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The Doctrine of Theosis in the Thought of Gregory of Nazianzus

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MA, Durham University, 2014
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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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2019

Abstract

The Doctrine of Theosis in the Thought of Gregory of Nazianzus
Brendan A. Harris

This dissertation offers an in-depth investigation of Gregory's account of deification, which is also the first book-length study of Gregory's soteriology in forty years. This study considers Gregory's entire corpus in order to determine what Gregory means when he speaks of the human as being, in some sense, "divine", "a god", or "deified". I argue that Gregory believes that deification consists in union with God, and that this concept of deifying union serves to integrate various diverse soteriological themes into a coherent account of salvation. I pursue this thesis over six chapters. In chapter one I argue that Gregory believes that the angels are divine on account of their union with God. Chapter one sets up chapter two, in which I argue that human beings, while intended to share in the divine life of the angels, are created lesser than the angels because they are not divine from the moment of their creation. In chapter three I turn to Gregory's account of the deification of Christ's humanity, which comprises both the model and the basis for the deification of human beings in general. I argue that Christ's human is deified in virtue of its union with the divine Word and that Gregory appropriates Neo-Platonic models of "mixture"/"blending" in order to explain this union. I then turn in chapter four to Gregory's understanding of the Holy Spirit as the agent of deification. I argue that Gregory believes that the Spirit deifies those in whom the Spirit dwells by uniting them to God, a union he once again understands in terms of Neo-Platonic models of "mixture"/"blending". In chapter 5 I argue that Gregory understands the monastic life as providing the practices by means of which human beings can be deified in this life because it brings them to share in the life of the angels and enables their minds to ascent to union with the divine light. Finally, in chapter six I argue that the righteous will share in the heavenly life of the angels in the afterlife by being united to God.

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by the Atlantic Ocean. Rosie has been my constant source of inspiration, happiness, and joy from the moment I began down the road of postgraduate study. It goes without saying that words cannot express the appreciation I have for everything she has done along the way. I dedicate this dissertation to her.

Brendan Harris
Feast of St John Chrysostom, 2019

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Introduction

> Do you want to become a god – a god, a radiant attendant of the great God, dancing with the angels? Come, stretch out the wings of hawk-like desire, circling towards the heights. I shall purify your feathers, I shall elevate you with words. Like some well-winged bird, I shall send you forth into the aether.[1]

Introductory Remarks and Thesis:

The initial impetus for this study is to be found in a brief and under-explored scholarly suggestion regarding the origins and historical development of the doctrine of "theosis" or deification in early Christian thought.[2] In his 2009 study of Clement of Alexandria's Pneumatology, Bogdan Bucur, building upon the research of his former doctoral supervisor Alexander Golitzin, suggested that Jewish traditions regarding the transformation of the ascended human being into an angelomorphic being before the heavenly throne of God provides the background and content for early Christian accounts of theosis.[3] This suggestion aroused my

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[1] *Carm.2.1.88.65-75* (PG 37: 577).

[2] The title of this dissertation uses the English transliteration of the Greek term "theosis" in acknowledgement of Gregory's status as the inventor of this term (on Gregory's invention of the term "theosis", see Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 214 n.12, 340-341). This is just one of a variety of interrelated terms Gregory uses to speak about deification, as we will discuss later in this introduction. Throughout this dissertation I use the English word "deification" to refer generally to the concept Gregory expresses using this diverse collection of terms.

[3] Bogdan Bucur, *Angelomorphic Pneumatology: Clement of Alexandria and Other Early Christian Witnesses* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 49, where he states that "the interiorized ascent to heaven and transformation before the divine Face is what Christian tradition calls, in shorthand, θέωσις, 'deification.'" Bucur's observation builds on a series of studies by his former supervisor. See Alexander Golitzin, "The Temple of God and Throne of Glory: 'Pseudo-Macarius' and Purity of Heart, Together with Some Remarks on the Limitations and Usefulness of Scholarship" in H. Luckman and L. Kulzer (eds.) *Purity of Heart in Early Ascetic and Monastic Literature: Essays in Honour of Juana Raasch, O.S.B* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 107-129; "'Earthly Angels and Heavenly Men': The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Niketas Stethatos, and the Tradition of "Interiorized Apocalyptic" in Eastern Christian Ascetical and Mystical Literature" *DOP* 55 (2001), 125-154; "'The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form': Controversy over the Divine Body and Vision of Glory in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature," *SM* 44.1 (2002): 13–42; "The Vision of God and the Form of Glory: More Reflections on the Anthropomorphite Controversy of AD 399," in J. Behr, A. Louth and D.

curiosity, since I had already noticed that Gregory Nazianzen sometimes portrays redeemed humanity in angelomorphic terms, but was at this stage uncertain as to what role this notion played in his soteriology as a whole. As I investigated further it soon became apparent that the notion of union with God accounted for Gregory's depiction of deified humanity in angelomorphic terms. That is, for Gregory, both the angels and deified human beings are "divine" on account of their union with God. I also began to see that this notion of deifying union formed a rich seam which connected various different aspects of Gregory's soteriology which had at first appeared to me to be distinct and separate. Moreover, I came to recognise that while previous scholars had addressed upon several aspects of Gregory's soteriology, none had given sufficient attention to his notion of union with God as an organising theme of his thought.[4] It seemed to me, then, that a fresh study of Gregory's account of deification was in order.

This dissertation offers an in-depth investigation of Gregory's account of deification, which is also the first book-length study of Gregory's soteriology in forty years.[5] The goal of this

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Conomos (eds.) *Abba: The Tradition of Orthodoxy in the West: Festschrift for Bishop Kallistos (Ware) of Diokleia* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 273–97; "Recovering the 'Glory of Adam': 'Divine Light' Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Ascetical Literature of Fourth-Century Syro-Mesopotamia' in The *Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Postbiblical Judaism and Early Christianity* (2003) 275-308; "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man" in *ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonos Petras, Mount Athos* (Athens: Indiktos, 2003), 391-447; "Topos Theou: The Monastic Elder as Theologian and as Theology: An Appreciation of Archimandrite Aimilianos" in D. Conomos and G. Speake (eds.) *Mount Athos the Sacred Bridge: The Spirituality of the Holy Mountain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 202-242; "Heavenly Mysteries: Themes from Apocalyptic Literature in the Macarian Homilies and Selected Other Fourth Century Ascetical Writers" in R. Daly (ed.) *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 174-192. See also Alexander Golitzin and Andrei Orlov, "'Many Lamps Are Lightened from the One': Paradigms of the Transformational Vision In Macarian Homilies" *VC* 55.3 (2001), 281-98.

[4] For a summary of previous scholarship on Gregory's understanding of deification, see the "Examination of Scholarship" later in this introduction.

[5] The last book-length study of Gregory's soteriology was that of Donald Winslow, published in 1979; Donald Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*

study is to explain what Gregory means when he speaks of the human as being, in some sense, "divine", "a god", or "deified". I will argue Gregory believes that deification consists in union with God. Recognition of this facts allow us to identify the coherence of Gregory's complex and multifaceted approach to deification. For Gregory, deification involves both becoming like Christ and sharing in the life of the angels, since Christ and the angels both exemplify this deifying union in different ways. Christ is both the model and the basis for the union of God with humanity, while the angels also serve as models for human beings inasmuch as they are united to God - and so deified - from the moment of their creation. Human beings, then, come to be like Christ and to share in the life of the angels by being united to God. This comes about by means of the activity of the Spirit and through ascetic practice in this life, and reaches its full fruition in the full union of human beings with God in the afterlife. Before I set out how I will pursue this thesis, a brief examination of previous scholarship pertaining to Gregory's soteriology is in order.

Examination of Scholarship:

Previous studies of Gregory's soteriology can be grouped broadly into two categories: 1) those which specifically address Gregory's account of deification[6] and 2) those which offer

(Cambridge MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979). Winslow's study was preceded by that of Heinz Althaus, published in 1972; Heinz Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster: MBT, 1972). Prior to these two studies, Leo Stephan wrote an unpublished doctoral dissertation on the subject of Gregory's soteriology in 1938; L. Stephan, *Die Soteriologie des hl. Gregory von Nazianz* Diss. (Rome/Vienna, 1938). More recently, Francesco Trisoglio has published a selection of translations of Gregory with an accompanying introduction designed to exemplify Gregory's soteriological thought; Francesco Trisoglio, *La Salvezza in Gregorio di Nazianzo* (Borla, 2002). Unlike these studies, the present dissertation does not intend to provide a complete overview of Gregory of Nazianzus's soteriology, but rather to provide an in-depth study of one of the core themes of Gregory's soteriology: his understanding of deification.

[6] Earlier scholarship on Nazianzen's thought did not produce sustained reflection on his notion of deification with discussion limited to occasional remarks and brief comments. See, for instance, Ricardus Gottwald, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico* (Bratislava: H. Fleischmann, 1906), 47; Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche-sur Yon, 1925), 200-202. Notably, the studies of Gregory's spirituality by Jan Szymusiak and Thomas Spidlik, and

considerations of particular aspects of Gregory's soteriology without relating these to his understanding of deification as a whole. Both categories of scholarship suffer from limitations which prevent us from grasping Gregory's understanding of deification. First, previous studies of Gregory's account of deification have failed to consider important aspects of his soteriology which bear upon his notion of deification. Conversely, while scholarship in the latter category has identified several important dimensions of Gregory's soteriology, these have often not been explored in sufficient depth. Moreover, scholars have not established how these aspects of his soteriology fit within his understanding of salvation and deification as a whole. As a result of these limitations, scholarly understanding of Gregory's account of deification is incomplete and, at times, inaccurate.

Regarding scholarship which specifically addresses Gregory's account of deification, we may identify two main lines of interpretation. The first of these, which until recently served as the dominant scholarly view, regards Gregory's account of deification as a combination of biblical and Platonic concepts, identifying deification with of the Platonic concept of "assimilation to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ).[7] The second main line of interpretation, which has emerged in recent years, seeks

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the study of his soteriology by Heinz Althaus, do not give sustained attention to Gregory's understanding of deification; Jan Szymusiak *Elements de theologie de I'homme selon S. Gregoire de Nazianze* Diss (Rome, 1963); Thomas Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome: PISO, 1971); Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*. Donald Winslow provided the first sustained discussion of this theme. In his monograph on Gregory's soteriology, Winslow argued that deification plays a central role in Gregory's thought as a whole, although he postponed his discussion of what Gregory means by deification till the final chapter and conclusion of his book; Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 171-199. Since Winslow's study several articles have addressed the topic of deification in Gregory's thought, either considered on his own or along with the other Cappadocian fathers.

