comes the victor's crown. May this be given to you as the wages of good citizenship: to confess (ὁμολογέω) the Spirit completely (τέλειος) and to proclaim (κηρύσσω) with us and in front of us its glory.<sup>387</sup>

Gregory implies, in the passage, that the non-proclaimers are in some sense lacking the Spirit if they do not confess and proclaim the Spirit completely. This may appear at first to be in fairly sharp contrast with the other passages which we have explored from *Oration 41*, in which Gregory emphasizes the fact that, from his point of view, the non-proclaimers really do have the “things of the Spirit.” Yet, Gregory's unsystematic approach to the question of the relationship of the non-proclaimers with the Spirit may be reflective of his understanding of the importance of confession for the efficacy of baptism and *theosis*. If, for Gregory, a right confession of the whole Trinity, including the Spirit, is non-negotiable for baptism and *theosis*, then perhaps Gregory is here concerned to point out that the non-proclaimers have come nearly the full distance to a life of *theosis*, and now lack only the act of confession to bring them the rest of the way. If so, then, for Gregory, the non-proclaimers do indeed take up a difficult position in which the “things of the Spirit” are in one sense present in them, and yet, at the same time, they have not entirely received the Spirit either. Regardless of its explanation, however, there clearly exists a tension in Gregory's mind when approaching the non-proclaimers in *Oration 41*. They are at once in possession of the “things of the Spirit” and at the same time fall short.

According to *Oration 41*, then, Gregory sees two key problems with the non-proclaimers. Insofar as Gregory believes that the non-proclaimers do possess the “things of the Spirit,” Gregory is concerned that by failing to declare the Spirit's divinity, they also fail to share their “treasure” with other Christians. But just as much, Gregory sees the non-proclaimers' failure to confess the Spirit as an impediment to their own complete reception of the Spirit itself. A failure to proclaim the Spirit's divinity, for Gregory, has serious ramifications both for the individual non-proclaimer, and for others in the Church.

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<sup>387</sup> *Or.* 41.8.

*Solving the Problem of the Non-Proclaimers*

In *Or.* 41.7, Gregory provides one of the most important responses to the non-proclaimers found anywhere in his writings. He begins by marking them as distinct from the pneumatomachians in a way which he believes opens the door to a friendly discourse between himself and the non-proclaimers.

If, though, you are healthy enough to flee from obvious impiety (ἀσεβεία) and to set outside of slavery (δουλεία) the one who actually makes you free, then examine what I will say next along with, not apart from, me and the Spirit. For I am convinced that you do participate (μετέχω) in [the Spirit] in some sense, and thus I will investigate matters along with you, like family.<sup>388</sup>

The “obvious impiety” to which Gregory is referring in the above passage is the idea that the Spirit is not divine, here identified again as a belief which makes the Spirit into a “slave.” Gregory identifies this explicitly as the “impiety” to which he is referring in the lines preceding the quotation above. Thus, in this section of *Or.* 41.7, Gregory makes clear to his audience that he does not consider the non-proclaimers to be engaged in the “impiety” of the pneumatomachians. Indeed, Gregory calls the non-proclaimers “participators” in the Spirit here. We saw Gregory use the same term of Saul's relationship to the Holy Spirit in Chapter 1.<sup>389</sup> As we saw there, for Gregory the word indicates a very close relationship to the Holy Spirit which produces a greater whole, a “spiritual person” in the case of Saul. Thus, Gregory is again casting his non-proclaimer opponents as having a real, indeed a very close, relationship with the Spirit. But Gregory limits their relationship with the Spirit, at least a little, applying the phrase “in some sense” to modify the word “participate.”

Gregory's goal in the remainder of *Or.* 41.7 will be to persuade the non-proclaimers to join him in openly declaring the divinity of the Spirit.

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<sup>388</sup> *Or.* 41.7.

<sup>389</sup> See pp. 83-85.

