

**The Unity and Equality of the Divine Relations in Gregory of Nazianzus's  
Trinitarian Theology**

**By Grant M. Sutherland**

**In Partial Completion of MA in Theology**

**From the Religious Department, McMaster University**

**July 31st, 2019**

**Primary Supervisor: Dr. Peter Widdicombe**

**Secondary Supervisor: Dr. Travis Kroeker**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to first thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Peter Widdicombe from the Religious Department at McMaster University. He was a consistent voice of insight and he always asked difficult questions that helped me think more clearly on the subject matter at hand. I would also like to thank my secondary supervisor Dr. Travis Kroeker for all of his assistance and feedback. I must also express my appreciation for McMaster University's Religious Department and all the faculty and staff who provided an ideal learning environment for undertaking this thesis. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife Abi for her enduring support, love, and understanding throughout this season. This thesis is dedicated to my son, Theodore, who came into our life amidst the chaos of research and writing.

## Introduction

As of the fifth-century, Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 389) was the only theologian to be given the honorary appellation “the Theologian,” aside from the writer of the Fourth Gospel.<sup>1</sup> He had a renowned influence on Byzantine and Eastern theology, without rival.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I intend to investigate Gregory’s understanding of what the titles “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” refer to and what it means to say that they are “one being.” This is of critical importance for our ability to understand properly what Gregory thinks is said of the divine persons and of the divine being. The issue has been a matter of controversy in recent scholarship on Gregory.<sup>3</sup> It has been argued by Meyendorff (1973), Norris (1983), McGuckin (2001), and Beeley (2007), that Gregory of Nazianzus’ exclusively identifies the *Father* as the Primal Cause and divine monarchy, whereas others, such as Egan (1993), Ayres (2004), and Cross (2006), argue that Gregory identifies them with the divine *nature*. The former have done so in order to demonstrate that the Father as monarch is one of the most basic concepts in Gregory’s trinitarian theology and thus is the cause of the divine equality and unity. There is a recent tendency, witnessed, for instance in Beeley, to insist that the *homoousios* is merely a “cypher” for the concept of the monarchy and a term only used to align himself with the growing Nicene consensus. This, however, is based upon a misconception of Gregory’s understanding of what is attributed to the divine persons and what is grounded in the identity of substance. It also fails to recognize the way in which the *homoousios*

---

<sup>1</sup> Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 41.

<sup>2</sup> See Verna Harrison’s introduction to “Gregory Nazianzen’s Festal Spirituality: Anamnesis and Mimesis,” *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006): 28-9.

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the debate, see Christopher A. Beeley, “Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus.” *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007): 199-214; and Richard Cross, “Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus.” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006): 105–116.

secured a grammar of what can be spoken of the one and of the three. Although there are passages, such as *Or* 42.15 and 20.7, that could be read this way, when they are interpreted with attention to Gregory's distinction between what is predicated of the Father-qua-Father and of the being that is common to the divine persons, it seems clear to me that this is not the case.

There are three critical issues at stake with this interpretation of Gregory. First, the equality and unity of the divine persons *cannot* be secured by construing the monarch as the Father. Second, this reading suggests that the Father has peculiar properties that are not only correlative with Son, and Spirit, but also with creation. This is problematic because Gregory's critical settlement is that the identity of the Father, Son, and Spirit are simply their correlative relations. The Father as "unbegotten" and "begetting" indicates only his correlative relation with the Son and Spirit, whereas exclusively identifying the Father as "monarch" and "first cause" indicates a correlative relation proper to the Father that indicates everything that would be derivative from him, namely, the Son, Spirit, and *even* creation. As such, if Gregory is consistent on this point, which he very well may not be, the Father has something besides from his identity as unbegotten and begetting that is not true of the Son and Spirit. It is here that such a reading calls into question the equality of the divine persons. Third, the monarchy itself is at stake in such a reading because Gregory seems to maintain that the monarchy is logically contingent on the unity and equality of the divine persons, such a unity and equality that he continually couches in their ontological identity. The monarchy cannot be procured without an absolute identity of being that is entirely equal and unified in every respect and indivisible, and that maintains a differentiation between the divine persons, not at the level of being or attributes, but only in respect to peculiar relations-qua-origination.

What I hope to demonstrate in this study is that while Gregory sees the Father as the “cause” and “origin” of the Son, he does not identify the Father exclusively, or even most basically, with the divine equality and unity. Rather, he locates a particular conception of the divine unity, a simple unity, and an ontological equality of the divine persons with the *homoousios*. To the extent that scholars identify the monarchy solely with the Father, as notably seen in Beeley, the more the critical notion of *homoousios* is eclipsed and even passed-over in Gregory’s understanding of divine unity and equality. To demonstrate this, I will discuss three critical elements in Gregory’s understanding of the Trinity, devoting a chapter to each. First, his understanding of how theological language applies to God. Second, his understanding of relations and origination in the Trinity. Third, his understanding of how the *homoousios* is the basis for the equality and unity of the Trinity and how the divine monarchy is concomitant of that equality and unity. A discussion of the first will enable us to see that, for Gregory, theological discourse’s nature and scope is formed by the incomprehensibility of the divine being, both on account of God’s nature and of the limits of theological epistemology that is affected by humanity’s fallen condition, which are fundamental to how he thinks about the words Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This sets the ground for us to examine his understanding of the relations and origination. By exploring the second, it will be shown that Gregory understands the Father, Son, and Spirit to be subsistent relations of origin, that is, the divine persons are correlative relations signifying each other, and that the Son and Spirit originate from the Father in a divine way free of all creaturely attributes.

This discussion of Son and Spirit originating from the Father as relations of origin raises the question as to how he understands and grounds the equality and unity of the divine persons, which I will deal with in chapter 3. Does he locate the equality and unity in the Father? Although

there are a plethora of passages that attest to Gregory's understanding and many angles with which to approach this question, I have chosen, for the purpose of this thesis, to examine *Oration* 31.14-20 in which we see that Gregory does, in fact, identify the unity and equality of the divine persons in the *homoousios*. This thesis will primarily focus on *The Five Theological Orations*, that is, *Or* 27-31, where the critical passages for our present study are found, drawing on other passages as necessary. We shall see that Gregory presents a clear account of the Trinity that does not locate equality and unity of the divine being in the Father, but, rather, locates them primarily in the being that the three are.

## Chapter 1

### Gregory's Understanding of Theological Discourse:

#### *Prolegomenon to Trinitarian Theology*

One is correct to say that the debates Gregory engaged in were over the ontological status of the Son and Spirit. But such a synopsis fails to capture the more fundamental disagreements he navigated concerning the nature of human speech about God. Gregory's opponents, the Eunomians, did not merely assert that God's being could be comprehended, but that they, in fact, had determined the definition of God, comprehending his essence and nature as nothing other than unoriginate. Such a theological epistemology gave rise to a particular understanding of theological discourse that bolstered their identification of the divine essence as unoriginate. The Eunomians concluded that only the Father who is uncaused and has no source of his being can logically be identified with the being God.

Although *The Five Theological Orations* are considered among the most important writings on the Trinity in the Patristic period, *Or 27* and *Or 28* do not, properly speaking, address the doctrine of the Trinity. Nevertheless these two orations must be regarded as absolutely critical for understanding Gregory's trinitarian theology. As we will see, without them the force of his arguments concerning the Trinity in *Or 29*, *30*, and *31*, as well as elsewhere, lose their foundation. As John McGuckin states, concerning those who might separate the "scope" and "nature" of theology as laid out in *Or 27* and *Or 28* from Gregory's trinitarian theology, "one wholly falsifies the teaching."<sup>4</sup> The reason why Gregory does not discuss the trinitarian relations until *Or 29*, after two preparatory orations, is because of the nature of the debates that were

---

<sup>4</sup> John A. McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 18.

raging in Constantinople. He was faced by an audience comprised of allies, opponents, and others caught in the fray. In order for his own doctrine of the Trinity to be received, understood by all present at the little church of the Resurrection, and for his opponents' doctrines to be refuted, Gregory needed to both refute and replace the theoretical foundation that gave rise to their erroneous doctrine of the Trinity. That foundation was their understanding of theological discourse itself, which, Gregory seems to suggest, was the source of much of their error (*Or* 27.1; 28.1; 29.1). Gregory indicates that *Or* 27 was intended to prepare the audience for the discussion of God in *Or* 28 by setting down four rules or preconditions for theological discourse: (1) the theologian's character, (2) audience, (3) the occasion, and (4) the extent of theorizing. But he also states in *Or* 29.1 that *Or* 28 was itself intended to correct his opponents' "theological discourse" (περὶ Θεοῦ λόγοις).<sup>5</sup> He sought to censor (ἐπικόπτω), which is to say theoretically circumscribe, both his speech and his opponents' "hasty argumentation."<sup>6</sup> In short, *Or* 27 and 28 are two sides of the same coin—both address theological discourse. The former advances explicit rules or conditions for its practice and the latter advances its theoretical foundation. If Gregory could reform their starting assumptions about theology itself, then he could show that his opponents have no foundation for their doctrinal conclusions.

In this chapter, I will examine Gregory's conception of theological discourse and theological epistemology as he articulates it in *Or* 27 and *Or* 28. I will show that the perimeters and goal of his theological discourse is informed by three interrelated doctrines concerning (1)

---

<sup>5</sup> *Or* 29.1; Wickham, 245; *Discours 27–31 [Discours théologiques]*, ed. Paul Gallay, Sources chrétiennes 250 [Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978], 176. Henceforth, I will abbreviate the latter with "SC." Translations throughout this chapter of *Or* 28–31 are by Lionel Wickham and *Or* 27 is by Williams, from *God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius: St Gregory of Nazianzus* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> *Or* 29.1; Wickham, 245; SC 250:176.



the divine nature, (2) anthropology, and (3) soteriology. He does not treat these three doctrines separately but, often, all at once, since he does not understand them as separate domains of inquiry. This analysis will provide the bedrock for our examination of, and conclusions concerning, Gregory's articulation of the trinitarian relations in chapter 2 and the meaning of *homoousios* in chapter 3, and whether and to what extent concepts drawn from creatures, such as hierarchy and personhood, play a role in the doctrine of the Trinity. By giving an account of Gregory's presuppositions of theological discourse, in chapter 2, I will show that he thinks creaturely images and concepts corrupt one's understanding of the meaning of the divine titles.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I will examine Gregory's understanding of the divine nature. This section will show that, for Gregory, God must be incomprehensible in his being because of what it means to be comprehended. That is comprehension is a kind of circumscription that entails corporeality. After which I will consider the apophatic nature of divine predication in theological discourse. Second, I will examine his doctrine of humanity. In this section, I will show that Gregory thinks that both embodied and disembodied rational faculties are incapable of comprehending God, and the need of faith to supplement reason. Gregory argues for this weak epistemology from Scripture and from human ignorance in regards to creaturely realities. Third, I will examine Gregory's doctrine of salvation. In this section, I will discuss Gregory's understanding of the effect of the moral condition of the knower on theological epistemology, and the extent of divine knowability for the most pure. I will also examine how ignorance of the divine due to embodiment and enfleshment is an impetus for purification, and how purification is a necessary practice for the theologian. I will conclude this section by examining his rules for theological discourse that exhibit his soteriology.

### **1. Theological Discourse and the Divine Nature**

A fundamental starting premise of theological discourse for Gregory is that the divine nature is incomprehensible.<sup>7</sup> Gregory argues for this conclusion by showing the theological consequences of denying it. In this section, I will look at his argument for divine incomprehensibility. What is at stake for Gregory is that if one thinks that God can be comprehended, the definition of God would be anchored to one particular attribute over against all others. This conclusion has disastrous implications for the doctrine of the Trinity and this is precisely why Gregory so vehemently argues against it. The order of this section is as follows: I will analyze a passage in *Or 28.7* where Gregory assumes a connection between comprehension and corporeality, then I will examine his argument against corporeality and circumscription. I will conclude by looking at further clarifications Gregory makes concerning his apophatic understanding of divine predication.

### **1.1 Divine Comprehensibility Entails Corporeality**

Although it is not certain what Eunomius taught concerning the nature of God, in *Or 28.7*, Gregory refutes what he took to be a fatal error in their reasoning. His opponents seem to assume that God's being can be rationally (λόγος) comprehended. They define God as unoriginate. Directly after mocking his opponents for their alleged ability to comprehend the divine being, Gregory argues against divine comprehensibility via a *reductio ad absurdum*. His problem with divine comprehensibility is that it entails divine corporeality.<sup>8</sup> Speaking of the divine being, he asks his opponents,

---

<sup>7</sup> See John A. McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 13.

<sup>8</sup> *Or 28.7*; Wickham, 227; SC 250:112. According to Norris, there are no extant Eunomian writings that suggest they held to divine corporeality: See his, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 13. (Leiden etc., 1991), 112.

Is it corporeal (σῶμα)? How then can it be boundless (ἄπειρος), limitless (ἄοριστος), formless, impalpable (ἀναφής), invisible (ἀόρατος)? . . . How could it be worthy of worship were it bounded (περίγραπτος)? How could it escape elemental composition (στοιχείων συγκείσθαι) and disintegration (ἀναλύω) or even total dissolution (λύω)? For composition (σύνθεσις) is cause of conflict, conflict of division, division of dissolution. But dissolution is utterly alien to God the prime nature. So no dissolution means no division; no division means no conflict; no conflict means no composition, and hence no body involving composition.<sup>9</sup>

Gregory may have intended to shock his audience by abruptly asserting up front what he deemed the logical conclusion of divine comprehensibility, namely, that the divine being is corporeal.

Notably, Gregory does not, at this point, give an argument to show that if something can be comprehended, then it must be corporeal. It seems that Gregory assumes his audience will understand the connection between the mental act of comprehending (περιλαμβάνω and καταλαμβάνω) with the act of circumscribing (περιγράφω). If to comprehend something is to circumscribe it, then, Gregory's seems to argue, it must be corporeal, since that which is circumscribed is corporeal. Gregory does not articulate how this idea of circumscription entails the idea of composition but assumes his audience would concur. He seems to use περιγράφω as a synonym for περιλαμβάνω and καταλαμβάνω.

After rhetorically asking whether God is a body, he argues for the absurdity of divine corporeality by showing that it is incompatible with the divine attributes (such as, ἄπειρος, ἄοριστος, ἀναφής, and ἀόρατος). It should be noted here that Gregory only ascribes negative attributes to God. He is intent that deity (τὸ θεῖον) is necessarily characterized by these negative attributes;<sup>10</sup> otherwise the divine being would be subject to circumscription (περίγραπτος), composition (στοιχείων συγκείσθαι), and destruction (λύω). Gregory does not provide us with

---

<sup>9</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 227-8; SC 250:114.

<sup>10</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 227; SC 250:112.

a clear argument for each of his premises. This may suggest that his audience would have agreed with his summation of the *reductio*.

How does corporeality entail composition? Gregory uses the terms στοιχείον and σύγκειμαι together, which are common terms for connoting components and composition, respectively.<sup>11</sup> The latter literally means to lie together. Describing the elemental composition of the body, Plato first uses the term στοιχεῖα with σύγκειμαι in *Theaetetus* 201e.<sup>12</sup> Gregory takes for granted that a body (σῶμα) is composed of elements (στοιχείον) that form a composition (σύγκειμαι). A body composed of elements, as was widely held, is capable of undergoing the process of disintegration (ἀναλύω), whereby the elemental parts lose their cohesion. Gregory indicates that the logical result of composition is total dissolution (ὅλως λύεσθαι). In order to strengthen the *reductio*, Gregory not only claims that dissolution is the logical outcome of composition, but that composition contains within it the cause (ἀρχή) of a series that moves from conflict (μάχη) to division (διάστασις).<sup>13</sup> Gregory states that dissolution is an unacceptable property of the prime nature (πρώτης φύσεως), as was widely accepted.<sup>14</sup>

In *Or* 28.8, Gregory addresses the biblical theological ramifications for accepting divine circumscription. He goes on to query his opponents as to how God can fill heaven and earth, as Scripture teaches, if “part of [the universe] limits (περιγράφω) him and part of it is limited (περιγράφω) by him.” Gregory argues that there must be a limit between the divine and the universe if God is circumscribed, marking off the divine from the non-divine. In such an event,

---

<sup>11</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 227-8; SC 250:114.

<sup>12</sup> Eudem. ap. Simp.in Ph.7.13. Plato states: τὰ μὲν πρώτα οἶονπερὶ στοιχεῖα, ἐξ ὧν ἡμεῖς τε συγκείμεθα.

<sup>13</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 227-8; SC 250:114.

<sup>14</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 227-8; SC 250:114.

Gregory reasons that the universe must be the principle of God's circumscription. Moreover, if God is simultaneously circumscribed by the universe and circumscribes the universe, then, so Gregory argues, God cannot fill the universe, unless he were to "be contained by bodies—which is impossible."<sup>15</sup> Gregory thus concludes that if one circumscribes God, then God cannot pervade the universe as Scripture teaches. This conclusion is rather straightforward, given his premises and the metaphysical assumptions of his contemporaries.

In response to his argument, Gregory anticipates that his opponents will argue for divine circumscription (as synonymous with divine comprehensibility) by asserting that God is a corporal yet immaterial substance. He gives on behalf of his opponents an example of an immaterial yet corporeal substance: "What if we call God "immaterial" (αὐλόζ), the fifth element envisaged by some, borne along the circular drift?"<sup>16</sup> The heavens were composed, according to Aristotle, by the fifth element, which neither rose nor fell, but eternally circled the earth.<sup>17</sup> Gregory may have in mind this Aristotelian understanding of the aether. But this fifth material will not suffice to account for God's circumscription. He thinks that even the angels are composed of the fifth element and God could not have an angelic body or a body like the fifth element because angels are far inferior to God whom they serve. Angels are incorporeal (ἄσώματος) in the sense that they are invisible, like the aether.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the aether is not

---

<sup>15</sup> *Or* 28.8; Wickham, 228; SC 250:114.

<sup>16</sup> *Or* 28.8; Wickham, 228; SC 250:114.

<sup>17</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of His Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 166–169.

<sup>18</sup> *Or* 28.8; Wickham, 228; SC 250:116.

self-caused but set in motion by God.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Gregory concludes that God is incorporeal (ἀσώματος), unlike the immateriality of the fifth element that still is, in some sense, corporeal.<sup>20</sup>

Gregory has a clear sense of connection between circumscription and corporeality, and how God must be incircumscribable because he is incorporeal. Ultimately, Gregory wants his audience to conclude that God cannot be grasped and that comprehension is effectively a form of circumscription. After having argued against both divine circumscription and corporeality, he turns to clarify what precisely he means when he says that God is incorporeal and incircumscribable.

## 1.2 Apophatic Predication

Gregory recognizes that his conclusion may be misinterpreted by his opponents. In the process of defending divine incomprehensibility and incorporeality, Gregory wards off the claim that he himself has grasped or comprehended God's οὐσία. He states, "but the term "incorporeal". . . does not give an all-embracing (περιεκτικός) revelation (παροστατικός) of God's essential being (οὐσία)."<sup>21</sup> Gregory's main intention is to show that no definition can be given of God that can wholly encompass his incomprehensible being (ἀπερίληπτος). What is primarily of concern for Gregory is his opponents' contention that the divine essence is the peculiar attribute of the Father, namely, unorigination, as we will see in chapter 2. He goes on to state how no title or attribute fully expresses the divine nature: "the same is true of "ingenerate," "unoriginate," "immutable," and "immortal," indeed of all attributes applied, or referred, to

---

<sup>19</sup> *Or* 28.8; Wickham, 228; SC 250:116.

<sup>20</sup> *Or* 28.9; Wickham, 228; SC 250:116.

<sup>21</sup> *Or* 28.9; Wickham, 228; SC 250:118.

God.”<sup>22</sup> Gregory argues that predicating incorporeality of the divine nature is not to define it. He asserts, “just as predicating “is body” or “is begotten” of something or other where these predicates are applicable is not enough clearly to set out (ἵστημι) the thing but you must also, if an object of knowledge is to be displayed with adequate clarity, give the predicates their subject.”<sup>23</sup> But this, on Gregory’s account, is precisely what cannot be done. It is possible, on Gregory’s account, to predicate what a man is *not* and what a man *is*. But one can only predicate what God is not, which is different from defining what God *is*. Here, he seems to advocate an apophatic grammar of theological discourse. Which is to say, when we speak about God, we do not positively predicate anything of the divine essence, so as to define it.

The Eunomians, as Gregory represents them, assume a particular understanding of God that informs their theological discourse. Since God’s being is comprehensible, it is the task of the theologian to determine wherein lies the essence of God. The Eunomians arrived at such a conclusion: God is unoriginate *per se*. In this section we have seen that Gregory attempts to chasten theological discourse by showing that God by his nature is incomprehensible, and the absurdities that follow from denying it. Since God is, in essence, incomprehensible, the nature of theological discourse and its objectives are at variance with his opponents conception of them.

## **2. Theological Discourse and Anthropology**

Gregory’s understanding of theological discourse is significantly shaped by his theological anthropology. He sees divine incomprehensibility as both a theological *and* anthropological truism. As the former was discussed above, we now turn to the latter and how he articulates the capacity of the rational faculties for theological epistemology. Gregory is faced with opponents

---

<sup>22</sup> *Or* 28.9; Wickham, 228; SC 250:118.

<sup>23</sup> *Or* 28.9; Wickham, 229; SC 250:118.

who assert the outsized capacity of the human intellect to rationally comprehend the divine nature. First, I will examine Gregory's embodied and *a posteriori* epistemology that poses a divide for divine knowledge. Second, in light of the former, we will see that even disembodied knowledge of God, in the case of the angels, is still only partial. Third, as a result, I will analyze Gregory's articulation of a weak theological epistemology that is always limited in the extent of divine knowledge. Gregory gives two arguments for humanity's weak epistemology that will inform part four and five. The first is an argument from the testimony of biblical figures and the second is an argument from human ignorance of created realities. Finally, we will examine the need for faith to supplement the weak rational capacities.

## 2.1 Embodied Knowledge

Gregory understands the human person as embodied to receive knowledge through the senses. He has a clear understanding of human embodiment and thus he maintains that abstract thought of ideals is near impossible, insofar as corporeal images intrude into the mind. He articulates an *a posteriori* epistemology in which human knowledge is acquired through the senses. He states, "sight cannot approach its object without the medium of light (φῶς) and atmosphere (ἀήρ); fish cannot swim out of water; and no more can embodied beings keep incorporeal company with things ideal."<sup>24</sup> Gregory maintains that human knowledge of ideals, such as goodness or justice, do not come to the mind *a priori*, as Plato is famous for teaching. Rather, like fish in water, humans are in bodies and we come to know through the bodily senses. This point is clearly articulated in *Or* 28.21, where Gregory asserts, "We do not abandon the senses (αἴσθησις), they go with us, when we look at supra-sensible realities. . . We cannot get nearer the truth by meeting things in their naked reality with naked intellect. Our minds cannot

---

<sup>24</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 231; SC 250:126.



receive direct and sure impressions.”<sup>25</sup> For Gregory, “naked reality” is incorporeal reality, and this is what characterizes both ideals and the divine nature. Gregory is making this point in order to show that his opponents, who claim to know the divine nature through the rational capacities of their minds, are both incapable of completely abstracting the corporeal from their notions or circumventing the corporeal altogether for a direct reception of knowledge of incorporeal realities. Over against what Gregory’s opponents may have espoused, one cannot achieve a disembodied, non-materially mediated vision of the divine nature.

Gregory illustrates this epistemological problem of embodiment and the desire to “keep company” with ideas in complete abstraction from corporeality through an analysis of the divine titles. He rhetorically asks his audience whether “spirit,” “fire,” and “light,” “love,” “wisdom,” “righteousness,” “mind,” and “reason” and so forth, are titles of the prime reality (πρώτης πύσεως). . .”<sup>26</sup> He demonstrates why each title cannot be thought of without any suggestion of corporeality. He goes on to ask,

Can you think of wind without movement and dispersal? Of fire without matter, with no rising motion, no color and shape of its own? Or light unmixed with atmosphere, detached from what shines to give it birth, so to say? What of mind? Something else contains it, surely; its thoughts, silent or uttered, are movements. How can you think of reason other than as our inner discourse, unspoken or expressed—I shrink from saying “dissolved”?<sup>27</sup>

In each case, Gregory perceives that we cannot think of a title, such as fire, without “some corporeal factor” imbedded in our language and concepts rendering the predication, in some significant way, at odds with God’s incorporeal, non-composite, immutable, atemporal, incorruptible, and perfect nature. We may try to diminish the effect of our embodied way of

---

<sup>25</sup> *Or* 28.21; Wickham, 236; SC 250:142.