[7] This line of interpretation has a long pedigree. Already in 1908 Ricardus Gottwald suggested a Platonic background for Gregory's concept of deification, listing a handful of terminological parallels between Gregory's language for deification and the writings of Plato and Plotinus. It was Donald Winslow's 1979 study, however, which established the notion that Gregory's account of deification is a "conflation of biblical and Platonic views" as the standard

to identify Gregory's account of theosis with Stoic notions of "kinship towards God" (οἰκείωσις πρός θεον).[8] Yet neither of these lines of interpretation has robust textual support. Gregory never uses the phrase "ὁμοίωσις θεῷ".[9] Nor does he ever use the language of οἰκείωσις in conjunction with the language of deification.[10] Moreover, both of these lines of interpretation neglect

interpretation of this aspect of his thought. Until recently scholars largely followed Winslow's assessment, with Gerald Fitzpatrick, Norman Russell, Hilarion Alfeyev, and John McGuckin each providing similar interpretations. See Gottwald, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico*, 47; Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 173-174; Gerald Fitzpatrick, "St Gregory Nazianzen: Education for Salvation" *Patristic and Byzantine Review* 10.1–2 (1991): 47–55, 48; John McGuckin, "Deification in Greek Patristic Thought: The Cappadocian Fathers' Strategic Adaptation of a Tradition" in M. Christensen & J. Wittung (ed.). *Partakers of the Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Madison WI: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 95-114; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 222-223; Hilarion Alfeyev, *Le Chantre de la Lumiere: Introduction à la spiritualité de saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Cerf, 2006), 310-313. It is worth noting that each of these scholars offers a different perspective on the relationship between the 'biblical' and 'Platonic' elements of Gregory's account of deification. According to Fitzpatrick, Gregory's account of deification combines "the deifying power of the incarnation" with "the contemporary Hellenic concept of assimilation to God". Russell, on the other hand, downplays the importance of the incarnation, emphasising instead the "ethical" category of imitation and assimilation to God and "the soul's separation from the body and ascent to God in a Platonic manner". Alfeyev argues that Gregory's account of deification uses Greek philosophical vocabulary to express a biblical concept. In a similar vein, McGuckin argues that Gregory's use of Platonic concepts had a missionary purpose, namely, to present a more sophisticated account of the faith for an educated elite.

[8] Boris Maslov, "The Limits of Platonism: Gregory of Nazianzus and the Invention of theōsis' *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 52.3 (2012) 440–468, 441; Susanna Elm, "Priest and Prophet: Gregory of Nazianzus's Concept of Christian Leadership as Theosis" in B. Dignas, R. Parker, G. Stroumsa (eds.) *Priests and Prophets among Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 162-184; idem. "Oikeiōsis pros theon: Gregory of Nazianzus's Concept of Theōsis or Mediation between Individual and Community" in E. Rebillard and J. Ruepke (eds.) *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2014), 89-107.

[9] See Maslov, "Limits of Platonism", 447-448. Maslov observes that Gregory does use the term ὁμοίωσις on one occasion (*Or.6.14*) when speaking about the soul's "imitation of God and things divine" (ἡ Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων μίμησις).

[10] According to a lemma search conducted using TLG on 14/08/19, Gregory uses the noun οἰκείωσις 16 times. He never uses this term in conjunction with deification language. Moreover, Gregory only uses in only three times in his later writings dating from his time in Constantinople, and only one of these instances uses the term in the context of a discussion of the virtues. Since it is the writings dating from this period which contain the majority of his references to deification,

significant aspects of Gregory's soteriology which bear upon his understanding of deification, such as the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit.[11]

Some scholars have touched upon other important aspects of Gregory's soteriology without relating them to Gregory's understanding of deification as a whole. In an article published in 1991, Nonna Harrison provided a brief exploration of the Christological dimension of Gregory's soteriology, noting in particular the importance of Gregory's use of mixture language for his conception of the Christological union.[12] More recently, Andrew Hofer has also called attention to

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Gregory's failure to use the language of οἰκείωσις in this period counts against a reading which seeks to reduce his account of deification to the concept of "kinship towards God".

It does seem to be the case that the language of οἰκείωσις plays an important role in Gregory's ethics, at least in his early writings. However, Gregory speaks of the deification of the human as a reward for their virtuous activity on earth rather than equating this with the ethical life itself; see, for instance, *ep.178.11-12* (Gallay II: 68-69), where Gregory states that "to become a god" (θεὸν γενέσθαι) is "the prize of virtue" (ἀρετῆς ἆθλον). Whatever role the language of "kinship with God" has in Gregory's ethical theory, then, it does not seem that we can identify this with his concept of deification.

[11] While Winslow does consider these aspects of Gregory's soteriology in the course of his monograph, he omits them from his discussion of what Gregory means by deification in the final chapter and conclusion of this book; Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation* 171-199. Subsequent scholars have likewise failed to consider the breadth of Gregory's account of deification, with many focussing on just a couple of passages or aspects of his account, For instance, John McGuckin bases his discussion almost exclusively on Gregory's discussion of deification in *Or.21.1*, while Boris Maslov and Susanna Elm base their discussions entirely on Gregory's *Or.2* and *Or.4*; McGuckin, "Deification in Greek Patristic Thought"; Maslov, "Limits of Platonism"; Elm, "Priest and Prophet". Norman Russell explores a broader range of texts, but focuses on those in which Gregory uses deification terminology in conjunction with notions of ascent and ethical purification and downplays texts which refer to the deification of Christ's humanity and the deifying effects of the incarnation on believers; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 230-225.

[12] N.V. Harrison, 'Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology' *GOTR* 34 (1989) 11-18. Harrison's piece builds on the observations of Franz Portmann and Heinz Althaus, who likewise draw attention to the importance of Gregory's conception of the Christological union as a "mixture" for his soteriology as a whole; Franz Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia bei Gregor von Nazianz* (St Ottilien: Eos Verlag der Erzabtei, 1954), 64-65, 110-112; Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*, 131. See also Gregory Telepneff, "Theopaschite Language in the Soteriology of Saint Gregory the Theologian" *GOTR* 32 (1987), 403-416.

the soteriological significance of Gregory's use of mixture language to describe the incarnation.[13] These studies highlight an important aspect of Gregory's thought, but neither offers a sustained exploration of this theme. Moreover, while both scholars emphasise the importance of mixture language to this aspect of Gregory's thought, they disagree regarding the technical background and significance of this language.[14]

A number of scholars have also noted the importance of the Holy Spirit as the agent of deification for Gregory's thought.[15] However, since most of these pieces are concerned primarily with the function of the Spirit's soteriological activity within Gregory's pro-Nicene polemic, none of these provide a satisfactory account of the mechanism by which the Spirit performs its deifying activity. Nor has this aspect of Gregory's thought been related to his concept of deification as a whole.

Finally, in an article published in 1965, Jacques Rousse drew attention to the fact that Gregory frequently describes the eschatological state of the human being and the ascetic life in angelic terms.[16] On the basis of this observation Rousse suggested that, for Gregory, the ascetic life seeks assimilation to the angelic nature which will be fully achieved at the eschaton, when

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[13] Andrew Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).

[14] I provide a more extensive discussion of previous scholarly attempts to address this question in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

[15] Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 131; Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 154, 174-180; idem. 'The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen: The Pneumatology of Oration 31' in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 151-162; Philip Kariatlis, "'What then? Is the Spirit God? Certainly!': St Gregory's teaching on the Holy Spirit as the basis of the world's salvation" *Phronema* 26.2 (2011) 81-102; Gregory Hillis, 'Pneumatology and soteriology according to Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria' *SP* 67 (2013) 187-197; D.R. Mosley, 'The deifying Trinity: how Gregory Nazianzen and Augustine of Hippo use deification to explain the Trinity' *SP 72* (2014) 147-156.

[16] Jacques Rousse 'Les Anges et Leurs Ministre chez Gregoire de Nazianze' *MSR* 22 (1965) 133-152, 149-151.

human beings will join angels in the eternal praise and contemplation of God. Rousse's suggestion deserves more attention than it has received. While a handful of scholars have noted this aspect of Gregory's thought in passing,[17] none has offered a sustained investigation of this theme, nor has anyone explained its role in Gregory's understanding of deification.[18]

My dissertation will engage and build upon the scholarship outlined above by providing an in-depth account of Gregory's understanding of deification which takes into consideration aspects of his soteriology whose bearing on his notion of deification has been underappreciated. In contrast to previous scholarship, I do not identify Gregory's doctrine of deification with the Platonic

[17] For instance, Jan Szymusiak, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Nonna Harrison, and Francis Gautier each observe that Gregory views the ascetic life as anticipating the angelic state; Jan Szymusiak "Amour de la solitude et vie dans le monde à l'école de saint Grégoire de Nazianze" *La vie spirituelle* 114 (1966) 129-160, 145; Radford Ruether *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 147; N.V. Harrison "Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology", *JTS* 47.1 (1996), 38-68, 52; Francis Gautier, *La Retrait et le Sacerdoce chez Gregoire de Nazianze* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 34-35, 49-50. In addition to these, a couple of authors have noted that Gregory views the eschatological destiny of human beings in angelomorphic terms. For instance, Anne Richard remarks in passing on a couple of occasions that, for Gregory, the human being is called to be "à l'égale des anges"; and John McGuckin comments briefly that the themes of the final three poems of Gregory's *Poemata Arcana* "are related in Gregory's theological scheme by presenting the pattern of how human souls are posthumously metamorphized into angelic status by means of the deification process worked by Christ's incarnation and ascetic teachings"; Anne Richard *Cosmologie et Theologie chez Gregoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2003), 29: "l'homme est appelé a l'egale des ange"; c.f. 139, 148; John McGuckin "Gregory: the Rhetorician as Poet" in J. Børtnes and T. Hägg (eds.) *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum press, 2006), 171-212, 193 n.1. None of these scholars, however, provides an extended analysis of this theme, nor do they connect it specifically with Gregory's concept of deification.

[18] Indeed, the cursory nature of previous scholarship on angelomorphic depictions of human beings in Gregory's writings has resulted in a denigration of this aspect of Gregory's thought. Donald Winslow exemplifies this attitude when he argues that Gregory's use of angelomorphic language to describe the saved human being is "exaggeration", and that "none of these statements, by itself, allows us to conclude that Gregory equates either pre-lapsarian or redeemed humanity with angels"; Winslow *Dynamics of Salvation*, 49. The lack of sustained attention to this aspect of Gregory's thought in subsequent scholarship indicates that Winslow's judgement still holds sway.

concept of "assimilation to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ) or Stoic notions of "kinship towards God", but rather argue that Gregory understands deification to consist in union with God. A proper understanding of this notion of deifying union will allow us to integrate the above-mentioned aspects of Gregory's soteriology into a unified account of his thought.

Methodology:

This study is wide-ranging, in that it covers several significant aspects of Gregory's soteriology and takes into account his entire corpus, but it does not aim to be comprehensive. I will not consider every aspect of Gregory's soteriology. Rather, I intend to focus on those aspects of his soteriology which are most integral to his doctrine of deification and which reveal his overall conception of this doctrine.

In determining which aspects of Gregory's soteriology to consider, this study takes Gregory's use of terms conveying the idea of deification as its starting point. Gregory uses a range of terms to speak of the deification of the human being.[19] His preferred terms are the noun θέωσις (deification)[20] and its verbal form θεόω (to deify);[21] the phrase γίγνομαι θεόν (to become a god);[22] and θεοποιέω/θεόν ποιέω (to be made a god),[23] along with its adjectival form θεοποιὸς (deifying).[24]

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[19] For a brief analysis of Gregory's deification terminology, see Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 214-215.