Either show me the middle-ground between slavery and authority, so that I can put the glory of the Spirit there, or else, if you do not accept the term slavery [in relation to the Spirit], is it not obvious to which category you are ascribing the one whom you seek? But you cannot accept the syllables (συλλαβή); you trip over the sound of the word (φωνή) and it becomes a stumbling block for you and a trap-stone, as, indeed, Christ is to some. [1 Cor 1:23]<sup>390</sup>

In this section of *Or.* 41.7, Gregory seeks to emphasize the theological continuity which he sees between his own position and that of the non-proclaimers. If the non-proclaimers do not believe that the Spirit is a “slave,” and, as he established just a few lines before, do not believe the Holy Spirit to be a creature, then, Gregory implies, they must believe that the Spirit is God. Again, Gregory states that the difference between himself and the non-proclaimers is that the non-proclaimers “trip over the sound of the word.” The word which Gregory is referring to here can only be taken to mean the word “God” as applied to the Spirit. Gregory will make this clear as he continues in *Or.* 41.7.

Let us come together spiritually (πνευματικός) – let us cultivate brotherly love rather than narcissism. Grant the power of the Divinity, and I will give you the power to accept the sound of the word (φωνή). Confess (ὁμολογέω) the nature in other terms (φωνή) which you respect more, and, as sick people, I will cure you.<sup>391</sup>

In this section of *Or.* 41.7, Gregory reaches out to the non-proclaimers in friendly terms which, nonetheless, do not acknowledge the position of the non-proclaimers as acceptable. Gregory focuses on developing a “spiritual” connection between himself and the non-proclaimers, one marked by “brotherly love.” For Gregory, the first step towards a solution to the problem of the non-proclaimers according to *Oration* 41 is to place himself and the non-proclaimers in a community with one another such that Gregory can correct their errors. After establishing the need

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390 *Or.* 41.7.

391 *Or.* 41.7.

to be in a community with the non-proclaimers in order to correct them, Gregory focuses in *Or.* 41.7 on his own role as a pastor. He encourages the non-proclaimers to allow him to “give” them the use of the word “God” in reference to the Spirit, and to let him “heal” them in this capacity. His focus is on the idea of “confession.” If, for Gregory, he and the non-proclaimers enter a relationship of brotherly love, he is confident that he will be able to correct their confession of the Spirit.

But Gregory does not do this work alone. Instead it is the Holy Spirit, according to *Or.* 41.8, which will ultimately correct the non-proclaimers.

Confess, brothers and sisters, the Trinity in one Divinity, or, if you prefer, in one nature, and I will request of the Spirit that the word (φωνή) “God” (θεός) be given to you. For [the Spirit] will give it, I am certain, having granted you the first and the second point already, and all the more so if this is a spiritual (πνευματικός) worry rather than the devil's opposition that you are fighting for.<sup>392</sup>

Here, Gregory merely makes a request to the Spirit on behalf of the non-proclaimers, and it is the Spirit which grants them the ability to call the Spirit “God.”

Gregory turns, in *Or.* 41.9, to an extended series of declarations, most being allusions to scripture, about the Holy Spirit which emphasize the Spirit's equality and unity with the other Persons of the Trinity. This passage is too long to quote in full. Gregory's strategy in *Or.* 41.9 is similar to that which he used in his concluding remarks to *Oration* 31. He boldly, and with nothing approaching a systematic defence, applies a series of scriptural titles and descriptions to the Holy Spirit which his audience is meant naturally to associate with God. These include declaring the Spirit's eternal existence, work in deification, invisibility, eternity, incomprehensibility, and so on. In essence, the passage is Gregory's way of simply returning to the conclusion for which he has been arguing (that the Spirit is God) in a way which, by virtue of the length and grandeur of Gregory's words, provides the greatest possible rhetorical emphasis.

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<sup>392</sup> *Or.* 41.8.