<sup>26</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 231; SC 250:126.

<sup>27</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 231; SC 250:126.

knowing and thinking through ascetic practices but “some corporeal factor of ours will always intrude itself, even if the mind be most fully detached from the visible world and at its most recollected when it attempts to engage with its invisible kin.”<sup>28</sup> Gregory recognizes that we can attempt to remove corporeal realities from our mind, in order to contemplate ideas, but, due to our embodied state, a completely disembodied perception is not possible. Even those who are capable of extended periods of abstract thought with incorporeal ideas, are ultimately weighed down by “bodily conditions.”<sup>29</sup>

Gregory speaks about the way the condition of embodiment affects abstract thought, in general, and divine knowability, in particular, with the imagery of light and darkness. He maintains that corporeality (σωματικώς) acts as a middle (μέσος) barrier, a gloom (γνόφος) that impedes divine knowability.<sup>30</sup> Quoting Psalm 17.12, Gregory states that God made “darkness . . . his hiding-place.” He interprets “darkness” as human thickness (παχύτης), or what Wickham renders “grossness.”<sup>31</sup> Gregory contrasts the darkness of corporeality that signifies ignorance with the light which signifies knowledge of God who is light.<sup>32</sup> Only some individuals are able to peer through the corporeal darkness to catch a vision of the divine reality but even this knowing is partial and not a comprehension of the divine being. Human embodiment problematizes the theologians pursuit of a pure and true knowledge of God that veritably reflects God’s incorporeal and uncreated nature. This practice of the Christian philosopher—divine contemplation—is, in light of embodiment, only possible through purification, as we will observe in the final section of

---

<sup>28</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 231; SC 250:126.

<sup>29</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 231; SC 250:126.

<sup>30</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 230; SC 250:124.

<sup>31</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 230; SC 250:124.

<sup>32</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 230; SC 250:124.

the chapter. Gregory sees embodiment as a universal condition that limits the present extent of divine knowability. But what is the extent of disembodied knowledge? Could one then apprehend the divine nature?

## 2.2 Disembodied Knowledge

Gregory routinely contrasts the epistemological capacity of embodied humans with disembodied angels. He speculates in *Or* 28.3-4 that there may exist angelic beings who apprehend (κατανοέω) God to a greater degree than humans, are illuminated by the divine light and are closer to God.<sup>33</sup> Which is to say, the divine light is not mediated through corporeality, as it is for embodied humans. He states, “for were a thing all heavenly, all super-celestial even, far more sublime in nature than ourselves, far nearer God, its remoteness from him and from his perfect apprehension (τῆς τελείας καταλήψεως) is much greater than its superiority to our low, heavy compound (κράμα).”<sup>34</sup> Gregory thinks that the difference between divine knowability for angels and humans is because the latter are composed (κράμα) of body and soul, and it is the body which “weighs” us down.<sup>35</sup> By κράμα, Gregory refers to the body-soul compound by which the human is constituted. He entertains the possibility that there are beings whose greater proximity to God is due to their excellences (ἀρετήν) and who, as a concomitant, apprehend God to a greater degree than humans.<sup>36</sup> It is critical to note the contrast Gregory offers between the proximity of humans and angels to the distance between angels and God. Divine self-

---

<sup>33</sup> *Or* 28.4; Wickham, 226; SC 250:108; see also *Carmina* 1.1.3 (De Spiritu); PG 37.415.

<sup>34</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 226; SC 250:106.

<sup>35</sup> See also *Or* 27.7; Williams, 221; SC 250:86-8, where Gregory use κράμα in relation to relationship of the body, which he metaphorically refers to as dust (χοῦς), and the spirit (πνεῦμα).

<sup>36</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 226; SC 250:106.

knowledge far transcends the apprehension of angels. This passage is insightful to the degree to which human apprehension of God is not merely a problem of embodiment. The rational faculties cannot abstract themselves, even in a disembodied condition, from all corporal notions, otherwise angels would be able to comprehend God.

Gregory goes on to argue, in *Or* 28.5, that knowledge of God's nature is impossible. He refers to Plato's statement that "to know God is hard, to describe him impossible."<sup>37</sup> Although, Gregory affirms, it is impossible (ἀδύνατος) to describe (φράζω) God, "to know (νοέω) him is even less possible (ἀδυνατώτερον)."<sup>38</sup> He uses the comparative form of ἀδύνατος to indicate the severity of the human incapacity to know God in contrast with the lesser inability to even describe him. Humanity's weak theological epistemology is contrasted with God's perfect self-apprehension. In *Or* 28.3, Gregory draws a distinction between creaturely knowledge of God and the Trinity's self-knowledge, the Trinity, who "alone apprehends its own nature."<sup>39</sup> He extends to the trinitarian relations of origin, as we will see in chapter 2, this contrast of the divine self-apprehension and the divine incomprehensibility to creatures. Whereas human knowledge of God is mediated through creation, divine self-knowledge is immediate and perfect. Since God is perfect and self-comprehended, the human inability to comprehend God is a condition of finitude. The human mind by its very constitution is incapable of gazing into the divine being.

### **2.3 Weak Theological Epistemology**

---

<sup>37</sup> *Or* 28.4; Wickham, 226; SC 250:106. Norris notes that this statement resembles Clement of Alexandria comments on Plato's *Timaeus* 28C. See Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 110.

<sup>38</sup> *Or* 28.4; Wickham, 226; SC 250:108.

<sup>39</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 225; SC 250:106.

In spite of this epistemological problem of the human condition, Gregory does think that theological knowledge is possible, albeit, in a highly qualified and mediated way. Knowledge of God's existence can be derived from creation with the positive function of reason. Humans discern with the aid of reason the difference between what is created and what is divine. He states,

reason took us up in our desire for God, in our refusal to travel without guide or helmsman reason looked on the visible world, lighted on things primeval yet did not make us stop at these (for reason will grant no superiority to things as much objects of sense as we are) but leads us on through them to what transcends them, the very means of their continued existence.<sup>40</sup>

Reason is supposed to distinguish between what is corporeal and visible and what is beyond the visible and the source of the created reality's existence. Gregory seems to be suggesting that human knowledge of God is *a posteriori*, leading from effects in the visible creation, such as order, beauty, motion, and purpose, to the invisible first cause, the first principle of creation.<sup>41</sup> He states, "thus God-derived reason, bound up, connected, with the whole of nature, man's most ancient law, has led us up from things of sight to God."<sup>42</sup> But inasmuch as reason is both from God and the tool which guides minds in their ascent back to God, Gregory goes on to restate his central contention: "no one has yet discovered (εὐρίσκω) or ever shall discover what God is in his nature (φύσις) and essence (οὐσία)."<sup>43</sup> But he makes a critical distinction between knowing a thing's existence and its nature. He states, "a thing's existence is quite different from knowledge of *what* (ἵτις) it is."<sup>44</sup> The limiting of human knowledge to God's existence was the

---

<sup>40</sup> *Or* 28.16; Wickham, 233; SC 250:132-4

<sup>41</sup> *Or* 28.16; Wickham, 233; SC 250:132-4

<sup>42</sup> *Or* 28.16; Wickham, 233; SC 250:132-4

<sup>43</sup> Wickham, 28.17.

<sup>44</sup> *Or* 28.5; Wickham, 226-7; SC 250:110.

reason his opponents mocked his faith as vain and empty.<sup>45</sup> His opponents believed, as this text suggests, that meaningful knowledge of God is of both his existence and his nature. In sum, for Gregory, knowledge of God is derived from creation, but the content of this knowledge is limited to God's existence and not God's nature or essence.

Gregory gives an analogy, in *Or* 28.3, to explain both the possibility and limited extent of divine knowledge. What creatures know is what “reaches us at its furthest remove from God, being, so far as I can understand, the grandeur, or as divine David calls it the “majesty” inherent in the created things he has brought forth and governs. All these indications of himself which he has left behind him are God’s backside.”<sup>46</sup> Gregory here proposes that the knowledge we have is of God’s grandeur, the “back of God,” that we witness in creation. What we know of God is what has “been left behind” as marks or traces of his active power through creating and governing the world. But what are these divine traces? “They are,” he states, “shadowy reflections of the Sun in water, reflections which display to eyes too weak, because too impotent to gaze at it, the Sun overmastering perception in the purity of light (τῷ ἀκραιφνεῖ τοῦ φωτὸς).”<sup>47</sup> Gregory sees the weakness and inability of eyes to stare directly at the sun as an analogy for the human incapacity to know God directly, and thus we can only know through the medium of “shadowy reflections” of creation.<sup>48</sup> The use of the term “shadowy” indicates that the light is diminished from its initial brilliance, so that what knowledge we have is a reflection of the object of our knowledge. Which is to say, that our knowledge is not univocal. There is not a one to one correspondence between

---

<sup>45</sup> *Or* 28.5; Wickham, 226-7; SC 250:110; c.f. *Or* 27.8.

<sup>46</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 225; SC 250:106. He is here referencing the encounter of Moses with the averted form of God in Exodus 33.

<sup>47</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 225; SC 250:106.

<sup>48</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 225; SC 250:106.

our knowledge of God and God in himself. There is a fundamental asymmetry between what we know and the object of our knowledge. Gregory seems to imply that the medium of corporeality is responsible for diminishing our vision of God. As we have already seen, light and darkness imagery is highly symbolic for divine knowledge and ignorance. Gregory is here clearly asserting that humans do have knowledge of God but this knowledge, which he is equating with the vision of the eyes, does not grasp God in himself. Although this knowledge is mediated through mixture with and derivation from corporeality, it is nonetheless knowledge of God, despite its impurity.

#### **2.4 The Testimony of Scripture**

Gregory attempts to show that his arguments for divine incomprehensibility, as both a theological reality (section 1) and an anthropological condition (section 2), are grounded in the testimony of the patriarchs and the apostles.<sup>49</sup> Gregory demonstrates that the Eunomians, who profess to have comprehended God's being as "unoriginate," exceed the claims of knowledge by the holy men in Scripture. How could the Eunomians know more than the holy patriarchs, prophets, and apostles?

In *Or* 28.18-20, Gregory argues that if all the patriarchs themselves did not apprehend or give pretension of knowing the divine essence, then how can the Eunomians claim such knowledge.<sup>50</sup> For example, Elijah, Gregory recounts, saw the outline of the presence (παρουσία) of God, but not the outline (σκιαγραφώ) of the nature (φύσιν) of God because it is

---

<sup>49</sup> *Or* 28.18-20; Wickham, 234-6; SC 250:136-42.

<sup>50</sup> In *Or* 27.9, Gregory mocks the Eunomians for claiming to see that which is not seen (ὁ τῶν ἀθεάτων θεατής), namely the divine essence, more easily than even Elijah, Moses, and Paul.

incircumscribable.<sup>51</sup> For “[n]one saw, none told, of God’s nature (φύσιν).”<sup>52</sup> In examining Paul’s mystical experience in 2 Corinthians 12.2-4, Gregory notes that Paul did not speak of it.<sup>53</sup> Thus, since his experience was “ineffable” (ἄρρητος), we should keep silent (σιωπάω) concerning those mystical realities.<sup>54</sup> Gregory concludes that we should affirm like Paul that “we know in part and we prophesy in part.”<sup>55</sup> Gregory is attempting to show the absurd arrogance of his opponents who claim to know the nature of God while the Apostle Paul, who was “no mere layman in knowledge,” considers “all knowledge in this world as nothing more than “puzzling reflections in mirrors.”<sup>56</sup> Gregory believes that our knowledge is reflections because they are “small-scale images of reality” (ἐν μικροῖς τῆς ἀληθείας ἰσταμένην ἰνδάλμασιν).<sup>57</sup> Our knowledge is partial and mediated. This is a fact of the human constitution as embodied creatures who know via bodily senses and who attempt to know that which is supremely incorporeal and immaterial.

Gregory does think that some figures in Scripture “had a manifestly more brilliant knowledge than others not equally illuminated. This superiority was reckoned knowledge in the full sense, not because it really was so, but by contrast of relative strengths.”<sup>58</sup> The knowledge of even the most illumined individuals of Scripture is nonetheless to be deemed great in contrast to

---

<sup>51</sup> *Or* 28.19; Wickham, 234; SC 250:138.

<sup>52</sup> *Or* 28.19; Wickham, 235; SC 250:140.

<sup>53</sup> *Or* 28.20; Wickham, 235; SC 250:140.

<sup>54</sup> *Or* 28.20; Wickham, 235; SC 250:140.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Cor. 13.9.

<sup>56</sup> *Or* 28.20; Wickham, 52; SC 250:142. He quotes 1 Cor. 13.12.

<sup>57</sup> *Or* 28.20; Wickham, 52; SC 250:142.

<sup>58</sup> *Or* 28.27; Wickham, 58-9; SC 250:136.



those whose knowledge was little. Thus, on Gregory's account, knowledge should be understood in terms of degrees in the receiver, rather than a univocal knowledge that one either has or does not have.

## 2.5 Human Ignorance of Creation

In developing his particular anthropology that undergirds his understanding of theological discourse, Gregory offers an argument for the ultimate incapacity of human reason to comprehend God from the fact that humans fail to comprehend creation. In sum, Gregory maintains that if human reason cannot comprehend the λόγος of creation, even more so must human reason fail to comprehend the Creator of *that* creation. After examining his argument, I will analyze how, for Gregory, the incapacity of human reason to know God makes faith necessary for theological discourse.

Gregory states, in *Or* 28.5, that knowledge of the “bare outline” of creation may be possible in this life but with much difficulty.<sup>59</sup> Even though humans will one day come to know the reason or order (πάγιον λόγον) of creation, it may be argued that such an outline is impossible to possess in the present.<sup>60</sup> Gregory picks up this argument in *Or* 28.22-30 where he marshals the full force of his rhetorical education. He demonstrates his opponents' ignorance of creation and the concomitant absurdity of claiming to comprehend its Creator. He unleashes a forceful list of questions that demonstrate the mysteries of creation, such as the relationship between mind and body, the knower and the object known, the cause and origin of the appetites, and the capacity of food to nourish the body. Gregory asks whether his opponents comprehend these mysteries and paradoxes (παράδοξος) of the human person (*Or* 28.22), animals (*Or*

---

<sup>59</sup> *Or* 28.5; Wickham, 40; SC 250:110.

<sup>60</sup> *Or* 28.5; Wickham, 40; SC 250:110.

28.23), fish (*Or* 28.24), birds (*Or* 28.25), plants (*Or* 28.26), geological bodies (*Or* 28.27), the weather in the sky (*Or* 28.28), and the planets and the Sun in the heavens (*Or* 28.29-30).

Gregory expects that his opponents, and the audience, will quickly recognize the extent of human ignorance with respect to creation. Creation is full of mysteries and paradoxes, and humans fail to rationally explain or comprehend its order and principles. Gregory encapsulates in a statement his verdict on the capacity and extent of reason: “reason (λόγος) has no explanation of what upholds the world except the will of God.”<sup>61</sup> Human reason is inept in the face of the transcending explanation of creation, the will of God. So if one fails to comprehend with reason the explanations of the mysteries of creation, then how can the Eunomians expect to have comprehended its cause, the Prime Cause—the transcendent Creator.

## **2.6 Faith in the Face of Reason’s Weakness**

Epistemological weakness requires the assistance of faith for even understanding created things, let alone God. Gregory states,

if you have traversed the air and reckoned up all it involves, come now with me, touch heaven and things celestial. Faith (πίστις) rather than reason (λόγος) shall lead us, if that is, you have learned of the feebleness of reason to deal with matters quite close at hand, and have acquired enough knowledge of reason to recognize things which surpass reason. If so, it follows that you will not be a wholly earthbound thinker. . .<sup>62</sup>

If one has difficulty ascertaining the reality and truth of nature within our sensuous reach, how much less comprehensible are the heavens that lay beyond our reach. Gregory thinks that one must have faith when thinking about things beyond rational explanation and empirical investigation. But if faith is required to even understand the celestial bodies, how much more faith would be required to know God? λόγος is incapable to account for creation and, more so,

---

<sup>61</sup> *Or* 28.26; Wickham, 57; SC 250:158.

<sup>62</sup> *Or* 28.28; Wickham, 59-60; SC 250:164.

God. For Gregory, the theologian depends on faith when faced with mystery and paradox since some things transcend reason. This is not to say that Gregory thinks that anything which transcends reason is irrational, but that it escapes the rational capacities of a finite human mind.

Gregory goes so far as to say that theological discourse cannot even get off the ground without faith and without a recognition that reason is limited. He concludes the barrage of rhetorical questions by reiterating his thesis: “the nature of beings on the second level” is too much for the human mind, let alone “God’s primal and unique, not to say all-transcending, nature.”<sup>63</sup> Gregory desires a theological discourse that is characterized by humility in respect to the power of λόγος. In the concluding remarks of *Or 29*, Gregory states, “for when we abandon faith to take the power of reason as our shield...then reason gives way in the face of the vastness of the realities...Faith, in fact, is what gives fullness to our reasoning.”<sup>64</sup> Gregory seems to think that reason can only function in theological discourse when it recognizes its limits.

Gregory’s argument in *Or 28* indicates what he thinks the problem is with his opponents’ understanding of theological discourse. It seems that he thinks that reason, unrestrained by a recognition of its limitations, is the reason for his opponents’ theological conclusions. Norris suggests that he wants his opponents to give up logic-chopping for faith.<sup>65</sup> Which is to say, the Eunomians thought that the human person had the capacity through reason and logic to comprehend the divine nature.

Gregory further clarifies his problem with his opponents’ understanding of theological discourse and his own view of the limited capacity of reason. He develops an argument, in *Or*

---

<sup>63</sup> *Or 28.31*; Wickham, 63; SC 250:172.

<sup>64</sup> *Or 29.21*; Wickham, 88; SC 250:224.

<sup>65</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 88.

27.8, to show that the Eunomians err by believing that knowledge of God is easily grasped, and thus accessible to anyone by means of reason (λόγου) and study (θεωρίας). *Or* 27.8 is best interpreted in light of the concerted argument he makes throughout *Or* 28 for divine incomprehensibility, discussed above. He begins his dialectical argument by stating, “since you are so fond of talking and of the dialectic method, I will address a few questions to you.”<sup>66</sup> Gregory gives an analogy wherein God makes and fills various mansions in heaven with his glory, leaving none empty or vain (κενὰς καὶ μάτην). Christians arrive at these mansions by traveling along different roads (ὁδοῦς), which he identifies with different “proportions of faith” (τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως).<sup>67</sup> The knowledge of God, which he associates with God’s glory, is not according to proportions of reason, but of faith. He quotes Matthew 7:14, which states “there is one road and that a narrow one,” as proof that the way is only accessible (βατήν) to a few to travel upon. Even though his interlocutors agree that there is only one “way” (ὁδοῦς), they insist that it is divided into “many” parts (εἰς πολλὰ σχίζηται).<sup>68</sup> Despite advocating for many branches within the one path, which they define as reason and study, the Eunomians, according to Gregory, reject his own “branch” for its poverty. Gregory asks, “why is it that people like you condemn our doctrine for its alleged “poverty” (πενίαν) reject all the other ways, rush, pushing and shoving, along one way only, the road you think is that of reason and study (διὰ λόγου καὶ θεωρίας), as indeed you yourselves claim, but I say is of [garrulity] and [fancy talk] (ἀδολεσχίας καὶ τερατείας)?”<sup>69</sup> The Eunomians perceive Gregory’s restraint in

---

<sup>66</sup> *Or* 27.8; Williams, 31; SC 250:88.

<sup>67</sup> *Or* 27.8; Williams, 31; SC 250:90. Gregory associates glory and knowledge in *Or* 28.11.

<sup>68</sup> *Or* 27.8; Williams, 31; SC 250:90.

<sup>69</sup> *Or* 27.8; Williams, 31; SC 250:90. Williams unhelpfully translates the terms here as “Gossip and Sensationalism.”

speaking of the divine being as impoverishment. But he intends the imagery of poverty to indicate what he thinks the appropriate extent of theological knowledge should be (c.f. *Or* 27.10). Reason and study are limited in their capacity for deriving knowledge of God and inept in defining his being. This is not to say that Gregory is against λόγος or θεωρία. The theologian should be characterized by study<sup>70</sup> and reason can play a role in purifying the theologian.<sup>71</sup> Yet a theological discourse that does not recognize their limits and the essential role of faith will make false claims of divine knowledge.<sup>72</sup>

Following this theological account of the limits of human knowing, Gregory criticizes his opponents' faith (πιστεύω) in the power of logic (λογικός) to comprehend God.<sup>73</sup> Wickham renders λογικός as “methods of deductive argument.” Gregory is not against λογικός in general, as he explicitly articulates in *Or* 28.8, an inductive argument that he describes as ὁ λόγος. He defends the virtue of his argument for “mounting from consequences to first conditions (τὰ πρῶτα).”<sup>74</sup> Gregory also states that his opponents boast in being without measure (ἄμετρα), which is an indication of their pride for thinking they can rise to a level that only incorporeal beings can attain. It appears that Gregory is primarily concerned with his opponents' unwavering confidence in the power of λογικός. In his estimation, they fail to recognize humanity's condition.

In this section, I have analyzed the anthropology that undergirds Gregory's understanding of theological discourse. Humans, as those who are embodied, cannot comprehend God because

---

<sup>70</sup> *Or* 27.3; Williams, 27; SC 250:76.

<sup>71</sup> *Or* 28.1; Wickham, 37; SC 250:100.

<sup>72</sup> *Or* 27.1; Williams, 25; SC 250:72.

<sup>73</sup> *Or* 28.5; Wickham, 40; SC 250:110.

<sup>74</sup> *Or* 28.7; Wickham, 41; SC 250:114.

our predication presupposes creaturely notions that are alien to God's incorporeal, non-composite, and immaterial being. Gregory's formulation of true theological discourse recognizes the ultimate impotence of human rational faculties as embodied and the inability to detach oneself fully from the notions of corporeality. His theological discourse recognizes that God is incomprehensible (ἀπερίληπτος) to the human mind. What is at stake for him is "the incomprehensibility of deity to the human mind and its totally unimaginable grandeur."<sup>75</sup> In arguing this conclusion, he appeals to the patriarchs', prophets', and apostles' ignorance of the divine essence. Moreover, we saw how the incapacity of human reason to explain creation should lead one to affirm its incapacity to comprehend the creator of creation. Finally, this conclusion about the limits of reason, for Gregory, entails that theological discourse requires faith as the basis only upon which reason can properly function.

### **3. Theological Discourse and Soteriology**

We have thus far examined, in respect to theological discourse, Gregory's doctrine of God and doctrine of man. Gregory's soteriology is, as I will show, an outworking of these two doctrines. Although much can be said concerning Gregory's doctrine of salvation, and the role of Christ's incarnation, death, and resurrection, I will only address here those elements that relate to the thesis of this chapter. Section 3 will take the following arrangement. First, I will explicate Gregory's understanding of the correlation between purity and divine knowability. Second, I will show that Gregory thinks even the most pure are still unable to comprehend God. Third, I will give a definition of purity and the practices of purification. Fourth, I will show how desire to know God in the face of human enfleshment and embodiment generates the impetus for purification. Subsequently, I will examine the necessity of purification in light of the danger of

---

<sup>75</sup> *Or* 28.11; Wickham, 45; SC 250:122. Τὸ μὴ ληπτὸν εἶναι ἀνθρωπίνη διανοία τὸ θεῖον, μηδὲ ὅλον ὅσον ἐστὶ φαντάζεσθαι

idolatry in theological discourse. Finally, I will examine three of the four rules for theological discourse that Gregory gives in *Or 27* to better understand the salvific dimension of theological discourse.

Before examining Gregory's writings, it would be helpful for me to summarize, in general strokes, his, and then his opponents', position. Gregory understands the goal of theological discourse to be the salvation of the participant. Salvation is to know God but this terminus is problematized by his doctrine of incomprehensibility and his doctrine of anthropology. Since God is incomprehensible and knowledge of him is difficult to come by due to the frailty of the rational faculties and the intrusion of the corporeal into our thinking, Gregory develops a particular understanding of how one might arrive at this salvific vision of God that shapes his understanding of theological discourse. One may conclude, on the basis of the previous section, that Gregory thinks the human inability to comprehend God is merely an epistemological problem. Rather, he thinks that the difficulty, or impossibility, of knowing God runs deep into the moral condition of the human person as fallen. The moral fallenness has corrupted the extent and capacity of the rational faculties for knowing God, to the extent that is possible. But this fallen condition is not static. The moral agent can either further corrupt or enlighten their rational capacities through acts of pollution or purification, respectively. Which is to say, the more pure one becomes, the more one's rational capacities are liberated from notions of corporeality. Conversely, the more impure one becomes, the more one's thinking is polluted by corporeal notions, such as change, passivity, temporality, and materiality. Thus Gregory's theological epistemology, a component of his anthropology, is not a static and universal condition, but rather it is contingent, in part, on the moral condition of the knower.