[20] Ten times: *Or.4.71*; *Or.4.124*; *Or.11.5*; *Or.17.9*; *Or.21.2*; *Or.23.12*; *Or.25.2*; *Or.25.16*; *Or.39.16*; *Carm.1.2.34.61*.

[21] Twenty times: *Or.4.59*; *Or.31.28*; *Or.31.29*; *Or.34.12*; *Or.38.11*; *Or.38.13*; *Or.40.42*; *Or.41.9*; *Or.45.9*; *Ep.6.3*; *Ep.101.21*; *Ep.101.46*; *Carm.1.1.10.61*; *Carm.1.2.2.960*; *Carm.1.2.10.630*; *Carm.1.2.17.2*; *Carm.1.2.33.934*; *Carm.2.1.11.165*; *Carm.2.1.34.84*; *Carm.2.2.7.165.*

[22] Seventeen times: *Or.1.5*; *Or.7.22*; *Or.7.23*; *Or.14.23*; *Or.14.26*; *Or.17.9*; *Or.25.2*; *Or.29.19*; *Or.30.3*; *Or.30.21*; *Or.36.11*; *Or.39.17*; *Or.40.45*; *Or.42.17*; *Ep.178.11*; *Carm.1.1.2.48*; *Carm.2.1.88.65.*

[23] Seven times: *Or.2.22*; *Or.2.73*; *Or.28.13*; *Or.28.14*; *Or.30.14*; *Or.30.21*; *Or.31.4.*

[24] Twice: *Or.3.1*; *Carm.2.2.7.69.*

Occasionally he uses the phrases θεόν τεύχω (to form into a god)[25] or θεόν τελέω (to perfect as a god).[26] While Gregory uses this terminology in a variety of contexts, certain uses are particularly prevalent, and so require addressing in this study.[27] This study will also include a consideration of aspects of Gregory's soteriology in which he only occasionally uses the language of deification, but which play an integral role in his soteriology and understanding of deification as a whole, such as his account of the afterlife. At times, Gregory uses the language of deification is ways which do not bear significantly on his soteriology as a whole.[28] These uses fall outside the range of this study.

I will proceed thematically rather than chronologically, treating Gregory's thought as largely coherent, while also acknowledging ambiguities, contradictions, and developments in his thought where they occur. This approach suits Gregory – and this project – for two reasons. First, Gregory will often allude to a concept in one text which he develops at greater length elsewhere. Alternatively, Gregory will develop a concept over multiple texts written at different times, or else he will use technical terms and phrases whose meaning can only be properly determined by considering its usage throughout his corpus. A thematic approach which treats Gregory's thought as a coherent whole allows these different passages to illuminate each other and reveal the broader conceptual framework which Gregory at times only alludes to.

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[25] Twice: *Carm.1.1.3.4: Carm.1.1.9.85.*

[26] Twice: *Carm.1.2.14.92*; Carm.2.1.1.16.

[27] For instance, Gregory is prolific in his use of deification terminology to speak of the deification of Christ's humanity, the Spirit's salvific activity, and the salvific effects of the monastic life, as we shall see in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of this dissertation.

[28] For instance, Gregory sometimes uses the language of deification ironically, such as when he speaks of the false deification of pagan gods (see *Or.4.59*; *Or.28.13*; *Or.28.14*; *Carm.1.2.10.862*) or as in one instance where he jokes that the glutton "deifies" (θεοποιεῖν) their stomach (*Or.40.39* [SC 358: 288]).

Second, as several scholars have observed, Gregory extensively edited his writings in his retirement years; the versions of his works which have come down to us are the fruit of this editing process from Gregory's mature years.[29] While this does not mean that Gregory's writings should be read outside the context of their initial composition, it does mean that Gregory approved them for publication, and possibly altered them to fit his mature thought. Again, this not meant to preclude the possibility of development in Gregory's thought. Rather, Gregory's later editing of his works simply serves to highlight the difficulties of basing one's analysis on a chronological approach.[30] A thematic approach, on the other hand, recognises that these texts do indeed comprise a unified whole of sorts, even if they also at times bear witness to developments in Gregory's thought.

Chapter Summary and Outline:

It remains for me to set out the stages by which my argument in this dissertation will progress. This dissertation begins with a consideration of Gregory's angelology in chapter 1. The angels play a significant role in Gregory's soteriology, since they have the sort of life human beings

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[29] See Neil McLynn, "The Voice of Conscience: Gregory Nazianzen in Retirement" *Vescovi e pastori in epoca Teodosiana* (Rome: Institutum Patristicum Augustinianum, 1997), 229-308; John McGuckin, "Autobiography as Apologia in St Gregory Nazianzen" *SP* 37 (2001), 160-177; idem. *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Bibliography* (Crestwood, NY: SVS, 2006), 1 n. 2, 385; idem. "Gregory: the Rhetorician as Poet"; Caroline Macé "À propos d'une édition récente de Grégoire de Nazianze," *L'Antiquité Classique* 77 (2008), 243–256; Bradley Storin, *The Letters of Gregory of Nazianzus: Discourse and Community in Late Antique Epistolary Culture* PhD diss. (Indiana University, 2012), 15.

[30] Ryan Clevenger summarises the difficulties of such an approach succinctly: "It is difficult to pick out a particular passage as being "original" as opposed to part of the later recension. Whatever edition a passage belongs to, it has Gregory's final editorial stamp of approval and so should be understood as being consistent with Gregory final mature thought, unless an actual contradiction is present."

Ryan Clevenger. *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language* PhD Diss. (Wheaton, 2017), 103.

are meant to have and so exemplify what is possible for human beings. In this chapter I show that Gregory views the angels as "divine" because they are united to God's "light" or "divinity". By contrast, chapter 2 shows that human beings, although intended to share in the life of the angels, are not created divine like the angels since the conditions of the body inhibit their union with the divine light.

The deification of human beings is made possible by the deification of Christ's humanity, which is the subject of the third chapter of this dissertation. Christ both exemplifies what is possible for human beings and makes this possible, since he is the union of God with humanity *par excellence*. An examination of Gregory's conception of the deification of Christ's humanity reveals that he conceives of this union in terms of Neo-Platonic models of "mixture" as the interpenetration of material or immaterial natures by an immaterial nature.

While Christ makes this deifying union possible for human beings, it is the Holy Spirit who effects this union in those who come after Christ. Therefore, in the fourth chapter we turn to Gregory's conception of the Holy Spirit as the agent of deification. There I show that Gregory views the Spirit as deifying human beings by indwelling them and thereby uniting them to God by means of mixture.

In the fifth chapter I turn to Gregory's account of the monastic life. Gregory considers monasticism as providing the practices by means of which human beings attain this deifying union in this life. For Gregory, the monastic life deifies human beings because it purifies its practitioners, enabling them to escape the conditions of the body and thereby share in the life of the angels and attain union with the divine light.

Chapter 6 concludes this study with an investigation of Gregory's conception the deified state of the righteous dead at the eschaton. I show that Gregory believes that the righteous dead will ascend to heaven and share in the life of angels by being fully mixed with the divine light.

1

Theosis and the Angels

As I mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the angels play a significant role in Gregory's soteriology because they have the sort of life human beings are meant to have and so exemplify what is possible for human beings. I will show that the angelic life serves as a model for human deification later in this dissertation. Before I do so, however, it will be helpful to investigate Gregory's conception of the heavenly life of the angels. This examination will cast light on Gregory's understanding of the deification of human beings by illustrating the sort of divine life to which human beings are to aspire.

Gregory's corpus contains several extensive discussions of the nature and ministry of the angels.[31] These passages evince a sophisticated angelology.[32] Rather than providing a comprehensive study of this angelology, this chapter aims to highlight those aspects of Gregory's angelology pertinent to this understanding of deification. In this chapter I will argue that Gregory considers the angels to be "divine" because they are united to God. The first part of this chapter demonstrates this contention. The second part explores its implications.

1.1 THE "DIVINITY" OF THE ANGELS AND UNION WITH GOD

[31] Principle among these are the following: *Or.6.12-13; Or.28.31; Or.38.9; Or.40.5; Or.45.5; Carm.1.1.4.75-101; Carm.1.1.7; Carm.1.2.1.30-55*.

[32] Jacques Rousse has outlined the broad contours of Gregory's angelology in what remains the most comprehensive study of this aspect of his thought to date; Jacques Rousse "Les Anges et Leurs Ministre chez Gregoire de Nazianze" *MSR* 22 (1965) 133-152. More recently, Anne Richard's study of Gregory's cosmology and theology includes discussion of several themes pertaining to Gregory's angelology; see Anne Richard *Cosmologie et Theologie chez Gregoire de Nazianze*, (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2003), 143-164. These studies are useful; however, much work remains to be done on this topic.

In this part of this chapter I will investigate Gregory's claim that the angels are, in some sense, "divine" (θεῖος). This investigation will reveal that Gregory considers the angels to be divine because they are recipients of God's "light" and "divinity". Furthermore, I will demonstrate that Gregory understands the angels as receiving "light" and "divinity" from God by being united to God when God illumines them. This observation allows us to recognise that the angels are deified by means of their union with God.

Gregory refers to angels as "divine" in a handful of passages in his writings. One such passage is his lengthy description of the angels in his poem *On Rational Natures* (*Carm.1.1.7*), a poem in which Gregory provides a concise summary of his angelology. There, after a brief discussion of God the "Source of lights" (πηγή φαέων), Gregory proceeds to describe the angels, the "second lights" (φῶτα δεύτερα). In the course of this description he again evokes Psalm 103.4 (LXX), describing the angels as fire and spirit, but this time adds that they are also "divine" (θεῖα):

> There second lights (φῶτα δεύτερα) after the Trinity (which holds royal esteem): splendid angels (ἄγγελοι αἰγλήεντες), formless, who go about the Great Throne, since they are nimble minds, fire and divine spirits (πνεύματα θεῖα), running swiftly through the air, eagerly serving his great commands.[33]

Gregory again alludes to the divinity of the angels in his oration *On Himself Against those who say he Desired the Throne of Constantinople* (*Or.36*) , where he states that Lucifer was "divine" (θεῖος) prior to his fall:[34]

> It was envy that darkened (ἐσκότισε) Lucifer when he fell through pride. For, being divine (θεῖος ὢν), he could not tolerate it that he was not also acknowledged as God (θεὸς νομισθῆναι).[35]

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[33] *Carm.1.1.7.11-16* (Sykes and Moreschini: 26, 28). See also *Carm.1.2.1.30-34* (PG 37: 524), in which Gregory again refers to the angels as "divine spirits" (πνεύματα θεῖα).

[34] Gregory holds the traditional Jewish and Christian view that Lucifer and his demons are fallen angels; see, for instance *Carm.1.1.7.27-95*.

[35] *Or.36.5* (SC 316: 250).