What is notable for us about *Or.* 41.9, however, is that Gregory actually does *not* explicitly apply the word “God” to the Spirit in the section. This, however, is sensible within the scope of *Oration* 41 when we recall Gregory's words in *Or.* 41.7, quoted above, in which he invited his audience to “confess the Spirit in other words for which you have more reverence,” and then promised that if they should do so, he [Gregory] would “heal” them and the Spirit would ultimately grant them the word “God” as applied to the Spirit. *Or.* 41.9 seems to be an effort on Gregory's part actively to facilitate this process. Choosing scriptural language which he believes shows the Spirit's divinity without using the word “God,” Gregory seeks to bring the non-proclaimers to a full confession of the Spirit's divinity by guiding them to see that this confession is merely the outgrowth of what they already believe about the Holy Spirit anyway.

It is easy to see Gregory's ecclesiology reflected in his approach to the non-proclaimers in *Or.* 41.7-8. In response to the problem he sees with them, Gregory invites the non-proclaimers to enter into a community with him, be guided by him to a correct confession of the Spirit, and ultimately be taught by the Spirit to say that the Spirit is God. For Gregory, it seems, the solution to the problem of the non-proclaimers is the Spirit-guided Church itself. *Or.* 41.9 constitutes an example of Gregory attempting to play his own role in guiding the non-proclaimers to declare the Spirit's divinity. In sum, Gregory's approach to solving the problem of the non-proclaimers is to invite the non-proclaimers into Gregory's and the Spirit's guidance of the Church as we saw him construct it in Part I.

#### *The Non-Proclaimers at Pentecost*

In the above two sub-sections we have explored Gregory's direct responses to the non-proclaimers in *Oration* 41. One more line of enquiry remains with regard to the sermon which sheds light on how Gregory understands the non-proclaimers. We begin with two simple questions. Why does Gregory choose to engage in a discussion of the problem of the non-proclaimers in his sermon on Pentecost? What, if any, connection exists in his mind between this particular feast and the non-proclaimers? In this sub-section we will show that the

connection in Gregory's mind between Pentecost and the non-proclaimers is not arbitrary.

The first point of connection between Pentecost and the non-proclaimers can be seen in Gregory's introduction to the sermon, which comprises *Or.* 41.1-2. Here Gregory indicates to his audience that their purpose in coming together on Pentecost is to “keep festival (έορτάζω)” and he explains what, in his view, this should mean for Christians.

Let us philosophize (φιλοσοφείω) a bit about the festival, so that we may keep festival (έορτάζω) spiritually (πνευματικός). For some people do so with a different kind of gathering (πανήγυρις), but for the servants of the Word (Λόγος), a discourse (λόγος) is the way to go. Indeed the discourse which of all discourses is most appropriate for the present occasion (καιρός).<sup>393</sup>

Central to Gregory's introduction to *Oration* 41 is his use of the term *logos*. Gregory uses it three times here. The first is a clear reference to the second Person of the Trinity, the *Logos*, whom Gregory says he and his congregation worship. The second and third uses of the word *logos* above are more important for our purposes. In both cases, Gregory almost certainly means *logos* in the sense of a discourse or sermon, in fact the very sermon to which the passage above serves as an introduction. What Gregory is therefore saying is that the act of giving a discourse, in this case, *Oration* 41 itself, is a central way in which he intends to keep the festival of Pentecost along with his audience. Gregory also comments that his discussion should be appropriate to the festival at hand. In this case, the rest of the oration focuses on the topic of the Holy Spirit, and the feast of Pentecost.

Before continuing to a further discussion of Pentecost in the oration, Gregory will take a moment to offer his audience two examples of how Christians should *not* keep festival. The first is that of the Jews who, Gregory says, keep festivals only according to the law and not “spiritually.” The second is that of the Greeks who, Gregory says, keep festival “only in the body,” a way of keeping festival which only leads to “passions” and “sin.” After setting these negative

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<sup>393</sup> *Or.* 41.1.

examples in front of his audience, Gregory offers a second, slightly augmented definition of Christian festival-keeping which amounts to an expansion of his first definition as quoted above.

We also keep festival, but we do it as is right in the eyes of the Spirit. And in [the Spirit's] eyes what is right is either to speak (λέγω) or to do something which is proper. So, this is what it means for us to keep festival: to place as treasure (θησαυρίζω) in our soul something steadfast and enduring rather than something yielding and breakable.<sup>394</sup>

In this passage, Gregory defines the Christian way of keeping festival, over and against the Jewish and Greek ways, in terms of one central question. For Gregory, the Christian way of keeping festival is pleasing to the Spirit. There are echoes here of Gregory's discussion of Christian baptism, which we examined in Chapter 2, in which Gregory emphasizes that the key difference between Christian baptism and other forms of baptism is the presence of the Holy Spirit.<sup>395</sup> In *Or.* 41.1, Gregory provides his audience with a brief explanation of what he and they must do to please the Spirit when keeping festival. He says that they must do or say something “proper.” This combination of doing or speaking and pleasing the Spirit, Gregory summarizes by saying that it results in placing “as treasure in our soul something steadfast and enduring.” This last phrase is somewhat difficult to interpret on its own, but Gregory makes clear what he means by it by contrasting it in the next line with things of the body. “For the body has enough evil of its own. Why would it need more fuel for the fire, or more food for the beast?”<sup>396</sup> To treasure things up in the soul is to do something which contrasts with activity pleasing to the body. For Gregory, Christian festival keeping is marked by speech and action which benefit the human soul in contrast to the body and thus please the Spirit.

It is clear that Gregory thinks that he personally is meant to keep the festival by way of speech and discourse. He makes this evident in *Or.* 41.5.

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394 *Or.* 41.1.

395 See p. 54 ff.

396 *Or.* 41.1.

These, then, are the things of Christ. Now let us see the even more glorious things which come after Him, and let us be seen by them also. I mean the things of the Spirit (τὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος) [1 Cor 2:14] – and let the Spirit be present with me, and give me the discourse (λόγον) which I wish to have, and if not that one, then the one appropriate to the present occasion (καιρός). Indeed, [the Spirit] will be present entirely as master, not in any way like a slave, nor awaiting orders, as some people think. For it blows (πνέω) where it wants, and on whom it desires, and as far and as wide. In this way I myself am inspired (ἐμπνέω) to think and to speak (λέγω) about the Spirit.<sup>397</sup>

We must make two points about the passage. First, the emphasis on the agency of the Spirit in “inspiring” what Gregory thinks and says about the Spirit clearly reflects Gregory's understanding of the Spirits' role in his teaching and discourse, as we discussed it in Chapter 3. This is important to observe because it confirms that Gregory sees *Oration 41* itself as a product of his relationship to the Spirit, a relationship which is foundational to his teaching as he understands it. *Oration 41* is an example of Gregory doing what he believes the Spirit wills him to do as a Christian teacher.

Our second observation involves the phrase “things of the Spirit.” The phrase appears to refer here to the work of the Spirit after the ascension of Christ, and Gregory may have in mind the work of the Spirit in teaching. We can suggest this because the phrase appears to be an allusion to 1 Cor 2:14, in the context of which Paul emphasizes that the Spirit teaches “spiritual things” to “spiritual people.” Paul says that only “spiritual people” come to know the “things of the Spirit (τὰ τοῦ Πνεύματος),” whereas others do not. For Gregory's part, he contrasts the “things of the Spirit” with the work of Christ as he summarized it in the first part of *Or. 41.5*, and after mentioning the “things of the Spirit,” asks the Spirit to provide him with his discourse. Gregory's allusion to 1 Cor 2:14 may thus reveal that he has in mind the teaching role of the Spirit when he mentions the “things of the Spirit.” If so, he is asking the Spirit to provide him with his

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<sup>397</sup> *Or. 41.5*.

discourse as a Christian teacher and pastor, in much the same way as he attributed his teaching to the Spirit in the passages which we examined in Chapter 3.<sup>398</sup> While not all Christians must offer discourse as a means for keeping festival according to *Or.* 41.1, it is clear that Gregory himself intends to keep the festival with his words.

Gregory makes clear in *Or.* 41.10 that the kind of discourse in which he wants to engage at Pentecost is one in which he teaches dogmatically, rather than debates theological questions regarding the Spirit.

Are you giving birth to objections? Then so am I to a continuation of my discussion (λόγος). Honour the Spirit's day – hold back your tongue a little, if you are able. This is a discussion of other tongues – respect and fear them seeing that they are made of fire. Today let us preach dogma (δογματίζω), tomorrow we can argue – today let us keep festival (έορτάζω), tomorrow we can disgrace ourselves.<sup>399</sup>

For Gregory, the proper way for him to keep the festival of Pentecost is for him to preach and teach his congregation in matters of doctrine. It is a time for the Church to embrace rather than challenge Gregory's teachings.

There is a certain connection, then, between Gregory's approach to festival keeping and the problem of the non-proclaimers. The type of discourse which Gregory is claiming to be central to Christian festival keeping in *Oration* 41, especially his own festival-keeping, may well be threatened, in his mind, by the non-proclaimers. If they do not teach the Spirit's divinity openly then perhaps, for Gregory, they cannot really keep the festival of Pentecost in a way pleasing to the Spirit. As Gregory thinks about what it means to be a Christian celebrating Pentecost, he turns to the problem of what happens in the Church when certain individuals fail to keep festival as he believes they should; this is the problem of the non-proclaimers.

In *Oration* 41, then, Gregory takes the opportunity of Pentecost to deliver a sermon which addresses the non-proclaimers directly. He invites them to join

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<sup>398</sup> See pp. 100-107.

<sup>399</sup> *Or.* 41.10.

him in openly proclaiming the Spirit's divinity on a day when, for Gregory, keeping festival in this way is of particular importance. Gregory seeks to bring the non-proclaimers more fully into the Church as he understands it such that they will no longer deprive themselves or others, in some sense, of the Spirit. For Gregory, Pentecost is the perfect moment for the non-proclaimers to correct their relationship with the Spirit, Gregory and their community by declaring that “the Spirit is God.”

### **Conclusions**

For Gregory, then, the non-proclaimers do not present the same problem as the pneumatomachians. They do not, like that group, risk compromising Christian *theosis*, baptism or illumination by way of actively teaching a doctrine which compromises such things. Instead, the pneumatological problem presented by the non-proclaimers is, for Gregory, a problem of their participation in the Spirit's relationship to the Church. For Gregory, the non-proclaimers threaten others in the Church, as well as themselves, by failing to proclaim a truth which it became the Church's mission to proclaim from the time of Pentecost forward. Gregory's letters to Basil, his responses to the Council of Constantinople, his scattered responses to the non-proclaimers in *Oration* 31, and finally the central discussion of *Oration* 41 show that, for Gregory, the non-proclaimers have failed to participate fully in the Spirit's work in guiding the Church as they should. They do not follow the order of theology set forth by God with regard to the Spirit by participating in the Spirit's (and Gregory's) work of teaching the Spirit's divinity now that the time for such a teaching is right. For Gregory, only a little more is required of the non-proclaimers to solve this problem. They need only join him, enter more fully into the Spirit guided Church, and ascribe the word “God” to the Holy Spirit. Yet, small as the syllables are, their proclamation is, for Gregory, non-negotiable. If Christians are to participate in the Spirit's work of teaching the Spirit's divinity, that divinity must now be proclaimed.

### *Conclusions for Part II*

We have come full circle in our investigation of Gregory's pneumatology. Beginning with Gregory's understanding of the Spirit's relationship to the Church, we have progressed, in Part II, to an examination of the orations which Gregory composed chiefly or in part as a means through which he saw himself to be participating in the Spirit's guidance of the Church. We have seen him attempt to defend his flock from a wrong confession of the Spirit in *Oration 31*, and we have seen his responses to those who he thinks fail to fully participate in the Spirit's guidance of the Church, the non-proclaimers. Throughout Part II it has been clear that the driving force behind Gregory's doctrinal pneumatology is, in fact, his ecclesiological pneumatology. Gregory's approach to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit grows, for him, out of his understanding of his relationship to the Spirit and the Church. Gregory's is the pneumatology of a man who thought of himself as a Spirit-guided pastor, not that of a systematic theologian or speculative philosopher. In his writings on the Spirit, Gregory works, by whatever rhetorical means he can, to guide his audiences to what he believes to be a right confession of the Spirit, namely, a declaration that “the Spirit is God,” and he works to invite all other Christians to join him in this task.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we must summarize what we have discovered in light of the basic project of this study. How did Gregory understand the pneumatological landscape of the Fourth Century? What was important about pneumatology for him and why? Most importantly, how did he understand his own contribution to the theology of the Spirit?

At least by the time he delivered *Oration 12*, in the conclusion of which Gregory declares the Spirit's divinity and wonders how long the "candle will remain under the bushel," Gregory had come to think that the time had come for the Church to work with the Spirit in order to make the truth of the Spirit's divinity explicit. For Gregory, the Spirit became fully present to the Church at Pentecost, and at that moment began its work of turning Christians into proclaimers of the truth. While scripture never calls the Spirit "God," for Gregory it is the Spirit that teaches such a truth, and the Spirit teaches this, just as it teaches everything, by participating with human beings in constructing and guiding the Church. Gregory understands himself to play a critical role as a Spirit-guided teacher in so working with the Spirit. While Gregory submits his will entirely to the Spirit, he sees the real possibility that others in the Church will fail to do so. Gregory understands himself to work, in large part through his orations and writings, to do the Spirit's will, and protect the Church against those who have failed to participate fully in the Spirit's relationship to the Church. For Gregory, the two most important groups who have failed so to participate are the pneumatomachians, addressed in *Oration 31*, and the non-proclaimers, addressed most fully in *Oration 41*. These, and other pneumatological texts and passages in Gregory's corpus, are what remains of the work of one Christian pastor who thought it the Spirit's will that he teach the Spirit's divinity in the face of anyone who would call it into question, and so serve the Church as a Spirit-guided teacher.

In the main, this study should make two contributions to future work on Fourth Century pneumatology. First, it should provide a clearer and more complete picture of the nature of Gregory's own pneumatology in and of itself.

This will, hopefully, open the door to studies which can ask the serious and complex question of whether Gregory's pneumatology was in any way historically influential on any group of Christians, and if so, why, and who they were. Given Gregory's status as the first Christian author to declare that "the Holy Spirit is God," it is quite possible to imagine that a fuller understanding of Gregory's place in history will reveal that he was indeed among the most influential thinkers on this topic in Christian history, even if his contribution went no further than making this small, but certainly critical phrase acceptable to the world's Christians. That, however, remains to be proven. The second contribution which has hopefully been made in this study is that of calling attention to Gregory's interactions with the non-proclaimers in the late Fourth Century. McGuckin has observed an irony in the fact that nearly all the world's Christians read the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed with Gregory's theology in mind, despite the fact that this theology seems to have been consciously rejected at the Council of Constantinople.<sup>400</sup> It is thus quite conceivable that Gregory's own success has overshadowed the importance of his contribution to Christian history in the form of his responses to the non-proclaimers. Gregory's pneumatology may well be taken so much for granted by later generations of Christians, that the fact that his position on proclaiming the Spirit's divinity was ever something debated or defended is scarcely remembered anymore. When examined from Gregory's point of view, the late Fourth Century begins to look like a time in which some of the most powerful voices in the Church stood among the very real group of theologians whom we have termed non-proclaimers. As minor as the debate may seem to the modern scholar, to Gregory it was a serious one indeed, and as such, it warrants further attention by historians of Trinitarian thought.

In closing, we should say that there is much work still to be done on the topic of Gregory's theology of the Holy Spirit as it appears in his writings. Many patterns and passages have gone unexplored in this study. One thing this study has certainly revealed is that Gregory is a thinker who is remarkably consistent, and yet anything but transparent on the topic of the Spirit. One is left, reading his works, with the feeling that there will always be something more to say.

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400 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus*, p.367.

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