As Gregory sees it, the Eunomians describe his theology as impoverished because it is moderated by his pessimistic view of the capacities of reason and the theological reality of God's incomprehensibility. They, on the other hand, think that anyone can have knowledge of God and his being, whether they are morally pure, or not. This amoral conclusion concerning the character of the theologian, as Gregory sees it, is a consequence of their exorbitant confidence in their rational faculties and a theology that assumes the divine essence can be delineated. One critical offshoot of their rationalism, as we might call it, is that, so long as one has received an education in dialectic, one can come to rationally comprehend God's being. Such confidence in the capacities of reason strips theology of any moral character. The result is that theological discourse is wide open to the impure masses merely trained in the dialectic method; and it need not be restricted to the few who have been, and are being, purified. Theological discourse, as so conceived, is stripped of its soteriological dimension and impetus. This is precisely what Gregory feared his opponents are promoting, as can be seen in his brusque attack on Eunomians' understanding of theological discourse and education throughout *Or 27* and *Or 28*.

### **3.1 The Correlativity of Purity and Divine Knowability**

We will now examine Gregory's presentation of the correlation between knowledge and purity in his autobiographical account of his struggle to know God at the beginning of *Or 28*. Speaking of his experience, he states, "I eagerly ascend the mount—or, to speak truer, ascend in eager hope matched with anxiety for my frailty—that I may enter the cloud and company with God (for such is God's bidding)..."<sup>76</sup> This passage encapsulates a number of the ideas already touched upon that factor into Gregory's understanding of theological discourse. First, it seems that although he desires to see God, he is aware of the weakness of his human faculties for such a

---

<sup>76</sup> *Or 28.2*; Wickham, 38; SC 250:104. c.f. *Or 37.3*.



task. Second, the destination of his ascent is to “company with God.” We have already seen above his discussion of keeping “company” with the ideal and how difficult, even impossible, it is to do so without bringing in corporeal notions into ones thinking.

One should note the salvific shape of this narrative. His point is to convey that knowledge of God is an end to which one progresses. But Gregory’s progress into the knowledge of God is determined by the degree of his purity. Speaking generally of this correlation, Gregory states, “his place matching his purity. . . Utterly unhallowed?—let him not come near, it is dangerous. Duly prepared?—let him abide below.”<sup>77</sup> As we saw above, Gregory describes himself as filled with trepidation because the knowledge of God is dangerous to those who are impure. He states that for “one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.”<sup>78</sup>

### **3.2 Incomprehensible to the Pure and Impure Alike**

Although Gregory emphasizes the influence of the knower’s purity on the degree to which God can be known, complete comprehension of the divine being is impossible in this life. He goes on to state, “I was running with a mind to see (καταλαμβάνω) God and so it was that I ascended the mount. I penetrated the cloud...”<sup>79</sup> Upon entering the cloud atop the mount, Gregory “scarcely” sees the backside of God (μόλις εἶδον Θεοῦ τὰ ὀπίσθια).<sup>80</sup> While hiding in the rock—the Word Incarnate, Gregory asserts that he did not see the “prime nature, pure” (οὐ τὴν πρώτην τε καὶ ἀκήρατον φύσιν) because the Trinity alone apprehends its own nature.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>77</sup> *Or* 28.2; Wickham, 38; SC 250:104; c.f. Poem 1.1.10, *De Patre* (PG 37, 397-401)

<sup>78</sup> *Or* 28.1; Williams, 37; SC 250:100.

<sup>79</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 39; SC 250:106.

<sup>80</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 39; SC 250:106.

<sup>81</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 39; SC 250:106.

He states, “peering in [to the cloud] I saw not the nature, self apprehended (by “self” I mean the Trinity, the nature as it abides within the first veil and is hidden by the cherubim...”<sup>82</sup> But even though Gregory ascends high upon the mount, penetrating the cloud, he is not privy to the inner sanctum of divine knowledge within the veil, and neither are the cherubim. For God is, in his being, incomprehensible, as established in section 1. Only the Trinity comprehends its own divine nature. This point is further illustrated when he states,

“but mentally (διάνοια) to grasp (περιλαμβάνω) so great a matter [God] is utterly beyond real possibility even so far as the very elevated (τοις λίαν ὑψηλοῖς) and devote are concerned, never mind slack and sinking souls. This truth applies to every creature born, to all beings whose view of reality is blocked by this gloom (ζόφος), this gross portion of flesh (σαρκίον). Whether higher, incorporeal natures can grasp it (κατανοέω), I do not know.”<sup>83</sup>

Notice here that Gregory connects grasping (περιλαμβάνω) with the mind (διάνοια) as an activity that appropriately characterizes the “very elevated” (τοις λίαν ὑψηλοῖς).<sup>84</sup> The “elevated” are those who, in some sense, are moving upwards towards a state of purity. Their elevation is symbolic imagery for their greater progress in moral purification that results in a cleansing from the infusion of corporeal notions in their thinking. What is important to note is that the less one is hindered by corporeality, like the angelic creatures, God is more knowable. Interestingly Gregory uses the term “flesh” (σαρκίον) to denote that which blocks the divine vision. Even the purest of Christians are blocked from grasping God because of flesh. The human predicament for Gregory is ignorance of God as a result of embodiment but also imprisonment in the flesh. He states, quoting Lamentations 3.34, “Yet we “prisoners of the earth” . . . pent in this

---

<sup>82</sup> *Or* 28.3; Wickham, 39; SC 250:106.

<sup>83</sup> *Or* 28.4; Wickham, 39; SC 250:108.

<sup>84</sup> *Or* 28.4; Wickham, 39; SC 250:108.

gross portion of flesh (σαρκίον).”<sup>85</sup> The flesh is that element of the human condition that will be done away with after death and that was introduced after the fall of humanity from the paradisaical state.

### 3.3 Defining Purity

So what does Gregory think that it means to be pure? He gives us some indication in *Or* 27.7:

Do we subordinate the inferior element in us to the better—I mean, the dust to the spirit, as we should if we have returned the right verdict on the alloy (κράμα) of the two which is our nature? Do we make life a meditation of death? Do we establish mastery over our passions, mindful of the nobility of our second birth? Do we tame our swollen and inflamed tempers? Or our pride which “comes before a fall,” or our unreasonable grief, our crude pleasures, our dirty language, our undisciplined thoughts, or anything in ourselves which the Evil One can take over from us and use against us, “bring in death through the windows,” as Scripture has it, meaning through the senses?<sup>86</sup>

True theological discourse can only be had by individuals who practice Christian virtue and the spiritual disciplines, such as fasting, charity, almsgiving, and prayer.<sup>87</sup> The pure are those who correctly order their soul in relation to their body, the former mastering the latter. The pure also master the passions, such as anger, grief, and pleasure, speech, and wondering thoughts. Gregory indicates that the body and soul mutually influence each other, and that the body, in particular, can act as a window for letting impure things into the soul. Thus, for Gregory, bodily senses pose a danger to the Christian, because through bodily senses a Christian can be controlled and overtaken, even by the devil. As we saw earlier, the embodied condition itself prohibits a true vision of the divine because our thoughts of incorporeal realities, most importantly, God, are

---

<sup>85</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 45; SC 250:124.

<sup>86</sup> *Or* 27.7; Williams, 30; SC 250:86-8. Norris points to Plato’s *Phaedo* 67b in the discussion of Gregory’s notion of purification: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 89.

<sup>87</sup> *Or* 27.7; Williams, 30; SC 250:86-8.

constantly intruded by bodily images and connotations. Gregory understands moral impurity to exacerbate this baseline problem that besets everyone, including the theologian. The more a mind is mastered by bodily passions, those things which come in through the “windows” or senses, the less the mind can conceive of abstract ideas. This problem is acute for Gregory in the case of the theologian who wishes to contemplate divine things, such as the divine titles. Christian purity becomes a necessary mechanism for thinking about God in a way that is free from creaturely concepts that admit corporeality, composition, mutability, and temporality.

### **3.4 The Impetus for Purification**

Gregory speculates that this fleshly human condition was intended by God as the impetus for purification. For without this condition, humanity would have had a pellucid rational faculty, capable of a far greater extent of divine knowledge than that of enfleshed humanity. He states, “so that those who have in this world been cleansed (καθαίρω), may look forward in patience to some greater prize for the brilliant labors of their lives.”<sup>88</sup> Purification is a necessary process for Christians who seek to grow in knowledge of God, and this earthly struggle is rewarded in the beatific vision.

As we have already sketched above, the Eunomians, on Gregory’s account, felt that they had already arrived at a definitive knowledge of God, having comprehended the divine being as unoriginate. Thus, in Gregory’s understanding of the soteriological component of theological discourse, they would no longer be in need of purification. He mockingly asks, “who was it who thus opened his mind’s mouth and drew in the Spirit, that by the Spirit which searches out and knows God’s depths he might comprehend (καταλαμβάνω) God, might stand in no need of further progress as owning already the ultimate object of desire (τὸ ἔσχατον ὄρεκτὸν) towards

---

<sup>88</sup> *Or* 28.12; Wickham, 45-6; SC 250:124.

which speeds all a lofty soul's thought (διάνοια)...?"<sup>89</sup> The answer for Gregory is no one. But the Eunomians think they have in fact comprehended the depths of God. It is here that Gregory perceives the theological consequences of admitting divine comprehensibility and an outsized confidence in human reason. Their understanding suggests that the flesh is no longer something to be morally overcome and one's attachment to the body is no longer a struggle for the Christian. Theological discourse ceases to be an activity of coming to know God, a process of ever increasingly pure thoughts about God, an ever greater union that climaxes in the eschaton with an eternal vision of God, and this vision is a pure knowledge of, but not a complete comprehending of, that divine nature and being. Gregory may here be suggesting that one cannot intellectually desire what one already comprehends, and thus the pure are marked by a desire for God. Gregory thinks it absurd that one can comprehend (καταλαμβάνω) the ultimate object of desire, namely, God in this life.

Gregory speculates, in *Or* 28.17, about the extent of eschatological knowledge of God. He states, "the discovery [of God's essence and nature] will take place, so my reason tells me, when this God-like, divine thing, I mean our mind and reason, mingles with its kin, when the copy returns to the pattern it now longs after. This seems to me to be the meanings of the great dictum that we shall, in time to come, "know even as we are known."<sup>90</sup> Gregory indicates that what he means by "copy" is that "God-like, divine thing, I mean our mind and reason" that returns to its archetype.<sup>91</sup>

### 3.5 Impurity and Idolatry

---

<sup>89</sup> *Or* 28.6; Wickham, 41; SC 250:110.

<sup>90</sup> *Or* 28.17; Wickham, 49-50; SC 250:134.

<sup>91</sup> *Or* 28.27; Wickham, 58-9; SC 250:134.

The necessity for purification to engage in sound theological discourse is heightened by the danger of idolatry. Gregory identifies idolatry as the result of a misdirected desire to comprehend God.<sup>92</sup> He thinks that “every thinking being longs for God, the first cause,” but those who, not content with their incapacity “to grasp him (καταλαμβάνω),” look to “things visible and makes of these a god.”<sup>93</sup> He explains that idolatry is the result of desire met with failure to grasp or comprehend God. Visible creation is supposed to be a guide, but is often a snare, as humans elevate what they see to the status of deity. The good desire for God is undermined, according to Gregory, when the devil misdirects desire away from God to both creatures and the devil himself. He states, “this was the Evil One’s trick, to use good for a bad end . . . He caught at their unguided longing to search for God, meaning to divert power to himself and cheat the desire of theirs.”<sup>94</sup> Idolatry occurs when one fails to be led up by the beauty, order, and grandeur of the visible creation to a knowledge of God. Others discover “God through the beauty of things seen, using sight as a guide to what transcends sight without losing God through the grandeur of what it sees.”<sup>95</sup> For Gregory, creation was divinely intended to function anagogically, to lead the Christian up from the visible and corporeal to the invisible and incorporeal in their return to, and union with, God. Gregory clearly sees the corporeal and visible creation as a good when it properly functions to this divine end.

What we have seen so far is that Gregory understands moral purity to be, in part, a state of the mind that is characterized as the near absence of corporeal notions in one’s thoughts about

---

<sup>92</sup> *Or* 28.12-16; Wickham, 45-8; SC 250:124-36.

<sup>93</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 46-7; SC 250:126-8.

<sup>94</sup> *Or* 28.15; Wickham, 48; SC 250:130-2.

<sup>95</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 46-7; SC 250:126-8.

God. Since God is incorporeal, a mind clouded by corporeal notions will fail to know him. Thus, purification is an essential foundation for theological discourse. It is in this sense, that soteriology undergirds Gregory's understanding of theological discourse, as it determines the shape and goal of theology. But, as has been stated, even the most pure are not able to comprehend God.

### **3.6 Rules for Theological Discourse**

What does this mean for theological discourse? Since theology is a salvific means of coming to know God, there must be certain rules that guard its practice from abuse and error. In *Or 27.3*, Gregory gives four rules for theological discourse that indicate his problem with his opponents' practice of theology, and, more importantly, their presuppositions about theological discourse. He asserts, “discussion of theology (Θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν) is not for everyone. . . it is no such inexpensive or effortless pursuit. Nor, I would add, is it for every occasion, or every audience; neither are all its aspects open to inquiry.”<sup>96</sup> The four pre-conditions of theological discourse are character, occasion, audience, and extent. Norris holds that Gregory is laying out the rules of rhetoric after the model set by Aristotle, which he outlined in the *Rhetoric*.<sup>97</sup> The rules for rhetoric, according to Aristotle, were “an educated speaker, a proper occasion, an appropriate audience and selected subjects.”<sup>98</sup> I would go beyond Norris and argue that Gregory's conscious patterning of theological discourse after Aristotle's fourfold rules is because of their suitable and practical encapsulation of Gregory's doctrinal commitments. I will now

---

<sup>96</sup> *Or 27.3*; Williams, 27; SC 250:76.

<sup>97</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 90.

<sup>98</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 90.

briefly examine the first three and will not address the rule concerning extent because I have already addressed that theological issue for Gregory above.

The first rule is the *character* of the theologian that should be marked by, in order of importance, purity and study.<sup>99</sup> Theologians are those who “have found a sound footing in study (θεωρία), and, more importantly, have undergone, or, at the very least, are undergoing purification of body and soul.”<sup>100</sup> He criticizes his opponents in *Or 27* not merely because they propound a different, albeit, wrong practice of theological education, but also because they fail to produce theologians who are capable of knowing God because they are not concerned with purification. On Gregory’s account, the Eunomian approach to theological education and crass approach to theological discourse is a manifestation of a deeper set of theological assumptions, the nexus of their belief in divine comprehensibility, the power of human reason, and the fact that they think they have already arrived at a comprehending knowledge of God.<sup>101</sup> Their practical rules—or, in the eyes of Gregory, lack thereof—for engaging in theological discourse reflect these divergent theological commitments.

The second rule is the need for an appropriate *audience*. Gregory delivers his *Theological Orations* in a public setting, for all who are present in the church. Gregory states, “who should

---

<sup>99</sup> *Or 27.3*; Williams, 27; SC 250:76.

<sup>100</sup> *Or 27.3*; Williams, 27; SC 250:76. According to Norris, the term θεωρία, which Wickham renders “study,” indicates both formal education and spiritual meditation. Norris takes up Gregory’s emphasis on study and identifies it with the notion *paideia*, which he seems to argue is Gregory’s central concern in *Or 27*. Norris argues that although “spiritual purification is the ultimate goal” for the Christian, “that emphasis does not minimize [Gregory’s] debate” over παιδεία with the Neo-Arians. Norris is correct that Gregory and the Eunomians disagree over the nature of *paideia* and the relationship of dialectic to rhetoric, but he fails to articulate the theological reason for their disagreement and the flippancy of Gregory’s opponents: *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 86-9.

<sup>101</sup> *Or 27.2*; Williams, 26; SC 250:72-4.



listen to discussions of theology? Those for whom it is a serious undertaking, not just another subject...<sup>102</sup> Theology is a serious endeavour because it pertains to the salvation of the participant. For Gregory, the contemplation of the divine, which is, in part, process of returning to God, is the goal of salvation, and should not be treated light-heartedly. The gravitas of theological discourse is underscored, for Gregory, by the ease with which an impure audience misinterprets biblical truth:

Why do we allow audiences hostile to our subject-matter to listen to discussion of the “generation” and “creation” of God, or of God’s “production from non-being,” and such dissections, and distinctions, and analyses? . . . How, I ask you, will such a discussion be interpreted by the man who subscribes to a creed of adulteries and infanticides, who worships the passions, who is incapable of conceiving of anything higher than the body, who fabricated his own gods only the other day, and gods at that distinguished by their utter vileness? What sort of construction will he put on it? Is he not certain to take it in a crude, obscene, material sense, as is his wont? Will he not appropriate your theology to defend his own gods and passions?<sup>103</sup>

The error of the Eunomians is that they talk about God in front of non-believers who inevitably interpret Christian doctrine as teaching materialistic or corporeal ideas about God.<sup>104</sup> Gregory is primarily concerned with the way the Eunomians’ audience will understand talk of the creation by, and the generation of, the Son of God. He holds that discourses on God must be free from these material conceptions that the heathen assume. A theologian must, for his audience, remove from their speech “all alien (τὸ ἀλλότριον) elements.”<sup>105</sup> These alien things consists of anything that promotes a materialistic or passible conception of God.

---

<sup>102</sup> *Or* 27.3; Williams, 27; SC 250:76.

<sup>103</sup> *Or* 27.6; Williams, 29-30; SC 250:86-8.

<sup>104</sup> Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 93. Norris suggests that these dissections and distinctions are Gregory’s primary concern.

<sup>105</sup> *Or* 27.7; Williams, 30; SC 250:86-8.

The third rule is the correct *occasion* for theological discourse. In a critical passage, Gregory characterizes the proper environment and mental state of the theologian: “What is the right time? Whenever we are free from the mire and noise without, and our commanding faculty is not confused by illusory wandering images, leading us, as it were, to mix fine script with ugly scrawling, or sweet-smelling scent with slime. We need actually “to be still” in order to know God...”<sup>106</sup> The occasion that Gregory determines to be ideal for theological discourse portrays his assumption about the divine nature as incorporeal and the human persons frail, and often misled, faculties of reason, and the way the proper undertaking of theological contemplation is a means of knowing God.

### **Conclusion**

Gregory’s opponents assume that through the use of logic or reason, one can circumscribe the divine being, and thus determine *what* it is. That is, they can completely and exhaustively grasp the being or nature of God. In dissent, Gregory concludes concerning the capacities of the human mind, in light of the incircumscribability of God, that it “gazes in impotence at what lies beyond its powers.”<sup>107</sup> Humans are “powerless to grasp him” (καταλαβείν δὲ ἀδυνατεῖ).<sup>108</sup> We have seen that, before broaching the doctrine of the Trinity *per se*, Gregory articulates a specific understanding of theological discourse and the concomitant practices for undertaking it. His theological discourse built upon, as I have demonstrated, three doctrines. The first pillar is Gregory’s resolute affirmation that God’s being is incomprehensible. The second pillar is a doctrine of humanity that recognizes the finite and embodied mode of knowing whereby neither

---

<sup>106</sup> *Or* 27.3; Williams, 26; SC 250:76. Ps 46 (45): 10(11); Ps 75 (74):2 (3).

<sup>107</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 46; SC 250:128.

<sup>108</sup> *Or* 28.13; Wickham, 46; SC 250:128.

humans, nor any creature, can comprehend God's nature and being. The third pillar for Gregory's understanding of theological discourse is a particular understanding of salvation as witnessed through a process of purification that results in a greater, but not complete, knowledge of God. His soteriology recognizes that theological epistemology is shaped by the moral condition of the knower and that, as a result, theologians must seek to purify themselves and their concepts of anything that is foreign to the nature of God. As I analyze of Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity in respect to the divine persons (chapter 2) and the *homoousios* (chapter 3), keep in mind the way Gregory's particular understanding of theological discourse and its undergirding doctrines shape his conclusions and his stance of faith in the light of the incomprehensible mystery of the divine persons and their unity and equality.

## Chapter 2

### **The Role of Divine Titles in Gregory's Understanding of Divine Persons**

In chapter one, I argued that Gregory's trinitarian theology cannot be hived off from his theology of theological discourse, which he develops in *Or 27* and *Or 28*. Chief among Gregory's concerns is to curtail the epistemological hubris of his opponents by showing that the divine being is incomprehensible. We also saw how Gregory's theological discourse is as much about correct thinking and speaking about God as it is about understanding the moral and ontological condition of the human person, and the salvific component of knowing and speaking about God. This discussion of Gregory's theological discourse has set the stage for analyzing Gregory's understanding of the trinitarian relations.

Gregory makes two fundamental affirmations that seem to be in tension: (1) there is origination in the Trinity and (2) the divine persons are equal. If the Son and Spirit are *from* the Father, then how can they be equal with the Father? Are they not in some sense subordinate to the Father? And would not origination imply a hierarchy of the persons that could be cashed out in terms of subordination of will or being? It is my contention to show that these two principles are congruent in Gregory's thought and that they do *not* result in a hierarchy of being, will, or power and activity. Fundamentally, we are seeking to uncover what precisely Gregory means when he speaks of the trinitarian relations and how they should be conceived. Thus, in this chapter, I will show how Gregory moves from the divine titles of "Father" and "Son" to a particular understanding of the divine persons. His understanding, as I will argue, is that the divine persons are consubstantial and subsistent relations of origin. Beyond this, Gregory does not offer an account of the persons that would promote social relations under the rubric of authority-submission or egalitarianism. I will undertake this by first examining what the divine

titles “Father” and “Son” do not indicate, and then what they do indicate, namely (1) differences in divine persons, (2) correlativity of the relations, (3) identity of substance, and (4) the origination of the Son and Spirit from the Father. In section (4), I will discuss the uniquely divine mode of the Son’s and Spirit’s origination as atemporal, incorporeal, impassible, incomprehensible, and free of compulsion.

### **1. What The Divine Titles Do Not Signify: The Divine Substance**

To better understand Gregory’s account of the trinitarian relations, we must first assesses how Gregory understands the biblical language of Father and Son, what they do and do not refer to. One of the critical questions that Gregory wrestles with is the relationship between peculiar divine properties, such as ingeneracy, and the divine being. His opponents work from the epistemological assumption that the divine being can be comprehended, and from there they move to a definition of the divine being as “unbegottenness.” According to McGuckin, Gregory’s opponents defined the divine being as “unbegottenness” (Ἀγεννησία)<sup>109</sup> and, it is vital to note, that they assumed it was synonymous with “unoriginateness” (ἀναρχος Θεός).<sup>110</sup> Since the Son is not unbegotten but, in fact, begotten, he cannot be the same substance as the unbegotten Father, so they argue. Gregory succinctly summarizes their position: “if ingeneracy (ἀγέννητος) is the substance of God (οὐσία Θεοῦ), generacy (γεννητός) is not his substance.” Since “ingenerate and generate are not the same (οὐ ταὐτόν)...the Father and the Son cannot be the same thing.”<sup>111</sup> Gregory addresses both the capacity of human language to name the divine being

---

<sup>109</sup> Synonymous with “ingenerateness.”

<sup>110</sup> McGuckin, “Perceiving Light from Light in Light,” 19.

<sup>111</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8.

and the relationship of the title “unbegotten” to the divine substance in his response to this argument against the Father and Son’s consubstantiality.

Gregory objects to the Eunomians’ underlying assumption by reaffirming divine incomprehensibility and by giving two arguments from *reductio ad absurdum*.<sup>112</sup> His first argument is that if the divine substance is defined as “unbegottenness” (ἀγεννησία), then other divine attributes, such as “immortality, innocence, and immutability,” must also be divine substances in their own right. Second, if, on the other hand, one insists that all the divine attributes define a single divine being, then God is a composition (σύνθετος) of all these attributes.<sup>113</sup> It seems that both of Gregory’s objections take issue with a particular theory of divine predication, one that admits the human capacity to univocally name the divine essence, as we saw in chapter 1. The result of univocal language is that either there are multiple divine substances, each with its own divine attribute, or one must compromise God’s simplicity by making God an aggregate of substances that are each respectively a different one of the divine attributes. Moreover, he points out that his opponents fail to make the distinction between the adjective “unbegotten” (ἀγέννητος) and the noun “unbegottenness” (ἀγεννησία).<sup>114</sup> Gregory thinks that if “unbegotten” is a noun, then it must be said of the substance, but if it is an adjective, then it must not. Gregory is attempting the critical maneuver of relocating the attribute of ingeneracy away from the Eunomians’ claim of its co-extension with the divine being in order to make the Begotten’s consubstantiality with the Unbegotten a logical option. Insofar as the

---

<sup>112</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8. For a detailed discussion of this argument, see Edgars Narkevics, “*Skiagraphia*: Outlining the conception of God in Gregory’s *Theological Orations*.” In *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, ed. Jostein Børtnes and Tomas Hägg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006), 83-112.

<sup>113</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8.

<sup>114</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8.

divine substance is defined as unbegotten, the Begotten one cannot be divine. Thus, since the divine substance can neither be exhausted nor circumscribed by a definition, Gregory holds that God's being cannot be defined by the attribute "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος) nor any other subsisting property.

Another argument that Gregory marshals, in *Or* 29.11, is a brief analysis of the term ἀγέννητος, showing that it is a negative assertion (μὴ ὄντος ἀναίρεσιν).<sup>115</sup> As such, according to Gregory, ἀγέννητος simply means that the Father has no parent, and does not positively predicate anything of the Father. McGuckin correctly points out that Gregory is indicating that the term unbegotten is a relational predicate, not an essential predicate, which I shall address below.<sup>116</sup> But even the name "Father" cannot designate the divine substance. Applying the same logic Gregory used in analyzing ἀγέννητος, he states, "for if we say that it names the substance (οὐσία) we shall then be agreeing that the Son is of a different substance."<sup>117</sup> Thus, we can conclude that Gregory does not think that either the names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit or their respective attributes of unbegotten, begotten, and procession are predicated of the divine substance. If this is the case, then what does Gregory think the names and peculiar properties designate?

## **2. What The Divine Names Do Signify: The Divine Persons**

After clearing away the mistaken assumption that unbegotten is predicated of and defines the divine substance, Gregory shows that the divine titles are predicated of unique subsisting hypostases. The Father and Son are distinguished (τέμνω) not in the divine substance, but in

---

<sup>115</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:198.

<sup>116</sup> McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 19.

<sup>117</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

their peculiar subsisting properties (ὑπάρχω).<sup>118</sup> For Gregory, unbegottenness is attributed to the Father alone, and not the divine substance, and so too the attribute of begottenness is attributed to the Son alone.<sup>119</sup> In *Or* 29.12, Gregory asserts that “the difference lies outside the substance of God...”<sup>120</sup> Gregory insists that when we investigate in what God’s being consists, an immovable property, relationship, and particular existence (τῆς ιδιότητος ἀκινήτου) should not be considered.<sup>121</sup> For Gregory, the Father, Son, and Spirit each have distinct particular properties that are unchanging. As such, the property of begetting is eternally an attribute of the Father. So too the begottenness of the Son is unchanging of him. He uses the term ἀκίνητος to characterize the particular existence, indicating that whatever the ιδιότητος is, it subsists immutably. Two of the critical and technical terms that Gregory uses are ιδιότης and ἴδιος, both of which indicate a personal property or name. Gregory thinks that the Father, Son, and Spirit are marked by and only distinguished by their peculiar properties of begetting, being begotten, and proceeding. Gregory recognizes that he must avoid the error of absolutizing the singularity of God by defining the divine being as undifferentiated. He states, “The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases (ὑποστάσεων) within the single nature (μὲν φύσει) and quality of the Godhead. . . The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in personalities (Ἐν τὰ τρία θεότητι, καὶ τὸ ἕν τρία ταῖς ιδιότησιν).”<sup>122</sup> Gregory identifies hypostases with ιδιότης, or what Wickham renders “personalities,” as distinct from the single nature and Godhead. Daley states that for Gregory, “God is, at the heart of this eternal and

---

<sup>118</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8.

<sup>119</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:198.

<sup>120</sup> *Or* 29.12

<sup>121</sup> *Or* 29.12

<sup>122</sup> *Or* 31.9; Wickham, 123; SC 250:292.



unchanging reality, three “individuals” (ὑποστάσεις, hypostases), whose very individuality is defined simply by their relationships to each other: three “*personae*” (πρόσωπα) or agents. . .”<sup>123</sup> In *Or* 25.16, Gregory states. “the special characteristic (ἴδιος) of the Father is his ingenerateness, of the Son his generation, and of the Holy Spirit its procession.”<sup>124</sup> Each divine persons is individuated by their unique ἴδιος. The names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit also designate their unique characteristics not shared in common. Gregory states in *Or* 31.9, “the very fact of not being begotten, of being begotten and of proceeding, give them whatever names are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively.”<sup>125</sup> What Gregory is saying is that the very names themselves are given on account of the things which they signify—the divine origins of begetting, begotten, and procession. Moreover, they are not distinguished on account of lack (λείπον), but on account of their differing manifestation (ἐκφάνσεως) and mutual relationship (πρὸς ἀλλήλα σχέσεως).<sup>126</sup>

The difference between the Father and both the Son and Spirit is that he is unbegotten,<sup>127</sup> but Gregory recognizes that it is not so clear where the difference lies between the Son and the Holy Spirit. Gregory attempts to identify the difference between the generation of the Son and the procession of the Holy Spirit, although both are characterized by origination, in defining the

---

<sup>123</sup> Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 46.

<sup>124</sup> *Or* 25.16; trans. by Martha Vinson, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003), 172; SC 284:198. Another word in this passage that Gregory uses to indicate the uniqueness of each divine person is μοναδικός. Gregory is contrasting those attributes that are ἴδιος with those that are κοινὸν (common or shared) by the three, namely, divinity and uncreatedness (γεγονέναι).

<sup>125</sup> *Or* 31.9; Wickham, 123; SC 250:290.

<sup>126</sup> *Or* 31.9; Wickham, 123; SC 250:290.

<sup>127</sup> *Or* 25.16.

Spirit's procession as a half-point between the unoriginate and generation.<sup>128</sup> Gregory goes to great lengths to show, against the criticism of his opponents, that the Son and Holy Spirit are not brothers.<sup>129</sup>

### 1. Divine Titles and Correlativity

Gregory's understanding of the Trinity seems to be largely dependent on his understanding that the designations Father, Son, and Holy Spirit refer to relations of origin. I will seek to address what Gregory means by relation before analyzing his understanding of origination. Much has been made of the term "relation" in modern trinitarianism, whereby the divine persons relate to each other in a way analogous to the social relations of fathers and sons.<sup>130</sup> Of course the proponents of the social analogy recognize points of convergence and divergence between divine-person-relations and human-relations, but the ascription of personhood to the divine persons and the conception of "relation" is fundamentally different from what Gregory has in mind. As we will see, he has a very different conception of "relation" and the "person" that fundamentally cuts against a social conception of the trinitarian relations, whether the community is cashed out in an equalitarian or hierarchical structure as both conceive of the divine person as irreducibly social. This modern notion of the relations will also be challenged by my analysis of the ὁμοούσιος in chapter 3.

Gregory is working within a tradition, stemming from Origen, through Athanasius, who conceived of the Father and Son as correlative relations. The notion of relation finds its theoretical origin in Aristotle. He writes in *Categories* 6b28: "relatives are spoken of in relation

---

<sup>128</sup> *Or* 31.8; Wickham, 122.

<sup>129</sup> *Or* 31.7-8, 10-11.

<sup>130</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 363.

to correlatives that reciprocate. For example, the slave is called slave of a master and the master is called master of a slave. . .”<sup>131</sup> According to Aristotle, relatives can be indicated by the genitive, such as ὁ δούλος δεσπότητος δούλος λέγεται.<sup>132</sup> He goes on to write “relatives seem to be simultaneous by nature (Δοκεῖ δὲ τὰ πρὸς τι ἅμα τῇ φύσει εἶναι), and in most cases this is true. For there is at the same time a double and a half, and when there is a half there is a double, and when there is a slave there is a master; similarly with the others. Also, one carries the other (συναναίρει) to destruction.”<sup>133</sup> The idea is that a relation requires two terms, for instance, master and slave. Each term signifies the other. An individual cannot be a master without having a slave. The fittingness of this logic within trinitarian discourse is immediately obvious. Thus it was taken up by Christian thinkers when conceiving of the relationship of the Father and Son, and, with greater difficulty, of the Holy Spirit.<sup>134</sup> A father cannot be father without being the father *of a son*. So too, a son is always son *of a father*. If there is a father, it follows that there is a son. These two terms are correlatives insofar as each has mutual reference to the other. A father and a son or a master and a slave is a mutual or correlative property. Gregory was persuaded by the doctrine of the Father’s and Son’s correlativity, and found in it a critical conceptual framework for further developing his Pro-Nicene theology.

---

<sup>131</sup> J. L. Ackrill, trans., *Aristotle: Categories and De Interpretatione* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 18; *Categories* 6b28; Harold P. Cook, trans., *Aristotle: Categories of Interpretation and the Posterior Analytics* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1942), 48.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *Categories* 7b15

<sup>134</sup> For a discussion of the correlativity of the Father and Son, as it developed from Origen through to Athanasius, see Peter Widdicombe, *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 1-8, and throughout.

The Eunomians, according to Gregory in *Or* 29.16, deny the Son's ontological equality with the Father, insisting that the biblical language of "Father" signifies either the divine substance or a divine activity. Gregory states, "for if we say that it names the substance (οὐσία) we shall then be agreeing that the Son is of a different substance, there being a single substance and that one, according to [the Eunomians], preempted by the Father. But if we say that the term designates the activity (ἐνέργεια), we shall clearly be admitting that the Son is a creation (ποίημα) not an offspring (γέννημα)."<sup>135</sup> Gregory sees these alternatives as a false dichotomy. He proposes a third option: the name "Father" designates a relation (σχέσις) and not "the substance (οὐσία) or the activity (ἐνέργεια)."<sup>136</sup> The signification "Father," according to Gregory, "designates neither the substance nor the activity, but the relationship, the manner of being, which holds good between the Father and the Son (ὄνομα ὁ Πατήρ . . . σχέσεως δὲ καὶ τοῦ πῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὸν Υἱὸν ὁ Πατήρ, ἢ ὁ Υἱὸς πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα)." In response to identifying "Father" as an ἐνέργεια, Gregory indicates that by understanding "Father" as a "relation," he can maintain the ὁμοούσιος (consubstantiality) of the Father and Son. The divine persons are the relations and the relations are the divine persons. Which is to say that both the Father and Son share the same substance but the names themselves refer to their mutual relations.<sup>137</sup> After asserting σχέσις as the alternative to the false dichotomy between οὐσία and ἐνέργεια, Gregory goes on to show that even if he settled for the Eunomian dilemma between

---

<sup>135</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

<sup>136</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210. For a discussion of Gregory's understanding of the Spirit as an agent and not a divine activity, see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, "The Holy Spirit as Agent, not Activity: Origen's Argument with Modalism and its Afterlife in Didymus, Eunomius, and Gregory of Nazianzus." *Vigiliae christianae* 65 (2011) 227-248.

<sup>137</sup> This conclusion runs in the face of John Meyendorff who argues, without evidence, that the Greek theologians did not define the divine persons in terms of relations: *Byzantine Theology*, 184.

οὐσία or ἐνέργεια, the notion (ἐννοια) of Son would still be present on account of the correlative meaning “Father.”<sup>138</sup> He states, “let it be granted that “the Father” is a substance. That idea will bring in the Son along with it, not alienate him.”<sup>139</sup>

We get greater clarity on Gregory’s understanding of the divine relations by his analysis of father-son relations in humans. In *Or* 29.5, Gregory points out that the human relations (σχέσις) of fathers and their offspring both begin and dissolve.<sup>140</sup> It seems that Gregory thinks that, after dissolving in reality (πρᾶγμα), the relations of father and son remain only logically.<sup>141</sup> In contrast to the relation of human fathers and sons, Gregory seems to be suggesting that the divine Father-Son relation is most real (πρᾶγμα) because they are not capable of dissolution nor did they begin, and thus they are most properly considered Father and Son. The Father and Son relation (σχέσις) is an eternal reality in God. So in the case of God the Father, “Father” designates a subsistent relation *of the Son* and “Father” does not designate the divine substance in which the relation of ‘Father’ inheres. Fatherhood in God, for Gregory, is not an attribute inhering in, nor is it the definitional essence of, the divine substance. What is important to note in this instance of σχέσις is that Gregory is suggesting, as we will see later, that the Father-Son relation eternally exists in reality, and not merely as a logical relation. We can conclude from this that Gregory thinks the divine persons as relations are co-ordinate realities, each mutually dependent on the other.

---

<sup>138</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

<sup>139</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

<sup>140</sup> *Or* 29.5; Wickham, 72; SC 250:184.

<sup>141</sup> *Or* 29.5; Wickham, 73; SC 250:184.

Moreover, for Gregory, the paternity of the Father and the sonship of the Son are the most proper designations because the Father is not a son and the Son is not a father. Human fathers are, aside from Adam, always sons and sons are capable of becoming fathers. Humans can have multiple relations over time that begin and end, and so they are not identified essentially with either the relation of father or son. But in the case of the Father and Son, they are most properly said to be as such because paternity and sonship most fittingly signify the reality that they are.

In *Or* 30.18, Gregory makes a distinction between absolute names and relational names.<sup>142</sup> Gregory seems to indicate that the divine name—‘He who is’ (ὁ ὢν)—is the preeminent designation for the divine being, more fitting than “God,” because ὁ ὢν is not a relational name, but absolute. Gregory states, “we are making deeper inquires into a nature (φύσιν) which has absolute existence (τὸ εἶναι καθ’ ἑαυτό), independent of anything else (οὐκ ἄλλω συνδεδεμένον).”<sup>143</sup> He indicates that the divine nature is that which exists according to itself, which is to say, God is self-existent, not receiving existence from anything else. Moreover, he indicates that the self-existent nature cannot be συνδέω, literally ‘bound together,’ with anything else. That is, if God were bound together with something else, his existence would not be on account of himself but dependent on that to which he was related. By drawing this distinction between absolute names and relational names, Gregory seeks to safeguard the divine being from entering into a relation with something else that is temporal. For Gregory the personal being of God (ἴδιον ὄντως Θεοῦ) is not related to anything (τῷ πρὸ αὐτοῦ), on account of which it would be limited and it would cease to be self-subsistent.<sup>144</sup> Gregory is here distinguishing

---

<sup>142</sup> *Or* 30.18; Wickham, 108; SC 250:262.

<sup>143</sup> *Or* 30.18; Wickham, 108; SC 250:262.

<sup>144</sup> *Or* 30.18; Wickham, 108; SC 250:264.

between names that are predicated of God that indicate a relation with creation, and to that extent do not properly designate God's nature. An example of relational names are "God" and "Lord" that Gregory gives here, using the technical term *πρός τι* in order to indicate a correlative relation between two things. We are now in a better position to discuss with a little more clarity Gregory's understanding of the divine persons as *σχέσις* who are to (*πρός*) one another.

The divine name, in addition to the many other divine titles, are common (*κοινός*) to the divine 'persons' in contrast to the "personal names" of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.<sup>145</sup> Gregory makes a contrast between names that are *κοινός* and *ἴδιον*. In *Or* 31.9, Gregory seeks to address the question of what constitutes the difference between the Son and Holy Spirit. His opponents are eager to assert that the Spirit must lack something in respect to the Son in order to be distinguished from the Son. Gregory states, "it is their difference in, so to say, "manifestation" or mutual relationship, which has caused the difference in names (*τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλα σχέσεως διάφορον, διάφορον αὐτον καὶ τὴν κλήσιν πεποίηκεν*)."<sup>146</sup> One must note that the *διάφορος* lies in their relation with each other and not with respect to the divine substance. Thus, the divine relations of Father, Son, and Spirit are each absolute being, since, as Gregory thinks, they have the divine name in common.

## **2. Divine Titles and Identity of Kind:**

The meaning of divine person as subsistent relations provides an important but incomplete analysis of Gregory's conception of the divine persons of the Trinity. The biblical language of "Father" and "Son" do not only indicate, for Gregory, their correlativity but also their substantial identity and the Son's origination from the Father. This dual-indication of the Father-Son

---

<sup>145</sup> *Or* 31.9; Wickham, 123; SC 250:202.

<sup>146</sup> *Or* 31.9; Wickham, 123; SC 250:202.

language is indicated by Gregory when he states in *Or* 30.20 that “he is called “Son” because he is not simply identical in substance with the Father, but stems from him.”<sup>147</sup> For Gregory, the name ‘Son’ is the best and only word that indicates the Son’s origination *from* and consubstantiality *with* the Father,<sup>148</sup> and their correlativity as indicated above. On account of Gregory’s understanding of the appellation “Son,” let us turn first to his substantial identity with the Father, and next to his origination from the Father.

One of the prominent arguments forwarded by Gregory’s opponents against understanding God as Father and Son was the creaturely connotations of such familial language. It was taken for granted by both parties that God is not a creature, and thus the merit of such language was debated. Gregory recognizes that some will attribute “corporal ideas” to the trinitarian relations when they attempt to trace the similarities between God as Father and Son and human fathers and sons. He suggests that it was in the theological interests of his opponents to amplify the creaturely unfitting characteristics of familial language.<sup>149</sup> Thus, to identify God with Father and Son posed a dilemma for Gregory and his allies. In order to respond to this objection, Gregory asserts a principle for trinitarian theology on the basis of a distinction between the divine names (ὀνόματα) and the realities (πράγματα) that those names signify: not everything that a name signifies when attributed to God obtains.<sup>150</sup> The principle is so obvious to Gregory that his opponents’ neglect of this principle in their understanding of the Father-Son language is worthy

---

<sup>147</sup> *Or* 30.20; Wickham, 109; SC 250:266. λέγεσθαι Υἱὸς μὲν, ὅτι ταῦτόν ἐστι τῷ Πατρὶ κατ’ οὐσίαν, καὶ οὐκ ἐκείνο μόνον, ἀλλὰ ἀκείθεν.

<sup>148</sup> Here Gregory brings together causal language of ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ with the word ὁμοούσιος. *Or* 31.7; Wickham, 121; SC 250:288.

<sup>149</sup> *Or* 31.7; Wickham, 121; SC 250:288.

<sup>150</sup> *Or* 31.7; Wickham, 121; SC 250:288.



of mockery: “it does not follow that we ought to think it essential to transfer wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names of human family ties.” He goes on to ask whether God is a man on account of the masculine Greek word for ‘God’ and ‘father,’ or whether the Godhead or the Holy Spirit is respectively feminine or neuter because of the Greek word’s gender.

In arguing for the correct signification of the biblical language of “Son” as indicative of substantial identity, Gregory must overcome the apparent contradictory meanings of unbegotten and begotten. He shows, in *Or* 29.10, that they are, in fact, not merely non-contradictory, but indicate a mutual identity of being. The error of his opponents is to interpret unbegotten (ἀγέννητος) and begotten (γεννητός) to mean “unoriginate” (ἀναρχον) and “created” (κτιζόμενον). The latter pair, as the Eunomians are correct to hold, could not have the same “nature” (φύσις).<sup>151</sup> For whatever is created cannot be what is without origin. On the other hand, offspring (γέννημα) have the same nature (φύσις) as their parents (γενέτης).<sup>152</sup> We see in this a clear distinction between what it means to be created and to be begotten. Creation, for Gregory, seems to indicate an ontological coming into being, whereas begetting does not. Gregory states, “these must be the same, it is in the nature of an offspring to have a nature identical with its parents.”<sup>153</sup> Gregory is not arguing that human fathers and sons are the same thing, ontologically, but rather that, as in the case of human parents and offspring, the offspring is the same kind of thing as its progenitor. Gregory’s argument is to show that Father and Son are ontologically the same thing (ταυτός).<sup>154</sup> We get another argument in *Or* 29.16, directly after the

---

<sup>151</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196.

<sup>152</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196. See Michel R. Barnes, *The Power of God: Δύναμις in Gregory of Nyssa’s Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC: Catholic University Press, 2001) 15.

<sup>153</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196.

<sup>154</sup> *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196.

argument that ‘Father’ designates a relation, where Gregory asserts that the common usage of the terms “father” and “son” point to an identity of kind. He states, “just as with us these names indicate kindred (γνήσιος) and affinity (οἰκεῖος), so here too they designate the sameness of stock, of parent and offspring (τήν τοῦ γεγεννημένου πρὸς τὸ γεγεννηκὸς ὁμοφυΐαν σημαίνουσιν).”<sup>155</sup>

The Eunomians find Gregory’s argument that the common meaning of father-son language connotes identity of kind unconvincing because they think that (1) the definition of the divine substance is unbegotten and (2) for the Son to also be God in the way that the Father is would compromise the unique identity of God as unbegotten. Gregory seems to object to their premises by appealing to a counter illustration from the biblical account of Adam’s formation by God. Although he was the only human to be moulded (πλάσμα) by God, which is a unique and peculiar attribute reserved for him alone, Adam is not the only human “because manhood is not formation.”<sup>156</sup> Which is to say, to be “moulded” by God is not the essence of human nature. Gregory is saying that the definition or nature of species is not determined by the unique peculiar attribute of any one member. The Eunomians would have to agree that Adam’s unique identity as πλάσις does not define humanity as such, for that would entail the idea that Adam was the only human. Thus, even though Adam is unique in his formation by God, that which is begotten (γεννηθὲν) of him is equally human despite not having the unique attribute of divine formation.

This argument regarding Adam suggests that for Gregory not all knowledge of God is negative and that some analogies can be made between God and his creation. The critical issue for us is determining what Gregory thinks is analogous and what is not. Although Gregory is

---

<sup>155</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

<sup>156</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:198.

using the distinction between human nature in general and individual humans, namely humanity and Adam, we should not infer that Gregory conceives of the divine persons as individuals of a generic divinity. The distinction between nature and the particular only characterize creatures, and cannot be used of God. Gregory's emphasis in these passages is *only* on the ontological sameness that is indicated by Father-Son and begetter-begotten language, rather than on the genus-individual logic. The point of the illustration is that just as human nature is not defined by Adam's unique attribute of divine formation, the divine nature is not defined by the Father's unique identity as ἀγέννητος, and that what the Father is, so too is the Son because parents beget offspring after their own kind. Thus, Gregory concludes, "it is not the case that the unbegotten and only the unbegotten is God."<sup>157</sup> Since the begotten, Gregory argues, is "from God" (ἐκ Θεοῦ), thus "even the Begotten is God" (καί τὸ γεννητὸν εἶναι Θεόν).<sup>158</sup> Gregory is also clear that the divinity of the Son does not compromise the unicity of the Father as "unbegotten," no more than Adam's offspring would compromise his unique attribute of being formed by God. While only Adam is πλάσμα, it follows that only the Father is unbegotten and only the Son is begotten (and only the Spirit is procession).

Following the same logic of familial identity, in *Or* 30.20, Gregory explains that the Son is the "concise and simple revelation of the Father's nature—everything born is a tacit definition of its parent" by correlating the Son as the word to the Father. What Gregory intends to show is that if you know what the Son is, you will know what the Father is, because that which is begotten has the same nature as its parent. Gregory also thinks that 'Word' language is indicative of substantial identity. In *Or* 30.20, Gregory explains why the Son is referred to as λόγος. He

---

<sup>157</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:198.

<sup>158</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:198.

states, “He is “Word,” because he is related to the Father as word is to mind. . . One could say too, perhaps, that his relationship is that of a definition (ὄρος) to term defined (ὀριζόμενον).”<sup>159</sup> Gregory’s opponents argue that if the Son is to the Father as word is to mind, then the Son must be a product of the Father’s will and not a product of the same being. He would have been aware of this argument, and thus he here suggests that if we understand “word” to be a definition in respect to an account of a thing’s nature, then the Son could be to the Father as a word is to mind. In evidence of this, Gregory points to John 14:9, which he renders “he who has known the Son has known the Father.” With this meaning of ‘Word’ as “definition”, Gregory interprets this passage to mean that what the Son is, is the definition of the Father. So not only is there a correlative relation between the Father and his Word, but also the Word is definitional of the Father. What the Word is, the Father is.

### **3. Divine Titles and Origination:**

Since I am arguing that Gregory understands the divine persons as consubstantial relations of *origin*, and since I have already analyzed the relational component, I will now analyze Gregory’s conception of divine origination. Father-son language indicates the Father’s and Son’s consubstantiality (ὁμοούσιος), but, as noted above, in *Or* 30.20 and *Or* 31.7, familial language also indicates that the Son is *from* the Father. In order to maintain the absolute divine equality of the three divine persons, Gregory thinks the origination of the divine relations must be conceived in a very specific way. For Gregory, divine origination is emphatically *divine* in its mode, without any hint of inferiority or subordination, otherwise all three would not be the fullness of the

---

<sup>159</sup> *Or* 30.20; Wickham, 109; SC 250:206. c.f *Or* 38.13, the Son is “the definition and explanation of his Father.” See also Vinson, 139; *Or* 23.11 where Gregory states, “the nature of divinity is one and the same, characterized by lack of source, generation, and procession (these correspond to mind, word, and spirit in humans, at least insofar as one can compare things spiritual with things perceptible and things that are very great with those that are small, for no comparison ever represents the true picture exactly).”

Godhead in themselves.<sup>160</sup> The Son's generation from the Father gave rise to stock arguments that the Son is not consubstantial or coequal with the Father. In order to establish the equality of the divine persons *in* the Son's and Spirit's originations, Gregory must clear away misconceptions about the nature of divine origination. As we will see, he argues that divine origination is (1) atemporal, (2) incorporeal, (3) impassible, (4) free of compulsion, and (5) it is incomprehensible. One's conclusions about the mode of divine origination, for Gregory, do not merely determine the divine status of those who are *from* but also the one who is *origin*. Gregory tirelessly shows that any attempt to predicate the aforementioned creaturely attributes to the divine origination more generally, and more specifically the Son's generation, will compromise the Father's atemporality, incorporeality, impassibility, freedom, incomprehensibility, and identity as Father. The Son's origination from the Father is, for Gregory, most naturally the first line to defend; only after correcting his opponents' understanding of the Son does he then in *Oration 31* turn to defend the origination of the Holy Spirit. Most of the following analysis is taken from Gregory's rehabilitation of the Son's generation. Gregory is attempting to re-conceive of origination in a way that is fitting of God.

### **3.1. Atemporality:**

Does the generation of the Son or procession of the Spirit involve any measure of time? The first characterization of divine origination, as Gregory understood it, is that it is absolutely atemporal. First, in *Or 29.3*. Gregory addresses the question "*when* did these last two [the Son and Spirit] originate?"<sup>161</sup> According to Gregory, his opponents erroneously believe that the Son's generation and the Spirit's procession are temporal activities. As a result, both the Son and Spirit

---

<sup>160</sup> This claim will be substantiated later in this chapter.

<sup>161</sup> *Or 29.3*; Wickham, 71; SC 250:180. The emphasis is my own.

are not to be identified with the monarchy (μοναρχία), mentioned earlier in *Or* 29.2.<sup>162</sup> Yet Gregory contends that whatever the generation and procession are, they “transcend whenness.” Which is to say, the Son’s begetting (γεννάω) and Spirit’s procession (ἐκπεπόρευται) are eternal and non-temporal activities within God.<sup>163</sup> Gregory seems to define time in terms of the division (μεριζόμενον) and measurement (μετρούνον) of a unit that involves the sun’s motion.<sup>164</sup>

Gregory goes onto present a possible objection to the co-eternality of the Son and Spirit with the Father. According to Gregory, his opponents object that if they are co-eternal (συναίδια), then they must also be “co-unoriginate” (συνάναρχα).<sup>165</sup> Both Gregory and his opponents take as a given that there can only be one Unoriginate (ἀναρχα).<sup>166</sup> Gregory seems to define “Unoriginate” as that which does not have a cause (αἴτιος).<sup>167</sup> In order to avoid positing multiple unoriginates, Gregory explains that, since the Son and Spirit are “from him” (ἐκείθεν) and not “after” (μετά) him, they are not συνάναρχα with the Father.<sup>168</sup> Thus, the three are συναίδια while the Father alone is ἀναρχα. This objection indicates that his opponents assume that ἀναρχα is the precondition for eternity. Said differently, that which is eternal must be without an origin (ἀναρχα) and that which has an origin (ἀρχή) cannot be eternal. In order to overcome this, Gregory discerns that (1) his definition of eternity must not exclude origination

---

<sup>162</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:180.

<sup>163</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:180.

<sup>164</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:180.

<sup>165</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

<sup>166</sup> *Or* 29.2-3; Wickham, 70-1; SC 250:180-2.

<sup>167</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182. Οὐκ ἀναρχα οὖν τῷ αἰτίῳ.

<sup>168</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

and that (2) origination need not require temporal extension. Gregory employs Aristotelian logic in order to distinguish between eternity and unoriginate, arguing that anything that is unoriginate is eternal, but not everything that is eternal is unoriginate. Although he is himself *ἀναρχα*, Gregory states, “the Father is referred to as origin (*ἀρχή*)” of the Son and Spirit.<sup>169</sup> Thus, according to Gregory, eternity and origination are not mutually exclusive attributes.

Second, Gregory gives a brief argument that origination need not require temporal priority or posteriority. He states, “a cause is *not* necessarily prior (*πρῶτον*) to its effects—the sun is not prior to its light. Because time is not involved, they are to that extent unoriginate (*ἀναρχα*)...for the sources of time are not subject to time (*χρόνος*).”<sup>170</sup> The sun and its light is a common image that Gregory appeals to when discussing the co-eternity of the divine persons because of the apparent simultaneity of cause and effect.<sup>171</sup> Thus even though the Father is in a very specific sense the cause (*αἴτιος*) of the Son, and thus the origin (*ἀρχή*) of the Son, Gregory insists that the Father’s begetting of the Son does not involve time. In *Or* 30.19, Gregory states, “the personal names of the unoriginate (*ἀναρχος*) is “Father”; of the eternally (*ἀνάρχως*) begotten, “Son”; of what has issued, or proceeds, without generation, “the Holy Spirit.”<sup>172</sup> Gregory describes the mode of the Son’s generation as *ἀνάρχως* after identifying the Father as *ἀναρχος*.

---

<sup>169</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

<sup>170</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182. Δῆλον δὲ τὸ αἴτιον οὐ πάντως πρῶτον τῶν ἐστὶν αἴτιον...Καὶ ἀναρχά πως τῷ χρόνῳ...οὐ γὰρ ὑπὸ χρόνον τὰ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χρόνος. The emphasis is my own.

<sup>171</sup> We see in this appeal to light imagery an explicit affirmation of the Nicene formulation of “light from light.”

<sup>172</sup> *Or* 30.19; Wickham, 109; SC 250:266.

When considered under the category of time, Gregory holds that even the Son and Spirit are considered unoriginate (ἀναρχα) because they are both with the Father the source of time. Gregory seems to be suggesting that something can be said to be ἀναρχα in two different respects: (1) something which is without a cause and (2) something which is not posterior. The confusion of the Eunomians, according to Gregory, is to conflate these two possible meanings of ἀναρχα, and thus exclude the Son from divinity because he is not (1) without a cause. Thus, when speaking of the trinitarian relations, Gregory intends for us to understand by the term ἀναρχα that which does not have a cause, and when speaking of the Trinity in respect to creation, they are without cause and posteriority. Thus, Gregory can conclude that the Father, Son, and Spirit are coeternal while not compromising the unique identity of the Father as unoriginate when considered under the category of causality.

In *Or* 29.9, Gregory gives another argument for the eternity of the Son's origination from the Father. He responds to the hypothetical statement, "[the Son] either existed or did not exist when the Father begat him."<sup>173</sup> The reason Gregory's opponents may have presented this false dichotomy was because, as Gregory proceeds to argue, they failed to conceive of the Son's begetting as an atemporal activity, not conditioned by being and non-being in creaturely substantial change. Gregory cites John 1:1-2 that speaks of the Word as being with the Father "from the beginning." He argues against his opponents that their question is a contradiction that assumes a temporal generation. He indicates that if the Son preceded his generation by some kind of existence, in the way that humans in some sense pre-exist themselves in the matter of which they come about from, then something would pre-exist the "beginning." But if something is prior to the beginning, so Gregory argues, then it is not really the beginning. He states, "what

---

<sup>173</sup> *Or* 29.9; Wickham, 77; SC 250:192.



point is there prior to “from the beginning” to fix the existence or non-existence of the Son? Either way the notion of “from the beginning” will be destroyed . . . You must appreciate that it is even stupider to be correcting people on the subject of whether or not what has been begotten from “from the beginning” existed prior to its begetting. This question only arises in connection with temporally determined beings.”<sup>174</sup> The beginning, for Gregory, indicates an eternal state in which the Son is begotten, and thus there can be nothing prior to the beginning.

We get further insight into Gregory’s understanding of the eternal nature of the Son’s and Spirit’s origination in *Or 29.5* where he discusses the temporal relations of fathers and offspring. According to Gregory, his opponents seem to believe that if God is a Father, then he must have begun to be so at sometime. This assumption about the nature of fatherhood is, as Gregory suggests, derived from human experience with men wherein they are for a time not a father and then at another time become a father at the moment when they beget children. Thus, his opponent objects, “Can anyone be a “father,” without beginning to be one?”<sup>175</sup> Gregory takes to the task of correcting the concept of fatherhood in such a way that will be congruent with the eternal fatherhood of the Father who eternally begets the Son, not becoming Father, but always being Father. Gregory asserts that it is possible for someone to be a father without starting to be one at some point in the past. He states, “what begins to exist begins to be a father.”<sup>176</sup> Since what the Father is did not begin to exist, the Father did not begin to be Father. Gregory thinks the correlativity of the Father, Son, and Spirit require the three to be eternal, and thus, “if one existed

---

<sup>174</sup> *Or 29.9*; Wickham, 77; SC 250:194

<sup>175</sup> *Or 29.5*; Wickham, 72; SC 250:184.

<sup>176</sup> *Or 29.5*; Wickham, 72; SC 250:184.

from the beginning, so did all three.”<sup>177</sup> Moreover, Gregory argues that the Father *is* Father in the proper sense (κυρίως) because he did not begin to be so and he is not a son; likewise, the Son *is* Son in the proper sense (κυρίως) because he not a father and did not begin to be Son.<sup>178</sup>

Although Gregory is clear that the Son’s and Spirit’s origination from the Father is eternal, in that it does not begin or end, and that it is not a temporal activity that can be measured, and that the begetting of the Son and proceeding of the Spirit is simultaneous with the Father, Gregory does seem to describe generation and procession as indivisible and immeasurable extension (διάστημα; which literally means “to stand through”).<sup>179</sup> What seems to motivate Gregory to assert this? It seems that Gregory is attempting to maintain the unity of the begetter and begotten, the originator and the originated—in the eternity of the origination—all the while maintaining that there is a *genuine* origination. If there was no extension, so Gregory seems to be hinting at, there would be no irreducible distinction between the originator and the originated. He concludes that the generation is characterized by διάστημα and yet it is not capable of being measured or divided because its mode is a “non-temporal way (ἀχρόνως)” that “transcends explanation” (ὑπερ λόγον).<sup>180</sup> As we have already seen in chapter one, Gregory is concerned with affirming the incomprehensibility of the divine nature—that the divine being cannot be grasped by human reason. We see here Gregory following the principles of theological discourse that he has laid out in *Oration 27* and *28* by maintaining the Son’s eternal generation and Spirit’s eternal procession are within the veil of divine mystery, incomprehensible to the λόγος of the

---

<sup>177</sup> *Or* 31.3; Wickham, 119.

<sup>178</sup> *Or* 29.5; Wickham, 72; SC 250:184; c.f *Or* 25.16, *Or* 39.12

<sup>179</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

<sup>180</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

human mind. In this Gregory is insistent that the origination of the Son and Spirit from the Father is eternal or, stated negatively, non-temporal.<sup>181</sup>

### **3.2. Incorporeal:**

But where does the similarity between divine and human generation lie? And what is the difference? Gregory immediately demands his opponents drop “ideas of flux (ῥέω), division (διαιρέω), and cleavage (τομός), drop the habit of treating the incorporeal nature as if it were a body and you might well get a worthy notion of God’s begetting.”<sup>182</sup> Gregory here identifies three attributes that plague the Eunomians’ concept of generation, all of which presuppose corporeality and composition. But since, as we have already discussed in chapter 1, God is not corporeal, then composition, change, division, and cleavage cannot be predicated of the Son’s generation (or the Spirit’s procession). Most of Gregory’s discussion of divine origination is centred on the Son’s generation from the Father because it is, on account of the obviously non-divine attributes of creaturely generation, most susceptible to misunderstanding. The Son’s eternal generation, Gregory concludes, is unlike any created thing as indicated by his identity as the “Only-begotten.” Gregory states, “he is “Only-begotten” (Μονογενής) not just because he alone stems uniquely from what is unique, but because he does so in a unique fashion unlike things corporeal.”<sup>183</sup> Gregory maintains that the Son’s generation involves no division in God. For Gregory, divine origination is unlike any created corporeal thing in its mode.

### **3.3. Impassible:**

---

<sup>181</sup> *Or* 29.3; Wickham, 71; SC 250:182.

<sup>182</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 76; SC 250:192.

<sup>183</sup> *Or* 30.20; Wickham, 109; SC 250:206. See also *Or* 40.42.

After asserting that generation is eternal, Gregory addresses another objection to the Son's consubstantiality which asserts that begetting involves the state of being "passible" (ἐμπαθής).<sup>184</sup> To Gregory's audience, the concept of "generation" (γέννησις) was charged with passion, and bodily and emotional changes and affects. Divine passibility was uniformly rejected by Pro-Nicene and Anti-Nicene parties in the 4th-century trinitarian debates.<sup>185</sup> Gregory defends the generation of the Son as impassible in a number of passages but *Or 29.4* is most notable. Gregory's opponents assume that generation involves passibility. Since God is impassible, so his opponents' argument goes, and since generation involves passibility, the Son is not God. In an earlier passage, Gregory asserted that the Father's causality concerning the Son does not involve temporal division cause and effect.<sup>186</sup> But here it seems that Gregory is here concerned with causation considered under the category of change. Gregory defines passibility as the corporeal affects from external causes whereby the body undergoes changes from one state to another. But in reply to this objection, Gregory states, "if corporeal begetting implies subjection to change, an incorporeal one must be free of it."<sup>187</sup> For Gregory, only bodies are subject to passivity, to receiving something from without that produces an affect in the subject. Thus Gregory rejects the passibility of the Son's generation by insisting, as detailed above, that the Son himself and his generation is incorporeal, and thus the Son's generation is impassible.

---

<sup>184</sup> *Or 29.4*; Wickham, 72; SC 250:182.

<sup>185</sup> See the excellent study by Paul Gavrilyuk, *The Suffering of the Impassible God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), see the conclusion.

<sup>186</sup> *Or 29.3*; Wickham, 71; SC 250:180.

<sup>187</sup> *Or 29.4*; Wickham, 72; SC 250:182.

Gregory also counters this objection by arguing that even “creating” (κτίζω), as used in common parlance, connotes passibility.<sup>188</sup> So too, Gregory insists on being consistent in his articulation of both creation and generation. He argues that one must interpret both God’s activity of creating and the Son’s generation as impassible, not admitting any affect from without. The problem with holding that the Son could not have been impassibly generated is that the one would have to logically accept that God’s creation of the world involved passion, as both are activities of God. One of the assumptions at work in Gregory’s argument is the Son’s divinity. If the Son is God, and God is incorporeal, then the Son is incorporeal. If the Son is incorporeal, and if only corporeal beings are subject to affects from without, then the Son’s generation is also impassible. Speaking of the Father, Gregory goes on to say, “one whose being is not the same as ours has a different way (τούτῳ) of begetting as well.”<sup>189</sup> Thus, Gregory seems to suggest that the qualitatively distinct being of God is the basis for the difference between the mode of the Son’s generation and human generation. Gregory also suggests in *Or* 30.20 that the Son is called Word because there is an analogy between the impassibility of a mind generating a word and the impassibility of the Father begetting the Son. He states, “He is “Word,” because he is related to the Father as word is to mind, not only by reason of the undisturbed character of his birth (τὸ ἀπαθὲς τῆς γεννήσεως). . .”<sup>190</sup> One’s understanding of the Son’s generation, according to Gregory, must be free of those things common to creaturely bodies, namely, passibility.

### **3.4. Free of Compulsion:**

---

<sup>188</sup> *Or* 29.4; Wickham, 72; SC 250:182.

<sup>189</sup> *Or* 29.4; Wickham, 72; SC 250:184.

<sup>190</sup> *Or* 30.20; Wickham, 109; SC 250: 266.

In *Or* 29.6-7, Gregory responds to a dichotomy proposed to him by his opponents that the generation of the Son was either voluntary or involuntary. The Eunomians insist that the divine origination of the Son (and Spirit) is a product of the Father's will and not of his being. The result is that the Son is not God because his being is contingent on the Father willing him to be.<sup>191</sup> Speaking of the Father, Gregory states, "if, [his opponents] say, it was involuntary, he was in someone's power...But if it was voluntary, the Son is son to a will; so how can he stem from the Father?"<sup>192</sup> Gregory here employs a genitive of cause with "voluntary" (θελήσεως) in order to indicate that the cause is the will, rather than the Father himself. He reasons that if the will is from another, then the Son cannot be "from the Father" (ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς).<sup>193</sup> Gregory and his opponents agree that if anything external to God is a principle of his actions, then God is not ultimate primacy.<sup>194</sup> God must be free from all external compulsion. In his rebuttal, Gregory argues that even his opponents are presented with the same dichotomy. He states, "did *you* come into existence as a result of your father's willing it, or without his will?"<sup>195</sup> Gregory goes on to apply the same logic to God's creation of the world, asking them whether it was a voluntary or involuntary act. For Gregory, the problem for his opponents is that they fail to distinguish

---

<sup>191</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 73; SC 250:186.

<sup>192</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 73; SC 250:186.

<sup>193</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 73; SC 250:186.

<sup>194</sup> Gregory is very aware of the implications of utilizing certain words for doctrinal formulations that would suggest that the Son's and Spirit's originations from the Father was an involuntary act. For instance, in *Or* 29.2, Gregory identifies the preferred "Christian terms" for God as "the unbegotten" (τὸ ἀγέννητον), "the begotten" (τὸ γεννητόν), "what Proceeds" (ἐκπορευόμενον) because these terms, he asserts, safeguard against notions of involuntary (ἀκούσιος) emanation, a non-Christian philosophical understanding of God: Wickham, 70; SC 250:180.

<sup>195</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 74; SC 250:186.

between “subject of motion” (a participle) and the “motion itself” (a noun).<sup>196</sup> He states, “we make a distinction, I think, between “willing” (θέλων) and “a will” (θέλησις), between “begetting” (γεννῶν) and “begotten” (γέννησις), between “speaking” (λέγων) and “speech” (λόγος).”<sup>197</sup> Gregory seems to say that “will” belongs to the subject who does the willing, and thus the Son belongs to the Father as the subject who begets. Moreover, Gregory seems to suggest that in creatures the subject and the activity are metaphysically distinct but in God the subject and the activity are identical. He states, “what belongs to God transcends all these cases even. For him begetting may well just be the will to beget—but without anything intervening (μέσον).”<sup>198</sup> He suggests that his opponents’ question can be resolved by identifying γέννησις with θέλησις in God. Whereas in creatures a space or distinction exists between our willing to beget and the act of begetting, in God these are identical. Thus, Gregory is keen to conclude that there is no superiority between willing and begetting because they are identical in God. The Son who is begotten by the Father is not a product of the Father’s will because the Father’s will of the begetting and the act of begetting itself are not distinct in God. Once again, Gregory demonstrates his creative ability to discern errors in analogical reasoning from creatures to God. That is to say, what is meant by the Father's begetting of the Son must be purified of notions that are incongruent with God’s nature as non-composite. Gregory extends this logic to an analysis of the Father’s identity as Father.<sup>199</sup> According to the logic of the Eunomians, God is Father on account of either volition or compulsion. But as is the case of the identity between the

---

<sup>196</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 74; SC 250:188.

<sup>197</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 74; SC 250:188.

<sup>198</sup> *Or* 29.6; Wickham, 74; SC 250:188.

<sup>199</sup> *Or* 29.7; Wickham, 75; SC 250:190.

will of God and his activities, Gregory asserts that so too the identity of the Father is neither subject to volition or compulsion on account of his simplicity.

### 3.5. Incomprehensible

Lastly, Gregory understands divine origination to be incomprehensible, in the same way that the divine being is incomprehensible. Every one of the previous apophatic clarifications of the nature of divine origination—that it is eternal, incorporeal, non-composite, impassible, and free of coercion—suggest the fundamental doctrine of divine incomprehensibility. Having dedicated much of chapter 1 to an analysis of Gregory’s understanding of the necessity for and articulation of divine incomprehensibility, it is merely my task here to show that Gregory extends to the Son’s and Spirit’s originations from the Father that same veil of incomprehensibility. This is precisely what Gregory does in *Or* 29.8, where he asserts that the Son’s generation is incomprehensible. Everyone of the previous questions concerning the nature of the Son’s generation from the Father have presupposed, on the part of Gregory’s opponents, the human capacity to comprehend the Son’s origination, either under the category of time, quantity, change, or volition. This problematic assumption is epitomized in Gregory’s articulation of their most fundamental question: “[h]ow, then has he been begotten?”<sup>200</sup> Gregory’s reply is indicative of his entire approach to theology, that is, his theology of theological discourse: “This begetting would be a triviality (οὐκ...μεγάλη) if it could be understood (καταλαμβάνω) by you, who have no knowledge of your own genesis and are ashamed to explain in full the limited (μικρόν) understanding (καταλαμβάνω) you have.”<sup>201</sup>

---

<sup>200</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 75; SC 250:190.

<sup>201</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 75; SC 250:190; cf. *Or* 20.10-11, where Gregory states, concerning the Son’s and Spirit’s origination, “what we are thinking and talking about defeats my powers of speech!”



One of the errors that Gregory ascribes to the Eunomians is their inability to believe something if it cannot be grasped by reason.<sup>202</sup> He states, “if you make [divine generation’s] incomprehensibility a ground for denying the fact, it is high time you ruled out as non-existent a good number of things you do not understand, the chief of which is God himself.”<sup>203</sup> Gregory turns their principle back onto them, mocking them for failing to comprehend creaturely realities, and even their own human generation. He states, “explain these [creaturely generations], and even then you are not able to treat (φιλοσοφώ) of God’s begetting. . . For if you know your own, it by no means follows that you know God’s; and unless you know your own, how could you know God’s. The heavenly begetting is more incomprehensible than your own...”<sup>204</sup> Gregory here indicates three things germane to our study. First, God’s begetting is not comprehensible according to human reason. Second, we must know something of our generation in order to think about the Son’s generation. Gregory is clear that there is some resemblance between the divine Son’s generation and creaturely generation, as discussed above. Third, the divine Son’s generation is not identical to human generation. While Gregory is willing to admit that we can know something of the Son’s generation on account of knowing our own, in the final analysis, it remains fundamentally incomprehensible. Earlier in *Or* 29.4, Gregory states that the Son is “divine and unutterable (ἀνεκλόλητον).”<sup>205</sup> Gregory consistently applies his unqualified affirmation that God is incomprehensible to the Son’s generation, since the Son is God. Thus, for the Eunomians to deny the Son’s generation because its manner is not comprehended, they must

---

<sup>202</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 76; SC 250:192

<sup>203</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 76; SC 250:192

<sup>204</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 75; SC 250:192.

<sup>205</sup> *Or* 29.4; Wickham, 72; SC 250:182.

logically deny the reality of God altogether. Gregory concludes that the Son's generation is incomprehensible and thus it "ought to have the tribute of our reverent silence... As to the way it happens, we shall not concede that even angels, much less you, know that."<sup>206</sup> Only the Father and Son know the manner in which the generation occurs.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

I have argued in this chapter that Gregory has a very specific understanding of the divine persons. He conceives of them as correlative subsistent relations of origin. The origination of the Son and the Spirit from the Father is, for Gregory, understood in a very narrow sense, completely free of all creaturely attributes and thus neither compromising their divinity nor their consubstantiality with the Father and each other. The Father's begetting of the Son and the procession of the Spirit is eternal, incorporeal, simple, impassible, without compulsion, and utterly incomprehensible. Although it may leave much to be desired, this is Gregory's account of the "how" of the Son's and Spirit's origination. Gregory is concerned to maintain the absolute equality of the Son and Spirit with the Father, without any hint of subordination. This chapter has sought to show the lengths to which Gregory argues against such misconceptions in his articulation of the divine persons that arise from inappropriate applications of creaturely concepts, illustrations, and analogies.

---

<sup>206</sup> *Or* 29.8; Wickham, 76; SC 250:192

### Chapter 3

#### The Role of the the *Homoousios* in Gregory's Understanding of the Divine Equality and Unity

In the previous chapter, we analyzed Gregory's understanding of the divine titles and how they give rise to a particular understanding of divine persons as subsistent, consubstantial relations of origin. We saw how Gregory argues for the consubstantiality of the Father and Son on the basis of the meaning of their divine titles. With this, we have a preliminary sketch of Gregory's understanding of the trinitarian relations. But this description is incomplete. I will now examine the function of consubstantiality in Gregory's trinitarian theology in securing the divine equality and unity. In this chapter, I will argue that the ὁμοούσιος guarantees the divine persons' (1) equality and (2) unity. It is difficult to ascertain what precisely Gregory believed concerning the unity and equality of the divine persons because he did not consistently describe them. He describes the Father as the source of the unity and equality of the divine persons, yet he also speaks about the ὁμοούσιος as the ground for the unity and equality. I do not intend to reject the critical function of the Father in *communicating* the divine life to the Son and Spirit. I, however, intend to rehabilitate the ὁμοούσιος in Gregory's understanding of equality and unity. This chapter has two sections. In the first section, I will analyze Gregory's understanding of divine equality as grounded in the ὁμοούσιος. The first section has three parts, in which I will examine (1) the equality of attributes, (2) the equality of the Son as uncaused, and (3) the equality of the Son as caused/originated. In the second section, I will analyze Gregory's understanding of divine unity as grounded in the ὁμοούσιος. The second section has two parts, in which (1) I will analyze *Or* 31.14-20 as a basis for an argument for locating the divine unity in the ὁμοούσιος,

and (2) I will examine *Or* 42.15, *Or* 20.6-8, and *Or* 29.2 in order to demonstrate Gregory's consistent appeal to the ὁμοούσιος in his understanding of divine unity. Part one will help elucidate the meaning of the three texts in part two. Before commencing with the body of the chapter, I will first give a brief account of why this is important both to modern scholarship and theology that interacts with, Gregory.

In modern scholarship, the importance of the ὁμοούσιος in Gregory's trinitarian theology has been challenged, above all, by Christopher Beeley. He has argued that the divine monarchy, which he identifies exclusively with the Father, is the most foundational concept in Gregory's trinitarian theology. He also argued that the divine monarchy of the Father is the cause and source of divine equality among the persons and the divine unity. He writes,

the priority of the Father within the Trinity does not conflict with the divine unity and equality, but is rather what causes and enables them. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God, sharing the exact divine nature, only because the Father conveys that nature to the Son and Spirit, while the consubstantiality of the Son and the Spirit with the Father is a corollary and the eternal result of the monarchy of the Father. Rather than being opposed, monarchy and consubstantiality therefore belong together in the same concept, and the divine unity has a particular "shape," being structured under the priority of the Father... Gregory is firmly rejecting the notion that the monarchy of the Father in any way conflicts with the equality of the three persons—on the grounds that it is precisely what brings about that equality! . . . causality and consubstantiality, just as much as causality and personal distinctions, within the Trinity necessarily belong together in the same theological principle.<sup>207</sup>

In spite of Beeley's claim, as we will see, the "priority" of the Father does conflict with the equality of the divine persons. Gregory does not seem to espouse an unqualified equality of the divine persons, as Beeley seems to suggest, for the identity of the Father as "cause" and "origin" make him superior to the Son only in respect to causality. Moreover, Gregory consistently refers to ὁμοούσιος as the reason for their equality. Beeley also writes,

---

<sup>207</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus and the Knowledge of God*, 210.

he also refers to [the monarchy of the Father] through secondary, derivative concepts, such as the language of consubstantiality. The Nicene term ὁμοούσιος functions mainly as a cypher for the more fundamental concept of the monarchy, and a public moniker with which to announce his alignment with the emerging pro-Nicene consensus.<sup>208</sup>

The problem with Beeley diminishing the importance of the ὁμοούσιος in Gregory's thinking to a mere "cipher" for the more fundamental notion of the Father's monarchy is that his writings do not conclusively support this interpretation, as we will see. Moreover, his interpretation places the unity and equality of the divine person at stake. Gregory consistently appeals to the term in order to defend the divine unity and equality, as this chapter will demonstrate. Gregory's trinitarian theology should be located firmly within the trajectory of pro-Nicene theology that sought to defend the ὁμοούσιος because it was precisely what this term signified that enabled the Nicene Father's to affirm the equality and unity of the divine person who are distinct in their relations.<sup>209</sup>

Modern theologians frequently interact with the Nicene ὁμοούσιος without a clear understanding of what pro-Nicene theologians, such as Gregory of Nazianzus, meant by it and how it functioned within their theology. Some, such as Moltmann, have rejected substantial language, opting for an account of the Trinity that depends solely upon the notion of *perichoresis*, that is, the mutual indwelling of divine persons in order to uphold divine unity.<sup>210</sup> Others, such as John Zizioulas, have so significantly revised the meaning of substance so as to have no relation to what the pro-Nicene thinkers actually thought. Zizioulas advocates a personalist account of the unity of the divine persons over against an essentialist account, wherein he advocates that Personhood is most fundamental in God over against substance. He

---

<sup>208</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus and the Knowledge of God*, 210.

<sup>209</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 301.

<sup>210</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God*, 47.

writes, “outside the Trinity there is no God, that is, no divine substance, because the ontological “principle” of God is the Father. The personal existence of God (the Father) constitutes His substance, makes it hypostases. The being of God is identified with the person.”<sup>211</sup> He goes on to state that “the basic ontological position of the theology of the Greek Fathers” is that “the ontological ‘principle’ or ‘cause’ of being—i.e. that which makes a thing to exist—is not the substance or nature but the *person* or hypostasis. Therefore being is traced back not to substance but to person.”<sup>212</sup> Another thinker, John Meyendorff, also advocates this personalist interpretation of the Greek Fathers. He states, “Greek theology attributes the *origin* of the hypostatic “subsistence” to the *hypostasis* of the Father, not to the common essence.”<sup>213</sup> As we will see, the personalist thesis, as put in contrast with the “essentialist” thesis, does not bare out in Gregory’s thinking.

### **1. *Homoousios* is the Grounds for the Equality**

The ὁμοούσιος plays a critical role in Gregory’s understanding of the equality of the divine persons. The equality of the divine persons is challenged by the Father’s origination of the Son and Spirit. Gregory attempts to navigate the apparent incompatibility of divine origination with the equality of the divine persons on the basis of the ὁμοούσιος. This section has the following structure. First, I will develop Gregory’s understanding of ὁμοούσιος as the basis for the equality of attributes among the persons. Second, I will examine texts in which Gregory maintains that the Son is uncaused. Third, I will examine texts in which Gregory insists that the

---

<sup>211</sup> John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 41. See also John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 183-4.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, 41 n.37.

<sup>213</sup> Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 183.

Father is the “cause” and “origin” of the Son. These texts indicate the substantial role that *homoousios* plays in maintaining the equality of the divine persons through a grammar of what is common and different.

### **1.1. The *Homoousios* and the Equality of the Divine Attributes**

Gregory thinks that the ὁμοούσιος of divine persons is the reason for their ontological equality. This conclusion is seen in Gregory’s discussion of the divine existence as common to both the Father and Son. To speak of the equality of attributes is just another way of saying what the divine persons share in common in contrast with their peculiar identities of origination (namely, begetting, begotten, and procession).

While responding to the criticism levelled against the Son because of his alleged limitations in John 5.19, in *Or* 30.11, Gregory argues that the Father and Son work inseparably because everything they have they share in common. He states, “for all that the Father has, is the Son’s, and *vice versa*. Nothing belongs only to one (ἴδιον), because all things belong to both (κοινά); even existence (τό εἶναι) *per se*, though it comes to the Son from the Father...”<sup>214</sup> A critical question that Gregory was attempting to address was what precisely is included in “all that the Father has.” The Eunomians interpreted John 5:19 in a way that is congruent with the Son’s ontological subordination. It seems that, for them, the Son shares some of the divine attributes, like other created creatures, but is not self-existent. Gregory only explicitly mentions τό εἶναι as an example of what is included in “all,” instead of listing any number of other divine attributes.

---

<sup>214</sup> Πάντα γὰρ ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατήρ, τοῦ Υἱοῦ ἐστίν: ὡς ἔμπαιν τὰ τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Πατρὸς. Οὐδὲν οὖν ἴδιον, ὅτι κοινά. Ἐπεὶ καὶ αὐτὸ τὸ εἶναι κοινὸν καὶ ὁμότιμον, εἰ καὶ τῷ Υἱῷ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς.

The reference to τὸ εἶναι as that which is common to the Father and Son is significant when one considers what God's existence means for Gregory. A little later in *Or* 30.18, he indicates that the nature (φύσις) of God is self-subsistent (τὸ εἶναι καθ' ἑαυτό).<sup>215</sup> Which is to say, God exists on account of himself and not on account of another being; the divine being is absolute and primal being. When Gregory says that the τὸ εἶναι of God is common to the Father and Son, he indicates that the Son, like the Father, is self-subsistent. Everything that the Father has the Son has also, even existence. We must note Gregory's distinction between ἴδιον and κοινά. Existence is neither peculiar to the Father nor a distinguishing marker of his identity as Father, but it is common, shared with the Son (and Spirit).

If the Father had some substantial attribute, such as power or glory, that the Son and Spirit lacked, the Father would be ontologically superior in that regard. And if the Father were ontologically superior on account of anything, Gregory seems to think, then the divine persons are not ὁμοούσιος. In these three passages, Gregory is presupposing that the Father and Son are ὁμοούσιος because he is using the language of “common” and “peculiar,” which designates what is predicated as the same in divine persons, in contrast to what is predicated as different.

Gregory further clarifies the extent of the divine persons' equality in *Or* 34 and *Or* 41. First, in *Or* 34.10, he states, “but if all that the Father has (πάντα ὅσα ἔχει ὁ Πατήρ) is of the Son, except unbegottenness (ἀγεννησίας); and all that is the Son's belongs also to the Spirit except his sonship, and whatever is spoken of Him as to Incarnation for me a man, ... then cease your babbling...”<sup>216</sup> We see here that πάντα does *not* include those peculiar attributes that distinguish the three, namely, unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession, and also the peculiar

---

<sup>215</sup> *Or*. 30.18; Wickham, 108; SC 250: 262-4.

<sup>216</sup> *Or* 34:10; ANF, 337; SC 318:214-6. According McGuckin, this oration was preached in May of 380: see *Saint Gregory*, 270.



activities in the divine economy, such as the Son's incarnation. Second, we see a similar argument in *On Pentecost, Or 41.9*, where Gregory advocates the divinity and equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and Son. Speaking of the Holy Spirit, he states,

He is always the same as himself and as those with whom he is ranked, invisible, eternal, uncontainable, unchanging, without quality, without quantity, without form, intangible, self-moving, ever-moving, self-determining, self-powered, all-powerful. If indeed this pertains (ἀναπέμπεται) to the first cause (πρὸς τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν), as it is all ascribed to the Only-begotten so it is also ascribed to the Spirit ... They are one common rank, one in adoration, worship, power, perfection, sanctification. . . All that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son except unbegottenness. All that belongs to the Son belongs to the Spirit except begottenness. These things do not divide (ἀφορίζει) the essence (οὐσίας), according to my teaching, but they are divided in the [common] essence (περὶ οὐσίαν δὲ ἀφορίζεται).<sup>217</sup>

In this passage, Gregory is presenting a case for the divinity of the Holy Spirit as ὁμοούσιος against the Pneumatomachians and Eunomians by arguing that he possesses everything that is true of the being of the Father and Son. This list of attributes are predicated of God's substance and not the divine relations. In this passage, it seems that his opponents are concerned that the Son's and Spirit's origination will divide the substance, but Gregory's response is to locate the Son's and Spirit's origination within the substance. He explicitly uses the term ὁμοούσιος twice in *Or 41.12* with reference to the Spirit who is "coequal" with the Father and Son. The ὁμοούσιος of the correlative divine relations results in the mutual possession of divine attributes that the Eunomians maintain belong, in some unique and exclusive fashion, to the Father. This equality of divine attributes is made possible within Gregory's theology only on account of their ὁμοούσιος. Thus, if all things whatsoever are in common between Father, Son, and Spirit because of their identity of being, the only thing to distinguish them is their peculiar correlative attributes of unbegottenness, begottenness, and procession.

---

<sup>217</sup> *Or 41:9*; Nonna Verna Harrison, trans., *Festal Orations: St Gregory of Nazianzus*. Crestwood (NY.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 151-2; SC 358: 336. Parenthetical insertion is original.

## 1.2. The *Homoousios* and the Equality of Divine Causation

I have examined the important function of ὁμοούσιος in securing the divine persons equality in all attributes, including existence. I will now demonstrate that Gregory's understanding of the ὁμοούσιος also provides him with the grammar for maintaining the equality of the divine persons despite the fact that the Father's peculiar identity as begetter entails that, as he sees it, the Father is the "cause" and "origin" of the Son and Spirit. This doctrine is brought into immediate tension with the divine relations of origin. If the divine persons relate to each other on the basis of their mutual origination, as shown above, and if origination involves causation, then how can the divine persons who originate from the Father be God? This is problematic in Gregory's thinking as he seems to both affirm and deny causality of the Godhead, in general, and the Son, in particular. In some passages Gregory explicitly says that the Son's generation does *not* involve causality, yet in other passages he explicitly says that the Father is "cause" of the Son. Is this an inconsistency or contradiction in Gregory's thinking? Gregory's anti-Nicene opponents insisted that since the Son and Spirit originate *from* the Father, they must be ontologically inferior to him, and thus not ὁμοούσιος with him. I will suggest that Gregory uses causal language as synonymous with origination language.

Recognizing this tension, Gregory re-conceives of causality and origination in such a way that is congruent with the equality of the divine persons. I will show that, for Gregory, the Son's and Spirit's origination from the Father (1) does not make them ontologically inferior but (2) it does require that the hypostatic relations are differentiated in respect to "cause" and "origin." For Gregory, the key to maintaining their equality (1), as we will see, is the ομοούσιος of the hypostatic relations of origin. I do not claim to provide groundbreaking analysis here, but I intend to give greater attention to the function of the ὁμοούσιος in Gregory's understanding of

divine causality. This section will take the following structure. I will first examine three passages that deny causality of the Godhead and the Son, after which, I will analyze those passages that suggest the Son is caused.

### 1.2a The Son is Uncaused

There are three texts, that I am aware of, which deny causality of the Son, namely, *Or* 29.19, *Or* 30.2, and *Or* 30.11. First, in *Or* 29.19, Gregory states concerning the Son, “no because is required for his existence in the beginning (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἀναιτίως), for what could account for the existence of God (αἰτία Θεοῦ)?”<sup>218</sup> The Son is uncaused in the beginning, and by beginning, Gregory is referring to eternity. He is here emphasizing the absolute divinity of the Son and equal rank with the Father.<sup>219</sup>

Second, Gregory addresses his opponents, in *Or* 30.2, who were arguing from Proverbs 8:22 that the Son’s generation indicates his ontological subordination to the Father. Wisdom was often identified with the Son. Wisdom says concerning herself, in Proverbs 8:22, “the Lord created me as the beginning of his ways for his works.” Like his opponents, Gregory assumes that God has no cause, so if this verse teaches that the Son is caused, then he cannot be God. Gregory asks,

What reality has no cause (Τί τῶν ὄντων ἀνάιτον)? Godhead (Θεότης)—no one can talk of the “cause of God,” otherwise it would be prior (προεσβύτερον) to God. . . . Whatever we come across with a causal implication we will attribute to the humanity; what is absolute (ἀπλοῦν) and free of cause (ἀναιτίον) we will reckon to the Godhead (θεότητι).

By Godhead, Gregory is referring to the Son’s divinity. He reiterates that the Godhead is uncaused, using the same language of priority in *Or* 31.33. In response to an inadequate

---

<sup>218</sup> *Or* 29.19; Wickham, 86; SC 250:216. Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ἀναιτίως. Τίς γὰρ αἰτία Θεοῦ;

<sup>219</sup> *Or* 29.18.

illustration of the unity of the Trinity in creation, Gregory states, “nothing is prior (πρῶτον) to God (Θεοῦ) to be his mover—he is cause (αἰτία) of all and owns no prior cause.”<sup>220</sup> For Gregory, nothing is metaphysically or temporally prior to God because he is absolute primal being. To be absolute is to be uncaused, in the sense of not being posterior in time or being, so Gregory seems to reason. And thus, the Godhead must be uncaused and absolute. As we see in *Or* 30.2, what is true of the Godhead is true of the divine persons. If the Godhead is uncaused, then so is the Son because the Son is the Godhead, like the Father and Spirit. Gregory’s resolution to his opponents’ challenge is to distinguish between the act of creation and begetting. He goes on to say that “created” implies “causality” (αἰτίας), whereas begetting does not. Thus, Gregory concludes that the identity of the speaker in Proverbs 8:22 is Wisdom *as* begotten creature. In contrast to this, Gregory thinks that Wisdom is referred to as “offspring” (γέννημα) with regard to “the primal (πρώτην) and less comprehensible one (πλέον ἄληπτον).”<sup>221</sup> Gregory is here arguing that the Son who is Wisdom is both absolute and uncaused in himself, and thus he can only be referred to as “caused” *as* begotten in time. Since the Son is to be identified with Θεότης, the *eternal* generation of the Son must be distinguished from the *temporal* generation of the Son *as* man. Only the latter, so Gregory seems to maintain, involves causality, whereas eternal origination does not.

Third, the complexity of Gregory’s understanding of αἴτιος is seen in *Or* 30.11 where he interprets John 6.57: “I live because of the Father.” Gregory thinks that this passage indicates that the Son is *from* the Father while “existing atemporally and non-causally (ἐκείθεν

---

<sup>220</sup> *Or* 31.33; Wickham, 142; SC 250:340

<sup>221</sup> *Or* 30.2; Wickham, 94; SC 250:228.

ὑπάρχοντος ἀχρονως καὶ ἀναιτίως).”<sup>222</sup> Gregory denies that the Son’s “living and being are restricted by the Father.” We see him using ἀναιτίως to describe the existence (ὑπάρχοντος) of the Son. It seems that he is saying the Son exists from the Father without either temporality or causality.

In sum, Gregory is clear that since the Son is the Godhead, the Son is uncaused. Thus, since the fromness of the Son does not involve posteriority, the Son can be said to be uncaused in respect to his consubstantial identity with the Godhead. But in several texts Gregory seems to also say that the Son is caused by the Father, to which we now turn.

### **1.2b Son is Caused by the Father**

Although, as we have just seen, in some passages Gregory states that the Son is uncaused on account of his divinity and that his begetting did not admit “causality,” we will now look at some of the passages where Gregory explicitly maintains that the Son’s generation involves causality. Is this simply a matter of contradiction, or is Gregory simply inconsistent in his use of αἴτιος? What is at issue is whether Gregory can maintain the absolute divine equality in light of divine origination if origination does in fact imply causality. The Eunomians held that if the Father is greater in respect to being the ‘cause,’ then he must also be greater according to nature. Gregory’s solution, as we will see, is to maintain the absolute ontological equality of the divine persons on account of the ὁμοούσιος but differentiation of relations on account of the Father’s identity as “cause” and “origin” of the Son and Spirit.

The issue that this section brings to light is the clear problem of identifying the monarchy as the grounds for the equality of the divine persons, since origination is clearly the challenge to divine equality that Gregory seeks to address. If Gregory were to identify the monarchy with the

---

<sup>222</sup> *Or* 30.11; *SC* 250:246.

Father as the sole “origin,” and since monarchy contains the idea of origination or causation but not the idea of equality, it would be illogical for him to resolve this challenge with recourse to the idea of the monarchy. If Beeley is correct, to appeal to the monarchy of the Father for equality is to appeal to the very principle that gives rise to the criticism of inequality. Contra Beeley, Gregory looks to the *identity of being* that the originate and originator share in order to maintain the ontological equality and to provide the grammar for differentiation. I will now examine four passages in which Gregory discusses equality and logical priority among the persons with respect to Father as “cause” and “origin.”

First, In *Or* 29.11, Gregory states, “we will confidently assert that if it is a high thing (μέγα) for the Father to have no starting point (μηδαμόθεν), it is no less a thing (οὐχ ἔλαττον) for the Son to stem from such a Father (Υἱῷ τὸ ἐκ τοιούτου Πατρὸς). He must share (μετέχω) in the glory of the uncaused (ἀναίτιος), because he [is] from the uncaused.”<sup>223</sup> Gregory here describes the Father as uncaused (ἀναίτιος) and being from nowhere (μηδαμόθεν), while the Son is from (ἐκ) the Father. These peculiar identities are not grounds for the inferiority, but, conversely, shared glory.<sup>224</sup> In this passage, Gregory is saying that the Son is not inferior because he is *from* the Father but that he is equal to the Father in glory. Gregory does not explicitly state the *homoousios* as the grounds for the equality of Father and Son, but given the following texts, he must be here presupposing it, as we will see. Notably, Gregory does not think that the Father’s unorigination is a point of superiority. Gregory’s emphasis is on the equality of the Father and Son in their respective origins of relation. While the Son’s origination from the Father is a reason for their common honour, Gregory does not make it explicit as to why.

---

<sup>223</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:200.

<sup>224</sup> *Or* 29.11; Wickham, 79; SC 250:200.

Second, although Gregory's emphasis is decidedly on the equality of persons, shortly after the previous passage, in *Or* 29.15, he uses the comparative form of μέγα to indicate that the Father is "greater" (μείζων) than the Son in respect to causality. He states, "it belongs to the nature of the cause (αἴτιος) to be superior (μείζων), but they infer that the superiority belongs to the nature."<sup>225</sup> Directly after stating this, Gregory argues that the term "Father" designates neither the divine substance nor a divine activity, but a "relation."<sup>226</sup> Since "Father" is a relation and not the divine substance, then "cause" should only be understood in terms of the relation of origination, and not a substantial attribute of the Father. The Father is greater *only* in respect to being the "cause" (αἴτιος) of the Son, but his identity as 'cause' does not introduce an ontological division between the being of the Father and the Son. For Gregory, a cause is only "greater" than its effect in respect to being its origin but not on account of nature.

Third, Gregory explicitly counterposes "greater" with "equality" in *Or* 30.7. In this passage, he addresses the meaning of John 14:28, which states, "for the Father is greater than I." He posits,

supposing the Father were called "greater" (μείζων) with no mention of the Son's being "equal" (ἴσον), they might have a point here. . . How can there be harmony between incompatible terms [μείζων and ἴσον]? It is impossible for the same thing to be, in a like respect, greater than and equal to the same thing. Is it not clear that the superiority (μείζων) belongs to the cause (αἰτία) and the equality (ἴσον) to the nature (φύσεως)? . . . derivation (ἐκ) from the uncaused does not mean inferiority to the uncaused. [The Son] will share in (μέτεχοι) the glory of the unoriginate (ἀνάρχου) because he derives (ἐκ) from the unoriginate. . .<sup>227</sup>

The arguments and conclusions of *Or* 29.15 and *Or* 30.7 are similar. These passages indicate that Gregory thinks the Father should be considered "greater" than the Son *only* in respect to being

---

<sup>225</sup> *Or* 29.15; Wickham, 83; SC 250:208.

<sup>226</sup> *Or* 29.16; Wickham, 83; SC 250:210.

<sup>227</sup> *Or* 30.7.

his “cause.” He applies the same logic for distinguishing the divine persons as relations of origin and maintaining their “equality” (ἴσον) according to “nature” (φύσις). Gregory assumes that if two things are consubstantial, they must be equal in nature, even if one originates from the other.

Fourth, in *Or* 40.43, preached the following spring of 381 at the opening of the Council of Constantinople,<sup>228</sup> Gregory insists that the Father, Son, and Spirit are equal despite the fact that the Father is cause and origin of the Son and Spirit. What makes this passage unique is Gregory’s explicit discomfort with language that connotes inequality and his explicit appeal to the ὁμοούσιος. He states,

I would like to say the Father is “greater,” from whom indeed equality and being come to those who are equal ... And I fear to call him the origin (τὴν ἀρχήν), lest I make him the origin of inferiors (ἐλαττόνων) and insult him through this preeminence... Moreover, I suspect you are insatiable, and that taking the “greater” you would cut the nature in two (διχοτομήσης τὴν φύσιν), using the word “greater” in every sense (κατὰ πάντα τῷ μείζονι χρώμενος). For the “greater” does not apply to the nature but to the cause (τὴν αἰτίαν). For nothing of those who are [consubstantial] is greater or less in [being] (Οὐδὲν γὰρ τῶν ὁμοουσίων τῇ οὐσίᾳ μείζον ἢ ἔλαττον).<sup>229</sup>

Gregory is hesitant to use the word ἀρχή because of its subordinationist connotations, yet why does he appear to be okay with “cause” (αἰτία)? Since αἰτία also connotes creaturely subordination. But instead of saying that the notion of “greater” only applies to the ἀρχή, Gregory only applies superiority to the αἰτία. This may indicate that Gregory is using the terms *synonymously*. In which case, the Father is only considered under the category of “cause” (αἰτία) or “origin” (ἀρχή) to be “greater.” Gregory grounds the equality of the divine persons in their ontological unity as ὁμοούσιος, yet he differentiates the relations into a logical order. Since the Father and Son, for Gregory, are the same substance, any degree of “greater” or “lesser” cannot be predicated of the Son’s being, because the Son’s being is the being of the Father. As we saw

<sup>228</sup> McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, x.

<sup>229</sup> *Or* 40.43; Harrison, 138; SC 358:298.



earlier, the words “Father”, “Son,” and “Spirit” simply signify their correlative and co-ordinate relations. Thus, in order to avoid a contradiction in predication, they are distinguished as lesser and greater only on account of their relations of origin. Gregory thinks that this notion of greater and lesser does not apply to any other divine attribute, whether glory, honour, power, or authority, for example, because divine attributes are co-terminus with the divine being. Thus, Gregory locates the equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit, not in any one divine person or relation of origin, but in the divine being.

There is a tension here in Gregory’s thought as he attempts to differentiate between the persons without inequality, but, it seems, due to his vocabulary of “cause” and “origin” he cannot help but maintain some inequality between “cause” and effect and “origin” and “originated,” which he seems to use synonymously. If causal language is in fact synonymous with origination language, then to predicate “cause” of the Father may simply be Gregory’s way of referring to the Father as “begetter.” We must recognize that Gregory clearly distinguishes between causality in respect to creation and causality in respect to transcendent Trinity in whom there is no temporal, corporeal, or metaphysical division.

In sum, the relation of the Father as unbegotten is both unoriginate (ἀνάρχου) and uncaused (αἰτίας), whereas the relation of the Son as begotten is both originate (ἐκ) and caused. In this section, I have argued that Gregory’s affirmation of the Father’s, the Son’s, and the Spirit’s status of being of the *same being* necessitates a re-conceptualization of divine causality in order to maintain the equality of the divine persons. An element of this re-conceptualization was, as seen in chapter 2, the clear idea of relations as what the terms “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” refer to. Since the divine persons are the same being, and thus equally and eternally God, the divine persons can only be said to be unequal and differentiated in terms of their mutual

relations. Thus the divine persons are unqualifiedly equal in respect to being, and differentiated in respect to origination. The trouble with this conclusion, as noted in *Or* 40, is that it may lead some to smuggle the inequality of origin/cause into one's valuation of the divine persons' being.

This conclusion does not fit with Beeley's interpretation that "the monarchy of the Father within the Trinity is the sort of causality that produces equality and shared being, rather than inequality; and the equality of the three persons is the sort of equality that derives from and involves a cause, source, and first principle. . ." <sup>230</sup> This section reinforces what is at stake in identifying the monarchy as the Father with a view to securing the divine equality. The monarchy of the Father cannot secure the divine equality of the persons but would rather exacerbate the criticism of inequality. Gregory does not go to the monarchy to maintain the equality. He upholds the identity of being and nature as the central bulwark against inequality.

## **2. *Homoousios* and the Divine Unity**

We have seen how Gregory locates and grounds the equality of the divine persons in the fact of their *ὁμοούσιος*, both in respect to all the divine attributes and in respect to origination. We will now look at the function of the *ὁμοούσιος* in Gregory's understanding of the divine unity. There are two things I intend to demonstrate in this section. First, Gregory thinks that the unity of the divine persons is guaranteed, in part, by the *ὁμοούσιος*. There is substantial misunderstanding among modern theologians as to what the church fathers meant by *ὁμοούσιος*, and, in particular, the kind of unity that the fathers thought obtained between the divine persons. Many kinds of social trinitarianism presuppose a generic unity, as the divine persons are unified with each other in an analogous way to the unity that shapes the unity of humans. I intend to challenge this modern interpretation of Gregory's understanding of divine

---

<sup>230</sup> Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 210.

unity. Second, Gregory's understanding of the divine unity is not reducible to the Father. Beeley has argued that Gregory identifies the divine monarchy exclusively with the Father, and that, as a result, the Father is the grounds for the unity of the Trinity. The primary text, among others, Beeley points to is *Or* 42.15 where Gregory states, "the unity (ἕνωσις) is the Father, from whom and towards whom everything else is referred..."<sup>231</sup> I will return to analyze this passage. I will conclude that Gregory thinks that both the ὁμοούσιος and the Father are the unity, but in different respects. This section provides us with a clearer understanding of the divine unity as achieved through the ὁμοούσιος. I do not claim to address every aspect of their unity, but merely those that relate specifically to the ὁμοούσιος. We should not neglect the ὁμοούσιος in giving an account of Gregory's understanding of divine unity, as Beeley seems to suggest.

This section takes the following structure. I will first analyze *Or* 31.13-20 in order to show that Gregory grounds the divine unity in the ὁμοούσιος. We will see how Gregory rejects generic theories of unity and how his theory presupposes a particular understanding of the ὁμοούσιος, in which there is no distinction in being, but only a distinction in hypostases. My analysis of *Or* 31.14-19 should bring some clarity to the role of the ὁμοούσιος in the divine unity as seen in other passages. Second, I will examine Beeley's claim that the Father as the divine monarchy alone is the fundamental unity of the Trinity. I will look at *Or* 42.15, *Or* 20.6-7, and *Or* 29.2. Beeley describes *Or* 31.14 as merely an "enigma" and, with the over reliance on the *Theological Orations*, there is confusion over Gregory's understanding of divine causality.<sup>232</sup> Beeley thinks that less attention should be given to *The Theological Orations*, and more should

---

<sup>231</sup> *Or* 42.15; Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 147; SC 384:80-2.

<sup>232</sup> Beeley, "Divine Causality," 204.

be given to other key discussions of the Trinity.<sup>233</sup> I intend to show the consistency of *Or* 31.14 with these passages.

## 2.1 The Divine Unity in *Or* 31.14

In order to understand *Or* 31.14, I will first quote the entire text, and then look at the broader context, that is, *Or* 31.15-18, before providing an analysis of the text itself. The reason for focusing on this passage in which the ὁμοούσιος does not appear is to highlight the error of focusing on the monarchy as the exclusive way in which Gregory thinks about divine unity. The problem with such an interpretation is that it identifies unity as a product of personhood, rather than substance. What is the issue with unity arising from personhood? Gregory, as we will see, is very clear that the definition of person does not contain the notion of unity *per se*. Problematically, persons are prone to disunity. Gregory's identification of unity with the same being of the Father and Son is critical for maintaining the coherency of his conception of unity-in-diversity. Demonstrated below, it is Gregory's understanding of the divine persons as the same being that enables him to affirm a monarchy that is not susceptible to division and disunity. As I will show, the ὁμοούσιος, although absent in the text *Or* 31.14, nonetheless provides the logic for thinking about unity-in-diversity. Gregory states,

We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it (πρὸς ἓν τὰ ἐξ αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀναφορὰν ἔχει, καὶ τρία πιστεύηται). They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided (ἀμέριστος ἐν μεμερισμένοις). It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns. When we look at the Godhead (τὴν θεότητα), the primal cause (τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν), the [monarchy] (τὴν μοναρχίαν), we have a mental picture (φανταζόμενον) of the single whole (ἓν), certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists (τὰ ἐν οἷς ἡ θεότης), and at those who derive their

<sup>233</sup> In "Divine Causality," 204, Beeley points to *Or* 31.1-13, 14; *Or* 25.15-18; *Or* 23.6-12; *Or* 33; *Or* 34.8-15; *Or* 40.34, 41-3; *Or* 20.5-12; *Or* 38.3, 7-9, 15; *Or* 39.11-12; *Or* 42.15-18.

timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause (τὰ ἐκ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας ἀρχόνως ἐκείθεν ὄντα ὁμοδόξως), we have three objects of worship (τρία τὰ προσκυνούμενα).<sup>234</sup>

Commenting on *Or* 31.14, Beeley asserts that the Eunomians are not objecting to “the unity or indivisibility of a common divine nature” but “to the idea that divine relations are both causally ordered and equal at the same time. Gregory’s response is therefore to argue not for the unity or consubstantiality of three things in general...but in defense of the intrinsic connection between causality and ontological equality in God.”<sup>235</sup> There is a critical problem with Beeley’s interpretation of *Or* 31.14. Although Beeley is correct to note that the Eunomians thought that causality entailed ontological inferiority, as examined above, *Or* 31.13 and 31.15-16 make it clear that the Eunomians are, primarily, in *Or* 31.14, objecting to a misunderstanding of Gregory’s conception of divine unity and indivisibility. The issue is that Beeley’s interpretation, in so exclusively identifying the monarchy with the Father, eclipses the central contention that Gregory is attempting to address: divine unity-in-diversity. Gregory is not arguing for the connection between equality and causality, but rather that origination of the Son and Spirit does not compromise oneness of God because of the kind of unity secured by an absolute identity of being that holds between the divine persons. Richard Cross also has come to this conclusion, saying that, in light of the particular challenges raised by the Eunomians, in *Or* 31.14, Gregory attempts “to defend the indivisibility of the divine essence, co-ordinatively common to the three persons.”<sup>236</sup> But he does not seem to take into account the central role the *homoousios* plays in the indivisibility of the divine being in *Or* 31.14.

---

<sup>234</sup> *Or* 31.14; Wickham, 127; SC 250:302-4.

<sup>235</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus and the Knowledge of God*, 211.

<sup>236</sup> Richard Cross, “Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus,” 109.

In *Or* 31.13, the challenge that Gregory’s opponents raised against his statement on the “equal rank and equal deity inherent in all three” (*Or* 31.12) is that the triple-fold predication of God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—entails that there are “three gods” (τρεις θεοί) and a “polyarchy” (πολυαρχία).<sup>237</sup> Divine unity is the subject matter at hand. Gregory even makes a startling confession that he would prefer a “meager idea of the union” (μικρὰν τῆς ἐνώσεως φαντασίαν) over denying the whole divinity of the Son and Spirit.<sup>238</sup> Gregory defends the oneness of God in three divine persons by clarifying the Eunomians’ misconception of his own position.

The Christian belief in one Godhead must entail, for Gregory, that the three divine persons are not three gods. One conception of the Trinity’s unity that Gregory rejects outright is what is referred to as the “Generic Theory.” This theory of the unity suggests that the divine being relates to the divine persons as a genus relates to a concrete individual. In such a view, deity is a class in which the divine persons participate. This is what the Eunomians thought Gregory meant by divine unity-in-diversity. In the voice of his opponents, he asks,

*Do not non-Christians too ... hold to a single Godhead (μία θεότης), and do not we also hold to a single humanity (ἀνθρωπότης μία), the whole human race? Nonetheless they think that there is a plurality of gods and not just one, in the way that there is a plurality of men. [Gregory’s reply:] Yes, but in these cases the universal is only a unity for speculative thought (ἡ κοινότης τὸ ἐν ἔχει μόνον ἐπινοία θεωρητόν). The individuals are widely separated (μεμερισμένα) from one another by time, temperament, and capacity. We human beings are not merely composite (σύνθετοι); we are mutually opposed (ἀντίθετοι) and inconsistent even with ourselves. We do not stay the same for one day, let alone a lifetime ... we are ever fluctuating and changing.<sup>239</sup>*

<sup>237</sup> *Or* 31.13; Wickham, 127; SC 250:300: Εἰ Θεός, φησί, καὶ Θεός, καὶ Θεός, πῶς οὐχὶ τρεῖς θεοί; ἢ πῶς οὐ πολυαρχία τὸ δοξαζόμενον; See *Or* 31.3 for Gregory’s triple-fold predication of “light.”

<sup>238</sup> *Or* 31.12; Wickham, 126; SC 250:300.

<sup>239</sup> *Or* 31.15; Wickham, 128; SC 250:306. Italics are original to Wickham’s translation.

In this passage, Gregory's opponents mistook his own understanding of the divine unity of the Godhead to entail that there are three gods in the generic class of the "one Godhead." He has to clarify that his conception of the Godhead of the Father, Son, and Spirit espouses a different kind of unity. He indicates here that generic unity, as his opponents misunderstand his own position to be, is faulty on two fronts. First, although the individuals who have a generic unity are unified under a class of some universal idea (κοινότης... ἐπινοία), they are divided (μεμερισμένα) from each other when considered under various categories, such as time, condition, and power. Moreover, instances of a kind are "mutually opposed" (ἀντίθετοι) to one another. This is seen both in humans and in the Greek fables about the quarrelling among the gods (*Or* 31.16). Gregory indicates that in these fables even the demons and the "First Causes" (πρώτας αἰτίας), namely the gods "Ocean, Tethys, Phanes," among others, are opposed to each other.<sup>240</sup> Second, even individual persons are composed of parts (σύνθετοι), such as the soul and body. Moreover, individual persons are internally in conflict (ἀντίθετοι) with themselves. Gregory is likely referring to conflicting desires of the body and soul.<sup>241</sup> Both kinds of unities, (1) the generic and (2) the individual person, involve composition and change, and are thus deficient. But more basic than these two issues is that a human being is not humanity, no less than an individual god is the Godhead themselves in Greek thought. It is for this reason that the Greeks maintain that there is only one Godhead and still a plurality of gods. This deficient conception of unity is merely notional (ἐπίνοια), rather than obtaining in reality. This is akin to the problematic unity that Gregory would rather settle for, in *Or* 31.12, that is merely a mental image (φαντασία), over denying the equal divinity and nature of the Son and Spirit with the Father.

---

<sup>240</sup> *Or* 31.15; Wickham, 128; SC 250:306.

<sup>241</sup> See *Poem* II.1.11. 295-300.

Gregory agrees with his opponents that the Trinity would not be one God but three gods if their unity is conceived in terms of a generic notion of a common nature. But this is not what Gregory believes. The unity of the divine persons cannot be generic if he wishes to avoid the allegation, in *Or* 31.13, that his conception of the divine persons entail a plurality of “gods” and a “polyarchy.”<sup>242</sup> So what is the alternative? After showing the problems with his opponents' understanding of divine unity, Gregory clarifies his own position in *Or* 31.16-19 by way of the ὁμοούσιος. He states,

“but this is not the kind of [unity] we believe. . . No, each of the Trinity is an entire unity as much with himself as with the partnership, by [means of] identity of being and power (τὸ ἐν ἑκάστων αὐτῶν ἔχει πρὸς τὸ συγκείμενον οὐκ ἦπτον ἢ πρὸς ἑαυτό, τῷ ταύτῳ τῆς οὐσίας καὶ τῆς δυνάμεως). This is how we explain the unity to the best of our ability to understand it.”<sup>243</sup>

Notice here the same two kinds of unities that he analyzes in *Or* 31.15. He identifies the unity of (1) each divine person in themselves (in contrast with an individual human's unity), and (2) the unity of the divine persons taken together (in contrast with the generic notional unity of a class of humans). The critical clause that distinguishes Gregory's conception of unity from that of the Hellenes is “by identity of being and power.”<sup>244</sup> I would suggest that Gregory has in mind here the ὁμοούσιος. For something to be “the same” in “being” is synonymous with ὁμοούσιος. Moreover, directly after stating this, Gregory launches into a defence of the ὁμοούσιος against his opponents objections who attempt to undermine his “account of the unity.”<sup>245</sup> This statement, as McGuckin correctly notes, “lays to rest the ghost of the so-called ‘Generic Theory’ of

---

<sup>242</sup> c.f. *Or* 29.2.

<sup>243</sup> *Or* 31.16; Wickham, 129; SC 250:306-8.

<sup>244</sup> *Or* 31.16-17.

<sup>245</sup> *Or* 31.17.



trinitarian unity.”<sup>246</sup> He goes on to state that Gregory presses “the implication of identity of essence to its logical end — that no distinction is possible or conceivable in the Godhead in terms of being, volition, action, power, glory, degrees or status. . .”<sup>247</sup>

Although Gregory does point to an identity of power, it is not my intention to analyze its function within his trinitarian theology. But briefly, Harrison helpfully shows that there is only one divine activity to which each divine person contributes distinctly, as it “proceeds from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.”<sup>248</sup> The oneness of being is seen in the oneness of activity.

Note that neither the idea of the monarchy nor the Father play a role here in correcting the generic theory of unity that is, rightfully designated, a polyarchy. Rather the *homoousios* is the reason given for both the unity of each divine person in themselves and the unity of divine persons together. In the case of polyarchy, there are multiple divine substances, even though there is only one Godhead (in ἐπίνοια).<sup>249</sup> The divine persons, however, are each simply the one divine substance. In sum, they are individually and collectively unified by their identity *as* the one divine substance. The divine unity must reflect those things that are proper of the divine being, freedom from creaturely attributes. The divine unity of each divine person individually and taken together must be non-composite, immutable, immaterial, incorporeal, and actual (as opposed to merely notional). This kind of unity is wholly impossible for the creature.

---

<sup>246</sup> John A. McGuckin, “Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 24.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid*, 25.

<sup>248</sup> Harrison, 21. For more on the role of “power” in pro-Nicene theology, see Michel Barnes, “One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic.” *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997): 205-23.

<sup>249</sup> *Or* 31.15.

It is at this point that Gregory, after summarizing to the best of his ability the unity that he holds to, launches into an explicit defence of his use of the ὁμοούσιος and a clarification of what it does *not* mean. According to Gregory, the Eunomians maintain that only “consubstantial things” (τὰ ὁμοούσια) can be added up.<sup>250</sup> This is why there are multiple humans even though they are all of the same nature, as his opponents suggest in *Or* 31.15. Likewise, so their argument goes, if the Father, Son, and Spirit are ὁμοούσιος, there would be three Gods. The Eunomian solution to avoid a “polyarchy” (πολυαρχία)<sup>251</sup> is to both deny that the Father, Son, and Spirit are ὁμοούσιος, and affirm that only the Father is God. By doing so, they maintain the monarchy.<sup>252</sup> This suggests that Gregory’s opponents assume that he understands the ὁμοούσιος as providing only a generic unity, like a common notion that unifies disparate individuals. In *Or* 31.17-20, Gregory shows that his understanding of the ὁμοούσιος is different from the Eunomian understanding of ὁμοούσιος as a generic underlying substance in which individuals participate and, as a result, they can be “counted up.”

Gregory argues, in *Or* 31.18-19, that numerical summation is not limited to “consubstantial things” since numerical predication indicates “an amount of objects, not their nature.”<sup>253</sup> Numerical distinctions indicate quantity (ποσότητος) and not quality, aggregates and not natures. If things that are both of the same nature and things that are of disparate natures can be counted up, then, as Gregory sums up his argument, “what is left of your doctrinaire pronouncement?”<sup>254</sup> Which is to conclude that the initial Eunomian claim, in both *Or* 31.13 and

---

<sup>250</sup> *Or* 31.17; Wickham, 129; SC 250:308.

<sup>251</sup> *Or* 31.13.

<sup>252</sup> *Or* 31.17; Wickham, 129; SC 250:308.

<sup>253</sup> *Or* 31.18; Wickham, 130.

<sup>254</sup> *Or* 31.19; Wickham, 132.

reiterated in *Or* 31.17, that Gregory “cannot avoid mentioning three Gods,” is *false*.<sup>255</sup> Gregory thinks that he has demonstrated that he can maintain the oneness of God and the divine monarchy in his affirmation of “identity of being and power” of the three divine persons.<sup>256</sup> The divine persons are each the whole Godhead. This cannot be said of three humans sharing in a human nature, as the individual is not the human nature.

Therefore, Gregory seems to be suggesting that the three divine persons, as they appear (φαντασία) to our embodied minds, which know through material realities, are numerically distinct but ontologically identical in every way. Numerical distinction and unity is a product of the way we humans think. Gregory thinks that divinity is “devoid of quality, quantity, and time,” since God is immaterial.<sup>257</sup> As McGuckin points out, since the divine persons are entirely immaterial and incorporeal, “numerical distinctions could not apply.”<sup>258</sup>

This point is further elucidated in *Or* 23.10 where Gregory states, “the Trinity is not an arithmetical numbering of unequal things. . . but a comprehension of the coequal and the equally-honoured, and as they are united by nature they are named as a union, Thus, what is ignorant of all separations must never be divided by numerical division.”<sup>259</sup> Gregory’s point is that the kind of consubstantiality that is had by the Trinity is unlike any kind of consubstantiality that is had among creatures who are divided under various categories of being, such as power, disposition,

---

<sup>255</sup> *Or* 31.17.

<sup>256</sup> *Or* 31.16.

<sup>257</sup> *Or* 23.12.

<sup>258</sup> McGuckin, “Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 22.

<sup>259</sup> *Or* 23.10.

and time (*Or* 31.15). The Trinity is non-composite in its unity and thus its consubstantiality cannot omit a generic unity that the Eunomians fear.

Let us now reconsider *Or* 31.14. It is a positive statement on the unity-in-diversity that is undergirded by the ὁμοούσιος. The context makes clear that a proper understanding of the ὁμοούσιος is necessary for grasping *Or* 31.14, since he follows the passage, as we saw above, with an extended dismissal of improper characterizations of the divine unity and a clarification of his concept of the ὁμοούσιος.<sup>260</sup> As such, the ὁμοούσιος plays a critical role in Gregory's formulation of the trinitarian relations and the divine unity in *Or* 31.14.

Gregory maintains that the “three objects of belief” (τρία πιστεύηται), namely the Father, Son, and Spirit, are “to the one” (πρὸς ἓν) and “from it” (ἐξ αὐτοῦ).<sup>261</sup> We know this because the subject in this clause is still “the three” as indicated by the definite article τὰ. The “one” (ἓν) must be the “one God” (εἷς Θεός), and not the Father, because the “one” (ἓν) is in contrast to “the three” (τὰ...τρία). If the “one” (ἓν) designates the Father, then the Father along with the Son and Spirit as “the three” would be *to* and *from* himself. However, the relations of origin are not relations that indicate themselves but those to whom they are related, so ἓν cannot indicate the Father. This clause is not indicating the relations of origination between the divine persons, but a description of God's unity-in-diversity. Beeley himself recognizes that Gregory does often, in fact, uses ἓν to indicate what is one God.<sup>262</sup>

After characterizing the directionality of the three to and from the one, Gregory describes the *unity* of the divine persons in four ways that he will contrast with the *disunity* that

---

<sup>260</sup> Ayres, *Nicaea*, 236–240.

<sup>261</sup> *Or* 31.14; Wickham, 127; SC 250:302–4.

<sup>262</sup> Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 221.

characterizes generic unities, described in *Or* 31.15-16. First, the divine persons are unified in their perfect subsistence as God (Θεός) without any superiority or inferiority (μᾶλλον...ἥττον) among them. Second, there is perfect unity in an eternal presence with no priority or posteriority (πρότερον...ὑστερον) marking their unity. Third, they have a unity of will, that is not “cut” (τέμνεται),<sup>263</sup> in contrast to humans and the gods who are “mutually opposed” (*Or* 31.15). Fourth, they are not “divided” (μερίζεται) in power. In terms of the generic unity mentioned in *Or* 31.15 in which the members were “widely separated” from each other in terms of “time, disposition, and power,” we see here in *Or* 31.14 Gregory giving a completely different picture of the unity of the divine persons. The unity of the divine persons is unique because they are the same substance and distinguished only in their relations of origination.

Gregory is not saying that the Godhead is an undifferentiated monad. He states, “the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided (ἀμέριστος ἐν μεμερισμένοις...ἢ Θεότης).”<sup>264</sup> He is here indicating that the divine persons are “divided” (μεμερισμένοις).” This is the same word he uses in *Or* 31.15. What distinguishes the division between individuals in the case of humans and gods is that they are divided in some attribute, such as time, disposition, and power. This is precisely what is not true of the divine persons who are differentiated (μεμερισμένοις) because they are the same Godhead, the same being, that is undivided among them.

In contrast with the differentiation (μεμερισμένοις) of the divine person, Gregory names those things that we “perceive” (φανταζόμενον) as “one” (ἓν) in God and that are not differentiated: Godhead (τὴν θεότητα), the primal cause (τὴν πρώτην αἰτίαν), and the monarchy (τὴν μοναρχίαν). These are identified together. Since the Godhead is in those who are

---

<sup>263</sup> *Or* 31.14; Wickham, 127; SC 250:302-4. Gregory applies this same verb to distinguishing the divine persons in *Or* 29.10; Wickham, 78; SC 250:196-8.

<sup>264</sup> *Or* 31.14; Wickham, 127; SC 250:302-4.

differentiated, it seems to be the case that so too is the primal cause and the monarchy. Such an identification of the latter two by Gregory seems to suggest that he distinguishes between the causality in respect to creation, and causality in respect to the transcendent Trinity. This suggests that for Gregory, the Son is the primal cause, as he is the one Godhead. As we have already seen in chapter 1, Gregory does not think that the human mind can encapsulate the divine being so as to comprehend it. The unity of the divine being cannot be distilled down to a single word or definition. In *Or* 31.14, Gregory states that we have a mental image of God's oneness when we consider the Godhead, the First Cause, and the monarchy, but when we transfix our gaze upon the Father, Son, or Spirit, we likewise see each divine person as the fullness of that one Godhead. Our mode of knowing precludes us from grasping the diversity in unity and the unity in diversity because of God's non-compositional nature and, the concomitant of that, his incomprehensibility.

At the end of this passage, Gregory correlates "the three who are worshiped" (τρία τὰ προσκυνούμενα) with the "three who are objects of belief" (τρία πιστεύηται) at the beginning of the passage. Once again, the "three" are in contrast to the "one" that is the Godhead. The "three" (τρία) are those (τὰ) in whom the one Godhead is, those (τὰ) who are from the "first cause" (ἐκ τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας), and, lastly, those who are worshiped.

The point of this analysis is to indicate that the ὁμοούσιος, although unnamed in this passage, is a critical notion for understanding the unity of the three who are differentiated only by their relations of origin. It is for this reason that after this summation of his view, Gregory turns, as analyzed above, to a discussion of the divine unity with special reference to their "identity of being" (*Or* 31.16) and the proper understanding of the ὁμοούσιος (*Or* 31.17-20).

## **2.2 The *Homoousios* and the Monarchy**

The issue, as we've already seen, is the ability for Gregory's conception of the divine monarchy to actually maintain divine order. Is personhood insufficient for guaranteeing divine rule? The passages looked at above have suggested that unity is grounded in being, not in person. In this section, in service of clarifying Gregory's understanding of the ὁμοούσιος, I will examine three passages that have been cited as evidence for the assertion that the Father as monarchy is most fundamental to Gregory's understanding of the divine unity. This interpretation is espoused by both McGuckin, Beeley, and Meyendorff. McGuckin also thinks that "the commonality of nature is the ground of trinitarian unity" but he goes on to assert that "the Father's personal communication of his essence, entirely and without reserve, to the Son and Spirit, must be seen as the origin and principle of that unity."<sup>265</sup> The divine unity, according to McGuckin's interpretation, does not lie in the divine nature but in the "personal communication of the divine nature to the Son and Spirit..."<sup>266</sup> In order, I will examine *Or* 42.15, *Or* 20.6, and *Or* 29.2.

*Or* 42.15 is *prima facie* the strongest evidence for Beeley's, Meyendorff's, and McGuckin's assertion that the Father is most fundamental to the divine unity. Here Gregory urges his audience to imitate the Trinity's unity. But the Trinity's model of unity only goes so far. Gregory recognizes that humans are by nature complex in constitution and relations, whereas the divine being is by nature a simple unity in being and in person. He states,

There is one nature for all three: God. The unity (ἕνωσις) is the Father, from whom and towards whom everything else is referred, not so as to be mixed together in confusion, but so as to be contained, without time or will or power intervening to divide them (διείργοντος). These three have caused us to exist in multiplicity (πολλὰ), each of us being in constant tension (στασιάζοντος) with ourselves and with everything else, but

---

<sup>265</sup> McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 27.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

for them, whose nature is simple (ἀπλή φύσις) and whose existence is the same (τὸ εἶναι ταυτόν), the principal characteristic is unity (τὸ ἓν κύριον).”

They are all correct that this passage indicates that the Father does in fact play an important role in the unity of the Trinity. The kind of unity that Gregory is indicating is maintaining the distinction of divine persons through his generation of the Son and procession of the Spirit.

Without the distinct relations of origination that the Father, in some sense, initiates, the divinity would be undifferentiated. It is interesting to note here that Gregory uses the same three concepts of time, will, and power in his characterization of the divine unity among the persons in *Or* 31.14 and the deficient unity that characterizes humans and the gods in *Or* 31.15. What is important to note is that, although the Father is explicitly named as the divine unity, Gregory goes onto maintain that a “proper unity” (τὸ ἓν κύριον) is had by the Father, Son, and Spirit because their nature is non-composite (ἀπλή φύσις) and they have, as a result, an identity of existence (τὸ εἶναι ταυτόν). As we saw above, in *Or* 30.11, the divine existence is directional, in the sense that it is from the Father to the Son and Spirit, but it is common to the divine persons, and not peculiar to the Father, otherwise the Father would be something that the Son and Spirit are not.

In a similar passage, in *Or* 20.7, Gregory states that the “oneness” of God is maintained by the identity of being. He states, “the unity of God (εἷς Θεός) would be preserved, and Son and Spirit would be referred back to the one...cause, but not compounded or blended with each other (οὐ συντιθεμένων οὐδὲ συναλειφομένων); their unity would be based on the single, self-identical movement and will of the divine being...and on identity of substance (κατὰ τὸ ἓν καὶ ταυτὸ τῆς θεότητος...κίναμά τε καὶ βούλημα καὶ τὴν τῆς οὐσίας ταυτότητα).”<sup>267</sup> This passage seems to indicate that for Gregory, the Father as “cause” and “origin” is necessary, but

---

<sup>267</sup> *Or* 20.7; Brian E. Daley, trans. *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London: Routledge, 2006), 101; SC 270:70.



not sufficient, to maintain the divine unity. Just as in *Or* 42.15, Son's and Spirit's are referred back to the Cause, by which he means Father. The Father maintains a unity of differentiation in their relations of origination but Gregory here also returns to what the divine persons have in common in order to ground their unity. Once again, as in *Or* 31.14-16 and *Or* 42.15, the identity of will, movement (an idea associated with power), and identity of being is affirmed. This fact does not compromise the Father's unique and important role in the divine unity of preserving the hypostatic distinctions by being the Son's and Spirit's only "cause" and "origin." Yet, as in the previous passage, it is not clear that the Father is most basic to the divine unity *per se*. What is clear is that Gregory continually returns to an affirmation of what is common, and that is expressed in the language of "the same being."<sup>268</sup>

A critical passage in *Or* 29.2 is where Gregory indicates that the relationship between the divine monarchy and the unity of being among the divine persons is undergirded by the ὁμοούσιος. The issue that he is attempting to address is how a trinitarian conception of God, which involves the origins of relation, is congruent with the monarchy. His opponents say it is not because origins of relation introduces division into the divine being. Although much could be said on this passage, I will only point out some of the features that indicate my contention: the ὁμοούσιος is critical in Gregory's understanding of the divine unity:

Atheism (ἀναρχία), with its lack of a governing principle involves disorder (ἄτακτος). Polytheism (πολυαρχία), with a plurality of such principles, and this involves disorder again. Both lead to an identical results—lack of order, which, in turn, leads to disintegration (λύσις), disorder being the prelude to disintegration. Monotheism (μοναρχία), with its single governing principle, is what we value—not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person (πρόσωπον) (after all, self-discordant unity (στασιάζω) can become (καθίστημι) a plurality) but the single rule produced by equality of nature, harmony of will, identity of action, and the convergence towards their

---

<sup>268</sup> André de Halleux also holds that this passage does not identify the Father exclusively with the *homoousios*, "Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères cappadociens? Une mauvaise controverse," *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 17 (1986), 149.

source of what springs from unity—none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is a numerical distinction (ἀριθμῶ διαφέρει), there is no division in the substance (οὐσία μὴ τέμνεσθαι).<sup>269</sup>

Gregory maintains that “atheism” (ἀναρχία) and “polytheism” (πολυαρχία) lead to “disintegration” (λύσις) of what exists because they lack the necessary order that a single rule guarantees. Gregory’s theological solution to maintaining order is the rule of a monarchy (μοναρχία). But he intends to establish a unique Christian understanding of it grounded in the scriptural account of the Triune God. For Gregory, the monarchy cannot be defined as a “single person” (ἓν πρόσωπον) because individuals can be internally composed and divided. Our analysis of *Or* 31.15-16 reinforces this wariness concerning the kind of unity of individual persons. Self-discordant unities mark human beings and even the gods of the fables. Thus, a single entity (πρόσωπον) is an insufficient definition of monarchy because one who is internally divided, as a result of composition, is subject to change. The proper rule of the created order cannot be guaranteed by a being who changes. When describing the problem with the term πρόσωπον, Gregory uses the word στασιάζω, the same word he used to describe the fundamental problem with polytheism, which is constituted by factionalism, discordance, and difference, and the word he used to describe human mutual and internal opposition in *Or* 31.15-16. So what is the definition of a monarchy that is sufficient for maintaining a unified rule?

Gregory seems to think that a conception of the monarchy that can guarantee stable order must be characterized by four things: a unity of nature (φύσεως), will (γνώμης), and movement (αὐτότης κινήσεως); and an undivided being (οὐσία μὴ τέμνεσθαι). If an entity is divided in any respect, there will be faction, change, and decay. This passage indicates, *pace* Beeley, that without a grounding in a perfect identity of being, “monarchy” is insufficient to reply to the

---

<sup>269</sup> *Or* 29.2; Wickham, 70; SC 250:178-80. This is a direct quotation from Wickham.

charge of tritheism.<sup>270</sup> For “a self-discordant unity can become a plurality...”<sup>271</sup> My interpretation is also maintained by Richard Cross who likewise thinks that Gregory’s use of monarchy in *Or* 29.2 indicates that the “divine external activity is undivided, thus avoiding the following two states of affairs in God’s universal governance of creation.”<sup>272</sup> He goes on to state that “monarchy here is a way of asserting the indivisible existence and activity of this essence.”<sup>273</sup> What is at stake in maintaining that the divine unity is the monarchy of the Father, rather than the consubstantiality of the divine persons, is that such a definition of monarchy does not guarantee, by Gregory’s own definition, a rule without strife or division. The principle of creation must be internally and externally harmonious, and this the kind of unity of person and unity of “companionship” is only guaranteed by an identity of being (*Or* 31.16).

Even the Father, if he is internally divided, is incapable of maintaining the divine unity and monarchy of creation. Yes, this kind of unity could be had by a single “person,” but Gregory makes clear that the Father is not the only one in view. Thus, a single rule, a monarchy, is guaranteed by the absolute identity of being, the ὁμοούσιος of the Father, Son, and Spirit that in no way involves any division on account of their origins of relation. Origination does not entail division of being. What enables them to rule without division or strife, is that they are identical with respect to being, and their concomitant identity of will and of activity. This is congruent with Gregory’s account of the unity-in-diversity in *Or* 31.14-20. Numerical distinctions are only to be made among the divine persons/hypostases. But in no respect, as we have seen above, does

---

<sup>270</sup> Beeley, 208.

<sup>271</sup> *Or* 29.2.

<sup>272</sup> Cross, 114.

<sup>273</sup> Cross, 115.

Gregory think the divine being can be divided. The divine being is what each divine person is, and it is the ground (not to diminish the important function of the Father) of the divine unity.

### **Conclusion**

It has been my intention in this chapter to gain clarity on the function of the ὁμοούσιος in Gregory's formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. First, I have shown that, for Gregory, the relations of origin do not entail an ontological subordination of the Son and Spirit to the Father, as in every respect, they are equally and wholly the same divine being. Gregory lifts the notion of causality out of the realm of being and places it in the realm of relation. What this means is that causality language seems to be synonymous with origination language. Which is to say, when Gregory speaks of causality in reference to the transcendent Trinity, he is simply indicating begetting and procession, and that the Father is origin. But this is only possible because the divine relations (Father, Son, and Spirit) are the same being, as Gregory makes clear. The ὁμοούσιος secures the equality of divine attributes, even though those attributes are communicated between the divine persons in a structure corresponding to the divine origination. Since each divine person shares the divine attributes, in Gregory's thinking, then those attributes are not means of differentiating the divine persons. He is able to maintain the equality of the divine persons who originate from the Father through the ὁμοούσιος that obtains between them. Second, the ὁμοούσιος of the divine persons significantly shapes the unity they have with each other and themselves taken singly. We saw how, in *Or* 31.14-20, Gregory rejects the "generic theory" of unity, that was and is still, levelled at him since he maintains that numerical distinction are only predicated of the different hypostases, since they are in every other way identical. I then examined several passages that touch upon the divine unity and I showed how, although the Father is more significant in maintaining the distinction of persons through his

unique origination of the Son and Spirit, Gregory consistently returns to the ὁμοούσιος in order to ground the unity of the divine persons. In sum, ὁμοούσιος plays a critical role in securing the equality and unity among the divine persons.

## Conclusion

I have demonstrated in this study that, while Gregory sees the Father as the cause-origin of the Son and Spirit, he does not exclusively identify him with the divine equality and unity. To the contrary, we see how Gregory grounds a particular conception of the divine persons' unity and equality in the reality of their being the same substance. This conclusion required us to, in the first place, examine Gregory's understanding of theological discourse, and in the second place, distill what precisely he thinks the divine titles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit refer to, and how they relate to each other.

The equality and unity of the divine persons is, in fact, at stake in dislodging them from their loci in the identity of being, the *homoousios*. The equality and unity of the divine persons is fundamentally undone by locating them in the monarchy. In chapter one, when examining Gregory's understanding of theological discourse, I concluded that he thinks human knowledge of God is limited in extent and incapable of comprehending the divine essence and nature, and as such, it is limited to analogous knowledge that is apophatic in character. This discussion enabled us to see that, for Gregory, theological discourse is determined by the nature of God, anthropology, and soteriology. This is fundamental to how he thinks about the human capacity to comprehend and understand words, in particular, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that signify divine realities, realities that are free from the very notions of corporeality we cannot help but think with. *Or 27* and *Or 28* are not merely preliminary to his trinitarian theology but rather constitute the very epistemological and salvific structure within which theological reflection upon the Trinity is to take place. Outside of a proper understanding of theological discourse, Gregory thinks that one will be unable to grasp, with any degree of accuracy, the doctrine of the Trinity. The theologian can and must make progress in the knowledge of God through self-purification

that amounts to the removal of corporeal notions from one's thoughts about God. Such an account of theological discourse set the ground for us to examine his understanding of the relations and origination.

In chapter two, we saw that Gregory understands the Father, Son, and Spirit to be subsistent relations of origin. The divine persons are not like you and I, as Gregory understands them, but, rather, they simply are the very relations of each other. The Son and Spirit originate from the Father in a divine way, free of all creaturely attributes. He conceives of them as correlative subsistent relations of origins. The origination of the Son and the Spirit from the Father is, for Gregory, understood in a very narrow sense, completely free of all creaturely attributes and thus neither compromising their divinity nor their consubstantiality with the Father and each other. Contra Beeley's construal of the divine monarchy as the Father, the Father has no peculiar property that signifies anything other than his correlative relation with Son and Spirit. The Father is not uniquely correlated to creation as monarch in a way that Son and Spirit are not. This discussion of Son and Spirit originating from the Father as relations of origin raised the question as to how Gregory understands and grounds the equality and unity of the divine persons.

In chapter three, we saw that Gregory grounds the divine equality and divine unity in the identity of substance, the *homoousios*, and not, as Beeley, McGuckin, and Meyendorf argue, in the Father. The monarchy itself is at stake in such a reading because Gregory maintains that the monarchy is logically contingent on the unity and equality of the divine persons, such a unity and equality that he continually grounds in their ontological sameness and undivided being. The monarchy cannot be procured without an absolute identity of being that is entirely equal and unified in every respect and indivisible, and that maintains a differentiation between the divine

persons, not at the level of being or attributes, but only in respect to peculiar relations-qua-origination. When we examined Gregory's understanding of equality, we looked at a number of texts in which Gregory resolved the problem of inequality as a result of causality by determining that the Father and Son are absolutely identical in every way according to their being. The only difference that can be predicated is in terms of origination from the Father as "cause" and "origin." We then looked at how Gregory appealed to the *homoousios* to ground the unity of the Father and Son. We examined, in particular, *Oration* 31.14-20 in which we see that Gregory does, in fact, identify the unity and equality of the divine persons in their *homoousios*. Beeley identifies the monarchy with the Father and thinks that it is the most fundamental concept for Gregory's understanding of the divine unity. He writes, "as the basis of the divine unity, the monarchy of the Father thus serves as Gregory's most frequent reply to the charge of tritheism."<sup>274</sup> What we showed is that the monarchy is not the primary theological concept or the most basic concept that Gregory has recourse to. To the extent that scholars identify the Father solely with the monarchy, as notably seen in Beeley, the more the critical notion of *homoousios* is eclipsed and even passed-over in Gregory's understanding of divine unity and equality. This is a critical error, as the logical reason for equality and unity is challenged. This error has been seen in the enthusiastic affirmation of the Father as cause of the Son in an analogous way to God being the cause of creation. Gregory's argument for divine equality and unity falls apart if one neglects the *homoousios* in his trinitarian theology, as it is always operative in his fundamental assumptions about the unity and diversity in God. As we have seen, Gregory presents a clear account of the Trinity that does not locate equality and unity of the divine being in the Father,

---

<sup>274</sup> Beeley, "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus," 208.



but, rather, as detailed in *Or* 31.14-19, *Or* 42.15, *Or* 20.7 and *Or* 29.2, primarily in their mutual identity of being.

## **Bibliography**

### **Critical Editions:**

- Gallay, Paul. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 27-31 (Discours Théologiques)*. Sources Chrétiennes 250. Paris: Cerf, 1978.
- Moreschini, C., ed. and Paul Gallay, trans. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 32-37*. Sources Chrétiennes 318. Paris: Cerf, 1985.
- Mossay, J. With Guy Lafontaine. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 20-23*. Sources Chrétiennes 270. Paris: Cerf, 1980.
- Mossay, J. With Guy Lafontaine. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 24-26*. Sources Chrétiennes 270. Paris: Cerf, 1981.
- Moreschini, C., ed. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 38-241*. Sources Chrétiennes 358. Paris: Cerf, 1990.
- Bernardi, Jean, ed. *Grégoire de Nazianze: Discours 42-43*. Sources Chrétiennes 384. Paris: Cerf, 1992.

### **Translations:**

- Daley, Brian E. trans. *Gregory of Nazianzus*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Harrison, Nonna Verna. *Festal Orations: St Gregory of Nazianzus*. Crestwood, NY.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008.
- Vinson, Martha, trans. *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2003.
- Wickham, Lionel and Frederick Williams. *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letter of Cledonius*. Popular Patristics Series. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002.

### **Modern Studies:**

- Ayres, Lewis. *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Barnes, Michel. "One Nature, One Power: Consensus Doctrine in Pro-Nicene Polemic." *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997) 205–223.

- Barnes, Michel. "Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality," *Vigiliae christianae* 52 (1998) 59-87.
- Barnes, T. D. "The Collapse of the Homoeans in the East." *Studia Patristica* 29 (1997) 3-16.
- Beeley, Christopher A. "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus." *Harvard Theological Review* 100 (2007) 199-214.
- — —. *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We See Light*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Behr, John. *The Nicene Faith. Formation of Christian Theology 2*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004.
- — —. *The Way to Nicea. Formation of Christian Theology 1*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001.
- Børtnes, Jostein and Tomas Hägg, eds. *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006.
- Bouteneff, Peter. "St. Gregory Nazianzen and Two-Nature Christology." *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 38 (1994) 255-27.
- Cross, Richard. "Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 (2006) 105-116.
- Daley, Brian E. *Gregory of Nazianzus. The Early Church Fathers*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Egan, John P. "Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen's Oration 31.14." *Studia Patristica* 27 (1993) 21-28.
- — —. "Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis: Saint Gregory the Theologian, Oration 31.14." *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994) 83-93.
- — —. "Towards a Mysticism of Light in Gregory Nazianzen's Oration 32.15." *Studia Patristica* 18 (1989) 8-13.
- — —. "Aitios/'author,' aitia/'cause' and archē/'origin': Synonyms in Selected Texts of Gregory Nazianzen." *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997) 102-107.
- Gavrilyuk, Paul. *The Suffering of the Impassible God*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

- Halleux, André de. “‘Hypostase’ et ‘personne’ dans la formation du dogme trinitaire (ca 375–381).” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 79 (1984): 313–369, 625–670.
- — —. “Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les Pères cappadociens ? Une mauvaise controverse” *Revue théologique de Louvain* 17 (1986) 129–155.
- Hanson, R. P. C.. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.
- Harrison, Verna. “Greek Patristic Foundations of Trinitarian Anthropology.” *Pro Ecclesia* 14 (2005) 399–412.
- — —. “Illumined from All Sides by the Trinity: A Neglected Theme in Gregory Nazianzen’s Trinitarian Theology.” In *Re-Reading Gregory of Nazianzus: Essays on History, Theology, and Culture*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2012.
- — —. “Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers.” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 35 (1991) 53–65.
- — —. “Gregory Nazianzen’s Festal Spirituality: Anamnesis and Mimesis,” *Philosophy and Theology* 18 (2006) 27-51.
- Lloyd, G. E. R. *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Lienhard, Joseph T. “Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of ‘One Hypostasis.’” *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. S. T. Davis et al., 99–121. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Lossky, Vladimir. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. Translated by members of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius. Cambridge: James Clark, 1957.
- Louth, Andrew. “St. Gregory the Theologian and St. Maximus the Confessor: The Shaping of Tradition.” In *Meaning and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honour of Maurice Wiles*, edited by Sarah Coakley and David Pailin, 117-30. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- McGuckin, John A. “Perceiving Light from Light in Light (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of St. Gregory the Theologian.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994) 7-32.

- — —. “The Vision of God in St. Gregory Nazianzen.” *Studia Patristica* 32 (1997) 145-52.
- — —. *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*. Crestwood N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001.
- Meijering, E. P. “The Doctrine of the Will and of the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus.” *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift* 27 (1973) 224–234.
- Meredith, Anthony. *The Cappadocians*. Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995.
- Narkevics, Edgars. “Skiagraphia: Outlining the conception of God in Gregory’s *Theological Orations*.” In *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections*, ed. Jostein Børtnes and Tomas Hägg, 83-112. Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2006.
- Norris, Frederick. “Of Thorns and Roses: The Logic of Belief in Gregory of Nazianzen.” *Church History* 53 (1984) 131—140.
- — —. “The Tetragrammaton in Gregory Nazianzen, Or. 30.17” *Vigiliae Christianae* 41 (1989) 339-444.
- — —. “Gregory Nazianzen’s Opponents in Oration 31.” *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments*, ed. Robert Gregg. 321-326. Patristic Monograph Series 11. Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1985.
- — —. *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 13. Leiden etc., 1991.
- Russell, Norman. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. Oxford Early Christian Studies. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Scalise, Brian. “Perichoresis In Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor.” *Eleutheria* 2 (2013) 58–76.
- Torrance, Thomas. F. *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Faith*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988.
- Trigg, Joseph W. “Knowing God in the *Theological Orations* of Gregory of Nazianzus.” In *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson*, ed. by Andrew B. McGowan, Brian E. Daley, and Timothy D. Gaden, 84-101. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 94. Leiden: Brill, 2009.

- Studer, Basil. *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*. Ed. Andrew Louth. Trans. Matthias Westerhoff. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1993.
- Widdicombe, Peter. *The Fatherhood of God: from Origen to Athanasius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Winslow, Donald F. *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*. Patristic Monograph Series 7. Cambridge, Mass.: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979.