These passages raise the question of what Gregory means when he refers to the angels as "divine". The solution, I suggest, lies in Gregory's use of light imagery in the context of his angelology. While in the passage from *Or.36* above Gregory attributes Lucifer's pride to his being divine, he elsewhere speaks of Lucifer's pride resulting from his having received "the whole light" (τὸ φῶς ὅλον) of God from the moment of his creation.[36] Similarly, Gregory's description of the angels as "divine" in *Carm.1.1.7* comes as part of a broader description of the angels as secondary lights who reflect the divine light of God.[37] The connection between the divinity of the angels and the image of light becomes clearer when we consider Gregory's account of the creation of intellectual natures in his poem *On the World* (*Carm.1.1.4*). There, Gregory begins by stating that God was moved to create intellectual natures through the self-contemplation of his own "radiance" (αἴγλην) and "splendour" (σέλας), which he identifies with "the Triple-lighted divinity" (Τρισσοφαοῦς Θεότητος):

> Let us explain why divine intellection (θεία νόησις) moved itself [to create] – for in my view God is neither idle nor works without purpose – before all of this was established and adorned with forms. When he was ruling supreme over eternal nothingness he was moved by his Beauty (κάλλεος), whose beloved radiance (αἴγλην) he was contemplating, the same equally-luminescent Splendour (ὁμὸν σέλας ἰσοφέριστον) of the Triple-lighted divinity (Τρισσοφαοῦς Θεότητος), which is manifest to divinity alone (μούνῃ Θεότητι) and those who are God's (ὧν Θεὸς).[38]

Gregory proceeds to state that intellectual natures were created to be recipients of this "divinity" and "light":

> Mind laboured to birth all things, and later birth broke forth in due season, when the mighty Word of God disclosed it. He wished first to establish intellectual nature (νοερὰν… φύσιν), in heaven and on earth, translucent mirrors of the first light (πρώτοιο διαυγέα φωτὸς ἔσοπτρα), the former shining (στίλβουσαν) in heaven, attendants of the King, full of light (πλησιφαῆ), mighty, the latter having its glory (κῦδος) here. He poured forth divinity (πηγάζων θεότητα), so that he might rule over

[36] *Or.28.12*.
[37] *Carm.1.1.4.* (Sykes and Moreschini: 18, 20).
[38] *Carm.1.1.4.75-83* (Sykes and Moreschini: 20).

> many heavenly beings, and so that the blessed gift of light (φάος ὀλβιόδωρον) might be given to many. For it is the nature of my King to bestow bliss.[39]

In this passage, Gregory states that God created both the heavenly and earthly intellectual natures – that is, angels and human beings[40] – in order to share with them his own "light" (φώς) and "divinity" (θεότητα). Because, they, they are recipients of God's light and divinity, the angels are "translucent mirrors of the first light" (πρώτοιο διαυγέα φωτὸς ἔσοπτρα) and "full of light" (πλησιφαῆ). The notion that God created intellectual nature in order to share with it his own light and divinity accounts for Gregory's claim that the (unfallen) angels are "divine". At the same time, this solution to the question of the divinity of the angels gives rise to a further question since we must determine what Gregory intends to denote when he speaks of God's "light" (φώς) and "divinity" (θεότητα)

The term "divinity" (Θεότης) has two principal technical uses in Gregory's writings. First, Gregory uses the language of "divinity" to refer to that which is one in the Trinity:

> We ourselves, however, know that the nature of divinity (φύσιν θεότητος) is one and the same (μίαν καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν), distinguished (γνωριζομένην) in lack of source (ἀνάρχῳ), generation (γεννήσει), and procession (προόδῳ).[41]

> The three are one in divinity, and the one is three in personality.
> ἓν τὰ τρία τῇ θεότητι, καὶ τὸ ἓν τρία ταῖς ἰδιότησιν.[42]

> But we recognise one Glory (δόξαν… μίαν) of the Father – equal in honour with the Only-Begotten – and of the Son, and of the Spirit. And we consider that he who would lessen one destroys them all. For we worship and acknowledge them as three in their personalities (τρία μὲν ταῖς ἰδιότησιν), but one in their divinity (ἓν δὲ τῇ θεότητι).[43]

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[39] *Carm.1.1.4.75-83* (Sykes and Moreschini: 20).

[40] See *Carm.1.1.4.89* (Sykes and Moreschini: 20), where Gregory identifies the intellectual nature which exists in heaven with "the angelic choirs" (ἀγγελικῶν χορῶν) and that which exists on earth with "mortal nature" (βροτέην φύσιν), a standard term for human nature in Gregory's poetic works.

[41] *Or.23.11* (SC 270: 302).

[42] *Or.31.9* (SC 250: 292).

[43] *Or.43.30* (SC 384: 192, 194).

> It is necessary to believe that there is one divinity (μιᾶς θεότητος), the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.[44]

Second, Gregory uses the language of divinity to refer to the divine element in Christ:

> He came as God and mortal, two natures collected together into one (φύσεις δύο εἰς ἓν ἀγείρας), the one concealed, the other openly visible to men. Of these, one was God, the other was made later with us, when God was mixed with men in the womb. He is one God from both, since mortal man was blended (κερασθεὶς) with divinity (θεότητι), and by means of the divinity (ἐκ θεότητος) subsists as Lord and Christ.[45]

In both of these uses, Gregory deploys the term "divinity" (Θεότης) to denote the divine "nature" (φύσις) – whether in reference to the shared divine nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit when speaking about the Trinity, or the divine nature of Christ when speaking about the incarnation. Gregory's reference to ''the same equally-luminescent Splendour (ὁμὸν σέλας ἰσοφέριστον) of the Triple-lighted divinity (Τρισσοφαοῦς Θεότητος)'' in *Carm.1.1.4* recalls his Trinitarian usage of this term in particular, since in this phrase the language of "divinity" serves to denote the threefold divine nature. When, then, Gregory speaks about God sharing his "light" and "divinity" with intellectual natures, he indicates the self-communication of the divine nature itself to creatures.

The angels, then, are divine because they are recipients of the divine nature. Given this observation, we must determine what it means for the angels to receive the divine nature. In the remainder of this section I will show that Gregory believes that the angels as receive God's "light" and "divinity" because they are united to God. Two features of Gregory's thought substantiate this thesis. The first is Gregory's statement that the angels receive light and illumination from God by means of "participation" (μετουσία). The second is Gregory's belief that the angels receive illumination from God when they are pervaded by the Holy Spirit. What follows comprises an

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[44] *Ep.102.2* (SC 208: 70).

[45] *Carm.1.2.1.149-154* (PG 37: 533-534). Gregory repeats most of this material verbatim in *Carm.1.1.9.48-52.*

analysis of these two claims. Together, these claims indicate that the angels receive God's light because they are united to God by participating in God and being interpenetrated by the Spirit.

Gregory's oration *On Baptism* (*Or.40*) contains a passage in which Gregory details how God communicates his light to the angels. In this passage Gregory describes God as communicating his own light through his bestowal of "illumination" (φωτισμὸν) upon them, which he identifies as coming about by means of the angel's "participation" (μετουσία) in God's light:

> God is light (Θεὸς μέν ἐστι φῶς), the highest, inexpressible, and ineffable, neither apprehended by the mind nor expressed by word, the illumination (φωτιστικὸν) of all rational natures (πάσης… λογικῆς φύσεως). For he, contemplating and apprehending himself (ἑαυτοῦ θεωρητικόν τε καὶ καταληπτικὸν), pours forth a portion of this [contemplation] on those outside himself. The light of which I speak is that contemplated (θεωρούμενον) in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, whose wealth is their harmony and single out-leaping of light (τὸ ἓν ἔξαλμα τῆς λαμπρότητος). The angel is a second light (δεύτερον… φῶς): it is a sort of emanation (ἀποῤῥοή) or participation (μετουσία), of the First Light, possessing illumination (φωτισμὸν ἔχουσα) by its inclination (νεύσει) and service (ὑπουργίᾳ) towards it - I do not know whether illumination is distributed according to the rank of its station (τῇ τάξει τῆς στάσεως), or whether it receives its rank (τάξιν) on the basis of its degree of illumination (φωτισμοῦ).[46]

This passage contains a couple of points which bear upon our understanding of what Gregory means when he speaks of the angels as recipients of God's light. First, Gregory identifies the light God communicates to the angels with illumination. Second, Gregory identifies participation as the mechanism by which the angels receive God's light: the angel is a "second light" (δεύτερον… φῶς) by means of its participation in the First Light, God. For Gregory, then, the angels receive God's light and illumination by participating in God.

We may gain a more precise understanding of what Gregory means by "participation" by a consideration of the role he attributes to the Holy Spirit in the illumination of the angels. We have just seen that Gregory identifies the light the angels receive from God with illumination. In

[46] *Or.40.5* (SC 358: 204).

his *Oration on Pentecost* (*Or.41*) Gregory identifies the Spirit as the agent responsible for the illumination of the angels. He makes this identification in *Or.41.11*. There, Gregory provides a brief summary of the Spirit's economic activity throughout salvation history. He begins by noting the Spirit's activity in the angels:

> This one [the Holy Spirit] acted (ἐνήργει) first in the angelic and heavenly powers (ταῖς ἀγγελικαῖς καὶ οὐρανίοις δυνάμεσι), insofar as these are the first after God (πρῶται μετὰ Θεὸν) and surround God (καὶ περὶ Θεόν). For their perfection (τελείωσις), illumination (ἔλλαμψις), and difficulty or impossibility of moving towards evil (τὸ πρὸς κακίαν δυσκίνητον ἢ ἀκίνητον) comes from nowhere else but from the Holy Spirit.[47]

The angels receive their illumination – as well as their perfection and steadfastness in the good – from the activity of the Holy Spirit. Gregory does not here specify the nature of the Spirit's activity in the angels. Elsewhere, however, he indicates that that the Spirit is active in the angels by pervading them. He makes this point in his *Fifth Theological Oration* (*Or.31*). In *Or.31.29* Gregory argues that the Spirit possesses an infinite (and therefore divine) nature because the Spirit is able to pervade the entire angelic host, prophets, and apostles at the same time without being divided:

> He [the Holy Spirit] is all-powerful, overseeing all, going through all intellectual spirits (διὰ πάντων χωροῦν πνευμάτων νοερῶν) – the angelic powers (ἀγγελικῶν… δυνάμεων), I think, as well as the prophets and the apostles – and these at the same time and not in the same place, dispersed through one and the other (ἄλλων δὲ ἀλλαχοῦ νενεμημένων), by this demonstrating that he is uncircumscribed.[48]

While Gregory's aim in this passage is to demonstrate that the Spirit is uncircumscribed, it also casts light on the manner in which the Spirit acts in the angels. Gregory's argument that the Spirit is uncircumscribed is premised on the fact that the Spirit is present in and pervades "all intellectual spirits (πάντων… πνευμάτων νοερῶν), including the angels, without undergoing diversion. The statement that the Spirit pervades the angels explains the manner in which the Spirit acts in the

[47] *Or.41.11* (SC 358: 338).
[48] *Or.31.29* (SC 250: 336).

angels when illuminating them, inasmuch as it shows that Gregory conceives of the Spirit as acting in the angels by being present in them and interpenetrating them.[49]

The notions that the angels receive God's light and illumination by means of participation and by means of the Spirit's presence are interconnected, in that both notions explain the angelic reception of light and illumination in terms of the union of the angel with God. The notion of union in turn explains Gregory's use of the epithet "divine" to the angels. Seeing the angels are "divine" because they are recipients of God's light and divinity and given that union with God is the mechanism by which the angels receive this light and divinity, we may conclude that the angels are divine because they are united to God.

1.2 UNION WITH GOD AND VISION OF GOD

Having demonstrated that Gregory believes that the angels are divine because they are united to God, it is now time to explore the what this union entails. We saw in the previous section that Gregory identifies the light which the angels receive from God with illumination. This observation forms the starting point for this section. While in the previous section we saw that Gregory identifies union with God as the mechanism by means of which the angels receive light and illumination, in this section I will demonstrate that Gregory views the reception of illumination as entailing the direct, noetic vision of God's light. Thus, while the previous section established what the divinity of the angels consists in, this section will set forth what is entailed by this divine state.

I will begin this section by showing that Gregory believes that the illumination of the angels and their reception of the divine light enables them to know God "more clearly" than human

[49] As I will demonstrate later in this dissertation, Gregory's claim that the Spirit goes through all intellectual spirits draws upon a Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture as the union of immaterial natures by means of interpenetration; see chapter 4, section 4.2.

beings. Having established that illumination entails superior knowledge, I will then demonstrate that Gregory understands this superior knowledge as coming about by means of the direct noetic vision of God, in which the (angelic) mind is directly imprinted by the divine light. Together, these two observations demonstrate that the illumination of the angels – which occurs by means of their union with God – involves the direct noetic vision of the divine light.

In a passage in his *Second Theological Oration* (*Or.28*) Gregory provides a brief comparison of the knowledge of God which is had by human beings and that which is had by the angels. Having set out the difficulties regarding human knowledge of God, Gregory turns to the angels, and to the question of angelic illumination:

> "To know God is difficult; to speak of him is impossible", as one of the Greek theologians philosophised[50] – not unskilfully, it seems to me, for he says it is difficult so that he might seize glory, while escaping examination by saying it is inexpressible. But according to my theory, to speak of him (φράσαι) is impossible, but to know him (νοῆσαι) is even more impossible … I do not know, however, whether this is true of the higher, noetic natures (ταῖς ἀνωτέρω καὶ νοεραῖς φύσεσιν), who, because they are closer (πλησίον) to God and are illumined (καταλάμπεσθαι) by the whole light (ὅλῳ τῷ φωτὶ), perhaps know him clearly (τρανοῖντο) – if not completely (πάντῃ), nonetheless more perfectly (τελεώτερόν) and distinctly (ἐκτυπώτερον) than us, one more or less than the other, according to their order (ἀναλογίαν) and rank (τάξεως).[51]

In this passage Gregory suggests that the angels, because they are illumined by the "whole light" (ὅλῳ τῷ φωτὶ) of God, are able to see God "more clearly" (τρανοῖντο) than human beings. By making this suggestion, Gregory indicates that he views the illumination of the angels as entailing a superior knowledge of God. He is hesitant, however, regarding the nature of this superior knowledge, save for the suggestion that the angels perhaps know God "clearly" (τρανοῖντο) and "more perfectly (τελεώτερόν) and distinctly (ἐκτυπώτερον)" than human beings. This passage, then, tells us that Gregory understands the illumination of the angels as entailing superior

[50] C.f. Plato *Tim.* 28C.
[51] *Or.28.4* (SC 250: 108).

knowledge of God, but does not provide a clear statement as to what he thinks this superior knowledge consists in.

In order to determine the nature of this superior knowledge, a further investigation of Gregory's conception of how the angels know God is in order. Scholars have offered a number of divergent views on the Gregory's conception of the angelic knowledge of God. Joseph Maréchal, for instance, argues Gregory views the immediate, intuitive vision of God as reserved for the Trinity alone, and so both angels and human beings know God only indirectly through the mediation of created images.[52] Henri Pinault, Jacques Rousse and John Egan, by contrast, argue that Gregory believes that the angels (unlike human beings) are capable of knowing God directly.[53] Finally, Thomas Spidlik suggests that Gregory lacks a clear account of how the angels know and contemplate God because he is hesitant about speculating on higher matters such as this.[54]

These previous scholars have addressed the question of angelic knowledge in order to better understand the relationship between human and angelic knowledge of God, rather than considering Gregory's views on the angels in their own right.[55] I believe a different approach is more fruitful. In order to understand Gregory's account of angelic knowledge we must recognise

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[52] Joseph Maréchal *Études Sur La Psychologie Des Mystiques. Tome Second* (Bruxelles: Paris, 1937), 97-99. Maréchal does, however, concede that *Or.28.4* may indicate Gregory's hesitant endorsement of the view that the angels may also be capable of direct, intuitive knowledge of God.

[53] Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche-sur Yon, 1925); Jacques Rousse 'Les Anges et Leurs Ministre chez Gregoire de Nazianze', 136-137; John Egan *The Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen: A Study of the Images of Mirror and Light* PhD Diss. (Institut Catholique de Paris, 1971), 113.

[54] Thomas Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome: PISO, 1971), 43: "Et les anges? Grégoire craint de s'aventurer sur le question de leur connaisance de Dieu."

[55] This is, of course, an important question for this present study – indeed, it is the reason for our interest in the topic of angelic contemplation, as I noted at the opening of this section. While I do not attempt such a comparison in this chapter I will make some observations of this question at the end of this section.

the philosophical model he is using, namely κατάληψις, or "direct apprehension". By recognising Gregory's use of this model, we will be able to recognise that Gregory views the angels as possessing superior knowledge of God because they know God by means of direct noetic vision. Before we demonstrate Gregory's appropriation of the philosophical model of κατάληψις, however, we must first outline what how this epistemological model was understood in its original philosophical context.

The idea of direct apprehension has its origins in Stoic epistemology, where the term κατάληψις is used to describe the cognitive process by which foundational truths are apprehended by the mind.[56] The Stoic account of direct apprehension is attributed to Zeno, who argued that the foundation of knowledge lies in "kataleptic impressions" (καταληπτική φαντασίαι) – impressions received by the soul which are infallibly true, and which the mind intuitively grasps as such, and so serve as the basis for further knowledge.[57]

We may more fully grasp the nature of kataleptic impressions when we recognise that the Stoics identified these with the basic impressions of things which arise from sense-perception.[58] Thus, Diogenes Laertius reports that Chrysippus distinguished between the kataleptic impressions had through sense perception on the one hand, and "imaginings" (φάντασμα) – images and phantasms such as are seen in dreams – on the other.[59] In Stoic thought sense-perception, under

[56] On the Stoic account of κατάληψις, see especially Michael Frede 'Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions' in M. Burnyeat ed. *The Skeptical Tradition* (Berkely: The University of California Press, 1983), 65-93 and 'Stoic Epistemology' in K. Algra ed. *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 295-322.

[57] The key primary accounts of Zeno' teaching on direct apprehension are Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.46; Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.248-252; Cicero *Academics* 1.41.

[58] Michael Frede 'Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions'.

[59] Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.50.

normal conditions, can give rise to an immediate and intuitive apprehension of the object one perceives – an apprehension of such a character that it could not fail to be true. This kind of apprehension is infallible because such impressions fulfil the criteria set out in the Stoic definition of a "kataleptic impression". This definition is recorded by Diogenes Laertius:[60]

> An impression (φαντασίαν) is an imprint (τύπωσιν) on the soul, the name having been fittingly transferred from the imprint made in wax by a seal. There are two kinds of impression: kataleptic (καταληπτικήν) and non-kataleptic (ἀκατάληπτον). The kataleptic, which they say is the criterion of things, is that which comes from a really existing thing (ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος) and is stamped and moulded in accordance with the same really existing thing (κατ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον). The non-kataleptic, on the other hand, is not from a really existent thing (μὴ ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος), or is not in accordance with a really existent thing (μὴ κατ᾽ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ ὑπάρχον) – it is not clear (τρανῆ) or distinct (ἔκτυπον).[61]

The above definition identifies two criteria for mental impression to be considered kataleptic. An impression is kataleptic if (i) it "comes from a really existing thing" (ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος); (ii) it is impressed "in accordance with the same really existing thing" (κατ᾽ αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον). The first condition pertains to the causal origin of the impression, the second to the character of the

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[60] In fact, the Stoic definition of a "kataleptic impression" comes to us in two forms. The first form contains two conditions: an impression is kataleptic if (i) it "comes from what is" and (ii) it is in agreement with its object. In addition to these, the second form adds a third condition: an impression is kataleptic if (iii) it is such that could not come from what is not. For the longer definition, see Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.50 (LCL 185: 189; trans. is my own): "There is a difference between an impression (φαντασία) and an imagining (φάντασμα). For, an imagining is an appearance (δόκησις) in the intellect such as which comes during sleep, while an impression is an imprint (τύπωσις) in the soul, as Chrysippus sets out in the second book of his *On the Soul*... The impression meant is that which comes from a really existent thing (ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος), which is moulded, impressed and stamped according to a really existent thing (κατὰ τὸ ὑπάρχον), and is such that it would not come from what is not (οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο ἀπὸ μὴ ὑπάρχοντος)." See also, Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.248; Cicero *Academics* 2.77. For a discussion of these two definitions, see Michael Frede 'Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions', 63-66. I follow Frede's judgement that the third condition does not add new content, but rather makes explicit what is contained in the first two conditions. Therefore, in what follows I focus primarily on the shorter definition.

[61] Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.46 (LCL 185: 154; trans. is my own).

impression in-itself. The former specifies that a kataleptic impression must be caused by its object. The latter specifies that a kataleptic impression must also resemble the object which causes it.[62]

Notably, the causal conditions specified by the first criterion necessitate that kataleptic impressions provide direct and unmediated knowledge of their object. For, if an impression is not directly produced by its object, then it will not be kataleptic. We may illustrate this with an example from the realm of sense-perception which, as we have seen, was the sphere to which the Stoic account of direct apprehension applied. In sense-perception, I have a kataleptic impression of an object only if I perceive that object itself. So, I would have a kataleptic impression of a glass of whiskey only if I were to see it, touch it, smell it, or taste it (or, though this seems less probable, if I were to hear it). I would not have a kataleptic impression of a glass of whiskey if I were to read about it or if a friend were to tell me about it. That is, learning about the glass of whiskey indirectly would not be sufficient to provide me with a kataleptic impression of the glass of whiskey. Thus, kataleptic impressions provide direct and immediate knowledge of their object, since they arise from direct and immediate perception of said object.

Now that we have outlined the philosophical concept of κατάληψις or "direct apprehension", it is time to show how Gregory appropriates this model to explain angelic knowledge of God. That Gregory thinks that God is known by means of "direct apprehension" is suggested by his use of the language of κατάληψις to speak of God's self-contemplation in *Or.40.5*. There Gregory describes God as contemplating and apprehending himself" (ἑαυτοῦ θεωρητικόν τε καὶ καταληπτικὸν).[63] Yet shared terminology is not sufficient to demonstrate shared conception. Moreover, here Gregory applies the language of κατάληψις to God's self-contemplation alone. He

[62] C.f. Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.249.
[63] *Or.40.5* (SC 358: 204).

does not state whether this language – and whatever understanding of contemplation it conveys – also holds true for created beings such as angels.

Indeed, at first blush there are several objections to the suggestion that created beings are capable of apprehending God in this way. First of all, in *Or.28.3* Gregory appears to deny the possibility that created beings can apprehend God when he denies to the angels the "perfect apprehension" (τελείας καταλήψεως) of God.[64] In addition to this, Christopher Beeley has argued at length that Gregory denies the κατάληψις of God to all creatures.[65] Beeley views this denial as a corollary of divine infinity: according to Beeley, for a creature to have a κατάληψις of God would involve God's circumscription, and therefore violate the principals of divine infinity.[66]

Yet Gregory does use the language of κατάληψις to describe the creature's knowledge of God, most notably in *Or.33.17*, where he states that human beings will receive the "more distinct apprehension" (ἐκτυπωτέρα κατάληψις) of the Trinity at the eschaton.[67] Given, then, that Gregory uses the language of "direct apprehension" to describe eschatological knowledge of God, we must reconsider the implications of Gregory's remarks in *Or.28.3* and of Beeley's appeal to divine infinity for Gregory's conception of how the angels know God. Regarding Gregory's denial in *Or.28.3* that angels can attain the "perfect apprehension" of God, we may observe that Gregory's use of the qualifier τέλειος ("perfect") suggests that the angels are only denied a certain form of

[64] *Or.28.3* (SC 250:106): "For, even if one were all heavenly or all super-heavenly, being much loftier than our nature, and much closer to God, such a one would be further from God and from the perfect apprehension (τελείας καταλήψεως) of him than it is above that of our composite, humble, lowly and heavy blend."

[65] Christopher Beeley *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 94.

[66] Beeley *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 94-98.

[67] *Or.33.17* (SC 318: 196).

direct apprehension, namely, that which is perfect. Thus, Gregory leaves open the possibility that the angels may have some direct apprehension of God.

Regarding Beeley's argument, we must first observe that he is correct to state that any form of creaturely circumscription of God would be a violation of the principals of divine infinity for Gregory, and so any form of knowledge or apprehension of God which involves his being circumscribed by the creature must be ruled out.[68] The question, then is whether Gregory understands κατάληψις as involving the circumscription of its object.[69] In one place he appears to suggest that it does, when he states that "apprehension is one form of circumscription".[70] However, this assertion is qualified by the statement which immediately precedes it, in which Gregory states that "I do not yet say that God is wholly circumscribed (περιγραπτὸν πάντως), if he is directly

[68] See Gregory's argument concerning divine infinity and the impossibility of comprehensive knowledge of God in *Or.38.7* (SC 358: 116): "God, then, is infinite (ἄειρον) and difficult to contemplate (δυσθεώρητον). Indeed, this is the only thing that may be wholly apprehended (πάντη καταληπτὸν) concerning him: his infinity, even if one things that to be a simple nature renders one wholly unapprehendable (ὅλον ἄληπτον) or perfectly apprehendable (τέλεως ληπτόν)." Gregory here stands in a long line of Christian thinkers, going back at least to Irenaeus, who view divine incomprehensibility as a corollary of divine infinity. On this tradition, see William Schoedel "Enclosing not Enclosed: The Early Christian Doctrine of God" in *Early Christian Literature and the Classical Intellectual Tradition* (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1979), 75-86.

[69] Beeley argues that it does; *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, 94. Beeley's argument draws on the use of the term in Stoic epistemology. According to him, the Stoics use κατάληψις and related terms to denote "complete and total understanding". This is not the case. As we have seen, in Stoic thought κατάληψις refers to the process by which foundational truths are apprehended by the mind, as in cases of sense-perception, by means of kataleptic impressions. These kataleptic impressions do not provide comprehensive knowledge of their object. Rather, they represent an intermediate stage between ignorance and the more comprehensive form of knowing which constitutes "scientific knowledge" (ἐπιστήμη/*scientia*), and which is derived from first principles provided by κατάληψις. On this, see Cicero *Acad.*1.42 (LCL 268: 450): "But between scientific knowledge (*scientiam*) and ignorance (*inscientiam*) he placed direct apprehension (*comprehensionem*), about which I have already spoken, which he considered to be neither right nor wrong, but which he said to be merely believable (*credendum*)." Here *comprehensionem* translates κατάληψις.

[70] *Or.28.10* (SC 250: 120): ἓν γὰρ περιγραφῆς εἶδος καὶ ἡ κατάληψις.

apprehended by the intellect (διανοίᾳ καταληπτόν)."[71] It is unclear whether Gregory means to deny that God would be circumscribed in any way at all if directly apprehended by the mind, or whether he means to say that God would not be wholly circumscribed but would be partially circumscribed. The latter option, it seems, would violate God's infinitude, whereas the former would not. While to my knowledge Gregory nowhere offers an explicit statement clarifying his views on this point, his claim that human beings will directly apprehend God at the eschaton suggests that he believes that God can be apprehended without being circumscribed in any way. Inasmuch as this is the case, the issue of circumscription is not a barrier to creaturely apprehension of God.

So far we have established that Gregory uses the language of κατάληψις to describe the manner in which human beings will know God at the eschaton. We have not, however, determined what he means by this, nor have we seen that he understands angelic knowledge of God in this way. In the remainder of this section, then, I will show that Gregory draws upon Stoic models of κατάληψις to describe both eschatological and angelic knowledge of God, while also adapting these models to suit his own purposes

That Gregory is working with the Stoic understanding of direct apprehension when he uses the terminology of κατάληψις may be seen from his frequent descriptions of eschatological knowledge of God as being more "clear" (τρανός) or "distinct" (ἔκτυπος) than earthly knowledge of God.[72] These terms perform a technical function in Stoic accounts of direct apprehension, where they denote the distinctive quality which marks out kataleptic impressions from non-kataleptic impressions.[73] As Cicero explains, kataleptic impressions have a distinctive property (*propriam*)

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[71] *Or.28.10* (SC 250: 120).

[72] For Gregory's description of the eschatological vision of God as more "clear" than the earthly, see *Or.11.6*: τρανότερόν; *Or.16.9*: τρανώτερόν; *Or.32.23*: τρανοτέρα; *Or.39.20*: τρανότερον. On the eschatological vision as more distinct, see *Or.33.17*: ἐκτυπωτέρα.

[73] Michael Frede 'Stoics and Skeptics on Clear and Distinct Impressions', esp.162-163.

which distinguishes them from other, non-kataleptic impressions, thus allowing the mind to discriminate between the two: "not all impressions are trustworthy, but only those which have a certain property (*propriam*) making clear (*declarationem*) in themselves the thing seen."[74] Sextus Empiricus similarly speaks of kataleptic impressions as having a distinctive quality (ἰδίωμα) which distinguishes kataleptic impressions from non-kataleptic impressions, in the same way that horned snakes have a distinctive quality which distinguishes them from non-horned snakes:

> For these [the Stoics] say that one who has a kataleptic impression (καταληπτικὴν φαντασίαν) discerns with technical precision (τεχνικῶς) the difference subsisting in things, since this impression (φαντασία) has a certain distinctive quality (ἰδίωμα) when compared with other impressions, just as horned snakes do when compared with other snakes.[75]

This distinctive quality is usually explained in terms of the kataleptic impression being "clear" (τρανῆ), "distinct" (ἔκτυπος), "evident" (ἐναργής), or "striking" (πληκτικός).[76] It is this quality which allows the knowing subject to intuitively grasp the truth of the impression they have received, as Sextus Empiricus explains: "For this one [viz. the kataleptic impression], being evident (ἐναργὴς) and striking (πληκτικὴ), they say, all but grabs us by the hair and pulls us into assent, requiring nothing else to help it in this or to suggest that it is superior to the others."[77] Gregory's description of eschatological knowledge of God as "clear" and "distinct", then, indicates that he understands this vision to have the distinctive, intuitive quality proper to kataleptic impressions. Gregory's description of eschatological knowledge of God in these terms, then, indicates that Gregory is drawing on Stoic accounts of direct apprehension when he says that human beings will know God at the eschaton by means of κατάληψις.

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[74] Cicero *Academics* 1.41 (LCL 268: 448; trans. is my own).

[75] Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.252 (LCL 291: 134; trans. is my own).

[76] See, for instance, Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.171: ἐκτύπως; 1.257: ἐναργὴς and πληκτικὴ; 1.258: τρανὴν and πληκτικὴν. See also Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.46: τρανῆ and ἔκτυπον.

[77] Sextus Empiricus *Against the Logicians* 1.257 (LCL 291: 136-138; trans. is my own).

What is true of eschatological knowledge of God is also true of angelic knowledge of God. While Gregory does not use the term κατάληψις when speaking of angelic knowledge of God, he nonetheless provides indication that he understands angelic knowing using this philosophical model. Two passages from *Or.28* point towards this understanding of angelic knowing. The first of these is Gregory's comparison of angelic and human knowledge of God in *Or.28.4*, which we discussed at the start of this section. There, Gregory says of the angels that they "know him [God] clearly (τρανοῖντο)" and "more distinctly (ἐκτυπώτερον) than us".[78] This description suggests that Gregory believes that angelic knowledge of God has possesses the intuitive quality proper to kataleptic impressions, and therefore involves the reception of a kataleptic impression of God. A second passage confirms this suggestion. This passage occurs as part of Gregory's lengthy discussion of angelology in *Or.28.31*. There, Gregory describes the illumination of the angels by God in terms reminiscent of the Stoic account of direct apprehension:

> They [the angels] are shone upon (ἐλλαμπομένας) with the most-pure illumination (τὴν καθαρωτάτην ἔλλαμψιν), or to one degree or the other, corresponding to their nature and rank. To such a great degree are they formed (μορφουμένας) and imprinted (τυπουμένας) by its beauty that they become other lights and are able to illuminate (φωτίζειν) others by the efflux and diffusion of the First Light.[79]

Here Gregory speaks of the illumination of the angels by God in terms of their being impressed with divine light and so becoming light themselves. Three features of this passage indicate that Gregory understands this process in terms of Stoic direct apprehension. First, the language of being "formed" (μορφουμένας) and "imprinted" (τυπουμένας) corresponds to Stoic terminology used to speak of the process by which an "impression" (φαντασία) or "imprint" (τύπος) is formed in the mind. Indeed, the Stoic definition of a kataleptic impression begins by defining an "impression"

[78] *Or.28.4* (SC 250: 108).
[79] *Or.28.31* (SC 250: 172).

as "an imprint (τύπωσιν) on the soul".[80] Gregory's use of this terminology, then, suggests he understands the illumination of the angels in terms of the receipt of an impression of the divine light upon the mind.

Two further features of this passage indicate that Gregory understands this to be a kataleptic impression. First, Gregory identifies the object of this impression – God, the First Light – as the cause of this impression. This accords with the Stoic requirement that kataleptic impressions be directly caused by their object. Second, Gregory's claim that the angels become "lights" themselves by being imprinted with the beauty of the First Light suggests that he thinks of the impression the angels receive as resembling this light, inasmuch as it is the reception of this impression that causes the angels themselves to resemble the divine light. Insofar as the resemblance of the angels to the divine light is a function of their having received an impression which resembles the divine light, this also accords with Stoic thought, which requires that kataleptic impressions resemble their object. The illumination received by the angels, then, fulfils the conditions required for a kataleptic impression, since it is both caused by and resembling its object, namely, the divine light of God.

The preceding analysis indicates that Gregory appropriates the Stoic model of "direct apprehension" to explain how the angels know God. On the face of it this might seem surprising, since this epistemological model is intended to explain how knowledge of physical objects arises through the senses, whereas Gregory here uses it to explain how immaterial minds – the angels – come to know and contemplate the immaterial God. Yet this becomes less surprising when we consider that Gregory defines the mind as "inner sight" (ὄψις ἔνδον):

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[80] Diogenes Laertius *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 7.46 (LCL 185: 154; trans. is my own).

> Mind is inner sight, not circumscribed, while the work of mind is both intellection and being imprinted upon.
> Νοῦς δ' ἔστιν ὄψις ἔνδον, οὐ περίγραφος. Νοῦ δ' ἔργον, ἡ νόησις, ἐκτύπωμά τε.[81]

Gregory's definition of mind as "inner sight" belongs to a venerable philosophical tradition, going back at least to Plato, which compares the mind's intellectual activity to a sort of internal vision.[82] Gregory's definition of one of the activities of mind as "being imprinted upon" (ἐκτύπωμά) indicates the manner in which he understands this vision as coming about, namely, by the reception of the imprints and impressions of the objects of its vision. Given this understanding of mind as inner vision, we can recognise that Gregory appropriates the Stoic model of "direct apprehension" to explain angelic knowledge of God in order to explain the noetic vision which the angels have of God. Gregory's use of the Stoic model of "direct apprehension" reveals that he understands angels as knowing God by means of a direct noetic vision in which the mind is imprinted upon by the divine light. For Gregory, as we have already observed, this direct noetic vision represents a superior way of knowing God which the angels possess by means of their reception of the divine light and illumination. Insofar, then, as the angels are divine on account of their reception of this light and illumination, so the divine life of the angels entails the direct noetic vision of God.

Chapter Conclusion

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[81] *Carm.1.2.34.26-27* (PG 37: 947).

[82] On the notion of the internal vision of the mind in Plato, see, for instance, Plato *Phaedrus* 250d. The notion of the mind's internal vision later became a commonplace, although it should be noted that this notion plays a particularly important role in Plotinus's thought, as well as in Origen's account of the spiritual senses; see John Dillon "Aisthêsis Noêtê: a doctrine of spiritual senses in Origen and in Plotinus" in A. Caquot M. Hadas-Lebel J. Riaud (eds.) *Hellenica et Judaica: hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky*, (Leuven: Peeters, 1986), 443-455. For a treatment which situates of Gregory's conception of inner sight and the "eyes of the mind" in light of philosophical antecedents, see Ricardus Gottwald, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico* (Bratislava: H. Fleischmann, 1906), 42-44.

I have argued in this chapter that Gregory considers the angels to be "divine" because they are united to God. We saw that Gregory calls the angels divine on account of their reception of God's light and divinity – which he identifies with the divine nature – and that he views the angels as receiving this light and divinity by participating in God's light and by being interpenetrated by the Holy Spirit, with both of these notions indicating the union of the angels with God as the basis for their sharing in God's light and divinity. Finally, we saw that Gregory believes that the divine state of the angels entails their illumination, in which they receive the direct noetic vision of God by being imprinted upon by the divine light.

The significance of this chapter for this study as a whole will become clear as this rest of this dissertation unfolds. In the next chapter we will see that Gregory views the angelic life as exemplifying the sort of life human beings should aim for, while also depicting humanity as lesser than the angels in their created state. In addition to this, we will see later in this study we will see that Gregory views deification as making human beings to share in the life of the angels, inasmuch as human beings are also deified by means of their union with the divine light, a union which, as with the angels, involves the direct noetic vision of God.

2

Theosis and Creation

In the previous chapter we saw that Gregory considers the angels to be divine because they are united to God from the moment of their creation. We further saw that Gregory believes that the angels are receive this union with God because they are immaterial, and so capable of encountering the divine light directly. These two observations set up this chapter. In this chapter I will argue that, while Gregory depicts human beings as intended to share in the life of the angels, he also states that human beings are not divine from the moment of their creation since they lack union with God. I will begin by showing that Gregory portrays human beings as destined to share in the life of the angels by attaining "glory" and divinity" akin to that possessed by the angels. Having demonstrated this, I will then show that Gregory views human beings as created lesser than the angels since they, unlike the angels, are not divine from the moment of their creation. I will also show that Gregory considers human beings to be lesser than the angels because they the material conditions of human existence inhibit them from receiving the divine light. This chapter, then, will establish Gregory's understanding of the created state of human beings as one in which human beings are lesser than the angels because they are not divine on account of their inability to receive – and so attain union with – God's light.

2.1 THE INTENDED DESTINY OF HUMAN BEINGS

The goal of this section is to show that Gregory believes that the destiny of human beings is to share in the life of the angels by attaining union with God. Recognition of this fact not only allows us to see how the angels serve as exemplars for human being, but also allows us to recognise the

limitations of created humanity. For, while human beings are intended to share in the divine life of the angels, we will see in the next section of this chapter that human beings do not possess this divine state from the moment of their creation. As well as establishing Gregory's beliefs regarding the intended destiny of human beings, then, this section will also serve as a foundation for exploring how Gregory views human beings as lesser than the angels, the subject of the next section of this chapter.

In the opening lines of his *Lament over the Sufferings of my Soul* (*Carm.2.1.45*), Gregory states that that "the goal of mortal life" (τέλος βροτέης ζωῆς) is to incline towards heaven, and thereby ascend so as to join the heavenly choir of the angels:

> Whoever inclines towards heaven and binds his flesh to the Spirit, this one has Christ as the gentle ruler of his life. His possession, his tongue, his ears, his mind and strength: he devotes all of these to the life to come, seizing from the vast universe so far as he is able that which that thief of others – Belial, the enemy of God – has claimed for himself. Unto the treasure house he bears that which is much more valuable than earthly things, which are stolen and rust away, so that he might look upon the Royal God himself, and become spirit (πνεῦμα γενέσθαι), stripping himself of the flesh (σάρκ' ἀποδυσάμενος) and its resistant thickness (πάχος ἀντίτυπον), taking his stand in the angelic choir (ἀγγελικοῦ… χοροῖο), and [thereby] receiving a prize which is greater than his great labours. He no longer sees the shallow imprints of deception (σκηνῆς ἐλαφρὸν τύπον) as he once did, nor the dissolved images of the written law, but instead gazes upon the Truth itself with the eyes of a pure mind (καθαροῦ νοὸς ὄμματι) and sings with his mouth a festal song. To become like this is the goal of mortal life (τέλος βροτέης ζωῆς).[83]

In this passage Gregory speaks of the intended destiny of human beings in terms of sharing in the life of the angels. Gregory indicates this understanding in his description of the human being as ascending to join the "angelic choir" (ἀγγελικοῦ… χοροῖο). We can understand this reference to human membership of the angelic choir further by considering the lines which follow this statement. As a member of the angelic choir, Gregory says, the ascended human being has a direct vision of the Truth "with the eyes of a pure mind" (καθαροῦ νοὸς ὄμματι). This description recalls

[83] *Carm.2.1.45.11-27* (PG 37: 1354-1355).

Gregory's account of angelic contemplation, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, Gregory understands in terms of direct noetic vision. For Gregory, then, human beings are destined to share in the angelic life by joining the angelic choir and contemplating with the angels.

Gregory's statement that the destiny of human beings is to contemplate God as a member of the angelic choir can best be understood as part of his broader belief that human beings are intended to attain "divinity" akin to that possessed by the angels by being united to God. In a couple of passages Gregory indicates that human beings are intended to attain "glory" and "divinity" akin to that possessed by angels as part of his explanation as to why Lucifer and his demons are envious towards human beings. In his oration *On the Holy Lights* (*Or.39*) Gregory states that demons are envious of human beings for two reasons. First, they envy human beings because they do not want them to attain the "things of heaven" (τῶν ἄνω). Second, they are envious because they underwent a "transformation of their glory" (μετάστασιν… τῆς δόξης) as a result of their fall:

> For, since they [the demons] are envious and hate humanity by nature – or, rather, they became this through their own evil – they could not bear for the earthly beings to attain the things of heaven (τῶν ἄνω τυχεῖν) while they fell to earth below, nor that there had come to be this transformation of their glory (μετάστασιν… τῆς δόξης) and of their first natures.[84]

Gregory's statement that the demons are envious of human beings because they do not want them to attain the things of heaven implies that human beings are intended to attain the things of heaven, since if it were not the case that humans were to attain these things there would be no grounds for the demons' envy. It is unclear what Gregory means by "the things of heaven". One possibility is that human beings are intended to inherit "glory" akin to that which the demons lost as a result of their fall. This would help explain why the demons' loss of glory makes them envious of human

[84] *Or.39.7* (SC 358: 162).

beings. Demons envy human beings because they do not want them to attain glory akin to that which they lost as a result of their fall. This reading would suggest that Gregory believes that human beings are intended to attain glory akin to that possessed by the demons before their fall.

This is precisely what Gregory says in his account of the fall of Lucifer in his poem *On Rational Natures* (*Carm.1.1.7*). There Gregory states that, having lost his own "incredible glory" (κῦδος… περιώσιον) and "radiance" (αἴγλην) through his desire to become equal to God, Lucifer attacked human beings in order to prevent them from ascending to heaven and inheriting the "divinity" (θεότητος) akin to that which he had lost:

> In this way, the foremost Lucifer, having raised himself aloft – for indeed he hoped for the royal honour of the Great God, even though he already had incredible glory (κῦδος… περιώσιον) – destroyed his radiance (αἴγλην) and fell here with dishonour, becoming wholly darkness (ὅλον σκότος) instead of God. While he was nimble, he slipped to this lowly earth. Here he detests those who possess understanding, and bars the heavenly road from all, because he is angry as a result of this disgrace; nor does he want the formation of God to approach the divinity (θεότητος) from which he fell. For he desired mortals to have a share in dark sin. Therefore, the Envious One also cast from paradise the ones who yearned for godlike glory (κύδεος… ἰσοθέοιο).[85]

Again, Gregory's statement that Lucifer envies human beings because he does not want them to approach "the divinity (θεότητος) from which he fell" indicates that human beings are intended to attain this divinity. Since Lucifer and his demons were formerly angels, this glory and divinity may be identified with the divinity God gave the angels at creation. Thus, according to Gregory Lucifer and his demons envy human beings because they are intended to attain divinity akin to that possessed by the angels.

Since, as we saw in the previous chapter of this dissertation, Gregory believes that the angels possess divinity on account of their union with God, Gregory's belief that human beings are intended to attain divinity akin to that possessed by the angels suggests he views human beings

[85] *Carm.1.1.7.56-66* (Sykes and Moreschini: 30).

as intended to attain union with God. Gregory indicates this view of human destiny in his poem *On Virtue* (*Carm.1.2.10*). There, Gregory identifies union with God as the "one and only natural work" (ἕν ἔργον…φυσικόν τε καὶ μόνον) of the soul:

> For, since the soul, as both I judge it to be and have heard from wise men, is a sort of divine stream which comes to us from above – either the whole thing or the presiding and governing mind – its one and only natural work (ἕν ἔργον…φυσικόν τε καὶ μόνον) is to bear itself above (ἄνω φέρεσθαι) and unite itself to God (συνάπτεσθαι Θεῷ), to always and entirely look towards its kin.[86]

Gregory's statement that the "one and only natural work" of the soul is to "unite itself to God" (συνάπτεσθαι Θεῷ) explains his claim that human beings are intended to attain divinity akin to the angels. Just as the angels owe their divinity to their union with God, so too human beings are intended to attain divinity by attaining union with God. As a result, the divine life of the angels to exemplifies the state for which humans should strive. In addition to establishing Gregory's beliefs regarding the intended destiny of human beings, this observation provides a foundation for an analysis of the created state of human beings, which forms the subject of the next section.

2.2 THE CREATED STATE OF HUMAN BEINGS

In the previous section we saw that Gregory views human beings as intended to share in the life of the angels because he believes that they are intended to attain divinity akin to that possessed by the angels by being united to God. While sharing in the divine life of the angels is the intended goal of human existence, in this section we will see that human beings are not divine at the moment of their creation, and so are lesser than the angels.

In order to show this, I will examine three claims Gregory makes regarding the newly created human being, each of which serves to illustrate the imperfect state of created humanity.

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[86] *Carm.1.2.10.59-67* (PG 37: 685).

These are: 1) Gregory's claim that God intended human beings to undergo a period of training before attaining deification; 2) his claim that God created human beings in an infantile state; 3) his claim that the newly created human being is intermediate between the invisible and visible creation, and so is only an "initiate" of the heavenly realm. The first of these claims establishes that human beings are not divine at the moment of their creation. The second connects the lesser status of created humanity to their inability to contemplate God. The third indicates that the material conditions of human existence inhibit them from receiving the divine light.

In his oration *On Theophany* (*Or.38*), Gregory states that God intended the newly created human being to undergo a period of training on earth before being deified:

> He [the Word] placed him [the newly created human being] on earth… A living creature governed here (ἐνταῦθα οἰκονομούμενον), translated elsewhere (ἀλλαχοῦ μεθιστάμενον) and – the completion of the mystery – deified by its inclination towards God (τῇ πρὸς Θεὸν νεύσει θεούμενον). For, it seems to me, the light of truth which is possessed here in moderation tends to this: that we should both see and experience the Splendour of God, being worthy of Him who bound us together, loosed us, and will bind us together once more in a higher manner.[87]

By stating the newly created human being was intended to undergo a period of training on earth before being "deified by its inclination towards God" (τῇ πρὸς Θεὸν νεύσει θεούμενον), Gregory indicates that human beings are not divine from the moment of their creation. This means that human beings are lesser than the angels, since the angels are divine from the moment of their creation. Gregory makes this contrast in his discussion of the falls of Lucifer and Adam in his oration *On Himself Against those who say he Desired the Throne of Constantinople* (*Or.36*). In *Or.36.5*, Gregory provides a list of scriptural *exempla* in order to illustrate the evils which have come about as a result of envy. He begins with the falls of Lucifer and Adam:

> It was envy that darkened (ἐσκότισε) Lucifer when he fell through pride. For, being divine (θεῖος ὢν), he could not tolerate it that he was not also acknowledged as God (θεὸς νομισθῆναι). It was envy that expelled Adam from paradise, carrying him off

[87] *Or.38.11* (SC 358: 112).

> through pleasure and through a woman. For, he was convinced that he was begrudged the chance to be like God (ὡς θεὸς εἶναι), because he had been thus far kept away from the Tree of Knowledge.[88]

The falls of Lucifer and Adam illustrate the difference between the created state of the angels and the created state of human beings. Lucifer fell because he was already "divine" (θεῖος), and so exalted himself out of pride. Adam, on the other hand, fell because he was not divine and thought that the prohibition against partaking of the Tree of Knowledge was intended to deny him the chance "to be like God" (ὡς θεὸς εἶναι). The differences between the fall of Lucifer and the fall of Adam, then, reflect broader differences between the created states of angels and human beings. For, while the angels are divine from the moment of their creation, human beings are not. Human beings, therefore, while intended to share in the divine life of the angels, are created lesser than the angels inasmuch as they are not divine from the moment of their creation.

In *Or.38.12* Gregory explains why God prohibited Adam from partaking of the Tree of Knowledge using the tradition that God created human beings in an infantile state.[89] This claim

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[88] *Or.36.5* (SC 316: 250).

[89] The notion that God created humanity in an infantile state has a long history in early Jewish and Christian thought, going back at least as far as Philo, and finding subsequent expression in the writings of Theophilus of Antioch, Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria; c.f. Philo *On Husbandry* 2; Theophilus of Antioch *Autol.* 24-25; Irenaeus *AH* 4.38.1-2; Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2.3.1-3.

Scholars have long identified Irenaeus as the immediate source for Gregory's engagement with this tradition. Franz Portmann first suggested that the influence of Irenaeus on this aspect of Gregory's thought, and was subsequently followed in this judgement by Brooks Otis, Rosemary Radford Ruether and Heinz Althaus. More recently, N.V. Harrison has argued that Gregory draws upon Theophilus and Irenaeus, while nevertheless identifying Irenaeus as his principle source. See Franz Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia bei Gregor von Nazianz* (St Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 1954), 78; Brooks Otis 'Cappadocian Thought as a Coherent System' *DOP* 12 (1958) 97-124; Rosemary Radford Ruether *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 134-135; Heinz Althaus *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*, 67-70; N.V. Harrison 'Children in paradise and death as God's gift: from Theophilus of Antioch and Irenaeus of Lyons to Gregory Nazianzen' *SP* 63, (2013), 367-371. The consensus of previous scholarship in favour of Irenaean influence is peculiar since, unlike Gregory, Irenaeus does not use the notion that God created humanity in an infantile state in order to explain God's command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. On the other hand, this is precisely the context in which Theophilus

helps us better understand Gregory's conception of the lesser status of created humanity, since Gregory uses this claim to depict human beings as epistemologically limited in their created stated:

> He [the Word] placed him [the newly created human being] in paradise - whatever this paradise was - and honoured him with free will, so that the good might come from choice no less than from the planting of its seeds… And He gave him a law as material for his free will. This law was the commandment as to which plants he could eat of, and which he could not touch. The latter was the Tree of Knowledge: not that it was evil from the beginning when planted, nor that it was denied out of envy - lest the enemies of God exercise their tongues in imitation of the serpent - but rather that it was good if partaken of at the proper time. For the tree was contemplation (θεωρία), according to my theory, which is only be safely entered into by those whose habit is more perfect (τοῖς τὴν ἕξιν τελεωτέροις), but is bad for those whose longing is simpler and greedier (τοῖς ἁπλουστέροις… καὶ τὴν ἔφεσιν λιχνοτέροις), just as solid food (τροφὴ τελεία) is not advantageous for those who are simple (τοῖς ἀπαλοῖς) and in need of milk (δεομένοις γάλακτος).[90]

Here Gregory again presents the created state of human beings as, in some sense, imperfect: human beings are not perfect from the moment of their creation but are rather, like infants, "simple" (ἀπαλοῖς) and "in need of milk" (δεομένοις γάλακτος). Gregory connects this infantile state to the the notion that human beings are epistemologically limited in their created state. Human beings, since they are infantile, cannot safely partake of "contemplation" (θεωρία).

So far in this section we have observed that Gregory believes that human beings are created lesser than the angels, since they are not divine at the moment of their creation, and that human

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appeals to the notion. According to Theophilus, God forbade Adam from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge because Adam was an infant, and so could not consume the "solid food" of knowledge (γνῶσις) which the fruit represents. Gregory's account of humanity's infantile state in paradise parallels that of Theophilus in several important respects. Both use the notion that God created humanity in an infantile state to explain God's command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and both illustrate their arguments using the image of milk and solid food, identifying the Tree of Knowledge with the latter. Gregory also follows Theophilus in affirming the goodness of the Tree of Knowledge "if partaken of at the proper time", and in stating that God did not deny the Tree to humanity out of "envy" (φθόνος). Finally, both authors provide similar interpretations regarding the identity of the Tree itself, with Theophilus identifying the Tree with "knowledge" γνῶσις) and Gregory with "contemplation" (θεωρία). Given this dense constellation of parallels, it is clear that Gregory's account of humanity's infantile state in paradise is indebted to Theophilus's treatment of this theme.

[90] *Or.38.12* (SC 358: 126, 128).

beings are created imperfect because they are epistemologically limited. These two claims are related. We saw in the previous chapter that Gregory views the divine state of the angels as entailing superior knowledge of God, since the angels who are united to God attain the direct noetic vision of the divine light. For Gregory, I suggest, human beings are lesser than the angels and lack divine status because they are inhibited from receiving the divine light on account of the material conditions of the flesh. In order to recognise this point we must turn to the third claim I highlighted at the beginning of this section, namely, Gregory's claim that the newly created human being is intermediate between the invisible and visible creation, and so is only an "initiate" of the heavenly realm.

Gregory affirms the intermediate status of human beings in the account of creation he provides in his oration *On Theophany* (*Or.38.11*). There, Gregory describes the creation of the human being as the third and final stage of God's creation. First, God created the intellectual, invisible creation, which Gregory identifies with the angelic creation.[91] Then, God created the material creation of sense.[92] Finally, God created human beings as a mixture of the two:

> Up to this point Mind and Sense, having been separated from each other, had remained within their own boundaries, and bore in themselves the magnificence of the Creator-Word, as silent worshippers and piercing heralds. Nor had there yet been any blend made from each, or mixture of opposites, symbols of a greater wisdom and generosity towards (created) natures. Nor was the whole generosity of the good yet known. The Craftsman-Logos therefore, wishing therefore to demonstrate this by creating one living creature out of both – I mean out of both invisible and visible natures (ἀοράτου… καὶ ὁρατῆς φύσεως) – created man by taking the body from pre-existing matter, and implanting his own breath, which the Logos knew to be the intelligent soul and image of God. He placed him on earth as a sort of second world, great in smallness (ἐν μικρῷ μέγαν), another angel (ἄγγελον ἄλλον), a mixed worshipper (προσκυνητὴν μικτὸν), viewer of the visible creation (ἐπόπτην τῆς ὁρατῆς κτίσεως), initiate of the intellectual (μύστην τῆς νοουμένης), king over the earth, ruled by the king above, earthly and heavenly (ἐπίγειον καