GREGORY NAZIANZEN’S PNEUMATOLOGY COMPLETES THE 4TH CENTURY TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT
Gregory Nazianzen’s Pneumatology completes the 4th Century Trinitarian Theology
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The 4th century proved to be a fertile time for formulation of the doctrines of God. The deity of Jesus Christ and His equality with God the Father was affirmed at the Nicene Council in A.D. 325. However, the ensuing Creed left the Person and work of the Holy Spirit ambiguous. This led to over 60 years of controversy regarding the Spirit’s identity, His relationship with the Father and the Son, and ultimately the formulation of a biblical doctrine of the Trinity. While the pro-Nicene Fathers consented that the Spirit belongs to the divine realm, Gregory Nazianzen boldly and forcefully declared that the Holy Spirit is God. An ecumenical creed was formulated at the Council at Constantinople at A.D. 381, in which the Spirit was confessed to be co-glorified and worshipped with the Father and the Son. Although the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed fell short of an explicit confession of the deity of the Spirit, the idea that God is one Being in three Persons was solidified, in which Gregory played an important role.

This thesis examines the historic background and Gregory Nazianzen’s theology of the Holy Spirit, as well as its relationship to a full-blown Trinitarian theology. Gregory synthesized and consolidated a pro-Nicene tradition under the guidance of Scripture and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. And he came to the conclusion that the Church must confess the deity of the Spirit or the Trinity would fall apart. Gregory’s Pneumatology is examined in light of his methodology, his use of Scripture and orthodox teachings, as well as
his teaching on the existential work of the Spirit in the Church. As a result, Gregory’s Pneumatology complements and completes his biblical Trinitarianism, and together they led to a classical 4th century doctrine of the Trinity.
To God the Father,
God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit;

One God in three Persons, my Lord and Savior.

Kaling my wife,
My daughters Sophia,
and Susanna;

My loving and supportive family.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Trinity is a mystery. It is the revelation of the one true God, and how He relates to us as three Persons. Over against philosophical speculation and heretical teachings, the Church reached an orthodox formulation of “three Persons in one substance” (tres hypostasis, mia ousia in Greek or tres persona, una substantia in Latin) in the late 4th century. The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (commonly known as the Nicene Creed), describes the co-equality of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in their divinity and honor. This marked an ecumenical consensus in the 4th century regarding the biblical teaching on the Trinity.

The Holy Spirit has often been called the forgotten Person within the Trinity. The earthly ministry of Jesus, between the incarnation and the resurrection, was well documented in historical narrative of the Bible. However, the coming of the Holy Spirit and His dwelling in the Church was not as visible. Perhaps this is why many contemporary evangelical churches call themselves “Christ-centered” or “God-centered.” This smacks of Unitarianism or Christomonism; or to a lesser degree, an intellectual orthodoxy that stresses knowledge over Christian spirituality and practice. On the other hand, a non-biblical emphasis on the Spirit’s influence often leads to emotionalism and anti-intellectualism. Taken to a greater extreme, this leads to a re-enactment of Montanism and false biblical
interpretations and prophecies. So it is paramount for Christians not only confess God as a Trinity, but also worship and live in the light of a biblical and orthodox Trinitarianism.

With the rise of Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations, it is important for Christians to understand who the Holy Spirit is and what He does subjectively and objectively in and through the Church. When lost in a plethora of ideas and teachings, it is often helpful to look back in history to see how a classical Pneumatology was originally formulated. The 4th century represents such a time when the Church was thinking through difficult problems of the doctrine of Trinity. It is in this period when the Church came to a firm grip of the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and how they relate to God the Father. It would be beneficial to examine the formulation of the classical doctrine of the Holy Spirit, so that Christians today may see how we should (and should not) think about the Him.

The Nicene Council (A.D. 325) was the first ecumenical council with a written formal creedal confession. After expounding the co-equality and consubstantiality between the Father and the Son, the Nicene Creed (N) only contains the enigmatic phrase “and in the Holy Spirit.” The Church then spent the next 60 years considering who the Holy Spirit is, cumulating in the Council of Constantinople and the expanded version of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (C). In between these two councils, Gregory Nazianzen was instrumental in formulating a biblical Pneumatology as the last step towards a biblical and orthodox Trinitarianism. This thesis examines Gregory’s teaching on the Person and works of the Holy Spirit, as well as His relationship with the Father and the Son in the indivisible triune Godhead.
CHAPTER 2
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This chapter surveys the historical background in the Pneumatological controversy leading up to the Council of Constantinople in late 4th century. Particular attention will be paid to the writings of Athanasius and Basil regarding the Holy Spirit, since they laid the foundation for Gregory Nazianzen’s Pneumatology and the formulation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. For the first time the Church reached an ecumenical consensus regarding the Trinity of God, who is one Being in three co-equal Persons.

Ante-Nicene Pneumatology

The Apologists continued the apostolic tradition by naming the Holy Spirit along with the Father and the Son. Fighting against Gnosticism and atheism, these 2nd century Fathers primarily focused on the work of the Holy Spirit in inscripturation. They taught that the truth of God and the authority of the Scripture come from the power and divinity of the Spirit.

Irenaeus employed an innovative image of the Son and the Spirit as the “two hands of God”¹ to describe the works of God the Father. In so doing he set a contrast between the objective work of Christ at the cross for believers, and the subjective work of the Holy Spirit within believers. Taking this inner working of the Spirit to an extreme, Montanus and his followers claimed to receive novel prophetic revelation through the Holy

Spirit, compelling them to speak in ecstatic and frantic ways. Ironically, before Tertullian embraced Montanism, he was the first to formulate a unity of one God among the diversity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He coined the word “Trinity” (trinitas) to describe the triune personality of God.

Towards the 3rd century the Church faced a heightened awareness of problems posed by the Trinity. The teaching that God is three Persons implied that there are three gods. In an effort to correct this polytheistic tendency, two forms of monarchianisms sprang up. First is the dynamic monarchianism of Paul of Samosata, who regarded the Holy Spirit as a divine influence and the Son as adopted by God the Father. Interestingly, he was the first who called the Son homoousios with the Father, since Paul taught that the Son became one and the same as the Father.2 The second form of monarchianism—advocated by Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius—taught that God is one Person who manifested Himself in three names in historical succession. This is also commonly called modalism. Tertullian mocked Praxeas as “crucifying the Father and casting out the Paraclete.”3

The unity in a Trinity, setting in their order three, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—three, however, not in condition but in relation, not in substance but in mode of existence, not in power but in special characteristics; or rather, of one substance, one condition, and one power, inasmuch as it is one God from whom these relations and modes and special characteristics are reckoned in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.4

The influential Alexandria theologian Origen had a conflicted view of the Holy Spirit. On the one hand he taught that the Spirit “was made (egeneto) by the Word, and that the Word is the elder of the two.”5 On the other hand he attributed the work of creation and sanctification to the Spirit, as well as placing the Spirit in the realm of the divine rather

2 Kelly, 117-119.
3 Tertullian, Against Praxeas, ANF 3:873.
4 Ibid., 874-875.
than in the realm of the creation. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is worthy of equal honor to the Son and the Father. Origen also invented the necessary technical terms for constructing the doctrine of God. He called the Father “ingenerate” (αγεννηστος), and the Son “generate” (γεννηστα); thereby stating that the Son derives his eternal existence from God the Father who alone is αυτοθεος and πηγη της θεοτητος (fount of deity). Taken together, Origen’s Pneumatology was innovative and it became the standard starting point of the Pneumatology of the Eastern Church in the 4th century. However, Origen’s subordinationalism of the Son to the Father, and the Spirit to the Son and the Father, would have far reaching influence on later development of Arianism.

Arianism and the Nicene Council

A systematic treatment of the Christian doctrine of God began at the first ecumenical council at Nicaea, when 318 bishops gathered together to formulate an orthodox doctrine confessing the deity of Christ. The Nicene Creed (N) stemmed from an attempt to fight back heresies, the chief of those was Arianism since it denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ. The two most contentious teaching offered by Arius were: (1) “there was a time when he (the Son of God) was not,” and (2) the Son was created by the Father. Taken together, Arius and his followers deemed that Jesus is not fully God.

The outbreak of Arianism had serious consequences. A prevailing notion during that time was that the Son was made man so that man can be made God (θεωσις, or deification). Hence, if Jesus is not fully God salvation would be incomplete. In addition, worship of Jesus would be equivalent to idol worship. The emperor Constantine, under the

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6 Ibid., 130-131.
7 Ibid., 103-131; Kelly, 128.
8 Swete, 129; Kelly, 131.
influence of Spanish bishop Hosius, called the first ecclesiastical council at Nicaea in A.D. 325. The Council of Nicaea affirmed the divinity of the Son and His equality to the Father. At the insistence of Constantine, the Son of God was said to be ὁμοουσιος τῷ πατρὶ, which means that the Son shares the same divine essence with the Father even though they are distinct Persons. Although the Council primarily dealt with Christology, it also included in its creedal statement the clause “and in the Holy Spirit.” It can be speculated that it was the desire of the bishops to include the Holy Spirit in a confession of the Godhead, because many traditional liturgies already included worship of God as a Triad.9

The theological battle on the deity of Christ continued after rectification of N. Over the next half century, the Church continued to battle Arianism, Neo-Arianism, Sabellianism, and other minor heresies that denied the full equality of the Son and the Father. Athanasius and the three Cappadocians—Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, and Gregory Nyssen—steadfastly defended and propagated the Nicene orthodoxy by bearing witness to the deity of Christ. From the mid-4th century on, the Nicene faith began to gain the upper hand. As the Church began to embrace the deity of Christ, another problem regarding the doctrine of God broke out. This time, the Church began to mull over the place of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead (θεοτητες).

In the early 4th century, Arius argued that the Son had a beginning because He was created by the Father through an act of the will. His intention was similar to Sabellius in that the monarchy of Father must be maintained over against the co-equality of the Son. Although Arius did not explicitly mention the Spirit, he regarded the essence, nature, and honor of the Father and the Son as infinitely dissimilar.10

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10 Swete, 165.
Spirit cannot be co-equal with the Father since He also had a beginning. Later Arians would teach that it was the Son who created the Holy Spirit, borrowing from Origen’s subordinationalism. In the mid-4th century, some hardcore monarchians and Arians rejected the Son and the Spirit as being eternal and divine. Other moderates, such as Neo-Arians and the homoiousians, came to accept the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father, but they still denied that the Spirit should be equal to them in divinity and honor. Although orthodox pro-Nicene bishops generally regarded the Holy Spirit as co-equal to the Father and the Son, many stayed silent regarding the deity of the Spirit and the confession of the Trinity remained incomplete.

Post-Nicene Pneumatology

According to the writings of Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen, there were many different theories about the Holy Spirit in the marketplace. Some believed that He is created. Some believed that He is divine but of a lower rank than the Father and the Son. Others thought that the Spirit belongs to a “third-thing” that is neither God nor a creature, but a composite or a mixture. The Church had no formal dogmatic construction of the Trinity except in local liturgies. Since the Holy Spirit is named with the Father and the Son in baptism and in worship, momentum would take the Church to consider the deity of the Holy Spirit in order to complete a full confessional Trinitarian theology. Towards the end of the 4th century, the time was ripe for orthodox theologians, such as Gregory Nazianzen and his Cappadocians comrades, to finally come up with a biblical-theological formulation of Pneumatology towards a completion of an orthodox doctrine of God.

The problem with confessing the deity of the Holy Spirit was that it re-introduced the notion of polytheism and subordinationalism that were soundly rejected by N.
Just as the Church had to think through the being of the Son of God and His relationship with
the Father, it needed to develop a theology of the Holy Spirit. Two questions must be
answered. First, who (or what) is the Holy Spirit. Second, how He relates to the Son and the
Father. The following two sections survey the polemical writings of Athanasius and Basil on
the Holy Spirit, as their writings formed the necessary background for the Constantinople
Council.

**Athanasius’ Letters to the Serapion**

Athanasius is famous for defending the Nicene orthodoxy, especially his high
Christology and the *homoousios* between the Father and the Son. When he returned from his
last exile (A.D. 369-370), Athanasius was confronted with an outbreak of a new controversy
regarding the Holy Spirit. A group of Neo-Arians affirmed *homoousios* of the Son, but they
rejected that the Holy Spirit is co-equal with the Father and the Son. The majority of this
group of “Spirit-fighters” (*πνευματομαχοί*) insisted that the Holy Spirit is a ministering angel
with unmatched dignity and power.\(^{11}\) Therefore they discouraged worship of the Holy Spirit.
This prompted Serapion, bishop of Thmuis, to inquire of the great Nicene defender
Athanasius about the nature of the Holy Spirit. Sensing the danger of impugning the doctrine
and worship of God, Athanasius wrote a series of letters to correct this heresy. Athanasius
saw clarification of the Spirit’s divinity as urgent, dogmatic, and pastoral, because blasphemy
against the Holy Spirit is sinning against God.\(^{12}\)

Athanasius’ doctrine of the Holy Spirit can be described as Christocentric,
especially when *Letter II* of this treatise on the Holy Spirit is totally devoted to defend the co-

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\(^{11}\) St. Athanasius, *The Letters of Saint Athanasius*, trans. C. R. B. Shapland (New York: Philosophical Library,
1951), I.1.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., I.3, 10; quoting Matt. 12:31.
equality between the Father and the Son. Athanasius then extended this Christological *homoousios* to a Pneumatological *homoousios*. In other words, if the Son in His essence is the same as the Father, then the Holy Spirit in His essence is also the same as the Son, *mutatis mutandis*. Many theologians followed this standard method of deriving the ontology of the Holy Spirit from Christology. It is worth noting that Basil minimized this tendency and Gregory Nazianzen abandoned this method altogether.

The epistemology of Athanasius’ doctrine of the Spirit falls into two foci. First, God is one and indivisible. And second, a Christocentric view of the Spirit that resulted in an extrapolation of Pneumatology from Christology.

Athanasius denied that the Spirit is an intermediary being between the Creator and creatures. To him it is clear that there is only one eternal Creator who is divine, who alone made all creatures. If the Holy Spirit is a creature, the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) and benediction (2 Cor. 13:14) would put a creature together with the divine Father and the divine Son. It would then be an unthinkable mistake for anyone to be baptized into a creature. Therefore, by reason and liturgy the Holy Spirit must be on the side of the divine. Athanasius would find other scriptural support of the Spirit’s divinity. Athanasius’ unique contribution was to point out that the Spirit is often explicitly related to either the Father (“Spirit of God” or “my Spirit”) or the Son (“Spirit of the Lord”). The Spirit’s intimate relation with the Father and Son is thus further proof that He is divine and ontologically different from creatures. Moreover, the work of the Spirit in executing the will of the

13 Ibid., I.28.
14 Athanasius cited examples such as “Spirit of the Lord,” “My Spirit,” and “Spirit of God,” to stress that the Spirit is not just a divine force or energy, but a subsistence, ibid., I.5-6.
15 Ibid., I.16, 21.
Father and completing the work of the Son also points to an intra-Trinitarian relationship
from which flows all of the Spirit’s work in the world. Athanasius says:

When mention is made of the Father, there is included also His Word, and the Spirit
who is in the Son. If the Son is named, the Father is in the Son, and the Spirit is not
outside of the Word. For there is from the Father one grace which is fulfilled through
the Son in the Holy Spirit; and there is one divine nature (θεότης), and one God who is
over all and through all and in all.16

This represents one of the first examples of deriving an ontological
relationship among the three Persons from their economic activities.17

Other than His relationship with the Father and the Son, there are other
reasons why the Spirit must be divine. Athanasius pointed out that the Holy Spirit sanctifies
creatures, and is not Himself sanctified.18 In addition, the Spirit bestows life on man since
He is called “a quickening (ζωοποιον) Spirit.”19 He is also called the Creator20 and the image
of the Son.21 The attributes of the Spirit include immutability22 and omnipresence.23 Finally,
the works of the Holy Spirit show that He is doing what only God can perform.24

Although there was some ambiguity in the early Fathers concerning whether
the Spirit is a divine Person, a holy presence, or attribute of God, Athanasius emphasized that
the Spirit is indeed a personal Being. The work of the Spirit, as well as His name and rank
along with the Father and the Son, are definitive proofs that the Spirit deserves the honor and

16 Ibid., I.14.
17 Ibid., I.31, III.5.
18 Ibid., I.22.
19 Ibid., I.23, echoing Rom. 8:11.
20 Ibid., III.5
21 Ibid., I.24
22 Ibid., I.26.
23 Ibid., III.4.
24 Athanasius quoted Ps. 33:6 “by the word of the Lord (LXX: λόγῳ του κυρίου) the heavens were made, and
by the breath (τῷ πνεύματι) of his mouth all their host” as a definitive proof that the Spirit is involved in
creation along with the Father and the Son, ibid., III.5.
worship along with the Father and the Son. By exhorting believers to worship the Holy Spirit, Athanasius made a clear distinction that the Spirit is not a divine attribute but a divine Person who belongs to the Holy Triad.

On the other hand, Athanasius called the Holy Spirit the “energeia” of the Son when he discussed the role of the Spirit in completing the work of the Son in redemption. And because the Spirit is “in” the Son, believers can know the Spirit through the saving knowledge of the Son. For example, he says, “When we are enlightened by the Spirit, it is Christ who in Him enlightens us.” It appears that Athanasius still retained traces of Irenaeus’ teaching of the Spirit as the “divine in Christ.” It appears that Athanasius’ Christocentrism retained a faint trace of Origen’s teaching that the Holy Spirit is subordinated to the Son.

Athanasius briefly touched on the importance of the Holy Spirit’s subjective work in man. Previously he taught deification in his teaching of the incarnation. Here in The Letters to the Serapion, he further taught that “it is through the Spirit that we are all said to be partakers of God (θεοποιοι).” He was not saying that man may become God, but that only a divine Spirit can bring man into participation with a divine Being. Later Basil would follow this line of reasoning in his teaching of the inner-purifying work of the Holy Spirit, and Gregory Nazianzen would further formulate a systematic doctrine of theosis.

It appears that after writing voluminously on the consubstantiality of the Son and the Father, it would be natural for Athanasius to apply the same terminology and call the

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25 Ibid., IV.7.  
26 Ibid., IV.3.  
27 Ibid, I.20, 30.  
28 Ibid., I.19.  
29 Kelly, 142-145.  
31 Athanasius, Letters, I.24.
Spirit ὑμωσιος τῷ ίω (or τῷ πατρὶ). Curiously, Athanasius stated that the Spirit is 
homoousios with “him” (God).\(^{32}\) Even though Athanasius confessed that the Spirit is same 
in essence with God, he fell short of confessing that the Spirit is God Himself. In his battle 
against the Arians, Athanasius repeatedly called the Son “God”; he even boldly called the 
Son “holu theou.”\(^{33}\) Calling the Spirit “not-a-creature” and “divine,” Athanasius fell short of 
a full-blown Trinitarian confession of the deity of the Holy Spirit. This lack of theological 
clarity persisted until Gregory Nazianzen openly and unabashedly called the Holy Spirit God.

To summarize, *The Letters to Serapion* was the first doctrinal exposition on 
the Holy Spirit. Athanasius’ method was scriptural, and his foundation was the confessional 
tradition of God as a Holy Triad. The Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy 
Spirit, who are equal in honor, power, and divinity. To deny or reject the divine essence of 
the Holy Spirit is blasphemy and a denial of the Son.\(^{34}\)

Athanasius’ Pneumatology shared the same starting point with his 
Christology. He first proved from Scripture that the Son and the Spirit are not creatures, 
because their works are of divine in origin and power. He then appealed to the Son’s and the 
Spirit’s inseparable relationship with the Father, demonstrated by the coordinated works of 
the three Persons in creation and redemption. Likewise, the Spirit’s dependency on the Son 
(and the Father) put the Spirit as homoousios with God.\(^{35}\) Athanasius also proved that the 
orthodox pro-Nicene teaching of Christ can be extended and applied to the Holy Spirit. He 
used the logical extension of the oneness of the Son and the Father to show that the Spirit

\(^{32}\) Ibid., I.27. It is interesting to note that Athanasius did not specific to whom (the Father or the Son) the Spirit is homoousios. Athanasius’ vagueness regarding the Holy Spirit is contrasted with his boldness in calling the Son “God.”

\(^{33}\) St. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, NPNF 4:716-717.

\(^{34}\) Athanasius, *Letters*, I.1, 3.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., I.27.
relates to the Godhead in a close, intimate fashion because they are one in nature. The Spirit cannot be divided from the Son, as the Son is inseparable from the Father. Christians can only know the Spirit through knowledge of the Son. This is the Christocentric Pneumatology of Athanasius. Whatever relationship the Son is to the Father, the same relation the Spirit is to the Son.

Although Athanasius started a formal conversation and teaching of the Holy Spirit, his Pneumatology did not reach maturity. His use of *homoousios* was sparse, reserved and confusing. As much as Athanasius upheld the Holy Triad, he made no attempt to clarify the relationship between the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son. Indeed, his Pneumatology and Christology often seemed conflated. This is especially seen in the doctrine of inspiration and illumination. Athanasius’ insistence of the Spirit having the same rank and order to the Son as the Son to the Father gave a faint trace of subordinationalism, or even tritheism. In fact, this Eastern tendency to give rank and order to the three Persons continues today, with the Father being first, the Son second, and the Spirit third.

Over the last few years of Athanasius’ life, he had correspondence with Basil. Unfortunately, none of the letters are extant. The controversy surrounding the Holy Spirit only began in mid-4th century. From that point on confusion about the Spirit sprang up everywhere, from Egypt to Asia Manor and Cappadocia. The battle against the Pneumatomachians required a more sophisticated defense of the Holy Spirit, presented in Basil’s book *On the Holy Spirit.*

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36 Ibid., I.14, 16, 25, 33, III.1, 5, IV.4.
37 Ibid., I.2, III.1, alluding to 1 Cor. 12:3.
38 Ibid., I.21, III.1.
Basil’s *On the Holy Spirit*

Basil was regarded as the successor of Athanasius in defending the Nicene orthodoxy. During his lifetime Basil engaged in theological battles against the Macedonians and the Eunomians. Both parties were “Spirit-fighters” who taught that the Holy Spirit was created by the Son. According to these Pneumatomachians, the Spirit has a different nature from the Father and the Son and is inferior to them. Basil countered by saying that although the Spirit is third in rank, He is equal in honor with the Father and the Son.

Basil wrote *On the Holy Spirit* to refute accusations that he perverted the ancient worship and liturgy. In leading public worship, Basil often closed with a doxology by praying, “Glory to the Father with (*μετὰ*) the Son, together with (*σὺν*) the Holy Spirit.” Basil countered by saying that although the Spirit is third in rank, He is equal in honor with the Father and the Son.

Basil recognized that this was no mere wordplay, since the heart of the matter was confessing the Trinity. Basil’s opponents saw the Son and Spirit as instrumental in the spiritual worship of the Father. However, Basil noticed that the Son and Spirit should be objects of worship alongside the Father. The reason why he altered the ancient liturgical formula was to promote awareness of the full equality among the three Persons of the Godhead. Basil saw, as Athanasius previously did, the greater danger of blaspheming the Holy Spirit if He is not worshipped. Therefore, Basil continued the Athanasian tradition by

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40 Ibid., 3.
41 Ibid., 25, 27.
affirming the indivisibility of the Father, Son, and Spirit. All three Persons belong to the divine realm.

Quoting copiously from Scripture, Basil reasoned that since the Spirit is named along with the Father and the Son, He must be divine. Following Athanasius, Basil quoted the baptismal formula in Matt. 28:19 to show that believers cannot be baptized into a mixture of God and a creature.\textsuperscript{42} Hence, the Holy Spirit is “indivisibly and inseparably joined to the Father and the Son.”\textsuperscript{43}

Although Basil everywhere mentioned the indivisible link between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, he did not elaborate on how their relationships came to be. Basil mentioned that the Spirit proceeds from the Father,\textsuperscript{44} but the nature of “procession” is unclear.\textsuperscript{45} Basil also saw God’s work in salvation as distinguishable since the Father plans, the Son executes, and the Spirit perfects (or completes). There are clearly different roles (economy) for each Person, but their will and goal is one and the same. Therefore, philosophically and scripturally the Holy Spirit has the same divine nature ($\phi u o l \zeta$) as the Father and the Son.

An important advancement over the Athanasian teaching was Basil’s emphasis of the Spirit in worship and the life of the Church. According to Basil, without the immanent presence of the Holy Spirit Christians cannot worship God.\textsuperscript{46} God’s revelation to the Church is from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit. The way Christians worship God is in the reverse order that is in (or by, $\epsilon \nu$) the Spirit, through the Son, to the

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 37, 45, 55.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 46. Basil says little about the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, except that the Spirit is always in the Son during Jesus’ earthly ministry, 39.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 27.
Father. Since baptism is in the singular name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:29), Christian worship must also be offered to the same name.  

Basil further stressed that the Spirit is instrumental for believers to know the Father and the Son. In other words, the Holy Spirit is the epistemology of God. Quoting Matt. 11:27 (“No one knows the Father except through the Son”) and 1 Cor. 12:3 (“No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit”), Basil taught that God can only be known when the Spirit is “in” the believer. Interestingly, Basil distinguished between the Spirit indwelling “in” the believers and His communion “with” the Father and the Son. It is the indwelling Spirit who enables believers to know the Father and the Son. And it is this knowledge that enables believers to worship God as a Trinity. Diverging from Athanasius’ Christocentrism, Basil was able to focus on the peculiar work of the Spirit in the inner life of believers as a way to differentiate the Son from the Spirit.

To press this matter further, Basil believed that the Holy Spirit indwells believers when they are sufficiently purified from ethical impurities. Although it is not clear how this is achieved, Basil suggested that the Spirit restores believers from a state of sin to a state of original righteousness. Basil also appealed to the metaphor of believers being the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19) to support the notion that the divine Spirit takes up His abode in a sacred place. Basil at times struggled with his doctrine of regeneration and sanctification. He pointed out the Spirit’s re-creative work in the souls of

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48 Ibid., 40, 46.
49 Ibid., 47, 62.
50 Ibid., 23.
51 Ibid.
believers that leads them to eternal life.\textsuperscript{52} Yet he also taught that the Holy Spirit is a gift for the righteous and pure.\textsuperscript{53} Basil’s asceticism suggests that he emphasized the ethical purity of the believers before the Holy Spirit can bring them into a blessed communion with God.

Suffice to say, in 4\textsuperscript{th} century the doctrines of regeneration\textsuperscript{54} and sanctification were immature at best. However, Basil did raise valid and important points regarding the subjective work of the Spirit in believers.

This existential aspect of Basil’s Pneumatology was a helpful supplement to the scriptural teaching that the Holy Spirit is fully divine, giver of good gifts,\textsuperscript{55} perfector of God’s work in creation and redemption,\textsuperscript{56} and is the object of prayer.\textsuperscript{57} The strength of Basil’s arguments is that they left no doubt that the Spirit is a fully personal divine Being.

To sum up, Basil and Athanasius established a set of proof texts to demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In addition, they continued the liturgical tradition of worshipping the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit together. Athanasius observed the doctrinal importance of including the Spirit in the Trinity. Basil pushed this further in order to strike a balance between doctrine and worship. He also brought in a sharper focus on the Spirit’s works in regeneration, sanctification, and epistemology. All of them are important, in fact necessary, for worshiping the triune God. Basil also made important clarification of the terms οὐσία (substance, essence) and ὑπόστασις (person, subsistence), the former referring to that which is common in the Trinity whereas the latter referring to the idiosyncrasies of the

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{54} Unlike Athanasius, Basil did not appeal to the cosmic creative activity of the Spirit as a proof of His divinity. Basil was aware of passages such as Ps. 33:6, as Athanasius pointed out that it was a Trinitarian creation text. But for Basil, the Spirit’s creative activity lies predominantly in giving man a new heart. The link between Jesus’ resurrection to the believers’ new life in Christ is a direct proof of the Spirit’s regenerative activity in the Church. Ibid., 49, 56.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 37, citing 1 Cor. 12:1-11.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 38.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 49.
three Persons. But Basil’s hesitancy in calling the Holy Spirit “God” (θεος) unnecessarily delayed the formulation of a full-blown Trinitarian theology.

Instead of calling the Spirit consubstantial with the Father and the Son, Basil said that the Spirit “partakes of the fullness of divinity.”58 Perhaps Basil was being careful since Scripture never explicitly calls the Spirit “God.” This exegetical and pastoral sensitivity might be Basil’s strength, but Gregory Nazianzen ridiculed Basil for not stating the obvious: that the Holy Spirit is fully God, just as the Son is fully God.59 This hesitancy and ambiguity about the deity of the Spirit made it easy for the Pneumatomachians to continue their quest to deprecate the Holy Spirit. To Gregory, the deity of the Holy Spirit needed to be openly and forcefully confessed, since the doctrine and the life of the Church depend on it.

Contributions of Gregory Nazianzen

Between A.D. 340 and 381, stout defenders of Nicene orthodoxy—especially Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen—all wrote about the Holy Spirit in order to complete the doctrinal formulation of the Trinity. Athanasius represented the pioneer in the pro-Nicene teaching of the Holy Spirit. Basil wove into his biblical arguments an existential dimension for the works of the Spirit. But Gregory Nazianzen’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit consolidated previous teachings from Scripture and tradition. Culling from the best Fathers (especially Origen, Athanasius, and Basil) and combining a pro-Nicene orthodox tradition under the guidance of biblical exegesis, Gregory proved to be the right man at the right time.

58 Ibid., 46. In Letter 8: To the Caesareans, Basil appeared to reluctantly call the Holy Spirit consubstantial to the Father and the Son; Letters and Selected Works, NPNF 8:277-278.
There were common themes that Gregory shared with Athanasius and Basil, such as the Holy Spirit’s place in the divine realm rather than the creaturely, the inseparable Holy Triad who is worshipped together, and the plain teaching of Scripture that the Spirit is a divine Person. But Gregory broke new ground when he openly championed the deity of the Holy Spirit. He pushed the scriptural and metaphysical evidence to its logical conclusion and confessed that the Holy Spirit is God. Gregory saw that this is the last link that would bring a unity to the three Persons—the Father is fully God, the Son fully God, and the Holy Spirit fully God. If the Spirit is not confessed to be fully God, as the Son was at Nicaea, the unity of the Trinity would ultimately break down. Hence, Gregory’s Pneumatology and his Trinitarian theology were intimately related. He transposed the Pneumatology of Athanasius and Basil to a higher key, highlighting the personality and personal activities of the Holy Spirit while opposing all traces of subordinationalism that remained in Athanasius and Basil. Gregory’s Pneumatology will be examined in chapters 4 and 5.

The high-water mark of the classical Trinitarian formulation occurred during the Council of Constantinople, where the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (C) improved on the Nicene Creed (N) to include the teaching of the Holy Spirit as equal to the Father and the Son in honor and worship. Just a few years prior to the Council, Gregory Nazianzen had preached his famed The Five Theological Orations, in which he valiantly defended the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. These and other sermons also demonstrated Gregory’s biblical, theological, as well as philosophical acumen in his exposition of the doctrine of God. His able defense and convincing rhetoric were the reasons why he was chosen to preside over the Council after the death of Meletius.
Council of Constantinople

Scholars have long debated whether there was a real creedal statement issued at the Council of Constantinople. Some think that the Council used the existing N and simply added a statement on the Holy Spirit, while others think that the language of C is too different from N to be a simple amendment. J. N. D. Kelly’s comprehensive survey of the historical literature supports that C is most likely a different document than N. C has the literary flow of a liturgical document, with a possibility that it originates from a baptismal formula in Caesarea.\(^{60}\) Moreover, a closer examination of the wording between N and C reveals that only 1/5 of the words of C can be traced to N.\(^{61}\) Since the Council of Chalcedon acknowledged the creedal statements issued at both Nicaea and Constantinople, C is most likely a distinct creed from N. The bishops at the Constantinople Council did not seem to think that they were promulgating a new teaching. Instead, C was an endorsement and reaffirmation of N, with a clearer statement about the place of the Holy Spirit in the Godhead.\(^{62}\)

Under the preaching of Gregory, Neo-Arians and Pneumatomachians at Constantinople were losing their doctrinal grip on the subordinationalism of the Holy Spirit. Seizing the moment, the pro-Nicene emperor Theodosius called an ecumenical council in an attempt to reconcile the orthodox bishops with the Pneumatomachians (or Macedonians). The Council originally invited 150 homoousios bishops and 36 Macedonian bishops, as Theodosius “judged that it would be easy to effect a reunion with them.”\(^{63}\) What Theodosius failed to realize was that the Macedonian bishops could not even admit homoousios between

\(^{61}\) Letham, 171.
\(^{62}\) Kelly, *Creeds*, 328-331.
\(^{63}\) Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, NPNF 2:545.
the Father and the Son. So the topic of confessing the equality of the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son was a non-starter. As a result, the Macedonians left the Council. Meanwhile, the orthodox bishops were very hesitant to openly proclaim the deity of the Spirit in the same manner as N openly proclaimed the deity of the Son. Failing to incorporate strong language of the Spirit’s deity into C, Gregory abruptly resigned from the Council in disgust. Eventually, the Council passed a creed that takes on a conciliatory tone on the Holy Spirit. C does not explicitly state that the Holy Spirit is God, but He has divine attributes and equal standing and honor with the Father and the Son. Among the canons passed at the Council included a condemnation of those who denied the deity of the Son (Arians) and of the Holy Spirit (Macedonians). Those who denied the co-equality of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Sabellians, Apollinarians, Anomians, and Eunomians) were condemned as well. Hence, C solidly places the Holy Spirit alongside the Father and the Son in the divine realm.

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (C)

We believe in one God
the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, the only-begotten, begotten by his Father before all ages, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not made, consubstantial with the Father (όμοοιος τω πατρί), through whom all things came into existence, who for us men and for our salvation came down from the heavens and became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became a man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate and suffered and was buried and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father and will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, of whose kingdom there will be no end;

And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver (ζωοποιόν), who proceeds from the Father (ἐκ τοῦ πατρός ἐκπορευομένου), who is worshipped and glorified together
with the Father and the Son, who spoke by the prophets;
And in one holy, Catholic and apostolic Church;
We confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins;
We wait for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the coming age. Amen.64

C’s implicit recognition of the Spirit’s deity can be observed in these six points:

1. Calling the Holy Spirit Κύριος.
2. Spirit is “life-giver” (ζωοποιῶν).
3. His role in the incarnation (σαρκωθεὶς ἐκ πνεύματος ἅγιου).
4. Equality with the Father (who is God) and the Son (who is also God).
5. His work in inspiration (“spoke through the prophets”).
6. Worshipped and glorified together with the Father and Son.

The language of C also places the Father as the divine Monarch, from whom the Son and the Holy Spirit derive their being. This is seen in the use of “ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς” to describe the Son and the Holy Spirit. The difference between the Son and the Spirit is that the former is begotten (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθεὶς), whereas the latter proceeds (ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορευομένου). In this way, the Spirit relates to the Father by “procession” in a similar and parallel manner as the Son relates to the Father by “begottenness.” There is no mention of a relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit.

There is strong emphasis of the Trinitarian work of creation and salvation in C. The Father is the maker of all things. The Son is the one through whom all things came into existence (John 1:3). The Spirit is the life-giver (Rom. 8:11, John 6:63).65 The life-creation work of the Holy Spirit is also seen in the use of ζωοποιῶν in John 5:21, where it is used twice: once refers to the Father and once refers to the Son. Elsewhere, in 1 Cor. 15:45, the last Adam “became a life-giving Spirit,” and in 2 Cor. 3:6, the subject of the word ζωοποιῶν is the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Old and New Testament, ζωοποιῶν refers to the work of God in raising the dead. In the New Testament, this work is equally attributed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

64 Letham, 171-172, Kelly, Creeds, 297-298.
65 It is interesting that in John 5:21 ζωοποιῶν is used twice; once refers to the Father and once refers to the Son. Elsewhere, in 1 Cor. 15:45, the last Adam “became a life-giving Spirit,” and in 2 Cor. 3:6, the subject of the word ζωοποιῶν is the Holy Spirit. Throughout the Old and New Testament, ζωοποιῶν refers to the work of God in raising the dead. In the New Testament, this work is equally attributed to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
giving activity of the Spirit may have a double meaning. The context in Rom. 8:11 indicates that the Holy Spirit regenerates sinners from spiritual death to eternal life. But C supplements this regenerative work of the Spirit with the creative work of the Spirit in giving life to and lording over all creatures. This echoes Athanasius’ teaching of the cosmic creative work of the Spirit, as well as the inner re-creative work of the Spirit in believers as taught by Basil and Gregory Nazianzen. Taken together, there is no ambiguity regarding the divine power of the Holy Spirit in creation and regeneration. And the Spirit is a personal Being, since He spoke through the prophets. C does not teach the mode of divine inspiration, since its emphasis is on the Spirit who speaks (legate). This leaves no trace of the teaching that the Spirit is merely an energy emanated from God or a divine attribute. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is worshipped and honored together with the Father and the Son. Although C falls short of Gregory’s teaching of the full deity of the Spirit, it puts Him in the unequivocal position as God.

N employs many technical terms to explain the deity of the Son, such as “consubstantial,” “incarnate,” “hypostasis,” and “substance.” On the other hand, the teaching of C regarding the Holy Spirit is decidedly more biblical and less philosophical. The use of “life-giver,” “spoke,” “Lord,” “procession,” are all biblical terms taken directly from Scripture.

Since the Father, Son, and Spirit are equally divine,66 they are worshipped and glorified together (συνπροσκύνουμενον και συνδοξαζομενον).67 N ends with an anathema against those who called the Son a creature, but C ends with a Trinitarian praise and

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66 Whether it calls all three Persons “God” or not, C puts it in no uncertain terms that the Father, Son, and Spirit are all equally divine. This may be an implicit attempt, similar to the efforts of the Cappadocians, to refute the accusations of tritheism.

67 The wording of this phrase was common in liturgies used by Greek-speaking churches.
doxology. Therefore, instead of a polemical tone similar to N, C strikes a liturgical tone with a glorious declaration that God is one Being in three Persons (μια ουσία, τρεις ὑπόστασεις). The synodical letter does contain an anathema against the heretics; nevertheless, C is unmistakably confessional and liturgical.68 C sets up for the first time an ecumenical Trinitarian confession. Although Gregory Nazianzen did not get his wish of an open and explicit declaration of the Holy Spirit as God, this does not minimize C as the high-water mark of the early Trinitarian theology.

John McGuckin attributes C to the triumph of Basil, and to a lesser extent Athanasius, over Gregory Nazianzen.69 Although C echoes Basil’s teaching of the Holy Spirit in many points, it also encapsulates Gregory’s doctrine of the Holy Spirit substantially. C’s implicit and restrained language of the deity of the Spirit in no way contradicts Gregory’s explicit teaching of the Spirit’s deity. It is safe to say that the doctrines of the Spirit by C and Gregory both reach a common denominator. The Pneumatology of Gregory, examined in chapters 4 and 5, would go well beyond C to influence future theologians in a fuller formulation of Trinitarian theology (described in chapter 6). It is rather ironic that modern reading of C as the first great creedal statement on the Trinity is often through the eyes of Gregory Nazianzen.

68 The synodical letter from Council of Constantinople, according to Theodoret, The Ecclesiastical History, NPNF 3:205:
According to this faith (Nicene faith) there is one Godhead, power and substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; the dignity being equal, and the majesty being equal in three perfect hypostasis (ὑπόστασεως) and three perfect persons (προσώπως). Thus there is neither room for the heresy of Sabellius by the confusion of the essences or destruction of the individualities (ιδιοτητις); thus the blasphemy of the Eunomians, of the Arians, and of the Pneumatomachi is nullified, which divides the substance, the nature, and the Godhead and superinduces on the uncreated consubstantial and co-eternal Trinity a nature posterior, created and of a different substance (ουσία).

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CHAPTER 3
BIOGRAPHY OF GREGORY NAZIANZEN

This chapter presents a mini-biography of Gregory Nazianzen, giving a context of his life that would shape his doctrines of the Spirit, the Son, and the Trinity.

**Early Years**

Gregory was born in Arianzus around A.D. 329-330. His father Gregory used to belong to a sect called *Hypsistarii* (servants of the most High God) before his wife Nonna converted him to Christianity. Gregory the Elder later became bishop of Nazianzus, and despite temporary dabbling in Arianism he remained orthodox. Gregory, his sister Gorgonia and brother Caesarius, were born into a well-to-do family. The boys were well supported for their pursuit of higher education, as Gregory and Caesarius both went to top rhetoric schools in Caesarea Cappadocia. It is likely that during this time Gregory first met Basil, and they began develop a lifelong friendship. Later Gregory made stops at Caesarea Palestine, as well as Alexandria, where the influence of Origen and his catechetical school was great. It is rumored that Gregory might have met Didymus the Blind, and perhaps even Athanasius. But the panegyric Oration for Athanasius\(^1\) delivered by Gregory showed no personal acquaintance.\(^2\) It is not clear whether Gregory was indoctrinated with the Nicene orthodoxy at this stage.

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\(^2\) Ibid. Gregory commended Athanasius as the model for an orthodox bishop and defender of faith, but there was no mention of Athanasiyan theology. See Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8.
Towards the end of A.D. 348, Gregory decided to go to Athens. En route to Cyprus his boat encountered a violent storm. Gregory recalled this experience in the poem *On his own Life*, in which he described in dramatic terms how he placed his only hope in God and his desire to consecrate himself to God.\(^3\) It was not clear when Gregory was baptized, but this episode cemented a career of godly contemplating and pursuit of theological purity in service of the Church.

Being immersed in the intellectual center of Hellenistic philosophy and science at Athens, Gregory became a master of rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. Gregory was joined once again by his friend Basil during this time. All told, Gregory spent almost ten years in Athens. Before he left for Cappadocia, he was voted first place in “letters” in Athens and the people wanted him to stay and teach rhetoric.

**Cappadocia Years**

During their time together in Athens, Gregory and Basil committed themselves to theological contemplation and asceticism that suit a monastic life. But when Basil left for Cappadocia at around A.D. 356, he quickly got involved with ecclesiastical affairs at Caesarea. He eventually succeeded Eusebius as bishop and spent the majority of his time fighting against heterodox teachings. Seeking a lifestyle of quiet philosophical reflection, Gregory returned to Nazianzus and tended to his ill father. Unexpectedly, Gregory the Elder forcibly ordained his son to become a presbyter. Later Gregory wrote *In Defense of his Flight* to explain that he fled Nazianzus because of his reluctance to take up ecclesiastical affairs.\(^4\) However, he returned within six months and helped the elder Gregory in pastoral ministry. Aside from preaching, Gregory had a heart for the poor that grew out of

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\(^4\) *Oration 2*, NPNF 7:318-353.
his desire to follow the example of Christ. It was also during this time, Gregory visited Basil and collaborated with him to put together Origen’s teaching into *Philokalia Origenis*. It seems reasonable that the Christian philosophical background of Basil and Gregory uniquely prepared them for this task. It is better to say that Gregory was a student and revisionist of Origen, than to say that Gregory was an Origenist.

In A.D. 370, Basil interjected further in various theological disputes. He stood firm in the Nicene tradition and valiantly defended the full divinity of the Son. The Neo-Arian emperor Valens wanted to divide the civic province of Cappadocia for better political and theological control, but Basil fought against this by appointing his acquaintances and friends to neighboring towns. He appointed his brother Gregory as bishop of Nyssa, his friend Gregory Nazianzen bishop of Sasima, and Nazianzen’s nephew Amphiloctius bishop of Iconium. This was Basil’s attempt to establish pro-Nicene bishops all around Cappadocia to fight against the imperial city of Constantinople, which had an Arian bishop. Gregory Nazianzen reacted violently against Basil, since he was dismayed by the dusty little town of Sasima.5 His pride and anger prevented him from ever setting foot there. After the death of the elder Gregory and Nonna, Gregory succeeded his father and continued his pastoral ministry at Nazianzus until A.D. 375.

Once again discontented with ecclesiastical duties, Gregory fled to Seleucia where his sister Gorgonia had lived. It was not clear what Gregory did between A.D. 375 and 378. But his contacts with churches that experienced various theological controversies,

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5 Gregory wrote that Sasima is “utterly dreadful, pokey little hole; a paltry horse-stop on the main road where it splits into three on its way through Cappadocia; a place wholly devoid of water, vegetation, or the company of gentlemen.” From *On my Life*, quoted by McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001), 197-202. It is very ironic that Gregory longed for a quite, contemplative life and yet hated Sasima; and that he loved the poor and yet hated this poor little town. See also Daley, 11-12.
including Neo-Arianism and Apollinarianism, made him a well-known defender of the orthodox faith. Gregory became known as a stout defender of the Nicene faith, especially the *homoousios* of the Son and the Father, which he would later also apply to the Holy Spirit. Gregory also fought against those who theologized that Jesus had only one will—the *Logos*. Against the Apollinarians Gregory wrote that Jesus was fully God and fully human in one Person, since “what has not been assumed has not been healed.”

It is obvious that Gregory did not see theology as a speculative enterprise, but it serves to know God and His redemptive purpose of man. As much as Gregory hated ecclesiastical affairs, his desire to teach orthodox doctrines had a strong ecclesiastical purpose.

Just when the tide had turned against the Neo-Arians when the full equality of the Son and the Father was gaining a foothold, the Church wondered how the Holy Spirit fits into the Trinity. Earlier Athanasius had dealt with this problem in his *Letters to the Serapion*. Subsequently, Basil wrote a treaty, *On the Holy Spirit*, as a biblical exposition of the Person and work of the Spirit. Basil went further then Athanasius by focusing more on the divine work of the Spirit in the life of believers. Nevertheless, he stopped short of calling the Holy Spirit God. And this greatly aggravated Gregory Nazianzen. In fact, Gregory rebuked Basil of his timidity and how he “slurred over the Spirit.”

Evidently, at this time Gregory already had developed an understanding that the Holy Spirit is fully God, equal to the Father and the Son in all respects except His unique personhood.

It was probably during this monastic period that Gregory developed a correspondence with Melitius of Antioch, who later was called to preside at the Council at

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7 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle 58*, ibid., 669. Gregory further incited that Basil’s wishy-washy attitude on the Spirit was “a great injury done to the church if truth is driven away.” Basil was furious of this charge, as Gregory recalled in *Epistle 59*, ibid., 670.
Constantinople. In A.D. 378 Emperor Valens died by the hands of the Goths. The Spanish general Theodosius fought back against the Goths and succeeded Valens. One of the first priorities of Theodosius was to restore the Nicene faith across the whole empire. And this began at the capital of the East, Constantinople.

**Bishop at Constantinople**

Constantinople was recognized as the “Rome of the East.” And if the orthodox faith was to triumph, this capital city must be conquered. Bishop Demophilus was a moderate Arian, and Neo-Arianism dominated Constantinople. In order to turn back Arianism, a Nicene bishop with strong theological and rhetorical skills must be recruited to propagate the orthodox faith convincingly. Gregory Nazianzen did not escape the notice of many pro-Nicene bishops.8 To establish a pro-Nicene front, in autumn of A.D. 379 Gregory was given the pulpit of a newly founded congregation, aptly named *Anastasis*, in the hope of a resurrection and triumph of the Nicene orthodoxy.

During the next two years, Gregory faithfully and tirelessly preached and lectured on the Nicene faith, synthesizing Scripture and tradition. It was during this time when Gregory gave the famed *The Five Theological Orations* that contained a mature doctrine of the Trinity. It was the first time that a doctrine of God as three distinct but inseparable Persons with co-equality was presented without philosophical speculation. Gregory built on the early orthodox teaching of Didymus, Athanasius, and Basil, while stripping away many of the speculation, natural analogies, and fanciful exegesis. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit certainly are distinctive Persons (anti-Sabellianism), and each being

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8 Sozomen called Gregory one who “excelled in eloquence and piety all those of the age in which he lived,” in *Ecclesiastical History*, NPNF 2:194.
fully God (anti-Arianism). It was highly significant that for the first time at the imperial city, Gregory was given a platform to boldly and openly declare that the Holy Spirit is God.

There was a group of theologians (beginning in late A.D. 360) who affirmed that the Son is like the father (*homoiousios*), but objected to the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Some historians attributed the leader of this sect to Macedonius.⁹ And so they are called the “Macedonians.” Athanasius, Basil, and Gregory all wrote or preached against those who denied the Spirit’s divinity as the “Spirit-fighters” (Pneumatomachians). It cannot be ascertained whether these were two groups, or they collectively belonged to the same sect. But their insistence on the Spirit’s inferiority to the Father and the Son prevented the Church from a full confession of the Trinity. Gregory’s labor in Constantinople, especially his bold assertions on the Godhead of the Spirit, paved the way for the eventual creedal recognition of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all being one God.

The full equality of the three Persons was not only important dogmatically. Gregory and his predecessors Basil and Athanasius all recognized that Christian worship must be Trinitarian. Severing the Son or the Holy Spirit from the Godhead is to worship a false god. From A.D. 379 to 381, Gregory preached no less than half (22) of his orations. Besides detailed expositions of the Trinity, Christology, and Pneumatology, Gregory also taught on the character of a bishop, on baptism, as well as on ecclesiastical affairs and spirituality. Gregory’s epistemology is heavily Trinitarian, and he interspersed many sermons with the presupposition that God has revealed Himself as a Trinity.

Gregory’s rational and passionate defense of the deity of the Son and the Spirit gradually won over many. In May A.D. 381, emperor Theodosius called a council of

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⁹ Sozomen called Macedonius the first to openly deny the Holy Spirit’s place in the Godhead, ibid., 404-405, 461-462.
Eastern bishops at Constantinople in the hope of winning the Macedonians to the Nicene faith. He initially appointed Melitius of Antioch as the president, and the 150 bishops attending were under the influence of Melitius. The ecclesiastical council’s opening agenda was to confirm the bishop at Constantinople and to recognize him as equal in status to the bishop of Rome. And the main event of the council was to reconcile the Pneumatology between the Pneumatomachians and the orthodox pro-Nicene bishops. But the personal goal of Gregory was to put forward a full-blown Trinitarian confession by supplementing the Nicene Creed to acknowledge the deity of the Holy Spirit. Gregory had previously chastised Basil for his timidity in confessing the deity of the Spirit. Thus, anything less than an explicit confession of the Spirit’s deity and a threefold *homoousion* would not be acceptable to Gregory. Not only was it too much for the Pneumatomachians to swallow, to make matters worse the orthodox pro-Nicene bishops hesitated about Gregory’s open proclamation of the deity of the Spirit. A united front proved to be impossible.

Meanwhile, Melitius died shortly after the opening of the council. Gregory Nazianzen was unexpectedly elevated to the role of the president. His poor administrative skills immediately showed as conflicts mounted against him from all sides. In addition, an entourage of bishops came from Egypt. They accused Gregory of being illegitimately ordained, since the Nicene council also stated that a bishop cannot be ordained by two sees. It was rumored that Gregory was ordained bishop at Nazianzus and in Sasima, even though he did not take the positions of bishop in either place. This proved to be the last straw for Gregory. At a council meeting in June Gregory announced his resignation.10 Scholars differ regarding whether this was motivated by Gregory’s dogmatic stance regarding the Holy

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10 *Oration 42, The Farewell Discourse*, was preached at the Council. But scholars agree that it was later edited by Gregory into its current form, NPNF 7:576-590. See McGuckin, 359ff.
Spirit, or his ecclesiastical troubles. In his later writing *On my Life* Gregory scolded council meetings and called them evil; and in his *Last Will* he called himself the bishop at Constantinople. Gregory Nazianzen proved to be a deeply conflicted man who was torn between a private contemplative life and a public theological teacher. But his love of the triune God and his desire to think, to write, to preach, and to live in the light of the Holy Trinity was unquestionable and untamable.

Theodosius accepted Gregory’s resignation and ironically appointed the pagan Nectorius as the council president. Before the council adjourned in December A.D. 381, it produced the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (C) that clarified and expanded the Nicene Creed regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit. C strikes a conciliatory tone regarding the Holy Spirit. It calls the Holy Spirit “Lord (*Kurioj*) and giver of life,” and it places the Spirit together with the Father and the Son as object of worship. In addition, it contains language describing the personal activity of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the prophets to speak the Word of God. Overall, C is eerily similar to Basilean teaching on the Holy Spirit with an implicit acknowledgement of the Spirit’s deity. It appears that Basil won the day while Gregory lost his battle. However, the theology of C also contains the principle Pneumatological teachings of Gregory Nazianzen, perhaps to his dismay.

### Later Years

After resigning from the council of Constantinople, Gregory retired to his home in Nazianzus. He dedicated his time in writing poems and letters. He was the first Greek writer to compose a major autobiographical poem. And he was also the first Church Father to edit his theological writings (his orations and letters) for publication. It was not a

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life of quiet personal affairs, since Gregory spent much time caring for the poor. The council of Chalcedon affirmed both N and C, and also gave Gregory Nazianzen the honorific title of “Theologian.” This was a title bestowed to John the Apostle and Gregory Nazianzen alone. Gregory’s writing would become a standard for the Byzantine churches.

In his last years, Gregory returned to his family estate in Arianzus. The last extant writing of Gregory was his Last Will, in which he gave directions to witnessing bishops to divide his estate and apportion it to his relatives and the poor. Gregory was true to his conviction that a theologian is to live a pure life by patterning himself after the Trinity. As God came to poor and wrenched sinners in the Persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Church is also to go into the world to preach and work the Gospel of salvation. To Gregory, meditating on the doctrine of God is not an academic exercise of the mind, but it is the all-important spiritual food that the Christian life feeds on. He who said that “nothing is so magnificent in God’s sight as a purified reason and a soul made perfect by the doctrines of truth” also acknowledged that “the reformation of the whole Church is preferable to the progress of a single soul.” But the communion with the triune God is the ultimate goal of a believer, and in fact of the whole Church. It is only in the adoration and worship of the Trinity, the undivided Light, can the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit be the light of this world.

12 Gregory Nazianzen was first called ó θεολόγος in the 5th century by Gregory the Presbyter, the first biographer of Gregory Nazianzen. See Daley, 41, and McGuckin, 278.
13 Beeley says that Gregory consciously chose a middle-way between contemplative retreat and service to the Church and society, representing a “moderate asceticism,” 74. Daley portrayed Gregory as a conflicted man who had trouble balancing his vocation and his asceticism, 3-59. Perhaps McGuckin was on the mark by saying that Gregory is a complex character.
14 Oration 42.8, NPNF 7:581.
15 Oration 12.4, ibid., 379.
CHAPTER 4
GREGORY NAZIANZEN’S DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This chapter examines Gregory’s teaching on the Holy Spirit, beginning with his epistemology. In other words, how one can come to know the triune God; and more specifically, that the Spirit is God. This is followed by a survey of Gregory’s methodology and his different proofs to demonstrate the deity of the Holy Spirit. Finally, Gregory’s teaching of the Spirit’s personhood and its importance in His relationship with the Father and the Son summarize Gregory’s proclamation that the Holy Spirit is indeed God.

God–Incomprehensible but Knowable

How can a man like Gregory Nazianzen claim that “the Holy Spirit is God” when Scripture does not make such a propositional statement and the Church tradition has not taught it? Orthodox Fathers before Gregory have argued for the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His rightful place as the object of worship along with the Father and the Son. But none openly confessed that the Spirit is God. Gregory makes this audacious claim based on his personal knowledge that is firmly grounded in Scripture and tradition, as well as his conversant use of reason under the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Like Augustine, Gregory has a sophisticated view of Christian epistemology by divine illumination. This section surveys Gregory’s teaching on the role of the Spirit in the knowledge of God.
Gregory’s epistemological starting point is God. He believes that God is incomprehensible.⁴ This comes from his strong affirmation of a Creator-creature distinction. God the Creator and Almighty is infinitely above human knowledge, since “the divine nature cannot be apprehended by human reason, and that we cannot even represent to ourselves all its greatness.”⁵ Gregory also likens the human pursuit of knowing God to using a small tool on a big construction,⁶ apparently to illustrate that the finite cannot comprehend the infinite \((\textit{finitum non capax infinitum})\). Against the Eunomians, who claim that God can be known comprehensively, Gregory gives a polemical sermon in \textit{Oration 28} by making clear that God’s infinite nature is beyond the human mind. Gregory marvels the great distance between God and man:

But in my opinion it is impossible to express God, and yet more impossible to conceive Him...But to comprehend the whole of so great a Subject as this is quite impossible and impracticable, not merely to the utterly careless and ignorant, but even to those who are highly exalted, and who love God, and in like manner to every created nature; seeing that the thick covering of the flesh in an obstacle to the understanding of the truth.⁷

Gregory concludes \textit{Oration 28} by stating that God is not only above all things in a relative sense, but He is absolutely superior to all because He is the “first nature” and “first cause.”⁸ Elsewhere Gregory teaches that God is transcendent, unknowable, and is higher than the human minds, so that even the best and the purest man like Moses can only see Him veiled in a thick cloud.⁹ And with unbridled reason, especially tainted by sin since

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⁵ \textit{Oration 28.11}, ibid., 445. See also \textit{Oration 29.11}, ibid., 461-462.
⁶ \textit{Oration 28.21}, ibid., 450.
⁷ \textit{Oration 28.4}, ibid., 441.
⁹ \textit{Oration 28.2-3}, ibid., 440-441. Here Gregory uses the scriptural example of Moses to indicate that God’s nature, or essence, cannot be known by sense experience. But God can be known by His own revelation, for example at the burning bush (Exod. 3). See also Christopher A. Beeley, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 90-102.
the Fall, sinful men easily construct their own doctrine of God that is diametrically opposed to the true revelation in Scripture.

Some attribute Gregory and his Origenistic theology to the beginning of apophatic theology, teaching that God is wholly other and wholly unknown. As much as Gregory often praises God’s transcendence in his poems and writings, calling Gregory a proponent of apophatic theology is definitely an overreach. Gregory clearly teaches that God can indeed be known, even though His essence is unknown to man.

To resolve this apparent contradiction between God’s incomprehensibility and knowability, Gregory distinguishes between knowing God’s nature (or essence) and God’s existence. Gregory deems God’s nature incomprehensible. Gregory’s most devastating statement in demolishing the Eunomian epistemology is that, “If you do not understand your own [nature], how can you know about God’s?” While Gregory boldly proclaims God’s transcendence (Isa. 55:8-9; Job 11:7, 38:1ff, 42:3), he by no means disparages the use of human reason to “theologize” about God. This is because the existence of God is clearly shown in Scripture and in nature.

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8 Summarized by Beeley, 94n102.
9 For example, in Oration 40.5 Gregory writes, “God is Light: the highest, the unapproachable, the ineffable, That can neither be conceived in the mind nor uttered with the lips,” NPNF 7:541. A distinction must be made between Gregory’s heartfelt praise of the transcendent incomprehensibility of God in his poems, and his rational teaching of God’s self-revelation as the inseparable Trinity in his sermons and letters.
10 Citing Exod. 3:14, Gregory follows traditional exegesis by calling God the “o` wn”, or the self-existing One, Oration 30.18, ibid., 478-479. See Douglas F. Kelly, Systematic Theology, vol. 1 (Scotland: Mentor, 2008), 281; Beeley, 95.
11 Oration 28.2-4, NPNF 7:440-441.
12 Oration 28.4-5, ibid., 441-443. See also Frederick W. Norris, Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 110.
13 Oration 28.6-10, NPNF 7:442-444. Gregory uses an example of the lyre to make the point that it is made by an intelligent being. This is similar to other arguments of God’s existence known as teleological arguments. When human beings see the marvel of nature and creatures, they can either: (a) contemplate an almighty and intelligent Creator, or (b) philosophize about nature’s existence apart from God as the pagans do. The latter leads to pride and ethical impurity. This argument seems to be based on Rom. 1:19-25. Indeed, Gregory
understanding of God. Yet God is knowable, since He speaks to men through the divine Word. And most of all, He freely saves men to have communion with Him. This demonstrates that God can be known truly, relationally, and intimately. Clearly Gregory is opposed to a merely *via negativa* approach.

Gregory acknowledges that knowledge of God comes from faith, which is a gift from God to man. But Gregory is not a fideist. He understands that the basis of knowing God must come directly from God Himself. Gregory is not drawing a dichotomy between faith and reason. Instead, he draws attention to the use of human reason under the illumination and guidance of faith. Not surprisingly, Gregory states that faith must precede reason (*πιστίς δὲ ἁγετῶ πλεῦ ἡμας ἢ λόγος*) and reason must be subjugated to faith. Hence, faith and reason do not stand in a dichotomy. Rather, faith and reason are in a dialectic relationship, with faith having priority to reason.

This does not mean that the ways of knowing God, be it philosophy or quiet contemplation, are infallible. Only God is infallible and whatever means that man uses to study God is liable to error. Gregory mocks the Eunomians by pointing out their use of faulty logic and unsound exegesis to reach the conclusion that the Son and the Spirit are

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15 Beeley, 103.
16 Norris notes that Gregory’s critique on the *via negativa* approach complements his emphasis on education and contemplation, 114-115.
17 Norris, 117-118.
18 *Oration 28.28*, “And let faith lead us rather than reason, if at least you have learnt the feebleness of the latter in matters nearer to you, and have known reason by knowing the things that are beyond reason,” NPNF 7:453-454. Norris notes that Gregory’s thought is almost identical to Augustine’s “credo ut intelligam” and Anselm’s “*fides quaerens intellectum*,” 126-128.
created by the Father. In short, Gregory insists that theological method and epistemology must be subordinated to sound biblical truth.

Although Gregory offers many proofs of the existence of God in *Oration 28*, the ultimate demonstration of God’s existence is attested by the sacred Scripture. God spoke in the Old and New Testament through the prophets and the apostles, as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit when they spoke and wrote down the Word of God. Even though Gregory and the early Fathers did not have a concrete view of the Spirit’s role in the inspiration of Scripture, we already observe that they appeal to the Holy Spirit’s work in attesting the divine authority of Scripture. In other words, Scripture is God’s very Word to man because it is spoken by the Spirit through the prophets and apostles.

Finally, Gregory distinguishes between the partial knowledge of God in this life, and the fuller and blessed knowledge of God in heaven (1 Cor. 13:12). For Gregory, this eschatological vision of God between “this age” and the “age to come” has a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference. This is how he understands Paul in 1 Cor. 13:12, as Christians only “see” God dimly in this age but will gain a much fuller vision (“face to face”) in glory. Central to Gregory’s doctrine of God is the emphasis on this partial vision, or knowledge, of God in this life. The incomprehensibility of God does not negate any experiential knowledge of God, because by grace God has made Himself known to man in a partial but realistic manner.

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19 See *Oration 31.29*, NPNF 7:494-495; *Oration 41.11-13*, ibid., 573-574; and *Oration 42.1*, ibid., 577.
21 Beeley 105. See also *Oration 39.8-10*, NPNF 7:531-532.
22 *Oration 30.17*, ibid., 478.
Excursus: The use of Language

The use of human language is critical in theologizing about God. Gregory is a master of rhetoric and philosophy, trained under the best teachers in Alexandria and Athens. Although Gregory warns about the unbridled use of speculation and logic, he recognizes the need to develop technical terms for doctrinal formulations. He defends the use of *homoousios* from Nicene teaching, and he even invents terms such as *perichoresis* (περιχωρουσων) to describe the two-fold nature of Christ. But Gregory sees limitations of using extra-biblical terms for theological discourse. He realizes that precision of language is impossible, since God is indescribable in an exhaustive manner. For this reason, he qualifies the use of technical terms such as “begotten” and “procession.” On the one hand Gregory rightly deems them divine mysteries. On the other hand Scripture does reveal the truth of Trinitarian relationships, so the Church is urged to be careful in constructing dogma from Scripture. Technical terms are unavoidable, but they must be used judiciously and guardedly.

The use of these technical theological terms must be regulated by Scripture, as well as by the orthodox tradition of the Church (*regula fidei*). While Gregory concedes the limitation of the human reason and language, it is not wise to abstain from using philosophical or rhetorical terms (such as *homoousios*) to describe God because the Church needs to speak the scriptural truth. In this way, Gregory understands that exegesis is not

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23 It is ironic that Gregory uses *perichoresis* to describe the “mingling” of the divine and human natures of Christ in one Person, see *Epistle 101*, NPNF 7:649. In fact, Gregory coins this term to convey the idea of *communicatio idiomatum*. But the Chalcedonian Definition confesses that the two natures of Christ are “without mingling” (απομιμηθεται). This example shows that even though Gregory may not have gotten the theological language exactly right, it is still important for him to speak of God confessionally and biblically. He realizes that theological terms, language, and rhetoric are elastic enough that precision or consensus in their usage can be hard to reach.

24 *Oration 30.7*, NPNF 7:472-473.

25 *Oration 27.6*, ibid., 436-437. See also Norris, 85-86, 93.
based on individual words, but it is contextual and communally based. Hence, he has a realistic and practical view of using language as a theological tool to serve the Church in formulating orthodox doctrines. Language and doctrinal formulation serve as a means to know God, but they must be guided by Scripture and by faith. The objective revelation of God needs to be supplemented and reinforced by a subjective revelation of Himself through divine illumination.

**Divine illumination through the Spirit and the Word**

If God can be known through His self-disclosure, what is the media of this revelation? Gregory shows his hand by asking a different question: how can one know that God is triune? In *The Fifth Theological Oration on the Holy Spirit* Gregory famously says:

The Old Testament proclaimed the Father openly, and the Son more obscurely. The New manifested the Son, and suggested the deity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit himself dwells among us, and supplies us with a clearer demonstration of himself.

Hence, there is a redemptive-progressive revelation of God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This statement shows a two-fold basis of Gregory’s epistemology through the Spirit and the Word. First the Holy Spirit supplies the Church a clear demonstration of His own deity, leading to an existential assent in the believers. Second, and equally important, is the objective revelation of the Spirit’s deity in the Scripture.

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26 *Oration* 29.18-19, NPNF 7:464-466.
27 *Oration* 27.6, ibid., 436-437. See also Norris, 93.
29 *Oration* 31.26, NPNF 7:492.
30 Gregory focuses on the clarity of the scriptural teaching of the three Persons of God in a progressive revelation. He is obvious not a modalist teaching the evolution of God from the Father to the Son and then the Spirit. Rather, Gregory notes that the Old Testament already reveals the pre-incarnate Son and the Holy Spirit in existence and in creation (Ps. 33:6). For example Gregory says in *Oration* 29.2 that “Unity having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality, found its rest in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Spirit,” ibid., 457. He is merely using a rhetorical hyperbole to make his claim that the revelation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit follows a general historical-redemptive pattern.
While it is clear that Gregory marvels at the transcendence and incomprehensibility of God, he makes it equally plain that man can come to know God through the Holy Spirit since he says, “Let us rely on the Holy Spirit…(who) brings forth to the light our own conceptions about the Godhead.” Not only does Gregory affirm that the Spirit teaches Christians about objective truth such as the Trinity, he also appeals to an existential and subjective understanding (“our own conception”) brought forth by the Holy Spirit. Arguing from 1 Cor. 2:9-12, Gregory deems it an incontrovertible proof that the Holy Spirit empowers man to know God because He indwells the Church. Elsewhere Gregory says:

Both now and at all times, the aid of the Spirit, by whom alone we are able to perceive, to expound, or to embrace, the truth in regard to God. For the pure alone can grasp Him who is pure and of the same disposition as himself.

And also:

And now we have both seen and proclaim concisely and simply the doctrine of God the Trinity, comprehending out of Light (the Father), Light (the Son), in Light (the Holy Spirit).

And:

In God’s light see light, and in the Spirit of God be enlightened by the Son, that threefold and undivided Light.

Taken together, Gregory’s epistemology begins with the priority of the Holy Spirit’s work of illumination, in which Christians are enabled to know God because God

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31 *Oration* 29.1, ibid., 456. In this brief statement, Gregory affirms that divine revelation through the Holy Spirit is necessary for man to know the Trinity. Although this revelation is outside of man, this knowledge of God also resides in the rational mind since it is “our own conceptions.” Gregory therefore covers both the objective-subjective (or knowledge and the knower) dimension of epistemology. But it should be noted that divine illumination from God has the priority since it gives birth to a subjective knowledge of God.

32 *Oration* 2.79, ibid., 343; *Oration* 43.65, ibid., 619-620. See also *Oration* 28.6, ibid., 442; and *Oration* 31.26, ibid., 492.

33 *Oration* 2.39, ibid., 330.

34 *Oration* 31.3, ibid., 482. Notice how Gregory carefully constructs this phrase. Similar to Basil, it is in (ἐν, or by) the light of the Holy Spirit that one comes to know God.

35 *Oration* 40.34, ibid., 558.
Himself gives this knowledge. In this regard the Spirit works in a direct and immediate manner in illumination; by shining a light into the mind of man, so to speak.\textsuperscript{36} However, the Holy Spirit also uses means, such as perception, reason, or exposition of Scripture, to reveal the whole Godhead. All told, mankind can know God because of the subjective work of the Holy Spirit in illuminating the human mind.

Although the Holy Spirit is the primary agent of illumination and the source of Christian epistemology, Gregory also teaches that the Father and the Son play important roles in giving knowledge of the triune God. Alluding to Scripture, Gregory says that Jesus is the Light that enlightens everyone,\textsuperscript{37} and that “He who has known the Son has known the Father. The Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father’s nature.”\textsuperscript{38} There is a mutual knowledge between the Son and the Father, and this mutual knowledge is revealed to the Christians since “no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matt. 11:25-27, Luke 10:21-22). In addition, there is a mutual knowledge between the Holy Spirit and the Father, which is also revealed to Christians, since “no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God…we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:10-12). Finally, “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except in the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:3). Taken these scriptural witnesses together, the self-knowledge of God the Father is communicated to man through the mediation of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{39} Gregory states this position clearly:

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{36} Gregory is fond of quoting Ps. 36:9 “in your light do we see light” to demonstrate Scripture’s self-witness of God’s divine illumination of the human mind, so that believers can see the Trinity as a revealed truth. See \textit{Oration 31.3}, ibid., 482 and \textit{Oration 34.13}, ibid., 508.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Oration 39.1-2}, ibid., 528-529, quoting John 1:9.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Oration 30.20}, ibid., 479, echoing Matt. 11:27 and perhaps Heb. 1:3. This is in line with Athanasius’ teaching of the Christian knowledge of God through the Son.}
\footnote{\textsuperscript{39} Thomas F. Torrance, \textit{The Christian Doctrine of God} (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 16.}
\end{footnotes}
When I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in individualities or hypostases, if you prefer so to call them, or persons…For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead is.\(^{40}\)

There is therefore a clear and coherent revelation of God as a triune Being by the harmonious work of the Holy Spirit, the Son, and the Father.

It should be noted that Gregory’s teaching of a subjective illumination does not negate an objective revelation through Scripture. Rather, God’s immediate action of illumination makes the human mind assent to the objective truth of Scripture. Indeed, Gregory bases much of his teaching on Scripture, which he regards as sacred and authoritative. In *Oration 30*, Gregory begins his polemic attacks against heresies by stressing that he has been taught the truth by the Holy Spirit and Scripture.\(^{41}\) His firm belief that the Spirit is God also comes from Scripture, which will be examined in the next section.

There is a dialectical tension in Gregory’s epistemology. On one pole believers know God because of an immediate act of the Holy Spirit by divine illumination. On the other pole believers know God in a personal and spiritual manner because of the testimony of Scripture.\(^{42}\) This two-fold dialectical revelation underlines the work of the Holy Spirit in holding together the two poles of illumination and revelation.

In summary, emerging from his orthodox predecessors Gregory comes to a more mature and biblical understanding of the knowledge of God. Although Gregory makes little use of the noetic effects of sin, he does affirm that finite human reasoning is marred by sin.\(^{43}\) As a result, reason alone (as employed by the pagans or by theologians who are

\(^{40}\) *Oration 39.11*, NPNF 7:533-534.
\(^{41}\) *Oration 30.1*, ibid., 469.
\(^{42}\) The former is a subjective revelation that points to the infallibility of the objective truth inscripturated by the Spirit. The latter is an objective revelation confirming a subjective revelation which is God with us.
\(^{43}\) Beeley, 71, 77, 82-84. However, Norris thinks that Gregory lauds human intellect and philosophical training because he has no regard of the Original sin, 131. A case can be made that Gregory understands that reason and intellect are God’s gifts to man in the original creation (Gen. 1:27), so that they are good. Yet the Creator-
impure) cannot know God. But a true and certain knowledge of God comes to man accompanied by His gift of salvation, via a two-fold revelation through the Spirit and Scripture. The Holy Spirit works inside-out by an inward illumination, so that believers are made willing and able to know the truth of God. In addition, the Spirit works outside-in by giving the Church the authoritative Word of God through prophetic and apostolic writings. Ultimately, Gregory is proposing an epistemic circle, in which believers know and commune with God under the illumination of the Spirit and the Word.

Deity of the Holy Spirit

Gregory’s epistemology teaches the primacy of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to know God. The fact that the Holy Spirit adequately discloses God’s Trinitarian nature to man presupposes that the Spirit is divine. So this is Gregory’s syllogism:

1. God enables man to know Him,
2. The Holy Spirit illuminates the human mind, enables man to know God,
3. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.

Being the consolidator and synthesizer of the orthodox faith, Gregory perceives that it is paramount for the Church to not only insists that the Spirit is divine and has divine attributes, but it is necessary to plainly confess that the Holy Spirit is God. Scholars often cite Oration 31.10 as an example of Gregory’s conviction and confession:

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44 Oration 40.3, NPNF 7:541. See also Beeley 102-110.
45 Oration 29.21, NPNF 7:468-469.
46 Oration 31.3, ibid., 482; Oration 33.16, ibid., 502-503.
47 This is especially seen in the letters from Gregory to Basil. In a letter to Basil (Epistle 58, NPNF 7:669-670) Gregory was furious that Basil “slurred over” and “hints obscurely” about the Spirit, since Basil had not called the Spirit “God.” And he concludes that Basil caused “a great injury done to the Church if truth is driven away.” The vitriol against his good friend shows how Gregory is consumed by a full confession that “the Holy Spirit is God.”
Is the Spirit God? Most certainly. Well then, is He consubstantial? Yes, if He is God.\textsuperscript{48}

To Gregory this is a logical and necessary conclusion of Scripture and tradition, since the doctrine of the Trinity depends on it. If the Spirit is not fully God, then the Trinity is reduced to a Binary\textsuperscript{49} or a Monad.\textsuperscript{50} Gregory insists that,

If you throw down the One, I am bold to assert that you do not set up the other Two. For what profit is there in an imperfect Godhead? Or rather, what Godhead can there be if it is not perfect?\textsuperscript{51}

Gregory maintains that the Godhead is perfect only when the Spirit is confessed “God,” alongside the Father and the Son. Underlying his bold assertion is the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19) and the apostolic confession (2 Cor. 13:14) that God is a triune Being. Just as the Church came to assert the deity of the Son and His full equality with the Father at Nicaea, the full divinity of the Holy Spirit and His co-equality to the Father and the Son must now be confessed to complete the Trinitarian doctrine of God. Any ambiguity about the Spirit’s deity would bring the whole doctrine of God to naught.

Not as prominently cited is Gregory’s poem \textit{On the Spirit}, in which he begins with this audacious exhortation:

\begin{quote}
Let us bow in awe before the mighty Spirit, who is God in heaven, who to me is God, by whom I came to know God, and who in this world makes me God. All-powerful, manifold in gifts, theme of the hymn sung by the heavenly choir, giving life to heavenly and earthly beings, seated on high coming from the Father (\textit{Πατρόθεν ερχομενοι}), divine might, a self-determined being. He is not the Son, nor is he outside the invisible Godhead, but is of equal glory.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Oration 31.10}, NPNF 7:485.
\textsuperscript{49} This is likely the position of the Pneumatomachians, who confessed the deity of the Father and the Son but not the Spirit. They are sometimes referred to as Semi-Arians.
\textsuperscript{50} This is the position of the Neo-Arians, such as Eunomius and his followers. They deny the deity of the Son and the Holy Spirit, since only the Father is God.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Oration 31.4}, ibid., 482.
Contained in this short overture is a concise and compact summary of Gregory’s Pneumatology. The Holy Spirit is God by an objective (“God in heaven”) and a subjective revelation (“to me is God”). The Spirit is the agent of knowledge and illumination (“by whom I came to know God”). The Spirit applies salvation to individual Christians by the divine work of deification (“makes me God”). In addition, the Spirit is all-powerful (παντοθένες and θείον μενος), the giver of gifts (1 Cor. 12:4-6), and the object of worship. The Lordship of the Spirit is also affirmed since He gives life (φερεαθείον), and is “seated on high,” echoing the confession of the exalted Jesus. Interestingly, Gregory does not use “procession” (ἐκπορευέται) but “coming” (ἐρχόμενον) to describe His sending forth from the Father.53 Lest there is any misunderstanding of the Spirit’s ontological subordination to the Father, Gregory adds that the Spirit is “a self-determined being” (αυτοκελευστων). This is to make the qualification that although the Holy Spirit comes from the Father, He is a self-existing Person with His own self-consciousness. Lastly, the Holy Spirit is different from the Son even though both come from the Father. But the uniqueness of the Spirit does not preclude Him from sharing equal glory and honor with the Father and the Son, since the Spirit is not outside of the Godhead.

Intertwined in Gregory’s proofs of the Spirit’s divinity are three threads: scriptural proofs, metaphysical proofs, and existential proofs.54

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53 This indicates that Gregory does not always use “procession” or “sent” as a technical term to describe the relationship between the Spirit and the Father. The intra-Trinitarian relationship between the three Persons is ineffable, so that human language with its nuances may describe, but not define, it. Also note the present tense of “coming,” which suggests an eternal and continual relationship between the Spirit and the Father (eternal procession).

54 These three types of proofs can be further described as follows. The scriptural proofs are predicated on Scripture’s normative, authoritative, and objective revelation. Next, the right use of reason through philosophy and orthodox tradition gives the metaphysical proofs credence. This is because these proofs of the Spirit’s deity are derived from Scripture and the inner illumination of the Spirit. Finally, the illuminative work of the Spirit in Gregory’s mind not only leads him to rightly appropriate Scripture, but to assent to scriptural and metaphysical
Gregory follows the same logic and scriptural passages that Basil and Athanasius employed earlier to demonstrate the divinity of the Holy Spirit, except that Gregory pushes them to the logical conclusion that the Spirit must be God. To be silent about this or to take a “neutral position” dishonors God and shipwrecks one’s faith. While the Pneumatomachians and Neo-Arians accuse Gregory of teaching “a foreign and unscriptural God,” Gregory returns fire by declaring that his teaching on the Spirit’s deity has its origin from the Scripture. It has been previously mentioned that Gregory teaches a progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit in Scripture. But only after the ascension of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost would the Church see the Person and works of the Holy Spirit clearly. Thus, the present abiding of the Spirit in the Church should confirm what the Scripture says concerning Himself.

Gregory is not advocating that the deity of the Spirit is derived from Church tradition and dogma alone, nor is he drawing a dichotomy between Scripture and tradition per se. Rather, Gregory teaches that the progressive (which may even be called redemptive-historical) revelation as shown and codified in Scripture regulates how the Church constructs its theology. To put it in another way, because Scripture reveals the undivided unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Church should draw the obvious conclusion that the Spirit is God, just as the Son is God.

assertions that the Spirit is God. Together these three types of proofs form three distinctive yet related perspectives on the Holy Spirit. They interpenetrate one another to offer a coherent and definitive proof that the Spirit is God in Himself. In this manner, the Spirit reveals Himself through Special Revelation (Scripture) and General Revelation (metaphysics and the self). In addition, the self-revelation of the Spirit comes from an objective (Scripture and tradition) and subjective (existential) manner. A perspectival justification of this arrangement of theology can be found in Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God*, 123-164.

55 *Oration 31.5*, NPNF 7:483. See also Norris, 187.
56 *Oration 31.1*, NPNF 7:481. Norris thinks that Gregory’s accusers are likely the Pneumatomachians, 183-184.
57 Quoted in Chapter 4B, 43; from *Oration 31.26*, NPNF 7:492. See also *Oration 41.11*, ibid., 573.
58 *Oration 31.27*, ibid., 493, alluding to Acts 1:5, 2:1ff.
So why would the Neo-Arians and Pneumatomachians deny the deity of the Spirit? Are they not Christians? The purpose of Gregory’s *Five Theological Orations* is not to condemn the heretics (although his polemical tone is certainly very harsh), but to point out their grave error in denying the Son and the Spirit. Gregory hopes that by proving the Spirit’s deity he may save his critics from blasphemy and spiritual destruction. Gregory tells his congregation, which is not yet sold on the deity of the Holy Spirit, that it is the Holy Spirit who makes a believer spiritual:

Can a man be spiritual without the Spirit? Has he a share in the Spirit who does not honor the Spirit? Can he honor Him who is baptized into a creature and a fellow-servant? It is not so…Remember your confession. Into what were you baptized? The Father? Good but Jewish still. The Son? Good, but not yet perfect. The Holy Spirit? Very good; this is perfect. Now was it into these simply, or some common name of them? The latter. And what was the common name? Why, “God”. In this common name believe, and ride on prosperously and reign, and pass on from hence into the bliss of heaven.

So Gregory urges his hearers to remember their baptism into the triune name of God. And it is indisputable that in Matt. 28:19 the Holy Spirit is “named” alongside the Father and the Son (τὸ ὄνομα [singular] τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ ὀνόματος τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος). The threefold name of God is therefore clear evidence that the Holy Spirit shares with the Father and the Son the same divine nature. It is tantamount to idolatry if the Holy Spirit is a creature elevated to be placed with the Father and the Son in the initiation of salvation. While Athanasius and Basil made this point earlier, they failed to reach the ultimate conclusion that the Holy Spirit is God. The confession of the Spirit’s deity represents one of Gregory’s most urgent pastoral concerns, which is the salvation of those near apostasy.

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59 Oration 41.8, ibid., 571-572. A theme that is also prominent in the writings of Athanasius and Basil.
60 Oration 33.17, ibid., 503.
There are numerous Scripture passages that mention the Holy Spirit together with the Father and the Son as a Triad (2 Cor. 13:14, Eph. 4:4-5, 1 Pet. 1:2). The Spirit is called “holy” since Scripture describes His holiness as intrinsic and not derived. And the combination of using “holy” and “spirit” to describe the Spirit in the Old and New Testament indicates His transcendence and holiness. The Spirit is also called “another Comforter” to indicate His co-equality with the Son.

Although Gregory concedes that Scripture does not explicitly calls the Holy Spirit “\(\Theta\varepsilon\omicron\Theta\),” the deity of the Spirit can be plainly inferred from numerous scriptural witnesses. In his famous *Theological Oration on the Holy Spirit*, Gregory lists a swarm of scriptural testimonies about the divinity of the Spirit:

But now the swarm of testimonies shall burst upon you from which the deity of the Holy Spirit shall be shown to all who are not excessively stupid, or else altogether enemies to the Spirit, to be most clearly recognized in Scripture. Look at these facts: Christ is born; the Spirit is His Forerunner: He is baptized; the Spirit bears witness. He is tempted; the Spirit leads Him up. He works miracles; the Spirit accompanies them. He ascends; the Spirit takes His place. What great things are there in the idea of God which are not in His power?

Here Gregory begins his *apologia* by stating the Spirit’s ontological relationship with the Son of God. Those who deny the deity of the Spirit are simply going against the plain testimonies of Scripture. While the Church has always focused on the

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62 *Oration 31.2*, NPNF 7:481; and *Oration 31.29*, ibid., 493-494. See also Torrance, 60-62.
63 In *Oration 31.2*, Gregory argues that the combination of “holy” and “spirit” in the Old and New Testament is used in a “peculiar sense” to indicate the Spirit’s holy essence, NPNF 7:481. See also Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 192-193.
64 John 14:16. If the Son as the “first Comforter” (1 John 2:1) is fully God, than Spirit as the “other Comforter” is also fully God. See *Oration 31.26*, NPNF 7:492 and *Oration 41.12*, ibid., 573.
65 The closest that Scripture explicitly calls the Holy Spirit “God” is found in Acts 5:3-4. Peter accuses Ananias lying to the Holy Spirit as equivalent to lying to God. Curiously Gregory only makes a passing reference to this passage in *Oration 31.30*, ibid., 494.
67 *Oration 31.29*, NPNF 7:493.
Spirit’s work as Christ’s substitute post-Pentecost, Gregory sees obvious manifestation of the Spirit during Jesus’ earthly ministry. It is the Spirit who was the forerunner to Christ, who worked alongside Christ, and who takes His place after His ascension. The work of the Spirit in the life of Christ can be traced from the womb to the grave, and then to the throne. There is close continuity between the economy (οἰκονομία) and the ontology of the Holy Spirit and the Son. Therefore, if the Son is fully God (as the Nicene Creed confesses) then the Holy Spirit must also be fully God. As the Father and the Son are inseparable, so are the Spirit and the Son. As a result, if the Father and Son are “θεός,” so is the Holy Spirit.

But Gregory also recognizes that the Spirit is not the Son. So he continues with a list of scriptural titles given to the Spirit:

What titles which belong to God are not applied to Him, except only “Unbegotten” and “Begotten?”…He is called the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Mind of Christ, the Spirit of the Lord, and Himself the Lord, the Spirit of Adoption, of Truth, of Liberty; the Spirit of Wisdom, of Understanding, of Counsel, of Might, of Knowledge, of Godliness, of the Fear of God…the Finger of God; fire like God; to manifest, as I take it, His consubstantiality.68

Although Scripture does not directly call the Spirit “God,” the manifold titles given to Him should be more than adequate for the Church to come to this conclusion. Gregory’s list includes “Spirit of God” (Gen. 1:2, Job 33:4, Matt. 3:16, 1 Cor. 2:11), “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9, 1 Pet. 1:11), “Spirit of the Lord” (Isa. 61:1, Acts 5:9, 2 Cor. 3:17), and “Himself the Lord.”69 It should be clear that Scripture ascribes to the Holy Spirit the divine title of Yahweh, or Κυρίος. Scripture also personifies divine attributes of the Spirit and calls Him “Spirit of wisdom” (Deut. 34:9, Isa. 11:2), “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17, 15:26, 16:13),

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68 Ibid., 494.
69 Probably having 2 Cor. 3:17 in mind, Gregory sees “κυρίος το πνεύμα εστιν” as “the Spirit is the Lord.” This is the standard Cappadocian proof-text in ascribing the title “Lord” to the Holy Spirit, see also St. Basil, On the Holy Spirit, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1980), 21, 24; Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, NPNF 5: 245-246.
“Spirit of understanding and counsel” (Isa. 11:2). Additionally, the Spirit is called the Spirit of adoption, truth, wisdom, and so on (Rom. 8:15, John 14:17, 15:26, Isa. 11:2, Eph. 1:17). It is clear that Scripture does not merely state that the Spirit possesses these divine attributes, but His divinity is the ultimate source of wisdom, truth, and knowledge. Hence, Scripture gives the Spirit the titles of God because the Spirit is God. It is important to note that Gregory sums up this section by referring to the Spirit’s ὁμοόυσιος with the Father and the Son.70 The titles of the Spirit are not just bestowed to Him by God the Father. The Spirit shares the same divine titles with the Father and the Son because He is same in divine essence with them; yet He is also distinguished from them as a third Person. Therefore, Gregory says that the Holy Spirit is “inherited, glorified, reckoned with the Father and the Son.”71

Continue on in this swarm of scriptural testimonies, Gregory moves from ontology and titles of the Holy Spirit to His works in creation:

For He is…the Creator-Spirit, who by baptism and by resurrection creates anew; the Spirit that knows all things, that teaches, that blows where and to what extent He lists, that guides, talks, sends forth, separates, is angry or tempted, reveals, illumines, quickens, or rather is the Light of life; that makes Temples; that deifies…that does all things that God does; divided into fiery tongues; dividing gifts; making Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.72

The works of the Holy Spirit are all-encompassing, from the cosmic sphere to the individual milieu. They include creation (Gen. 1:1-2, Job 33:4, Pss. 33:6, 104:30), regeneration (John 3:3-8, 6:63, Titus 3:5), resurrection of believers (Ezek. 37:5-14, Rom.

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70 Again Gregory may not have any specific scriptural text in mind to prove the Spirit is homoousios with the Father and the Son. However, Gregory says that the Spirit “is like God, a fire, which proves, I think, that he is consubstantial.” Norris thinks that Gregory is combining the image of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire in Acts 2:3-4 with God’s manifestation as a consuming fire in Deut. 4:24 to draw the conclusion of consubstantiality, 296. It is equally likely that Gregory leans on the pro-Nicene Fathers, such as Athanasius and Basil, by calling the Spirit homoousios.
71 Oration 31.29, NPNF 7:494.
72 Ibid.
8:10-11), omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10), pedagogy (Luke 12:12, John 14:26), revelation and prophecy (Luke 2:26, 1 Cor. 2:10, Eph. 3:5, 1 Pet. 1:12), illumination (John 14:26, 1 Cor. 2:10-15), sanctification (Rom. 15:16, 1 Cor. 6:11), deification,73 and giving of gifts (1 Cor. 12:11, Eph. 4:11). Jesus states that “it is the Spirit who gives life” (John 6:63), in order to confirm that the Holy Spirit has the divine ability to give physical (Job 33:4, Rom. 8:11) and spiritual life (Rom. 8:10, 2 Cor. 3:6). Hence, Gregory exclaims that the Holy Spirit “does all things that God does.”74

These voluminous scriptural witnesses provide ample evidence of the Spirit’s deity. It is worth noting that Gregory moves from opera Spiritus ad intra to opera Spiritus ad extra in Oration 31.29.75 Gregory begins with the ontological relationship between the Spirit and the Son, and then to the titles of the Spirit. Together they show that the Spirit is of the same rank with the Son and the Father. Then he moves to the divine attributes of the Spirit. Finally, he ends with the divine works of the Spirit towards the creation, especially in redeeming men. To think of the Spirit as anything less than God amounts to going up against God’s own Word and works. Gregory asks the Pneumatomachians rhetorically, “So important then, and so vivid are His Names. Why is it necessary to lay before you the testimony contained in the very words?”76 In effect, it should be clear that Scripture says

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73 Gregory mentions that the believers are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19) through baptism (Matt. 28:19, 1 Cor. 12:13, Eph. 4:4-6) in Oration 2.97, ibid., 348; Oration 31.29, ibid., 493-494; Oration 33.15, ibid., 501-502; and Oration 34.12, ibid., 507-508. To quote Oration 31.29 in context, Gregory says that “He makes us his temple, he deifies, he makes us complete, he initiates us in such a way that he both precedes baptism and is wanted after it.” The link between deification and baptism will be examined in the next chapter, 91-94.

74 Oration 31.29, ibid., 494.

75 Also notice that Gregory’s “swarm” of scriptural testimonies on the Spirit’s deity begins with the Son of God. While Athanasius did not offer any biblical justification of deriving his Pneumatology from Christology, Gregory sees scriptural justification of doing so. But Gregory does not merely ground his Pneumatology on Christology; he is proposing that the work of the Holy Spirit is foundational in the Person and work of Jesus.

76 Oration 31.30, ibid., 494
“the Holy Spirit is God” without using the exact propositional phrase. In other words, Gregory rightly deduces that the deity of the Holy Spirit is a self-attested truth by Scripture.

This counters the original objection posted by the Pneumatomachians and Neo-Arians, that Scripture nowhere teaches that the Spirit is God. Gregory does not use the aforementioned scriptural passages simply as proof-texts. Rather, he is stating that the Pneumatomachians and Neo-Arians only focus on the “letter,” or the superficial meaning of Scripture. By doing so, they completely miss the “inner meaning” of Scripture which unequivocally demonstrates the deity of the Spirit. Gregory does not rely not on an allegorical reading of Scripture, but a grammatical-historical method of exegesis. Gregory quotes 2 Cor. 3:6 (“the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”) to distinguish the difference between the “letter” and the “spirit” of Scripture. The “letter” is an unenlightened reading of Scripture by a carnal, rational mind without the aid of the Spirit. On the contrary, under the illumination of the Holy Spirit one can rightly read, interpret, know, and apply Scripture in a “spiritual” manner. As a result, spiritually illuminated men should boldly testify that the Spirit is God.

To reinforce the role of the Holy Spirit in demonstrating His own deity, Gregory appeals to the word of Jesus when He said that the Spirit will come and teach the disciples all things (John 16:13). Gregory believes that this statement includes the Spirit’s teaching on His own deity. So Gregory chides those who accuse him of teaching the Spirit as an “unscriptural God” by saying:

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77 Norris thinks that Gregory may be influenced by Origen’s allegorical method, 37-38. But Beeley refutes this, 57, 271-273.
78 Gregory uses a similar argument in *Oration 30.1* to argue that the Holy Spirit makes him able to declare that the Son is fully God, NPNF 7:469.
79 *Oration 31.27*, ibid., 492-493. Jesus mentions that the Spirit of truth will guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13), including things that would happen in the future. It may be pure conjecture (through fanciful
Over and over again you turn upon us the silence of Scripture. But that it is not a strange doctrine, nor an afterthought, but acknowledged and plainly set forth both by the ancients and many of our own day, is already demonstrated by many persons who have treated of this subject, and who have handled the Holy Scriptures, not with indifference or as a mere pastime, but have gone beneath the letter and looked into the inner meaning, and have been deemed worthy to see the hidden beauty, and have been irradiated by the light of knowledge.

In one broad stroke, Gregory demolishes the arguments of his opponents. He proclaims that the deity of the Holy Spirit is not a novelty. It is according to Scripture and in line with orthodox teachings. Those who have been illuminated by an inner light of the Spirit come “to worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three Persons, one Godhead, undivided in honor and glory and substance and kingdom.”

Taken together, Gregory states that one can easily call the Spirit “God” by inference drawn from the myriad of scriptural testimonies. Nevertheless, this only happens when the Holy Spirit opens up the spiritual and deeper meaning of Scripture through divine illumination. Underlining this conclusion is Gregory’s teaching of a dialectic work of the Spirit and the Word in Christian epistemology. By pointing to a consensus forming amongst traditional and contemporary teachings that unwaveringly defends the divinity of the Spirit, Gregory consolidates these orthodox teachings and finds their root in the spiritual interpretation of Scripture.

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80 Oration 31.21, ibid., 490.
81 Oration 31.28, ibid., 493.
82 Gregory refers to the works of his contemporaries by saying that his Pneumatology is not totally novel because he is “building on another’s foundation,” Oration 31.21, ibid., 490. See also T. A. Noble, Gregory Nazianzen’s use of Scripture in defence of the deity of the Spirit in Tyndale Bulletin 39 (1988), 113-114.
Philosophical Proofs

One cannot read Gregory’s writing without seeing the importance of the Trinity in his thinking. Many of his orations, letters, and poems are permeated with reference to the ineffable glory of one God who is simultaneously three co-equal Persons, each is God Himself. It is rather difficult to assess whether Gregory’s Trinitarianism or Pneumatology comes first. In either case, they are inter-related and interposed. The Holy Spirit is God because He is named with the Father and the Son. On the other hand, the Trinity is three fully equal divine Persons because the Spirit is God and shares divine essence and attributes with the Father and the Son. This may appear to be circular reasoning, perhaps betraying Gregory’s rigorous philosophical training. On closer look this epistemic circle is inevitable, since the deity of the Spirit completes the Trinity and the Trinity necessitates a divine hypostatic Spirit.

The scriptural ground for resolving this philosophical conundrum is found in Matt. 28:19, in which Jesus commanded all disciples to be baptized into one name, which is the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a simple yet profound statement about God’s ultimate self-revelation since God’s covenantal name is a three-fold representation of the three Persons. Gregory points out how this three-fold name mirrors and completes God’s self-revelation to Moses as Yahweh (Exod. 3:14).84 In redemptive history God has always revealed Himself as the one and only true God (Deut. 6:4, Isa. 46:9, John

84 When God revealed His covenantal name Yahweh to Moses, it indicates His self-existence. Oration 30.18 is a dense paragraph which unpacks God’s self-existence, NPNF 7:478-479. In it Gregory quotes Exod. 3:14, Isa. 42:8, and Deut. 4:24 in succession to show that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all self-existing. Each Person has “absolute existence, independent of anything else.” It is interesting that Gregory finds the proof of the Son’s and the Holy Spirit’s self-existence from the Old Testament. See also Oration 31.5-6, ibid., 482-483.
17:3). So Gregory explains that there is a logical reason in the temporal revelation of the Father, then the Son, and finally the Holy Spirit:

It was not safe, when the Godhead of the Father was not yet acknowledged, plainly to proclaim the Son; nor when that of the Son was not yet received to burden us further (if I may use so bold an expression) with the Holy Spirit...For this reason it was, I think, that He gradually came to dwell in the disciples, measuring Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him.85

The reason why God reveals Himself first as a unity, and then a Trinity is to accommodate the understanding of the Church; in order that God’s people may not be thrown into the confusion of tritheism before the coming of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit. The Old Testament does speak of Christ and the Holy Spirit in types and shadows, but it is in the New Testament that the Son and the Spirit made their grand entrance into redemptive history. It was after Pentecost that God has fully and clearly revealed Himself as three Persons. Taking the whole redemptive history into account, the Church should draw the necessary logical conclusion that the Spirit is God.

Besides using the Trinity as the presupposition, Gregory also sees the Creator-creature distinction as a way to show that the Holy Spirit is divine. He says this about the Holy Spirit:

He will be conceived of either as a Creature of God, or as God. For anything between these two, whether having nothing in common with either, or a compound of both, not even they who invented the goat-stag could imagine. Now, if He is a creature, how do we believe in Him, how are we made perfect in Him? For it is not the same thing to believe in a thing and to believe about it. The one belongs to deity, the other to anything. But if He is God, then He is neither a creature, nor a thing made, nor a fellow servant, nor any of these lowly appellations.86

85 Oration 31.26, ibid., 492. R. P. C. Hanson thinks that Gregory draws on extra-biblical data when he derives his Pneumatology, since Gregory’s progressive revelation theory demands that he goes beyond Scripture (in the subjective knowledge and the dogma of the post-apostolic Church) to find proofs of the Spirit’s deity, _The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God_ (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 782-783. In so doing Hanson commends Gregory for using strict philosophical proofs of the Spirit’s deity. This is critiqued by Noble, who rightly says that Gregory’ progressive revelation concerns the nature and not the substance of the Spirit’s self-revelation, 117-118.

86 Oration 31.6, NPNF 7:483.
The whole creation order is made by one Creator, God, who alone is eternal, transcendent, and divine. And God also exerts his Lordship over the whole creation, so He is ontologically distinct from all that He has made. If the Holy Spirit belongs to the divine realm He must be God and not a creature.87 Gregory rejects that the Holy Spirit is a composite or mixture of the divine and the creaturely. Other pro-Nicene orthodox Fathers would only go as far as calling the Spirit as “of God.” Gregory rejects any rhetorical ambiguity and plainly states that the Spirit is Himself God. And “if God, He is not a creature; for the creature ranks with us who are not gods.”88

Gregory’s favorite metaphor to describe God’s attribute is “light” (φως, John 1:9, 1 John 1:5). It refers to God’s glory, transcendence, and holiness. Thus, Gregory’s attribution of “light” to the Holy Spirit is an affirmation of His deity. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are “light, light, and light.”89 Therefore, the Holy Spirit has all the divine transcendent attributes of God, such as aseity,90 eternity,91 omnipresence,92 omniscience,93 and omnipotence.94

Regarding the nature of the Holy Spirit, He is self-existing,95 He has no beginning,96 and He is perfect.97 Gregory even boldly asserts that the Holy Spirit “always

87 The Pneumatomachians agreed that the Son is God. In their affirmation of the deity of Christ from John 1:1-3, they reasoned that the “all things” made by the Son include the Spirit. Gregory explicitly rejects this as absurd, see Oration 31.12, ibid., 486.
88 Oration 42.7, ibid., 581. This also clarifies Gregory’s teaching on theosis: that man is not made to become God, but God-like. See chapter 5B, 78-90.
89 Oration 31.3, ibid., 482; Oration 31.27, ibid., 492-493.
90 Oration 31.5-6, ibid., 482-483.
91 Oration 31.4, 31.8, ibid., 482, 484.
92 Oration 31.29, ibid., 494, alluding to Ps. 139:7 and Wisd. 1:7.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid. See also On the Spirit, 11.
95 Oration 30.18, NPNF 7:478-479.
96 In Oration 31.4, Gregory alludes to Gen. 1:1 and John 1:1 by saying that the Holy Spirit, like the Son, is from the beginning (από αρχής), ibid., 482. His pro-Nicene language, “there was not a time when the Spirit was not” is a modified form of the anti-Arian language regarding the eternity of the Son, see Norris, 187.
existed, and exists, and will exist…(since He is) always numbered with the Father and the Son.”

In making all these claims about the Spirit’s nature and attributes, Gregory appears to rely on metaphysical ground that the Spirit is *homoousios* with the Father and the Son. Although T. F. Torrance thinks that Gregory centers his Pneumatology on the Nicene *homoousios*, it is more appropriate to conclude that Gregory subordinates his philosophical training under Scripture and the divine illumination of the Holy Spirit. Although Gregory is a traditionalist in an orthodox pro-Nicene sense, he does not merely follow the Pneumatological teachings of earlier Fathers. Instead, Gregory develops his Pneumatology with a priority of a spiritual understanding of Scripture, supporting by the necessary step of logical deduction that is also true to an orthodox tradition. This method of “faith seeking understanding” compels Gregory to declare the Spirit to be “God in Himself,” and one who possesses the unity of God’s substance.

**Existential Proofs**

Gregory not only appeals to Scripture and reason to show that the Holy Spirit is God, but he accentuates the subjective and existential work of the Spirit within believers to demonstrate that the Spirit is no other than God Himself. Gregory mentions twice in *Oration 31* that if the Spirit is not God, then he would not be deified. He says in the beginning of *Oration 31*, “If He is in the same rank with myself, how can He make me God

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97 *Oration 31.9*, NPNF 7:484-485. The Holy Spirit lacks nothing and has no deficiency compared to the Father and the Son. They are co-equal in divinity, and therefore consubstantial. See also Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 211.

98 *Oration 41.9*, NPNF 7:572.


100 *Oration 40.41*, NPNF 7:562.

101 *Oration 31.16*, ibid., 487-488.

102 Reason that is subordinated to Scripture and concurs with orthodox tradition; all under the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
(εμε ποιει θεον), or join me with Godhead?\textsuperscript{103} And again in the end of \textit{Oration 31}, “For if He is not to be worshipped, how can He deify me (εμε θεοι) by baptism?\textsuperscript{104} This literary \textit{inclusio} in Gregory’s \textit{magnum opus} on the Holy Spirit indicates the importance between the Spirit’s ontology and soteriology in the whole of his thought.

Gregory understands that the Holy Spirit indwells the Church corporately and believers individually, giving Christian an existential knowledge of His own deity by the process of \textit{theosis}.\textsuperscript{105} Just as the Holy Spirit descended on the Lord Jesus during His baptism to anoint Him for His ministry of redemption (Matt. 3:16, Mark 1:10, Luke 3:22), the Spirit has descended on the Church to anoint believers as a proof of Christ’s reconciliation between man to God (John 20:22-23, Acts 1:5, 2:4). After the ascension of the exalted Christ, the Holy Spirit became His earthly substitute\textsuperscript{106} in order to continue Jesus’ work of salvation.\textsuperscript{107} In his sermon \textit{On Pentecost}, Gregory develops his thought on the progressive revelation of the Spirit further by saying that:

But the first (Old Testament) manifested Him indistinctly, the second (New Testament) more expressly, this present one (post-Pentecost) more perfectly, since He is no longer present only in energy, but as we may say, substantially (ουσιωδως), associating with us, and dwelling in us.\textsuperscript{108}

Gregory again reasons that the Old Testament only shows the Person and work of the Holy Spirit dimly in order to prevent any misunderstanding and perversion of Christian monotheism. The New Testament shows the Holy Spirit in a clearer light, especially in the life and teaching of Jesus. The works of the Holy Spirit during and before

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{103} \textit{Oration 31.4}, ibid., 482.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} \textit{Oration 31.28}, ibid., 493. See also \textit{Oration 34.12}, ibid., 507-508; and \textit{Oration 41.9}, ibid., 572. Deification is categorically equivalent to salvation.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} See Chapter 5B, 78-90.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} \textit{Oration 41.12}, ibid., 573-574.
  \item \textsuperscript{107} \textit{Oration 31.27}, ibid., 492-493.
  \item \textsuperscript{108} \textit{Oration 41.11}, ibid., 573.
\end{itemize}
Jesus’ earthly ministry were mostly demonstrative of His “energy,” or power. But Pentecost marked the watershed event (“the present”\textsuperscript{109}) that the Spirit clearly manifests Himself in the midst of the Church because He now indwells the Church. It is a daring claim that the Being (\textit{ousia, ousiωδως}) of the Holy Spirit and not merely the activity of the Spirit (\textit{energēia}) is now present. The bodily manifestation of the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire on the disciples at Pentecost indicates that just as Jesus lived with His people bodily, the Holy Spirit now lives with the Church.\textsuperscript{110}

In addition to a progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit from the Old to the New Testament, Gregory also suggests that there is an intensification of His presence in the people of God. The Spirit made His presence known occasionally in the Old Testament in the inspiration of the prophets (1 Sam. 10:6, Ezek. 11:5, Mic. 3:8) or the temporary empowering of certain tasks (Exod. 35:30-32; Judg. 3:10, 11:29). However, after the ascension of Christ the Spirit indwells the Church permanently (John 14:15, 17), so that whoever is in Christ the Holy Spirit is also in him (Rom. 8:10-11, Eph. 3:14-19, Phil. 2:1). Here Gregory calls this eternal and personal presence of the Spirit in the Church “perfect.”

Earlier Fathers from Irenaeus to Athanasius spoke of the Spirit’s presence in the Church as demonstrated by His regenerative and purifying power.\textsuperscript{111} Gregory claims that it is the personal presence of the Spirit who bestows on the Church all the saving benefits.

When the eschatological Spirit descends and dwells in the Church at Pentecost, the Church

\textsuperscript{109} Noble correctly points out that Gregory understand his time as a continuation of the apostolic time, or “the new age,” 118. In other words, Gregory thinks that he lives in the period that began at Pentecost, when the revelation of the Spirit’s deity was already clear. One may be tempted to view this as a patristic equivalence to the “two-age” eschatology concept.

\textsuperscript{110} As a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to His disciple in John 14:18, when He says, “I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.” This is in the context of Jesus’ teaching of the Holy Spirit, who is with the Church forever because He “dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15, 17).

\textsuperscript{111} Hence, the Spirit is present in His economy or energy. This led to the unfortunately Eastern orthodox teaching that the Holy Spirit is present with the Church in His energy, since His essence is unknown and unknowable. This type of apophatic theology and mysticism cannot be attributed to Gregory Nazianzen.
becomes an earthly reflection of the ideal community modeled after the heavenly community
of the Trinity. Gregory often speaks glowingly on the life of the Church and pastoral
ministry as the work of the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{112}

Gregory understands the ontological distinction between God and man, and
sin makes this gulf infinitely worse. Jesus’ work at the cross achieved a divine substitution
of sacrifice for sinners,\textsuperscript{113} which can be deemed the objective work of God in salvation. In
order for sinners to be purified and renewed in mind and life, the Holy Spirit comes (or is
sent\textsuperscript{114}) and unites Himself with sinners to achieve salvation; that is, to live in perfect
obedience and communion with God. This is the subjective work of God to draw sinners to
Himself. The work of the Spirit in salvation of the Church is expounded beautifully:

\begin{quote}
For if He is not to be worshipped, how can He deify me by baptism? But if He is to be
worshipped, surely He is an object of adoration, and if an object of adoration, He must
be God: the one is linked to the other, a truly golden and saving chain. And indeed
from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from
the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of Him from whom it is
derived.\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

Therefore, the Holy Spirit shows Himself to be God by divinizing individual
believers and bringing them to the knowledge of Himself and the whole Godhead. Hence,
this is Gregory’s second syllogism:

1. Only God can save (deify) sinners,
2. The Holy Spirit saves (deifies) sinners,
3. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is God.

The ontological reality of the Spirit’s divinity comes to the subjective mind of
the Church through His soteriological work—a work that was publicly shown forth and

\textsuperscript{112} Beeley, 158.
\textsuperscript{113} Oration 29.19, NPNF 7:466-467. See also Oration 30.5, “As for my sake he was called a curse who
destroyed my curse, and sin who takes away the sin of the world, and became a new Adam to take the place of
the old, just so he makes my disobedience his own as head of the whole body,” ibid., 471.
\textsuperscript{114} Oration 41.11-12, ibid., 573-574.
\textsuperscript{115} Oration 31.28, ibid., 493.
completed in Christ and now is being continued by the Spirit. And because the Holy Spirit is God, He can apply the benefits of salvation earned and owned by the exalted Christ to all who place their faith in Him. The comprehensive program of salvation comes to Christians in a chain of events. Gregory lays out the order of salvation (“a truly golden and saving chain”) as regeneration (new birth, \textit{anagennhsi\c{c}}), re-creation (new creation, \textit{anaplasi\c{c}}), and illumination (deeper knowledge, \textit{epignwsi\c{c}}). Gregory appears to focus on the interlocking nature of all these three events, rather than their temporal priority. Nevertheless, his emphasis is that all these benefits are the result of the monergistic working of the Holy Spirit, done in Christians to inaugurate a new existential reality as the people of God. Put in another way, believers come to worship and adore the Holy Spirit as God only because of their rebirth and renewal of mind.

This subjective and existential work of the Holy Spirit is not individualistic, since the Church as a whole is indwelled by the Spirit.\textsuperscript{116} The purpose of salvation is to bring the Church, consisting of individual believers, into a living communion (\textit{koinonia}) with God.\textsuperscript{117} It has been an ancient formula that salvation is planned by the Father, executed by the Son, and applied to believers by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{118} It is through the reverse order that believers come to know and worship God. The Church knows God, worships God, and lives for God by/in the Spirit, through the Son, and to the glory of the Father.\textsuperscript{119} The existential work of the Holy Spirit in believers underlines all of salvation and worship. In fact, the

\textsuperscript{116} Oration 31.26, ibid., 492.
\textsuperscript{117} Beeley 177-178. John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 173-4. Thus believers collectively are called the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16), temple of God (2 Cor. 6:16), or temple of the Lord (Eph. 2:21).
\textsuperscript{118} In Oration 34.8, Gregory uses the ancient formula of calling the Father “\textit{aitioi},” the Son “\textit{dhmiourgoi},” and the Spirit “\textit{teleipoioi}” with respect to their work in salvation, NPNF 7:506.
The entire existence of the Church is predicated on the deity of the Holy Spirit since He makes the believers into the Temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19, 12:12-13; Eph. 4:4-6).

**Personhood of the Holy Spirit**

It is well known that the Cappadocian description of God as “one Being in three Persons” became the classic Trinitarian formulation. The use of being or essence (οὐσία) and person (ὑποστάσις or subsistence) became standard in Trinitarian theology after the Synod of Alexandria in A.D. 362. Some laud the Cappadocians for imposing the Aristotelian language of “essence” and “accident” into “being” and “person.” As a result, they are sometimes seen as Christian philosophers with a Neo-Platonic or Aristotelian presupposition. Although they are well-trained in Hellenistic philosophy, none of the Cappadocians view God as an abstract and supreme essence who unfolds from a unity into three distinctive Persons. This is especially true in Gregory Nazianzen’s Pneumatology. He does not speculate on the essence of the Holy Spirit, except that the Spirit is consubstantial (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father and the Son. Gregory always sees the Holy Spirit as a personal Being. This is why he rejects the idea that the Spirit is an activity, an emanation, or an attribute of God, because it is important to recognize the personhood and not merely the functions and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Besides, Christians simply cannot adore and

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120 For a summary of the patristic usage of “person” see John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1997), 27-49; and Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 243-306. Both see a person as a being in relation(s). Zizioulas thinks that the Cappadocians rejected the Greek concept of “concrete individuality” by grounding personhood in the biblical doctrine of the ontological Trinity. But LaCugna thinks that they merely borrowed the Greek term and Christianized it.  
121 LaCugna, 56-59.  
122 Sinclair B. Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 12, astutely observes that: The assertion that the Holy Spirit, once forgotten, is now forgotten no longer needs rephrasing. For while his work has been recognized, the Spirit himself remains to many Christians an anonymous, faceless aspect of the divine Being…Perhaps the facts of the situation would have been better stated by describing him as the unknown rather than the forgotten person of the Trinity.
worship an impersonal Spirit or a divine essence. Finally, the Holy Spirit cannot relate to (or
indwell in) the Church in a personal manner if He is not a personal Being.

Gregory stresses the personality of the Holy Spirit even when he speaks of the
Spirit in language such as infinity, eternity, and omnipotence. Buried in the swarm of
Scriptural testimonies is this little nugget:

For He is…the Spirit that knows all things, that teaches, that blows where and to what
extent He lists; that guides, talks, sends forth, separates, is angry or tempted.123

It is clear to Gregory that Scripture often speaks of the Spirit in personal
can be lied to (Acts 5:3), grieved by sinners (Isa. 63:10, Eph. 4:30), and angered (Isa. 63:10).
Thus, the Spirit acts in a personal and emotional way towards the Church.125 Jesus says that
whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven (Matt. 12:31, Mark 3:29,
Luke 12:10), and Gregory sees that “blasphemy is not the reckoning Him (the Spirit) God,
but the severing Him from the Godhead.”126 It is a dangerous and soul-destroying endeavor
to rank the Holy Spirit with creatures, to consider Him an impersonal essence or divine
attribute, or not to reckon Him as God.

Gregory also affirms with other Eastern Fathers that one should pray to the
Holy Spirit.127 Although Scripture does not explicitly command this, Gregory draws
inference from passages such as Rom. 8:26 and 1 Cor. 14:15. On closer look, Rom. 8:26
says the Spirit intercedes “for” us (“the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too

123 Oration 31.29, NPNF 7:494.
124 Oration 31.6, ibid., 483.
125 Although Scripture uses the masculine pronoun “he” (ἐγείρομαι) to describe the Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26,
16:8), the Spirit is also described as impersonal objects (a seal, an inheritance or so on), pointing to the reality
of the Church’s possession of the Spirit. In spite of this, it is reasonable to consider the Spirit’s personal
relationship with the Church as a reflection of His personal intra-Trinitarian relationship with the Father and the
Son.
126 Oration 34.11, ibid., 504.
127 Oration 31.12, ibid., 486; and Oration 41.8, ibid., 571-572.
deep for words.”). In 1 Cor. 14:15 Paul encourages the Corinthians to pray “with” the Spirit (προσευξομαι τῷ πνεύματι). Taken together, these texts do not suggest that Christians should pray to the Spirit. Nevertheless, Gregory conjectures that:

To adore or to pray to the Spirit seems to me to be simply Himself offering prayer or adoration to Himself. And what godly or learned man would disapprove of this, because in fact the adoration of One is the adoration of the Three, because of the equality of honor and deity between the Three?128

No matter how Gregory’s exegesis is viewed here, the point is that the Holy Spirit is God and thus should be the object of adoration and worship.129 But an important qualification must be made. Gregory often has the adoration of the three Persons (individually or collectively) in mind when he preaches and writes, but in all cases he maintains a proper balance in his assertion that Christian worship is due to one God. There is no hint of modalism or tritheism, since Gregory explicitly rejects them.130

By seeing how the Spirit works and relates to creatures (his ἐνεργεία or οἰκονομία131), it can be concluded that He relates to the Father and the Son in a personal way ad intra. In search of the right terms to describe the intra-Trinitarian relationships among the Father, Son, and Spirit, the Church Fathers return to Scripture as a guide. The Son is begotten from the Father (μονογενής, John 3:16), and the Spirit proceeds from the Father

128 Oration 31.12, ibid., 486. In addition, quoting John 4:24, Gregory maintains that “God is Spirit. And they that worship Him must worship in Spirit and in truth.” John Owen writes in Communion with God, abridged by R. J. K. Law (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 205:
It is impossible to worship any one person in the Godhead and not worship the Trinity. The divine nature in all its infinite excellence, dignity and majesty and as the origin and cause of all things is common to all three persons in the Godhead…So when we worship and pray to one person of the Trinity, we worship and pray to all three.
129 Oration 31.28, NPNF 7:493.
130 Oration 29.13, ibid., 462-463; Oration 30.1, ibid., 469; and Oration 31.5, ibid., 482-483.
131 Against any speculation that the Spirit merely represents a divine energy that derives from the Father and/or the Son, Gregory distinguishes between the Person of the Spirit (ὑποστάσεως) and the energetic works (ἐνεργεία) of the Spirit, see Oration 31.9, ibid., 484-485. Gregory also describes the works of the Spirit in the Church as economy (οἰκονομία).
Gregory finds biblical warrant for using “begotten” to describe the Son, and “procession” to describe the Holy Spirit. Hence:

The Father is the “Begetter” and the “Emitter;” without passion of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the “Begotten,” and the Holy Spirit the “Emission”…Let us not ever look on this generation as involuntary, like some natural overflow, hard to be retained, and by no means befitting our conception of deity. Therefore let us confine ourselves within our limits, and speak of the “Unbegotten” and the “Begotten” and that which proceeds from the Father, as somewhere God the Word Himself says.132

In this way, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit differ not in essence, but in their relationships (σχέσει) with one another.133 The Son uniquely relates to the Father as “begotten” (γεννησία). The Spirit uniquely relates to the Father as “procession” (ἐκπορευέται).134 Just as the Church confesses homoousios between the Son and the Father in their relationship of “begottenness,” Gregory recognizes that homoousios applies to the Spirit and the Father as well because they are one in essence through “procession.”135

Procession means that the Spirit is irreversibly coming from the Father. And though the Spirit and the Father have the same divine essence, the one proceeding is different from the one who sends. This does not mean that the Spirit is inferior to the Father. Earlier Fathers have given the illustration that the Spirit proceeds from the Father like the rays projecting from the sun, but Gregory consciously avoids this analogy.136

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132 Oration 29.2, ibid., 457.
134 Oration 31.6-7, 12, 30, NPNF 7:483-484, 486, 494. Gregory has John 14:26 in mind when he speaks about the procession of the Spirit from the Father as an indication of the Spirit’s oneness with the Father.
135 It is beyond the scope of this study to examine how Gregory Nazianzen derived the ontological relationship between the Father and the Spirit from the Spirit’s economic activity (John 15:16). Suffice to say, Gregory follows Irenaeus and Origen. To use Gregory’s image, he sees the Spirit as light, just as the Father and the Son are (Oration 31.3, ibid., 481-482; Oration 40.34, 41, ibid., 557-558, 562). The light ray that shines forth (opera Dei ad extra) originates from the intermingling light within the one great Light (opera Dei ad intra). The mission and work of the Spirit in the world thus reflects the intra-Trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Spirit, with the work and relationship between the Son and Father as a parallel.
136 Oration 31.32, ibid., 495.
points out that he tries to avoid any notion that God has a composite or impersonal nature like heat and light:

Lest we should give essence to the Father but deny personality to the others, and make them (Son and Spirit) only powers of God, existing in Him and not personal. For neither the ray nor the light is another sun, but they are only effulgentions from the sun, and qualities of His essence.\(^{137}\)

This indicates that the Holy Spirit is fully God and personal, like the Father and the Son.\(^{138}\) The three Persons share the same divine nature or essence, but they have different personalities (\(\lambda\delta\iota\sigma\tau\eta\varsigma\))\(^{139}\) denoted by “begotten” and “procession.”

As a result, Gregory’s use of the technical term “procession” is rather guarded. For example, he says:

The Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the Father, who, inasmuch as He proceeds from that source, is no creature; and inasmuch as He is not begotten is no Son; and inasmuch as He is between the unbegotten and the begotten is God.\(^{140}\)

Gregory does not explain the exact nature of procession, but the lack of precision in his language does not deter him. As a matter of fact, he honestly says that an imprecise term like “procession” and “begottenness” must be used to describe the Trinity,\(^{141}\) “since I must coin a word for the sake of clearness.”\(^{142}\) This approach is similar to

\(^{137}\) Ibid.

\(^{138}\) Oration 31.8, ibid., 484. To uphold the co-equal personhood of the Spirit with the Father and the Son, Gregory uses the metaphor of “light” and “sun” to describe all three Persons.

\(^{139}\) Oration 39.12, ibid., 534.

\(^{140}\) Oration, ibid., 484.

\(^{141}\) Oration 29.2, ibid., 457; and Oration 31.7, ibid., 483-484. Gregory is far from being sloppy and imprecise on theology. The earlier Fathers have already used “uncreated” (\(\alpha\gamma\epsilon\epsilon\nu\eta\tau\omicron\zeta\omicron\varsigma\)) to describe the Father, “begotten” (\(\gamma\epsilon\nu\eta\tau\omicron\zeta\omicron\varsigma\)) to describe the Son, and “procession” (\(\epsilon\kappa\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\rho\epsilon\omicron\nu\epsilon\tau\omicron\varsigma\omega\varsigma\)) to describe the Spirit. Gregory’s contribution is that he begins to use the same terms to define/denote the intra-Trinitarian relationships. Therefore, Gregory takes the descriptive terms and makes them denotative. Eventually, “ingenerate,” “filiation,” and “spiration” would become standard systematic textbook definition of the personal attributes of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. For example, see Herman Bavinck, The Doctrine of God, trans. William Hendriksen (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), 304-313.

\(^{142}\) Oration 39.12, NPNF 7:486. See also Oration 31.8, when Gregory ridicules the Eunomians who claim they can give a precise definition of the essence of God by saying “What then is ‘Procession?’ Do you tell me what is the ‘Unbegottenness’ of the Father, and I will explain to you the physiology of the generation of the Son and the procession of the Spirit, and we shall both of us be frenzy-stricken for prying into the mystery of God,”
Augustine, who rather describes God in an inadequate manner than remain in silence.\textsuperscript{143}

Besides “procession” (\textit{ekporeuetai}), Gregory also uses “sending” (\textit{pempw}) to describe the relationship between the Father and the Spirit, so that the Spirit is like the breath that comes from God’s mouth.\textsuperscript{144} Along with Basil and Gregory Nyssen, Gregory Nazianzen gives theological terms like “procession” (or spiration), “begottenness” (or filiation), and “paternity” a personal and relational overtone. The following quote gives a succinct summary of Gregory’s teaching of the Spirit’s procession as grounded in His unique personality \textit{ad intra}:

The Father is Father, and is “Unoriginate,” for He is of no one; the Son is Son, and is not “Unoriginate,” for He is of the Father…The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, coming forth from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by “Generation” but by “Procession” (since I must coin a word for the sake of clearness); for neither did the Father cease to be “Unbegotten” because of His begetting something, nor the Son to be begotten because He is of the “Unbegotten” (how could that be?), nor is the Spirit changed into Father or Son because He proceeds, or because He is God—though the ungodly do not believe it. For Personality is unchangeable.\textsuperscript{145}

In summary, Gregory sees a set of eternal, unique, and particular relationships with the Godhead: the Father begets the Son but not the Spirit, the Spirit proceeds from the Father and not vice versa.\textsuperscript{146} The procession of the Spirit from the Father is analogous to the Son being begotten from the Father; yet they are different, owing to the unique personalities

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{144} \textit{Oration 30.20}, NPNF 7:479-480; \textit{Oration 33.12}, ibid., 523; and \textit{Oration 40.2}, ibid., 540. Perhaps Gregory has these scriptural references in mind: Job 4:9, 37:10; Pss. 33:6, 104:29-30.
\item \textsuperscript{145} \textit{Oration 39.12}, ibid., 534.
\item \textsuperscript{146} Gregory nowhere teaches that the Spirit proceeds from the Son. However, the Spirit is “of the Son” (\textit{Oration 31.29}, ibid., 493-494; Rom. 8:9; 2 Cor. 3:17). The Spirit is also sent by the Son (\textit{Oration 41.11-12}, ibid., 573-574; John 16:7). Augustine and the Western Church would later teach that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son in a double procession from a single source.
\end{itemize}
of each Person. This is as far as Gregory is willing to go. Questions such as the source of procession (from the Father and/or the Son) and its deeper metaphysical meaning (what exactly is eternal procession and eternal generation) are alien to Gregory. Gregory finds it necessary and adequate to describe the intra-Trinitarian relationships, but not to define them with precision. It is enough to recognize that the three Persons are inseparable but distinct. Hence, God is three Persons existing in one single Godhead (τρεῖς ιδιότητας, θεοτητα μιᾶς). Gregory’s single-minded focus on the personhood of the Spirit has brought bountiful fruit in Trinitarian theology. This is especially helpful in correcting any tendency that makes the Holy Spirit an impersonal power or a bond of love coming out of the theology of the Western Church.

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147 Gregory is intentionally vague about the definition of “procession.” He calls it a mystery (Oration 31.7-8, ibid., 483-484) and inexpressible (Oration 42.18, ibid., 585-586). Yet he insists procession is a particular personal property that belongs to the Spirit alone (Oration 31.12, ibid., 486).
148 Oration 30.9, ibid., 473. Note especially how Gregory attributes three distinct titles (“unoriginate”, “unoriginately begotten”, and “unoriginately proceeding”) to the three Persons: “Now these are names common to the Godhead, but the proper name of the Unoriginate is ‘Father’, and that of the unoriginately begotten is ‘Son’, and that of the unbegottenly proceeding or going forth is the ‘Holy Spirit.’”
149 Oration 31.28, ibid., 493.
150 Both Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory Nyssen faced charges that they are tritheists. Gregory Nazianzen largely ignored this charge (Oration 21.13, ibid., 417; Oration 31.10, ibid., 485; Oration 33.16, ibid., 502-503; Oration 37.22, ibid., 517; and Oration 43.30, ibid., 604-605), and Gregory Nyssen tried to defend his position in Not Three Gods, NPNF 5:455-462. Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, the West has a robust view of the one essence of God, but is often accused of an impersonal Pneumatology. The East has a strong view of the personalities of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; yet the tendency of tritheism or modalism remains. Human finitude makes it virtually impossible to maintain a proper balance between the “One in Essence” and “Three in Persons.” The Cappadocians offer an excellent way to face this challenge: worship the one true God who is three Persons. According to them, knowledge in the intellectual realm is not the end, but worship and adoration of the triune God is the highest aspiration; and it is communion with God that gives the Church ultimate comfort and rest in doctrines and practice.
CHAPTER 5
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND DEIFICATION

With a firm reliance on Scripture, the orthodox tradition, and under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Gregory confesses that the Holy Spirit is the self-existing Creator who also guides and upholds all things.¹ But the most important aspect of the Spirit’s work is redemption of mankind, restoring sinners to a full communion with God. It has been acknowledged that while the reconciliating work of Christ is accomplished once-for-all at His death and resurrection, the Spirit’s work continues after Christ’s ascension and is ongoing. Another way to distinguish the economy of Christ and the Spirit is that the former is objective, whereas the latter is subjective.² The works of the Spirit in the inner-man include regeneration, sanctification, illumination, and enabling the worship of the triune God. While Basil made headway in teaching the Spirit’s subjective work in the believers, it is Gregory who systematizes the existential work of the Spirit by the often misunderstood concept of “deification” (θεωσία). Two aspects of theosis are examined below. First is the Spirit’s divinizing work in the Son of God, and second is the work of the Spirit in divinizing Christians as individual and the corporate Church as a whole.

¹ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 40.9, NPNF: 543-544.
² This is not to say that the exalted Christ does not work in the subjective psyche of Christians (“Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,” Eph. 3:17), or that the Holy Spirit does not work in a global and cosmic scale in providence. This objective-subjective dimension of the works of Christ and the Spirit has been a traditional scheme to distinguish the once-for-all work of Christ in the atonement and the ongoing work of the Spirit in salvation of individual believers.
Work of the Spirit in the Son of God

Gregory has written much on Christology. He not only affirms the pro-
Nicene teaching of the Son’s deity, but he articulates and affirms the two natures of Christ
during the Apollinarian controversy. Gregory and his contemporaries are often accused of
making little connection between Christology and Pneumatology. The most obvious reason
is that during the 4th century the Church was busy defending the deity of the Son and the
Spirit, focusing on the soteriological works of the Son and the parallel works of the Spirit in
believers. In so doing, there was a general tendency to make Pneumatology simply an
extension of Christology. Athanasius is a prime example of this propensity.

The Church has always taught that the incarnation of the Son of God is
necessary for salvation of mankind. Early theories of atonement include the ransom theory
and the recapitulation theory. From the mid-4th century on, the substitution theory began to
gain ground. Being a synthesizer and consolidator, Gregory teaches the substitutionary, the
ransom, and the recapitulation theories of the atonement. He further subsumes all these
theories under the rubric of deification, which is the overarching process in which God saves
men and brings them into participation of the divine life. Deification is made possible
through the incarnation and atonement of Jesus Christ, since “the humanity (of Jesus Christ)

3 Henry B. Swete even goes as far as saying that, “The question of His (the Holy Spirit) relation to the Son is
alien to St. Gregory Nazianzen’s purpose.” Quoted in NPNF 7:484. Though it is true that Gregory does not
explicitly teach the relationship between the Son and the Spirit, he does so implicitly. This section is an attempt
to examine Gregory’s thought relating the economic work of the Spirit in the Son to the ontological relationship
between them. The importance of the Spirit-Son relationship in Gregory’s Trinitarianism will be examined in
the next chapter (6B, 107-111).
4 “For us men and for our salvation,” in the Nicene Creed.
7 Ibid., 375-377, 382-384.
8 “As for my sake He was called a curse, who destroyed my curse; and sin, who took away the sin of the world;
and became a new Adam to take the place of the old, just so He makes my disobedience His own as head of the
whole body,” Oration 30.5, NPNF 7:471. See also Oration 30.4, 20, ibid., 470-471, 479-480.
9 Oration 39.13, ibid., 534-535.
10 Oration 38.6, ibid., 520; Oration 39.2, ibid., 529.
became God because it was united to God and became one person in order that I too might be made God, so far as He is made man.”\textsuperscript{11} To state this in another way, believers are deified because Jesus Christ is deified. Although the Church has previously affirmed the work of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation of Jesus through the Virgin Birth, Gregory pioneers the notion that the whole earthly life of Jesus is a result of deification through the work of the Spirit.

According to Christopher Beeley, Gregory is the first to formally coin the term \textit{qewσις}, which means “becoming divine.”\textsuperscript{12} Gregory believes that human beings are destined for growth and transformation to become like God in the beginning (Gen. 1:27). But the sin of Adam has brought ruin to all his progeny.\textsuperscript{13} Therefore, to save mankind from this predicament God sent His Son to take on human nature, in order to restore the fallen humanity. Gregory explains the necessity of the divine and human nature residing in one Person of Christ in this way:

\begin{quote}
In His own Person at once entire man and perfect God, for the sake of the entire sufferer, that He may bestow salvation on your whole being, having destroyed the whole condemnation of your sins.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

According to the Eastern Church, at the incarnation of Jesus Christ humanity has been deified,\textsuperscript{15} with the possibility to be restored to the original path towards knowledge, righteousness and holiness. Gregory famously says, “For that which he has not assumed has

\textsuperscript{11} Oration 29.19, ibid., 466. See also Oration 30.14, especially “he continues to wear the body which he assumed, until he makes me God by the power of his incarnation,” ibid., 477. Citing 2 Cor. 8:9, Gregory also says that, “he assumes the poverty of my flesh so that I may assume the richness of his divinity,” in Oration 38.13, ibid., 524. See also John Meyendorff, Byzantine Theology (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 160.
\textsuperscript{12} Christopher A. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 177. Gregory Nazianzen may be the first one to use \textit{theosis} as a technical term to describe salvation, but the concept of divinization has already been described by early Fathers. For example, Athanasius writes, “The very Word of God was made man that we might be made God (θεοποιηθῶμεν),” On the Incarnation of the Word, NPNF 4:54. Basil also alludes to this when he explains that the “highest of all (blessings) is being made God (θεων γενεσθαι),” On the Holy Spirit, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir Seminary Press, 1980), 23.
\textsuperscript{13} Oration 39.13, NPNF 7:534-535. See also Beeley, 117-118.
\textsuperscript{14} Oration 40.45, NPNF 7:564.
\textsuperscript{15} Meyendorff, 163.
not healed, but that which is united to his Godhead is also saved." Therefore, there is an exchange between Jesus Christ and the fallen humanity. On the one hand Christ bore the penalty of sin in His own body. On the other hand the divinity of Christ enables believers to escape sins by becoming divine.

One wonders how a firm believer in the ontological distinction between the Creator and creature can say that humanity can become God. Gregory is not teaching the abolition of human nature through deification. Nor is he teaching that the divine life swallows up humanity by fusion or composition. Rather, theosis is the goal of humanity and the eschatological fulfillment of human destiny. It is a process that begins and ends with God; or rather, the participation of men in the divine life of God. Theosis represents a new existential reality, as believers progressively put their sins to death, and increasingly live out the Gospel life as taught and exemplified by the Lord Jesus. Gregory often speaks of theosis and redemption interchangeably, with both leading to a renewal and re-creation of humanity towards heavenly glorification. Hence, men are not made ontologically divine. Gregory explains that men are renewed after a divinely ordained image:

A living creature trained, and then moved elsewhere; and, to complete the mystery, deified by its inclination to God. For to this, I think, tends that light of truth which we here possess but in measure, that we should both see and experience the splendor of God, which is worthy of Him who made us, and will remake us again after a loftier fashion.

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16 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Epistle 101, NPNF 7:650. Gregory further qualifies his statement as Christ being “in-humanized” and humanity “divinized, or however we should put it.” He is certainly true to his teaching on the use of language and rhetoric by inventing words in theology. Gregory’s rhetoric does not emphasize precision of theology and language, but rather the focus is on the power of God to save sinful human beings.
17 Oration 30.5, ibid., 471-472.
18 “God’s essence is that which belongs to God alone, and is proper to him,” in Oration 29.11, ibid., 461.
20 Beeley, 120.
21 This is clearly seen in Oration 7.23, in which Gregory exclaims that, “I must be buried with Christ, arise with Christ, be a joint heir with Christ, become a son of God, be called God himself,” NPNF 7:367.
22 Oration 30.4, ibid., 470-471.
23 Oration 38.11, ibid., 522-523.
Jesus Christ is not only the source and ultimate example of *theosis*, He is Himself divinized. Gregory teaches that the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit in uniting the two natures of Jesus Christ by *theosis*:

The Word of God Himself…conceived by the Virgin, who first in body and soul was purified by the Holy Spirit, He came forth then as God with that which He had assumed, one Person in two natures, flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former. O new commingling; O strange conjunction; the self-existent comes into being, the uncreated is created, that which cannot be contained is contained, by an intervention of an intelligent soul, mediating between the Deity and the corporeity of the flesh.24

The two natures of Christ are not equal, since the Son (or the *Logos*) is eternal but He only took on humanity (or flesh) in time. Gregory does not make any conjecture about the mechanism of this union, except that he attributes the deification of the human flesh to the work of the Holy Spirit. This work of the Spirit in Christ is perpetual, attested by the union of Jesus’ humanity to His divinity forever (Heb. 13:8). *Oration 31* contains Gregory’s rare teaching on the relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit:

Christ is born; the Spirit is his forerunner. He is baptized; the Spirit bears witness. He is tempted; the Spirit leads him up.25

In this passage Gregory considers the role of the Holy Spirit in the incarnation, baptism and temptation of Christ, as well as His miracles and ascension. It is obvious that the Holy Spirit is always with Christ and in Christ, and Christ is in the Spirit forever.26 For example, the Spirit effects the incarnation (Matt. 1:18, Luke 1:35),27 sends

24 *Oration 38.13*, ibid., 523-524. See Beeley 147ff for further explanation.
25 *Oration 31.29*, NPNF 7:493.
26 *Oration 30.21*, ibid., 480-481. On the “inseparable union” between Christ and the Holy Spirit, see also Basil, 16. The Cappadocians based their teachings on 1 Cor. 15:45 and 2 Cor. 3:17.
27 In *Oration 39.13*, Gregory audaciously claims that in Christ “the Spirit mingleth with the flesh,” NPNF 7:535. Since this paragraph immediately follows an exposition of the Trinity and especially of the Holy Spirit, it is safe to assume that Gregory is talking about the Holy Spirit in Christ that is “mingled” with humanity. This “mingling” does not destroy the two natures of Christ, since Jesus forever maintains a divine and spiritual nature as well as a human nature, see *Epistle 101*, ibid., 648-653.
Jesus to be tempted (Matt. 4:1, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1-2), empowers Jesus to work miracles (Matt. 12:28), and raises Jesus from the dead (1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Pet. 3:18). These passages suggest the priority of the Spirit in the Person and work of Christ. Gregory hints at this when he teaches that the Spirit “anoints” Jesus and “sends” Him to His messianic mission. But at the resurrection, a reversal took place so that the exalted Christ became the commissioner and giver of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7, Acts 2:33). Thus, the Holy Spirit is called “Spirit of the Lord” (Acts 5:9, 8:39; 2 Cor. 3:17) and “Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9, Phil. 1:19). Gregory infers from these passages that the Holy Spirit belongs to Jesus, and He is now sent to the Church (John 14:26, 15:26) as the agent who deifies believers.

There is hence a mutual and reciprocal economy between the Holy Spirit and the Son. The Spirit effects the incarnation, empowers the work of Christ, and is always with (or in) the Son. This is the prototypical mode of the Spirit working in Christ by theosis. On the other hand, the Son possesses the Spirit and sends Him to the Church. The Spirit is consubstantial with Christ, so that it is as if Christ Himself comes with all His saving benefits to the Church (John 14:28). Gregory understands that the saving work of the Spirit is based on His equal divine essence and power with Christ:

And therefore He came after Christ, that a Comforter should not be lacking unto us; but “another” Comforter, that you might acknowledge His co-equality. For this word “another” marks an Alter Ego, a name of equal Lordship, not of inequality. For another is not said, I know, of different kinds, but of things consubstantial.

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28 Sinclair B. Ferguson says the Spirit is the General who commissions Jesus to defeat Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4, Mark 1, Luke 4). Jesus was led (ἀνεγράμφθη, ἀγράμφθη) and thrown (ἐκβαλλόμενος) into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit. In The Holy Spirit (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 45-52.

29 Oration 30.21, NPNF 7:480-481; Oration 45.13, ibid., 634-635.

30 Oration 31.29, ibid., 493-494.

31 It is interesting to note that the Apostle John uses both πέμψω (“I will send,” John 14:26, 15:26) and δωσει (“I will give,” John 14:16) to describe the giving of the Holy Spirit by Jesus. On the other hand, the Father sent the Spirit by “procession” (ἐκπορευέται, John 15:26). The different words chosen to describe the giving of the Holy Spirit likely reflect the oneness in the will and work of the Father and the Son in giving the Church the Holy Spirit (John 17:21).

32 Oration 41.12 (alluding to John 14:16), ibid., 573.

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In this effect, the Son deifies believers by giving them the Holy Spirit, who works to deify them after the pattern that He deifies Jesus’ humanity. Two conclusions can be drawn. First, the Son and the Spirit engage in a mutually reinforcing work that reiterates the consubstantiality between them. In other words, the works of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit ad extra indicate their mutual and co-equal relationship ad intra. This important and often overlooked relationship between the Son and the Spirit will be further developed in the next chapter. Second, the Son is the archetype of deification by the Holy Spirit. The power of theosis exerted on Christ by the Spirit is the principle, which is actualized in the Church when the Spirit deifies believers. In other words, Christ is the paradigm of the new humanity, so that believers walk in the same walk Jesus walked (1 John 1:7, 2:6).

**Work of the Spirit in the Church through Deification of Believers**

Seeing that Jesus Christ is the ultimate goal and the perfection of theosis, Gregory exclaims that:

> I share one condition with the lower world, the other with God; one with the flesh, the other with the Spirit. I must be buried with Christ, arise with Christ, be joint heir with Christ, become the son of God, yea, God Himself!  

If the Spirit’s deification of the humanity of Christ is the archetypal theosis, deification of believers is the ectypal theosis. The constant presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church enables the economy of salvation, which includes renewal of the mind (illumination, knowledge of God), re-creation of the souls (disposition and affection towards God), reformation of lives (sanctification), and ultimately glorification and perfection of the

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33 Chapter 6B, 106-110.  
34 Meyendorff writes, “The Holy Spirit’s works reveal the Son, not himself. And it is through the Holy Spirit that the Logos became man, so it is also through that Holy Spirit life reaches men,” 170-171. So it is through theosis that believers are transformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29, 1 Cor. 15:49). This transformative work of the Spirit in the Church testifies His personhood, 180.  
35 *Oration* 7.23, NPNF 7:367.
saints. Only if the Holy Spirit is truly God can He perform this divine economy in Christ and in the Church.

It must be maintained that believers are not transformed into God by taking on the divine essence. Instead, *theosis* of believers means participation of the Holy Spirit or communion with God through the Spirit.

The life of Christ offers an analogy, or typology, to the *theosis* of man. The Spirit effectuates the incarnation by enabling Jesus to be born of the Virgin Mary. It is the same Spirit who effectuates the re-birth of believers (John 3:3-6, Titus 3:5). The Holy Spirit descends on Christ during His baptism, and the Spirit also baptizes believers in their conversion. Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit when He tells His disciples that knowledge of the Father is through the Son (Matt. 11:27, Luke 10:21-22). Knowledge of God in believers is also through the Son by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables Christ to perform miraculous work to authenticate the Scriptures. And the Spirit also dwells in the Church, empowering Christians to live according to God’s Word. Thus, the Holy Spirit uses the process of *theosis* to transform (2 Cor. 3:18, Phil. 3:21) and conform (Rom. 8:29, 12:2) believers to the life of Jesus Christ.

There are two serious problems in proposing that Jesus is deified. First, Gregory draws an analogy between deification of Christ’s flesh and deification of sinful believers. During the incarnation, the Holy Spirit made it possible for Christ to assume a

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37 In *Oration 31.29*, Gregory basically teaches that what the Spirit does, God does, NPNF 7:493-494. The work of deification permeates throughout this paragraph. See also Winslow, 130.
38 Meyendorff, 164.
39 *Oration 31.28*, NPNF 7:493.
40 “Baptism that consecrates me through the Spirit,” *Oration 40.43*, ibid., 563.
41 *Oration 40.9*, ibid., 572.
42 *Oration 40.11*, ibid., 573.
human nature, which is necessary to redeem the fallen humanity.\textsuperscript{44} But it should be made very clear that there is also a difference between Christ and sinful men. For Christ, \textit{theosis} is the Spirit’s work of uniting the divine nature and the human nature in one Person. But for fallen men, \textit{theosis} is the Spirit’s work to bring sinful human nature towards sinlessness and communion with God. These are two fundamentally different processes. Unfortunately, neither Gregory nor his contemporaries (Athanasius and Basil) made any distinction regarding this crucial difference. Some modern theologians continue this unfortunate trajectory, and they wrong-headedly teach that the \textit{Logos} assumed a “sinful flesh” in the incarnation\textsuperscript{45} since the Spirit deifies (purifies) the flesh of Christ just as He deifies humanity. This grave error needs to be strongly refuted.\textsuperscript{46}

Second, if the Son is already eternal and divine as the \textit{Logos}, how can He be divinized? For “in Him (Jesus Christ) all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Col. 1:19). Although Gregory only uses \textit{theosis} to describe the Spirit’s work in Jesus’ humanity, this also causes confusion regarding how the divine and human natures coexist in one Person. Karl Barth later makes the assertion that the humanity of Jesus is deified by \textit{enhypostasis}, and this view veers towards a Lutheran understanding of the ubiquitous flesh of Christ in the \textit{communicatio idiomatum}.\textsuperscript{47} If \textit{theosis} denotes the soteriological works of the Holy Spirit, it is obviously better to avoid using the same terms to describe the Spirit’s work in the life of Christ, who obviously needs no salvation.

\textsuperscript{44} Oration 40.29, ibid., 554-555.
\textsuperscript{46} For the sinlessness of Christ, see 2 Cor. 5:21, Heb. 4:15, 1 Pet. 2:24. Although Jesus was sent by the Father “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3), elsewhere Paul repeatedly calls Jesus “righteous,” “justified,” and “holy.” Thus, Paul’s emphasis in Rom. 8:3 is that Jesus has the “likeness” of sinful flesh, but sin excepted.
\textsuperscript{47} Torrance, \textit{Incarnation}, 223-225.
Excursus: Deification in 2 Peter 1:4

2 Pet. 1:4 is the *locus classicus* for the Eastern Orthodox doctrine of *theosis*. Referring to the enigmatic phrase “you may become partakers of the divine nature” (γενησθε θειας κοινωνια φυσεως), many commentators conclude that Peter 48 borrows a thoroughly Hellenistic concept and turns it into Christian language. 49 This excursus will (1) argue that Peter teaches a biblical doctrine of salvation in 2 Peter, and (2) examine how this relates to Gregory Nazianzen’s teaching of *theosis*.

Peter begins this epistle by making clear that all believers have an equal standing based on their faith in Christ. Specifically, the foundation is “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:1). Peter explains that this standing is a precious honor (ισοτιμιον) bestowed by God through faith, leading to grace, peace, and the knowledge of Jesus (1:1-2) who is God and Savior. This honorable standing of Christians is also based on the calling from Jesus (1:3), who calls them to His glory and excellence (1:3, δοξη και αρετη). In this prelude, Peter explains to Christians that they have been called by the Lord through knowledge of Him to eternal life, which is “life and godliness” (1:3, ζωην και ευσεβειαν). In short, the prerequisite for believers to enter eternal life is the divine calling and transformation that comes from Jesus Christ, appropriated by faith.

Bauckham suggests that Peter refers to the *Parousia* of the Lord here. So that eternal life is an eschatological hope that only materializes at the final resurrection. 50 However, the use of the perfect passive participle δεδωρημενος (“to grant,” 1:3) indicates that

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48 I take the position that Simon Peter, head of the twelve Apostles, wrote 1 and 2 Peter. Defense of this view can be found in Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 811-842. See also Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 139-150. Green also mentions Gregory Nazianzen’s use of 2 Peter, 143.
50 Ibid., 179-180, 193.
Jesus has already given Christians all things necessary for living a godly life. Hence, this eschatological blessing has already been given, and it will continue to bear fruit until perfection is given at the final consummation. Peter’s focus is that divine blessings and godliness are presently given to the Church through an experiential knowledge (ἐπιγνώσις, 1:3) of Jesus, so as to equip Christians to live godly lives in the midst of this evil age.

The resurrection of Christ guarantees the resurrection of Christians and a glorious life with God. Among the many precious promises of Christ the greatest promise is the Parousia (3:4, 9), with the concomitant renewal of the heavens and earth where righteousness dwells (3:13). This future blessing is communicated to the Church now by the fellowship (κοινωνία, sharing or partaking) of the divine nature (1:4). Just as Jesus’ divine power gives the Christians new “life in godliness” (1:3), this new “divine nature” is also given so that Christians may escape the “corruption” and “sinful desire” in this world (1:4). In other words, this divine nature is given to believers as a present eschatological gift.

An examination of 2 Pet. 1:3-4 will make clear the meaning of believers partaking of a “divine nature”:

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<th>A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Ως τα παντα ἡμιν – της θειας δυναμως αυτου – τα προς ζωη και ευσεβειαν δεδωρημενης</td>
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<td>δια της επιγνωσως – του καλεσαντος ήμας – ιδια δοξα και αρετη</td>
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<td>4 δια ων τα – τιμια και μεγιστα επαγγελματα – δεδωρηται [ἡμιν]51</td>
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<tr>
<td>ινα δια τουτων – γενησε θειας κοινωνι φυσιως – απεφυγοντες της ειν τω κοσμω ευ επιθυμια φθορας</td>
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Note the parallelism between verse 3 and 4. Verse 3 explains the objective work of Christ, giving life and godliness (ζωη και ευσεβειαν, 3C) to the Church; whereas

51 I have placed the pronoun ἡμιν at the end of the sentence for better balance and flow within a chiastic structure of verse 3-4.
verse 4 gives the subjective change in believers so that they may renounce ethical impurities (4C’). Peter explains that all things (τὰ πᾶντα, 3A) are derived from Christ’s own glory and virtues (ἀρετή, 3F) and given as great promises to Christians. These promises then give rise to the power for believers to live a morally pure life. It should be clear that believers do not have any innate power to achieve godliness, since it comes from the divine power of Christ.

This is supported by the parallel between θείας φύσεως (4B’) and θείας δυναμεως (3B), suggesting that the divine nature is related to Jesus Christ’s divine power and is derivative of it. Moreover, this is not a power infused into believers, but this power brings Christians into close fellowship (κοινωνία) with a divine nature. Peter immediately clarifies that it is exactly this new found nature that leads believers to escape moral corruption and sinful desires (ἐπιθυμία φθοράς, 4C’), the exact opposite of godliness (ἐυσεβία, 3C). Hence, sanctification of believers is directed by a divine initiative, and is fueled and maintained by a divine power.

This analysis demonstrates that Peter’s use of “divine nature” points towards Christ’s divine power and origin. The list of Christian virtues (τὴν ἀρετὴν, 1:5) from 1:5-9 is epexegetical, explaining to Christians that engaging in positive ethical practices is necessary to combat the negative ethics of the world (1:4). Therefore, “deification” refers to the power of Christ to pluck believers out of this sinful world (4C’; see also 2 Pet 2:20) by conforming

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52 It is not clear what specific promises Peter refers to. It may be God’s covenantal promise based on His hesed (Ps. 77:7-8, Rom. 9:4, Gal. 3:16, Heb. 8:6). It is tempting to speculate that the greatest promise is the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:15-16, Acts 2:33), since Peter was present during the Upper-room discourse and at Pentecost.

53 It is possible that by using the word “fellowship,” Peter sees the source of this divine power for godly living residing outside of believers. Yet this alien divine power has such intimacy with the believers, so that they exercise it with their subjective and personal psyche in concurrent with God.

54 R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St Jude* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), 267. Particularly insightful is Lenski’s observation that the divine nature and the sinful nature of the world are in antithesis.
them to His own image (3F). Ultimately, the righteousness given to the Church (1:1) will be the righteousness in which the Church dwells in the new heaven and new earth (2:13).

Elsewhere in Scripture Paul exhorts Christians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12-13). Instead of teaching a participation of the divine nature like Peter, Paul calls the Church to have fellowship with the Spirit (κοινωνία πνευματός, Phil. 2:1) and to share the mind of Christ (φρονεῖτε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Phil. 2:5). John also teaches that Christians love righteousness and hate evil because they have been born of God (1 John 3:4-10). Indeed it is the abiding of God’s seed (σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μενεῖ, 1 John 3:9) that prevents believers to continue in sin. Taking all these apostolic teachings together, Peter’s use of “divine nature” is equivalent to Paul’s teaching of believers union with Christ and in the Spirit, as well as John’s teaching of abiding in Christ. All these biblical terms describe salvation as a new nature and identity given by God to believers, so that they walk in godliness and shun evil.

Hence, in this passage Peter is not borrowing from pagan myths of man becoming God through knowledge (γνώσις). Rather, he is articulating a biblical doctrine of sanctification. By alluding that believers are endowed with a divine nature, Peter indicates that they have been made new. It should be obvious that believers participate in God’s nature by imitating His characters and attributes.55 Lenski helpfully notes that “this divine nature is not the substantia, but the qualitas; it is more than imitatio, it is rather the imago

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As a result, this divine nature gives Christians the necessary endowment to live godly lives the way that human beings were created for.

In addition, the indicative of “sharing a divine nature” drives the imperative to “flee from corruption and practice Christian virtues” (1:5-9). This is supported by Peter’s use of “for this reason” (καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο) in 1:5, so as to emphasize that this new godly nature enables Christians to pursue faith, virtues, and love. Expanding the scope to both Petrine Epistles, participation in the divine nature is one of the many benefits of salvation described by Peter. They include divine calling (2 Pet. 1:3, 10; 1 Pet. 1:15, 2:9, 3:9), regeneration (1 Pet. 1:3, 23), atonement (1 Pet. 1:18-19, 3:18) and justification (2 Pet. 1:1, 2:10). This de novo nature of believers not only enables them to be sanctified (2 Pet. 1:3-10, 3:14-15; 1 Pet. 1:13-21), but also to receive assurance of future glorification (2 Pet. 1:1). The overarching theme of salvation is the divine sovereignty of the triune God-Father, Son, and Spirit (1 Pet. 1:2). The Holy Spirit applies all these variegated benefits of salvation to the Church, so that believers become Christ-like in virtues and character, to the praise of God the Father.

Peter is a realist and not a perfectionist. He understands that having this new found nature does not mean that believers are holy and perfect in this life. Yet Peter urges the readers to confirm their faith by striving towards godliness. As Christ who calls the Church is holy, so the Church should also be holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16). The motivation for this devotion to holy living is the Christ-given grace (2 Pet. 1:1-3, 1 Pet. 1:13), along with the power of the Holy Spirit working in believers (1 Pet. 4:14). Peter warns them from idleness.

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56 Lenski, 266.
58 Moo, 43; G. Green, 186.
59 “We are promised a share in Jesus’ moral excellence during this life, and of His glory hereafter,” M. Green, 72.
and unfruitfulness, since Christian virtues come from divine qualities that are now residing and increasing in believers (ἵμων ὑπαρχοῦντα καὶ πλεόναζοντα, 2 Pet. 1:8). Moo sums up 2 Pet. 1:4-5 by saying that:

Through our union with Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we share in something of God’s own holy nature, separated from the corrupt world around us. And it is precisely for this reason (v5) that we called on to progress in holiness and godliness.⁶⁰

It should be briefly noted that when Peter warns believers of backsliding, he exhorts them to remember that they have been cleansed from former sins (2 Pet. 1:9). This likely alludes to the baptism of the believers.⁶¹ Not that baptism washes away actual sins, but it brings believers into union with the resurrected Christ through a cleansed conscience (1 Pet. 3:21).⁶² This means that believers are “being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18), so that they should stop sinning (1 Pet. 4:1-2). Baptism is the sign that believers are united to Christ by the Holy Spirit; thus, they have passed from death to life. This is yet another way to say that the believers have a “divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4).

In summary, Peter uses the expression “divine nature” to indicate that Christian life and practice are issued from divine power.⁶³ Understood in this way, “deification” has to do with moral transformation and not divinization of man.⁶⁴ It is a transformation into godlike character in the “eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:11). Peter’s teaching on “deification” is in full accord with the Pauline teaching of union with Christ in the two-age eschatology scheme, as well as the Johannine

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⁶⁰ Moo, 55.
⁶¹ M. Green thinks that 2 Pet. 1:4 speaks of a real union with Christ similar to 1 Pet. 1:23, Rom. 8:9, 1 John 5:1. And this union is actualized in a believer’s baptism, which is to enter into a totally new relationship with the triune God, 74. For the relationship between baptism and sharing of divine life, see also Bauckham, 180.
⁶² See also Heb. 9:13-14 and 10:19-25 for the relationship between the purification of conscience by the blood of Christ (indicative) and good works (imperative).
⁶³ G. Green, 182.
⁶⁴ Ibid., 186.
teaching of abiding in Christ in a semi-realized eschatology paradigm. It is unlikely that Peter borrows a pagan mystical concept, because he rejects myths and pagan teachings (2 Pet. 1:16). But it is certainly possible that Peter uses a phrase familiar to his contemporaries in order to convey scriptural truth. It is quite astonishing that Peter views Scripture as a more reliable testimony of God’s grace and truth than his own witness of the Lord’s transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16-19). The reason is that the Holy Spirit bears witness to God’s infallible truth by inspiration of the divine Word (2 Pet. 1:21). No wonder Peter also exhorts the believers to holy living because they have been re-born through God’s Word (1 Pet. 1:23).

The purpose of *theosis* derived from 2 Pet. 1:4 is to give the Church an imperative for godly living, since believers are made new in Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Eastern Orthodox teaching of deification began with this biblical foundation, but mystical and philosophical elements soon crept in to make *theosis* a subjective, mystical, and otherworldly encounter with God. It is unlikely that this is Gregory Nazianzen’s intention. This is not to propose that Gregory faithfully follows the biblical teaching of Peter, Paul, and John in teaching *theosis*. But given the lack of terminologies for calling, regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification in the patristic period, Gregory employs *theosis* to describe the transformation of believers by the Holy Spirit in conformity to Christ. In this manner, Gregory’s doctrine of deification is not far from the apostolic teaching of salvation.

Gregory’s doctrine of *theosis* describes the process by which the Holy Spirit brings Christians into a living and growing communion with the triune God; hence, *theosis* is a relational and personal term instead of an ontological term. This participation of divine life is the basis and motivation for believers to flee from evil and grow in holiness. Deification
understood in this way is devoid of mysticism, asceticism, and humanism. Even John Calvin consents that a right understanding of *theosis* means:

> We know how abject is the condition of our nature; that God, then, should make himself ours, so that all his things should in a manner become our things, the greatness of his grace cannot be sufficiently conceived by our minds...Let us then mark, that the end of the gospel is, to render us eventually conformable to God, and, if we may so speak, to deify us.\(^{65}\)

To avoid mingling the Creator-creature difference, a tendency to fall into mysticism, as well as the paradigmatic problems previously mentioned,\(^{66}\) it may be wise for the contemporary Church to refrain from using the term *theosis* to describe salvation. After all, there are better and more biblical terminologies to describe the believers’ union with Christ in the Holy Spirit.\(^{67}\) The remaining of this chapter returns to Gregory Nazianzen’s teaching on *theosis* as the means in which the Holy Spirit brings all the benefits of salvation.

**Baptism and Theosis**

Gregory adamantly insists that unless the Spirit is God, He cannot save (or deify) believers. In *Oration 31*, Gregory connects the Holy Spirit’s work of *theosis* and baptism in a believer:

> For if He is not to be worshipped, how can He deify me by baptism? But if He is to be worshipped, surely He is an object of adoration, and if an object of adoration He must be God; the one is linked to the other, a truly golden and saving chain. And indeed from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of him from whom it is derived.\(^{68}\)

The Holy Spirit brings a saving renewal that only God can effect. Gregory is clear that the Spirit is the instrumental cause and substance of baptism, since “baptism

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\(^{66}\) The “sinful flesh” of Christ and the dissimilarity between the Spirit’s work in Jesus and in believers, see 79-80.


\(^{68}\) *Oration 31.28*, NPNF 7:493.
consecrating me through the Spirit.” 69 And this salvation includes new birth, new creation, and illumination. All of these saving benefits are the result of baptism, since baptism signifies a new life in the Spirit.

Gregory recognizes three births for men: “namely, the natural birth, that of baptism, and that of the resurrection.” 70 Since the Original Sin has permeated mankind, by nature all men are dead in sin. 71 Sin and corruption of the flesh are not merely a judicial sentence, but an existential reality. But by the grace of God He has granted men the second and third birth, namely baptism and resurrection. Baptism is the turning point of a man’s life, since it signifies the eradication of the first birth that leads to death (Rom. 6:3-4, Col. 2:10-15). In addition, it paves the way towards the third birth that leads to heavenly perfection. Thus, baptism can be viewed as either an entry point into an eschatological life, or a turning point when one’s old life in sin is destroyed and a new life in God is inaugurated.

In the 4th century it is typical for professed believers to be subjected to catechetical teaching, so their faith is confirmed before baptism. In His earthly life Jesus showed how He identified with mankind by subjecting Himself to all these three births.

Gregory observes that:

He honored all these births in His own Person; the first, by that first and quickening inbreathing; 72 the second by His incarnation and the baptism where He Himself was baptized; and the third by the resurrection of which He was the firstfruit; condescending, as He became the firstborn among many brethren, so also to become the firstborn from the dead. 73

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69 Oration 40.43, ibid., 563.
70 Oration 40.2, ibid., 567.
71 Oration 2.23, ibid., 325-326; Oration 38.4, ibid., 519.
72 Gregory is certainly speaking of the Holy Spirit as the agent of the incarnation here by using the rhetorical device of “inbreathing.”
73 Oration 40.2, ibid., 540. For an interesting contemporary biblical study on the role of the Spirit in the three “births” of Jesus Christ, see James D. G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., 1970), 40-42. Dunn sees Christ’s incarnation as representation of the “old age”, whereas His baptism signifies the coming of the “new age” in which the ascension and out-pour of the Holy Spirit seal the sign of baptism.
Therefore, Christ is the guarantee that God has acted to bring faithful believers from the state of sin to the state of grace through baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the pledge that whoever is baptized in the triune name shall participate in God through theosis. In other words, baptism is more than a sacred rite, it is a “transformation and growth toward God.” In the Oration on Holy Baptism, Gregory exhorts his hearers:

Let us then be buried with Christ by baptism, that we may also rise with Him; let us descend with Him, that we may also be exalted with Him; let us ascend with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Beeley observes that Gregory has a threefold intertwining view of the Spirit’s role in theosis. First, He brings Christians into an existential participation in Christ, so a real transformation of life takes place and they follow Christ’s earthly life by a life-long pursuit of righteousness. Second, He makes Christ’s divinization real in believers. And third, the Spirit conveys the knowledge of God in Christ to believers by divine illumination.

Time and again, Gregory argues that only because the Holy Spirit is God can He deify believers. He says that, “And how is He (the Holy Spirit) not God…by whom you too are made God?” And again, “This Spirit shares with the Son in working both the Creation and the Resurrection…And He (the Holy Spirit) is the author of spiritual regeneration.” And he also solemnly warns that whoever severs the divinity, denying that the Spirit is God, will not receive the gift and grace of baptism. So the baptismal rite itself

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74 Beeley, 87.
75 Oration 40.9, NPNF 7:543-544.
76 Beeley, 177-178.
77 Oration 39.17, NPNF 7:538.
78 Oration 40.14, ibid., 546.
79 Oration 40.42., ibid., 562-563.
does not give regeneration, but it is a sure sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in the life and soul of believers. Salvation and baptism, in Gregory’s view, have a thoroughly theocentric meaning.

According to Gregory, baptism is the point of entry into a new life which is conforming to Christ (Rom. 8:29, 2 Pet. 1:4). This incorporation into the divine life is a two-way avenue. First, when a believer is baptized into Christ, his new life reflects the virtues, suffering, and service of Jesus, with an eschatological hope that he will be fully conformed to Christ’s deified humanity at the final resurrection (1 John 3:2). Gregory marvels at the baptismal union with Christ by saying that:

As we died in Adam, so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with Him and buried with Him and rising with Him. For I must undergo the beautiful conversion.

Secondly, the power of Christ and all His virtues flow to the believers.

Gregory is in line with orthodox teaching that Christ transforms the believers by the power of the Holy Spirit. He says:

For in Him (Christ) we live and move and have our being, according to the double power of that breathing into us; for we were all inspired by Him with breath, and as many of us as were capable of it, and in so far as we open the mouth of our mind, with God the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, theosis represents two sides of the same truth. One side describes the Holy Spirit uniting the believers to Christ (a God-ward direction); whereas the other side describes Christ’s ministry to believers through the Spirit (a man-ward direction).

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80 Winslow rejects the notion that Gregory teaches apotheosis, that after death one becomes a god, 133. Apotheosis originated from Greek mythology, so it would be a mistake to count Gregory Nazianzen as one of the mystics who advocate the transformation of humanity to God after death.

81 Oration 38.4, NPNF 7:519.

82 Oration 30.20, ibid., 480.
The deity of the Spirit and His consubstantiality safeguard a Creator-creature distinction between God and man.

Theosis and Christian Ethics

The actual Christian experience of theosis includes drastic changes in one’s intellect, knowledge, disposition, and ethics. When Gregory exhorts the faithful to be baptized in Orations 39 and 40, he focuses on illumination and purification as the twin benefits of baptism into the triune God. In fact, knowledge of God and the desire for godly practice are the two main foci of the soteriological work of the Spirit.

The Spirit works in a multi-dimensional fashion to bring believers towards the likeness of God. First, the Spirit gives Christian a saving knowledge of God. Second, one who is deified undergoes a moral purification through the Holy Spirit. Gregory does not advocate a priority of one over the other, since illumination and purification are mutually related. They are both gifts of the Spirit, and both of them reside in the life of the believers and require constant striving to perfect them. Therefore, Gregory explains:

Illumination is the splendor of souls, the conversion of the life, the question put to the Godward conscience (1 Pet. 3:21). It is the aid to our weakness, the renunciation of the flesh, the following of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Word, the improvement of the creature, the overwhelming of sin, the participation of light, the dissolution of darkness. It is the carriage to God, the dying with Christ, the perfecting of the mind, the bulwark of faith, the key of the kingdom of heaven, the change of life, the removal of slavery, the loosing of chains, the remodeling of the whole man. Why should I go into further detail? Illumination is the greatest and most magnificent of the gifts of God.  

Gregory, like many of his contemporaries, uses the word “illumination” (τὸ φωτισμός) in two ways. First it refers to the enlightening of the mind, so that Christians may know the truth of God from Scripture and nature. Second it echoes baptism (βάπτισμος). In

83 Oration 40.3, ibid., 541.
fact Gregory on several occasions equates illumination with baptismal renewal of one’s soul. While the concepts of φωτισμα and βαπτισμα are related, they must also be distinguished. In the writings of Gregory and the early Church Fathers, they often use “illumination” to describe the divine work of purification of the minds and souls of Christians, in which “baptism” is the initiatory and confirmatory rite of believers’ incorporation into God. Hence, illumination and baptism together confirm the work of the Holy Spirit in the inner-man. These two concepts are also related to purification, which is a moral transformation according to Scripture. Both are a result of theosis as discussed above. Beeley calls this “dialectic of purification and illumination.”

This can be summarized in the following scheme, based on Oration 31.28:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 2. Benefits of salvation in theosis through baptism.

When speaking about the benefits of theosis, Gregory encourages his hearers that God saves sinners:

By purifying to make us like God; so that when we have thus become like Himself, God may, to use a bold expression, hold converse with us as gods, being united to us,

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84 Beeley, 108-110.
85 Oration 39.20, NPNF 7:539; Oration 40.6, 39, ibid, 542, 561.
86 Beeley, 64, 109.
and that perhaps to the same extent as He already knows those who are known to Him. 87

The knowledge God imparts to Christians is a practical knowledge which brings the fear of the Lord (Prov. 1:7), which means keeping God’s commandments. 88 No wonder Gregory advocates that theological contemplation (θεωλογία) is both the stepping stone and the goal of Christian practice (πράξεις), 89 since both are undergirded by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a dynamic, fluid, and harmonious interplay between ethics and doctrine, as a theologian cannot have one without the other. 90

This marks an important distinction between Gregory Nazianzen’s theologization and Basil asceticism. Gregory’s emphasis veers towards knowledge and cultivation of a godly intellect, since it drives a biblically centered life. This is based on the priority of the Spirit’s regeneration in a Christian, which is the prerequisite to good works. On the contrary, Basil stresses the practice of godly virtues and purification as a priori to the indwelling of the Spirit in a believer. Hence, Basil and his followers focus more on asceticism. This is contrary to Gregory’s view of Christian virtues as a posteriori to the indwelling of the Spirit, because the Holy Spirit is the instrumental cause of theosis. 91

Seen in this way, purification is not strictly a human endeavor. Gregory teaches that baptism is a grace from God, 92 yet believers must work hard for their

87 Oration 38.7, NPNF 7:520.
88 Oration 39.8, ibid., 531-532.
89 Oration 20.12, cited by Beeley, 109.
90 This teaching of the interdependence of doctrine and ethics by Gregory can also be seen in contemporary teaching, see John M. Frame, “The qualification of the theologian” in The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1987), 319ff.
91 Oration 2.22, NPNF 7:325; Oration 31.4, 28, ibid, 482, 493.
92 In Oration 40.4 Gregory describes the divine gift of salvation with multiple titles:
   We call it, the Gift, the Grace, Baptism, Unction, Illumination, the Clothing of Immortality, the Laver of Regeneration, the Seal, and everything that is honorable. We call it the Gift, because it is given to us in return for nothing on our part; Grace, because it is conferred even on debtors; Baptism, because sin is buried with it in the water; Unction, as Priestly and Royal, for such were they who were anointed;
purification to preserve the gift of baptism.\textsuperscript{93} By the purification that comes from the Holy Spirit,\textsuperscript{94} the mind and life of a theologian are made fit to know\textsuperscript{95} and obey God. It is not the striving of a Christian, but it is by the principle established by Christ and through the Holy Spirit that a believer is enabled to work concurrently with the Spirit to live new lives. Therefore, Christian purification is a divine gift that requires human exertion,\textsuperscript{96} so there is no conflict between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. Christian ethics is grace-based and Spirit-filled.

\textbf{Summary of Theosis}

Winslow summarizes Gregory’s doctrine of \textit{theosis} in five points.\textsuperscript{97} (1) It describes the relationship between God and man as a spiritual union. This in no way abolishes the Creator-creature difference. (2) It is a dynamic term that describes the progress of sanctification, empowered by the Holy Spirit. (3) The two natures of Christ are the supreme paradigm of \textit{theosis}, in which the Spirit divinizes the human nature of Christ. Analogously, the Spirit divinizes believers through the same divine power. (4) It is a process which recapitulates Adam’s original condition. Since man was originally created to be in fellowship with God, \textit{theosis} is the mechanism that restores this original purpose of humanity after the Fall. But \textit{theosis} is not only restricted to perfecting an earthly life. The exalted Christ has inaugurated a new age when divinized men will march heavenward towards a

\begin{quote}
Illumination, because of its splendor; Clothing, because it hides our shame; the Laver, because it washes us; the Seal because it preserves us. Together they point to the simple fact that salvation is monergistic and by grace, ibid., 541. Moreover, in Gregory’s mind salvation or deification encompasses a wide range of saving benefits, from calling and regeneration to preservation.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} \textit{Oration} 40.34, ibid., 557-558. See also Beeley, 85.
\textsuperscript{94} Beeley, 109.
\textsuperscript{95} “The first approach to the knowledge of God, then, is to enter into the profound transformation that God requires and enables,” ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Oration} 39.8, NPNF 7:531-532; \textit{Oration} 40.34, ibid., 557-558. See also Beeley 84-85
\textsuperscript{97} Winslow, 183-189.
perfect eschaton. In one of Gregory first sermons to his father’s congregation he already had a vision of this heavenly life. He explains the importance of pastoral ministry in regard to theosis:

The scope of our art is to provide the soul with wings, to rescue it from the world and give it to God, and to watch over that which is in His image, if it abides, to take it by the hand, if it is in danger, or restore it, if ruined, to make Christ to dwell in the heart by the Spirit: and, in short, to deify, and bestow heavenly bliss upon, one who belongs to the heavenly host.⁹⁸

And finally, (5) Theosis involves the whole person. The Holy Spirit renews and recreates knowledge and ethics in men, so they participate in the Trinitarian life. This divine life is thoroughly spiritual, and is rooted in the ontological Trinity who created man as the imago Dei and to be conformed to the imago Christi.

Drawing connecting between Gregory’s doctrine of theosis to his Pneumatology, Beeley concludes that:

The fundamental basis of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, Gregory says, lies in the Christian life of deification, which begins in baptism. The Spirit is known to be God, and is therefore worshipped and adored, because it deifies Christians…This means that the Spirit’s divinity is recognize only from the Christian’s actual experience of the divine life, as it is conveyed through the Holy Spirit in the Church.⁹⁹

And this work of the Spirit is not separated from the work of Christ, since Gregory’s Christology and Pneumatology is intricately linked. Beeley adds that:

Through the particular work of the Spirit, God is the prime agent of the life of faith and the theological enterprise, just as he is the prime agent of creation, salvation, and eschatological consummation. The divinity of the Holy Spirit is therefore the ontic and epistemic basis of the entire doctrine of grace. The key difference between the soteriological dimension of Gregory’s Christology and that of his Pneumatology, then, is not between universal and particular salvation, but between the ideal or potential

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⁹⁸ Oration 2.22, NPNF 7:325.
⁹⁹ Beeley, 175.
salvation embodied in Christ and the actual salvation that the Holy Spirit realizes in the Christian life.¹⁰⁰

Ultimately, when believers are baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, they are baptized into one God. Gregory explains that baptism brings a close communion with the Trinity:

[Who is] of one substance and glory; in whom also baptism has its perfection, both nominally and really (you know who hast been initiated); being a denial of atheism and a confession of Godhead; and thus we are regenerated, acknowledging the unity in the essence and in the undivided worship, and the Trinity in the hypostases or Persons.¹⁰¹

Communion with God through theosis is the ultimate goal of human beings.¹⁰²

Therefore, theosis brings believers into a Trinitarian life which is fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging the deity of the Holy Spirit is not only a doctrinal necessity, but also vital to the salvation and life of the Church. Next chapter examines how Gregory’s Pneumatology completes his Trinitarian theology.

¹⁰⁰ Beeley, 180. I disagree with the view that the atonement offers an “ideal or potential salvation.” Christ actually accomplished salvation once-for-all at the cross. I would suggest distinguishing the salvific work of Christ and the Spirit as the “already” and “not-yet,” rather than “ideal” or “potential.”
¹⁰¹ Oration 42.16, NPNF 7:585.
¹⁰² Winslow, 186.
CHAPTER 6
THE HOLY SPIRIT AND TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

Gregory’s Pneumatology and Trinitarianism are interlocking and intertwined. If the Holy Spirit is not fully God, the Trinity collapses because the Spirit is intimately related to the Father and the Son. On the other hand, God has revealed Himself as three co-equal Persons, so that the Spirit must be confessed as God.

The figure below describes the Church’s teaching on the Trinity, against modalism and tritheism. The dashed line indicates the major contribution made by Gregory Nazianzen’s Pneumatology.

Figure 3. A scheme illustrating how Gregory’s Pneumatology completes the classical Trinitarian theology.
As seen in the previous chapter, the Person and works of the Holy Spirit, as described by Scripture and experienced by the Church, give definitive proof that He is God. And only if the Spirit is fully God can one maintain a holy Trinity.

Scholars differentiate Western and Eastern Trinitarian theology according to their emphases. The West traditionally focuses on God’s unity of essence; whereas the East stresses the three inseparable and co-equal Persons. Gerald Bray¹ contrasts the Western (or Augustinian) model of Trinity with the Eastern (or Cappadocian) model in this way:

![Western versus Eastern model of the intra-Trinitarian relationships.](image)

The most obvious difference between the West and East is the procession of the Holy Spirit. The West teaches a “double procession,” in which the Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). The East teaches that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, since the Spirit and the Son both derive their essence from the Father. A full blown East-West divide occurred in the Council at Toledo (A.D. 589) when the

The *filioque* clause was added to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed by the West. This ultimately led to the final schism in A.D. 1054. In the late 4th century, however, the major focus of the Church was to formulate a Trinitarian confession that holds together the biblical idea that the only one true God is also three Persons.

To refute the charge of tritheism, Basil and Gregory Nyssen reason that there is an order within the Godhead. The Father is ranked first, the Son the second, and the Holy Spirit third. This rank order does not indicate subordination, but it gives priority to the Father alone. There is a tendency to categorically put Gregory’s Pneumatology and Trinitarianism alongside the teaching of Basil and Gregory Nyssen and to label them as “Cappadocian” doctrines.

Patristic and Gregory scholars are generally divided into two camps. The first camp believes that Gregory, Basil, and Gregory Nyssen all uphold the monarchy of the Father, so that the Spirit (as well as the Son) derives His being from the Father. Hence, the Father is the “fount of divinity” and the first in rank. John Egan, Christopher Beeley, Gerald Bray, and John Zizioulas belong to this camp. The second camp, including Robert Letham, T. F. Torrance, and Douglas Kelly, thinks that Gregory goes above and beyond Basil and Gregory Nyssen by advocating a full mutual-indwelling of the Father-Son-Spirit. The three Persons are co-equal, all are without origin (but not without source). It is through *perichoresis* that the three Persons share one divine essence. The next two sections examine how Gregory fits his Pneumatology into a Trinitarian context.

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3 This does not mean that there is a temporal priority or superiority of honor and power of the Father over the Son and the Spirit. This intra-Trinitarian ranking is based on the biblical teaching that the Father sent the Son (John 6:44, 14:24, 17:25) and the Father and the Son sent the Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:7). See Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 19-27.
Monarchy of the Father or the Godhead?

Beeley, Egan, and Fulford all think that Gregory coalesces with Basil and Gregory Nyssen in promoting the monarchy of the Father. It is important to note that Basil and Gregory Nyssen are steadfast defenders of the co-equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, they also see a Trinitarian rank order *ad intra*, in which the Father is the source of the Son and the Spirit. Beeley\(^4\) cites *Oration 2.38*, in which Gregory Nazianzen says, “the rank of the Father as origin, inasmuch as He is the Father and Generator…and the Origin of the Godhead.”\(^5\) According to Beeley, Gregory’s referral to the Father as “Generator” and “Origin” is the proof that the Father is the source of the beings of the Son and the Spirit. Egan cites *Oration 31.14*, specifically “When we look at the Godhead, or the first cause, or the *monarchia*, that which we conceive is one,”\(^6\) as a proof that Gregory views the Father as the uniting principle of the Godhead.\(^7\) Egan further cites Norris’ commentary\(^8\) on *Oration 31.14* to support his thesis that Gregory teaches the Father’s causal superiority over the Son and the Spirit.\(^9\) Fulford\(^10\) finds the definitive proof in another place, in which Gregory writes, “Therefore, having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality, found its rest in Trinity.”\(^11\) Others such as Gerald Bray,\(^12\) John Zizioulas,\(^13\) Brian Daley\(^14\) and G. L.

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6 *Oration 31.14*, ibid., 487.
11 *Oration* 29.2, NPNF 7:458.
12 Bray, 159-164.
Prestige\textsuperscript{15} all agree that Gregory Nazianzen joins Basil and Gregory Nyssen in affirming that the Father is the divine monarch, from whom the Son and Spirit comes into Being eternally.

The passages cited above are examined below to see whether Gregory intends to teach a causal supremacy of the Father over the Son and the Holy Spirit.

To examine \textit{Oration 2.38} in context, Gregory says that:

It is necessary neither to be so devoted to the Father, as to rob Him of His Fatherhood, for whose Father would He be, if the Son were separated and estranged from Him, by being ranked with the creation…nor to be so devoted to Christ, as to neglect to preserve both His Sonship, and the rank of the Father as origin, inasmuch as He is the Father and Generator; for He would be the origin of petty and unworthy beings, or rather the term would be used in a petty and unworthy sense, if He were not the origin of Godhead and goodness, which are contemplated in the Son and the Spirit: the former being the Son and the Word, the latter the proceeding and indissoluble Spirit. For both the unity of the Godhead must be preserved, and the Trinity of Persons confessed, each with His own property.\textsuperscript{16}

In this passage, Gregory aims to differentiate and distinguish the Father from the Son while maintaining their co-equality. This is a tall order. On one hand, to see the Father as the “origin” and “generator” of the Son leads to denigration of the Son’s (and the Spirit’s) eternal existence and absolute divinity. This contributes to various forms of subordinationalism propagated by the Arians and Pneumatomachians. As a result they deny that the Son or the Spirit is fully divine. On the other hand, a one-sided devotion to the deity of the Son can lead to minimization of the Son’s (and the Spirit’s) uniqueness. After all, it was the Son of God who became incarnate and died on the cross, and it was the Spirit who was sent to the Church in God’s economy of redemption. As much as the Father, Son, and Spirit all participate in the works of creation and redemption, they play different but harmonious roles in planning, executing, and perfecting creation and redemption. Conflating the works of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit flattens out their unique personhood. This is

\textsuperscript{15} Prestige, 254.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Oration 2.38}, NPNF 7:330.
typical of modalism or Sabellianism. Gregory carefully guards against both of these extremes by insisting on the “unity of the Godhead” that is found in the three Persons, “each with His own property (ιδιοτητας).”

By attributing the “origin” to the Father, Gregory is referring to the generation of the Son. The Father is not the origin of the whole Godhead, since Gregory makes the important qualification that the Godhead is the Father “contemplated in the Son and Spirit.” Gregory’s explanation of the Spirit as “proceeding” and “indissoluble” further underlines his insistence of the co-equality of the three Persons in the Godhead. Contra Fulford, Gregory is not promoting the idea that the Father is the cause of the divinity of the Son and the Spirit. Instead, “generation” and “procession” are not causal or ontological terms but personal and relational terms denoting the relationships between the Father to the Son and the Father to the Spirit.

In Oration 31, Gregory makes his case for the monarchia of the Godhead:

To us there is one God, for the Godhead is one, and all that proceeds from Him is referred to one, though we believe in three Persons. For one is not more and another less God; nor is one before and another after; nor are they divided in will or parted in power; nor can you find here any of the qualities of divisible things; but the Godhead is, to speak concisely, undivided in separate Persons; and there is one mingling of light, as it were of three suns joined to each other. When then we look at the Godhead, or the first cause, or the monarchia, that which we conceive is one; but when we look at the Persons in whom the Godhead dwells, and at those who timelessly and with equal glory have their being from the first cause–there are three whom we worship.

Here Gregory labors to teach that all three Persons are equal in power and glory. And collectively they are referred to as “one God.” The whole Godhead is the “first cause or the monarchia” who is also “undivided in separation Persons.” There is no evidence that Gregory attributes the Father alone as the divine monarch. In fact, Gregory finds no

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17 Fulford, 176-179.
18 Oration 31.14, NPNF 7:487.
temporal or ontological priority of the Father over the Son or the Spirit; even though the Father begets the Son and sends the Spirit. Incidentally, there is a faint trace of the Western Trinitarianism since Gregory says that the three Persons “have their being from the first cause.” This may suggest that the first cause—the Godhead in one essence—unfolds into three distinct Persons. Nevertheless, elsewhere in Oration 31 Gregory also states that “each of these Persons possesses unity, not less with that which is united to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power,”19 and “in fact the adoration of One is the adoration of the Three, because of the equality of honor and deity between the Three.”20 It is important to notice that Gregory adamantly states that the Three and the One cannot be contemplated separately. This indicates that Gregory does not have an ontological priority of the substance of the Godhead over the three Persons.

An expanded citation of Oration 29.2 shows that Fulford misses the crux of Gregory’s argument against the monarchy of the Father. Gregory’s use of the “Monad-Dyad-Triad” expression is merely a rhetorical device to teach the historical-redemptive revelation of the Trinity.21 Hence, this does not mean that the Father ontologically derives the Son and then the Spirit. In fact, Gregory makes this important qualification:

But monarchy is that which we hold in honor. It is, however, a monarchy that is not limited to one Person, for it is possible for unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality; but one which is made of an equality of nature and a union of mind, and an identity of motion, and a convergence of its elements to unity—a thing which is impossible to the created nature—so that though numerically distinct there is no severance of essence. Therefore having from all eternity arrived by motion at Duality, found its rest in Trinity. This is what we mean by Father and Son and Holy Spirit. The Father is the begetter and the emitter; without passion of course, and without reference to time, and not in a corporeal manner. The Son is the begotten, and the Holy Spirit the emission.22

19 Oration 31.16, ibid., 488.
20 Oration 31.12, ibid., 486.
21 See also Oration 31.26, ibid., 492.
22 Oration 29.2, ibid., 457.
Gregory therefore explicitly teaches that *monarchia* is “not limited to one Person” – that is the Father. Elsewhere he also explicitly rejects any notion that the Father is ranked higher than the Son and the Spirit:

I should like to call the Father the greater, because from Him flows both the equality and the being of the equals, but I am afraid to use the word origin, lest I should make Him the origin of inferiors, and thus insult Him by precedencies of honor. For the lowering of those who are from Him is no glory to the Source... For in the consubstantial Persons there is nothing greater or less in point of substance.\(^{23}\)

In another place Gregory solemnly warns those who devised a rank order within the Godhead:

Rank no part of the Trinity with yourself, lest you fall away from the Trinity; cut not off from either the one and equally august nature; because if you overthrow any of the three you will have overthrown the whole. Better to take a meager view of the unity, than to venture on a complete impiety.\(^{24}\)

Basil and Gregory Nyssen try to avoid the accusation of tritheism by proposing that there is an *ad intra* rank order of the three Persons’ modes of being (τροπος ὑπαρξεως).\(^{25}\) But Gregory explicitly rejects any claim or suggestion that within the Godhead there is a causal ranking that hints of any superior-inferior relationships. He states his position plainly:

This I give you to share, and to defend all your life, the one Godhead and power, found in the three in unity, and comprising the three separately, not unequal, in substances or natures, neither increased nor diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite conjunction of three infinite ones, each God when considered in Himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Spirit; the three one God when contemplated together; each God because consubstantial; one God because of the *monarchia*.\(^{26}\)

\(^{23}\) *Oration 40.43*, ibid., 563. Although Gregory rejects a causal ranking of the Father over the Son and Spirit, he acknowledges that the Father is the “source” (αιτια) from whom the co-equal Son and Spirit flow. Gregory does not mention what this “source” means, except that he qualifies it by once again stressing the consubstantiality of the three Persons.

\(^{24}\) *Oration 31.12*, ibid., 486.


\(^{26}\) *Oration 40.41*, NPNF 7:562.
Three important points can be drawn from this passage. First, Gregory emphatically insists that the three Persons are equal in every respect. Of course he is not diminishing the individual personality of each Person, but Gregory opposes any suggestion that there is a greater Person within the Godhead. Second, it is easy to glance over Gregory’s significant proposition that “each (Person is) God when considered in Himself.” This goes beyond the Nicene teaching of consubstantiality, since the three Persons not only share the same divine essence, but each one possesses the fullness of divinity in Himself (autotheos).  

Third, Gregory claims that the uniting principle of the Godhead is homoousios and monarchia. This refutes any notion that out of an abstract divine substance first came the Father, who derived the Son and the Spirit by giving them divine beings. Therefore, there is no trace of ontological priority and ranking among the three Persons that make them unequal in divine attributes. The biblical word “God” refers to the one tri-personal Godhead, or it can describe each of the three co-equal Persons, eternally existing in an inseparable communion. The whole corpus of Gregory indicates that he sees the whole Godhead as a divine monarch, who is eternally three inseparable Persons.

Full equality of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

It is an exceedingly difficult task to hold on to the two poles of the doctrine of God. One pole is that God is one and only Lord and Savior (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 45:21, 46:9).

27 Even though each Person is fully God, yet “the three one God when contemplated together.” Gregory does not explore how the Father, Son, and Spirit can each be God in Himself yet all three together shares the same divine essence. Although Gregory stops at this apparent tension, later theologians would introduce the concept of perichoresis to account for this “one-in-threeness” within the Godhead. T. F. Torrance credits Gregory for pioneering God as a “transcendent communion.” See Thomas F. Torrance, The Christian Doctrine of God (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 102-104. Ironically, it shall be examined in the Excursus following this section that attributing to Gregory the teaching of perichoresis is a case of anachronism, 112-114.

28 However, the personalities (idiothj, or particularities) of each Person must also be acknowledged. This means that the Son and the Spirit are both from the Father, but not vice versa. Gregory steers away from the Basilean terms like “ranking” or “mode of being” to describe the intra-Trinitarian relationship. See Torrance, The Trinitarian Faith, 27, 134.
The other pole is that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. So how can one grasp the equality of the One and the Three? Gregory tries to ease this tension by using the Nicene *homoousios* terminology. To affirm the deity of the Holy Spirit, Gregory says that He is *homoousios* with the Godhead 29 and the Father. 30 But the majority of the time Gregory uses *homoousios* to describe the relationships among the three divine Persons. 31 For instance, he says that:

I am afraid to use the word “Origin.” lest I should make Him the origin of inferiors, thus insult Him by precedencies of honor. For the lowering of those who are from Him is no glory to the “Source.” Moreover, I look with suspicion at your insatiable desire, for fear you should take hold of this word “greater,” and divide the Nature, using the word “greater” in all senses, whereas it does not apply to the Nature, but only to “Origination.” For in the consubstantial Persons there is nothing greater or less in point of substance. I would honor the Son as Son before the Spirit, but baptism consecrating me through the Spirit does not allow of this. 32

Gregory is always careful to hold together the same divine essence (*ousia*) shared by three Persons with individual personalities (*idiothj*). Paul of Samosata first coined the term *homoousios* to propagate his error of dynamic monarchianism, the Nicene Fathers adopted it for orthodoxy, but finally Gregory rehabilitated it and makes it fit as a technical term for the doctrine of Trinity. 33

By using *homoousios* to describe the oneness of the divine Persons, at the same time Gregory alludes to the fact that the three Persons are distinct. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit share variegated intra-Trinitarian relationships that are fitting to their individual personalities. Therefore, Gregory makes a point of emphasizing that the Father

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29 *Oration 31.10*, NPNF 7:485.
30 *Oration 43.69*, ibid., 622.
31 *Oration 31.11*, 20, 29, ibid., 485-486, 489-490, 493-494; *Oration 40.41*, 43, ibid., 562, 563. Summing up the early patristic thought, Zizioulas concludes that God’s substance possesses a relational character as reflected by His tri-personality, 84. Hence God is a “Being in communion.”
32 *Oration 40.43*, NPNF 7:563.
holds special and distinct relationships to the Son and the Spirit by being the begetter and sender, respectively.34 When Gregory speaks of the Son and the Spirit coming from the Father, “from Him (the Father) flows both the equality and the being of the equals,”35 he is affirming the role of the Father as the sender of the other equally divine Persons. Gregory avoids any trace of subordination of the Son and the Spirit by qualifying that the Son and Spirit are consubstantial to the Father, so that “there is nothing greater or less in point of substance” among them.36 Hence, within this co-equality of divinity and honor there is an asymmetrical relationship between the Father and the Son, as well as between the Father and the Spirit. The Father begets the Son, but not vice versa. And the Father sends the Spirit, but not vice versa. In this case Gregory affirms that the economy of the Trinity reflect the intra-Trinitarian relationships. But the point of emphasis is on the Trinitarian relationships rather than on the order of rank. This relational aspect is the key to understanding the connection between opera Dei ad intra (ontology) and opera Dei ad extra (economy).

In the opera Dei ad intra, the Father differs from the Son and the Holy Spirit in that He is the sender of both. In addition, the Son and the Spirit differ from each other because generation is different from procession. What seems to be missing in Gregory’s “Trinitarian grammar” is a technical definition of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. But as noted in the last chapter, Gregory takes great pains to describe the co-equality and the mutual sending between the Son and the Spirit.37 It is therefore important to note that Gregory implicitly teaches a mutually reciprocal relationship between the Spirit and the

34 Oration 29.2, NPNF 7:457.
35 Oration 40.43, ibid., 563.
36 Ibid.
37 See chapter 5A, 72-78.
Son. 38 Gregory distinguishes the works of the Son and the Spirit ad extra because they are different Persons ad intra. To sum up the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit, Gregory says:

And therefore He came after Christ, that a Comforter should not be lacking unto us; but another Comforter, that you might acknowledge His co-equality. For this word another marks an Alter Ego, a name of equal Lordship, not of inequality. For another is not said, I know, of different kinds, but of things consubstantial. 39

Gregory’s choice of “Alter Ego” 40 and “Comforter” (παρακλητος or “Paraclete”) aptly denotes the co-equal and reciprocal relationship (“equal lordship” or συνδεσμοποιηματικ) between the Spirit and the Son. While the Son and the Spirit are sent from the Father in an asymmetric manner, the Son and the Spirit are symmetrical and reciprocal in their mutual sending. This reflects their co-equality ad intra, which is the basis of the intimate and mutually reciprocal relationship between the Son and the Spirit ad extra as Gregory expounds here and in Oration 31.29. 41 While scholars lament that the Cappadocians do not

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38 The relationship between the Spirit and the Son can be described as a “Pneumatologically conditioned Christology,” since the Spirit commissioned and empowered Jesus to carry out His earthly ministry. Conversely, it can also be described as a “Christologically conditioned Pneumatology,” because the exalted Christ poured out the Holy Spirit to constitute the Church as the spiritual Body of Christ. 

39 Oration 40.12, ibid., 545.

40 Gregory’s use of “Alter Ego” (αλλος ως εσω, loosely translated as “another-like-I”) is intriguing. The classical Greek usage of the term refers to the intimate bonds between two friends, who share the same thinking or reasoning (“twin-soul”); see B. A. G. Fuller, History of Greek Philosophy (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1932), 218-220. In Oration 43.20, Gregory describes his friendship with Basil as two friends having a common life, sharing the same doctrinal confession, and bonding in one soul, NPNF 7:599-600. In this panegyric to Basil, Gregory minimizes the differences between Basil and himself. He also exalts their oneness in mind and life, especially in their defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. This close platonic relationship, similar to that of David and Jonathan (1 Sam. 18:1-5), can be seen as an ectype to the archetypal fellowship between the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Son and the Spirit share a common source (the Father), the same soteriological mission, as well as equal honor and divine power. Hence they are mirror image in a mutually reciprocal manner of being each other’s “Alter Ego.” The biblical term “paraclete” aptly describes this consubstantial relationship between the Son and the Spirit without importing any philosophical presupposition like the “Alter Ego.”

41 Oration 31.29, ibid., 493-494.
make clear the relationship between the Son and the Spirit,\(^\text{42}\) the following Trinitarian model can be drawn from Gregory’s teaching:

![Diagram of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit]

Figure 5. A proposed model illustrating Gregory Nazianzen’s teaching of intra-Trinitarian relationships.

The Father relates to the Son by “begottenness” and the Spirit by “procession.” And the Son and the Spirit relate to each other by being “Paraclete” to each other. Moreover, the exalted Christ (1 John 2:1) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26) are both Paraclete to the Church, since their complementary soteriological works in the Church confirm their abiding presence in believers. In other words, the Son and the Spirit are the “two hands of God the Father,” working coordinately and harmoniously in bringing the Church into participation of the Trinitarian life.

These terms (begottenness, procession, Paraclete) are relational, not ontological; so that there is full equality among the three divine Persons within the Godhead.

\(^{42}\) Scholars often applaud the Western church for giving a precise definition of the Spirit also proceeding from the Son. But Scripture also depicts the Holy Spirit as the sender of Christ and commissioner of His earthly ministry.
Together they denote the intra-Trinitarian relationships (ad intra) that are the basis of God’s works of creation and redemption (ad extra).

Excursus: Perichoresis is not the Controlling Center of Gregory’s Trinitarianism

Both Torrance and Zizioulas applaud Gregory Nazianzen for constructing a Trinitarianism that emphasizes the co-equality of three Persons. In order to maintain the oneness of the Godhead, Torrance and Zizioulas both point to Gregory’s groundbreaking introduction of perichoresis, which refers to the reciprocal indwelling of the three divine Persons. Gregory coins the term perichoresis (περιχωροσων), but he refers to the mingling of the two natures of Christ in one Person. But scholars often refer to Oration 31.14 to show Gregory’s teaching of an inter-mingling of the three Persons within the one indivisible Godhead:

To us there is one God, for the Godhead is one, and all that proceeds from Him is referred to one, though we believe in three Persons. For one is not more and another less God; nor is one before and another after; nor are they divided in will or parted in power; nor can you find here any of the qualities of divisible things; but the Godhead is, to speak concisely, undivided in separate Persons; and there is one mingling of light, as it were of three suns joined to each other.

It is especially the description “one mingling of light” that prompts scholars to credit Gregory as the pioneer of the doctrine of perichoresis. Nevertheless, John Egan makes a convincing case that it was Pseudo-Cyril who first taught perichoresis by expounding Gregory’s Oration 31.14. It is not Gregory’s original intention to go beyond this imagery

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44 Oration 31.14, ibid., 487.
45 Egan, “Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis: Saint Gregory the Theologian, Oration 31.14.” The Greek Orthodox Theological Review 39 (1994): 83. Egan argues that it was pseudo-Cyril who first formulates the doctrine of perichoresis by exegeting Gregory’s Oration 31.14. Awad counters that in this passage Gregory only teaches that the three Persons do not have any degree of priority over or against one another. Gregory’s novel contribution is his imagery of mingling suns, in which he proposes that the Father, Son, and Spirit are not only same in substance but “together” one in substance, 193.
of intermingling suns (one light, three suns) to paint this indescribable picture of God’s one-in-threeness.

Even though perichoresis did not originate from Oration 31.14, Gregory elsewhere lays down the trajectory for later theologians to formulate this important doctrine. In Oration 40.41, Gregory marvels that “When I think of any one of the three I think of Him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me.”

Contemplation of any one Person, whether it is the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, causes Gregory to see God as a whole. Here Gregory does not teach the mutually enveloping and coinhering existence of three Persons. He is merely reaffirming his teaching that the three divine Persons are so intimately related, that it is impossible to think of them separately. The biblical revelation of the Father, Son, and Spirit demands believers to see God as who He is: a Trinity.

In Oration 31.16 Gregory teaches that, “each of these Persons possesses unity, not less with that which is united to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power.” This is the closest that he dabbles into perichoresis by suggesting that each Person possesses the whole of Godhead. Even though this may set up the background for perichoresis, it still does not represent the teaching of mutual and reciprocal indwelling of each divine Person in the other two. As in many other places, Gregory is simply upholding the tension of the unity of one God and His existence in three separate Persons (μιᾶ ουσίας τρειῶν ὑποστάσεων) without giving any concrete reason how it comes to be.

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46 Oration 40.41, NPNF 7:562.  
47 Egan, 86; Contra Torrance, Christian Doctrine of God, 102-103.  
48 Oration 31.16, NPNF 7:488.  
49 Regarding the inseparableness of the three Persons, Gregory maintains that this is “a thing which is impossible to the created nature,” Oration 29.2, ibid., 457. Although the human mind cannot grasp this deep mystery of God, it is clearly revealed by Scripture through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. To harmonize
homoousios, and not perichoresis, which forms the basis of Gregory’s Trinitarianism, Christology, and Pneumatology. The Church would wait until John of Damascus officially taught perichoresis (or circumincessio),\(^{50}\) which was later affirmed at the Council of Florence (A.D. 1445).

**Summary**

During a time of confusion and controversy regarding the Holy Spirit, Gregory clearly and firmly proclaims that the Spirit is God because this is a final and necessary step to complete the doctrine of Trinity. Orthodox pro-Nicene Fathers have taught the co-equality of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. But Gregory Nazianzen forcefully affirms the personality of the Holy Spirit and advances the relational aspect of the ontological and economical Trinity. Brian Daley states that “much of our traditional understanding of this Trinitarian life of God comes from Gregory himself,”\(^{51}\) and that Gregory gave the Church a “grammar” for Trinitarian theology and doctrine of God.\(^{52}\) T. F. Torrance praises Gregory for summarizing and synthesizing the Nicene orthodoxy and presenting a clear teaching on the “intrinsic Trinitarian Godhead.”\(^{53}\)

Gregory does not teach the Person and works of the Holy Spirit in isolation, since he always goes back to the unity and diversity of the Trinity as the basis and goal of Christian doctrines and worship. To Gregory, God is always one-in-three, without confusion, mixture, and separation. To give a few examples, Gregory says:

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\(^{51}\) Daley, 46.

\(^{52}\) Daley, 49.

\(^{53}\) Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 224. See also Kelly, 274. Hanson’s suggestion that Gregory’s Trinitarianism “displays no great originality” is therefore vastly overstated, in R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1988), 714.
But when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  

There is then one God in three, and these three are One, as we have said.

And when I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in individualities or hypostases, if any prefer so to call them, or persons, for we will not quarrel about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but one in respect of the substance—that is, the Godhead. For they are divided without division, if I may so say; and they are united in division. For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead is, or to speak more accurately, who are the Godhead.

No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one of the three I think of Him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking of escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.

This last quote is the one that “vastly delights” John Calvin, when he writes in the Institutes about the distinction but not the division of the three divine Persons. Calvin appears to continue the trajectory that was laid down by Gregory, when he describes the three Persons as distinguishable by their intra-Trinitarian relationships. This incommunicable quality of existence, or Calvin prefers to call “subsistence,” is what sets the Father, the Son, and the Spirit apart as well as binds them together.

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54 Oration 38.8, NPNF 7:521.
55 Oration 39.12, ibid., 534.
56 Oration 39.11, ibid., 533-534.
57 Oration 40.41, ibid., 562. This quote is preceded by Gregory’s exposition of the monarchy of Godhead in three co-equal Persons. We can see that theology is intimately linked to worship, as the confession of God as Father, Son, and Spirit leads to adoration of the Trinity.
59 In Institutes of the Christian Religion (I.8.6), John Calvin says: I shall proceed to speak of the thing itself: “Person,” therefore, I call a “subsistence” in God’s essence, which, while related to the others, is distinguished by an incommunicable quality...Now, of the three subsistences I say that each one, while related to the others, is distinguished by a special quality. This relation is here distinctly expressed: because where simple and indefinite mention is made of God, this name pertains no less to the Son and the Spirit than to the Father. Therefore, Calvin’s Trinitarianism stresses both the unity of God’s substance and the diversity of the three distinct yet inseparable Persons.
It is a daunting task to harmonize the teaching of God’s *μια ουσιά* with the *τρεις ὑποστάσεις*. The Nicene *homoousios* conveys the meaning that there are three distinct Persons in the Trinity with the same divine essence; hence it naturally ties the two poles together. Gregory’s Trinitarianism is bipolar and dialectical. He holds firmly that God is one and a unity. And yet this one God also reveals Himself as three distinct Persons who are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each of the three Persons is fully God, but together they are one God. How this is possible Gregory does not tell us, because he is simply faithful to God’s self-revelation. These two poles, the unity and diversity of the Godhead, can only be held together under the illumination of the Holy Spirit and the objective truth of Scripture. The Trinity is therefore not built upon metaphysical or arithmetic grounds, but on the Spirit and Word of God.

From this biblical foundation, Gregory Nazianzen broke new ground in the mid-4th century in his proclamation of the Holy Spirit’s deity and full equality with the Father and the Son. This represented the completion of the classical Trinitarian theology. Gregory’s immense contribution to the confessional statement “one substance, three Persons” can be represented as follows:

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60 Even though Prestige lauds Basil as the greatest contributor to the classic 4th-century Trinitarian theology, he correctly acknowledges Gregory Nazianzen as the one who corrects any misconception of an ontological rank order propagated by Basil and Gregory Nyssen. Therefore, Prestige notes that, “The fact that now comes to be emphasized is that the Father is manifested in the Son and in the Holy Spirit wholly and without any detraction. The three Persons no longer lead back to a unity that is primarily found in one Person; they are in a real sense one in themselves,” 233.
God’s essence and the consubstantial personal properties of the three Persons are represented as two sides of the same equation. In this case, the monarchy resides not just in the Father but in the whole Godhead.\textsuperscript{61} The Trinity is seen as one divine Light or three inseparable Lights. It is in this unresolved dualism that Christians finds life and joy in the adoration and worship of the Trinity.

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\textsuperscript{61} Torrance, \textit{Trinitarian Perspectives}, 73-74; Kelly, 570.
We have examined Gregory Nazianzen’s Pneumatology and how it completed the classical 4th-century Trinitarian theology. Gregory’s high Pneumatology—the Holy Spirit is fully God—gives finality to the early battles of the Trinity. The co-equality of the Father, Son, and Spirit as one God and each God in Himself triumphed over Arian (subordinationalistic) or Sabellian (modalistic) teachings. Despite the lack of an explicit creedal confession of the deity of the Holy Spirit at the Council of Constantinople, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed states unequivocally that the Holy Spirit is glorified and worshipped with the Father and the Son. But Gregory made it clear that to be faithful to God’s revelation it was necessary to take it a step further with an explicit confession of the Spirit’s deity, while also articulating the equality of the three Persons. By weaving the Spirit’s subjective and transformative work of the inner-man with His cosmic and corporate work in the Church, Gregory placed the Person and works of the Holy Spirit on par with those of the Son and the Father. As a result, a biblical Trinitarianism—featuring high Pneumatology and Christology—became the capstone of the patristic doctrine of God. In addition, these interrelating doctrines would become the foundation stones for further theological developments1 as the Church quickly adopted the notion that the Holy Spirit is God after the 4th century.

1 For example, the teaching of perichoresis by John of Damascus. Furthermore, John Damascene began his systematic theology (The Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, NPNF 9:430-456) with the knowledge of God and
To affirm that the Spirit is God, Gregory relied on: (1) scriptural authority, (2) the orthodox pro-Nicene tradition, and (3) the right use of reason under the Spirit’s illumination.\(^2\) While previous Fathers were hesitant to call the Spirit “God,” Gregory’s synthesis and consolidation of scriptural, traditional, and existential evidence proved to be successful in reaching the logical conclusion that the Holy Spirit is God. And this should be confessed openly by the Church in doctrine and worship.

The starting points of Gregory’s Pneumatology coincide with its endpoints, that is: (1) God can only be known by God; and (2) only God can save (deify) believers by bringing them into communion with all three Persons. State it in another way, only because the Spirit is God can He make known to Christians the reality of the Trinity, as well as make real to them the participation of eternal life. The Holy Spirit is essential and instrumental in all facets of Christian theology and ethics. From divine illumination, creation, salvation (\textit{theosis}), to worship and ethics, the Spirit bestows all saving benefits to the Church.

Although Gregory’s teaching on the intimate relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit has not been widely recognized, it played an important role in completing a Trinitarian theology which holds together the biblical revelation that God is one Being and three co-equal Persons. The Holy Spirit cannot be seen as an abstract divine essence, a divine influence, or even as a third ranked subordinated divine Person. His ontic and economic relationships with the Son of God demonstrate their inseparability as well as

\[\text{the Trinity, suggesting that he was influenced by the methodology and theology of Gregory Nazianzen. See the prologue by S. D. F. Salmond in John of Damascus, \textit{An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith}, NPNF 9:427-428.}\]

\(^2\) The comprehensiveness of the work of the Spirit in His self-testimony can be seen here in (1) His self-revelation in Scripture, (2) His rule in governing the Church, His Temple, and (3) His work of inner illumination of individual Christians.
personal uniqueness. This can be observed in the Son and the Spirit coming forth from the Father, the former by “begetting” and latter by “procession.” Hence the Spirit and the Son are mutually reciprocal and co-equal “Alter Egos,” or Paracletes. Overall, Gregory taught a Christological Pneumatology that leads to a biblical Trinitarianism that is thoroughly personal and relational.

The Holy Spirit relates to the Father and the Son in a distinct but inseparable manner. And from this ineffable threefold relationship the Church enjoys participation in the triune God. The Church is not deified or absorbed into divinity but is progressively conformed to the image of the Son while exhibiting diversity in spiritual blessings and gifts. Gregory reminded the Church that theologizing about God is not an abstract academic exercise. In fact, contemplation of the triune God inexplicably leads to worship, because believers who have a true knowledge of God are:

being molded and molding others by Holy Scripture…let us now enter upon theological questions, setting at the head thereof the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of whom we are to treat; that the Father may be well pleased, and the Son may help us, and the Holy Spirit may inspire us; or rather that one illumination may come upon us from the one God, one in diversity, diverse in unity, wherein is a marvel.4

Gregory’s teachings presuppose the truth and authority of God’s Word. They are also faithful to an orthodox tradition and under the Spirit’s illumination and guidance. Thus he serves as an example for the Church for deriving sound doctrines, emphasizing a faith seeking understanding and the priority of the Spirit and the Word. Gregory has shown the Church a glimpse of how constructing a biblical doctrine of God can bring a biblical knowledge of God, which drives worship and ethics. In summary, the objective truth of

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3 Therefore the Son and the Holy Spirit are homoousios. Gregory describes the relationship among the Father, the son, and the Spirit by their consubstantiality. So the three Persons are same in essence, but different in their peculiar personalities. Homoousios aptly affirms the co-equality of the three Persons as well as their distinctions.

God’s Word and Christ’s atonement coordinates with the subjective working of the Holy Spirit to bring Christians into a personal and perpetual communion with the triune God. The Spirit constitutes and fills the whole Christian life from beginning to last, so that it is increasingly conformed to the Son of God according to the good pleasure of the Father. In praise of the Holy Spirit, one can do no better than to echo Paul in Rom. 11:36:

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.
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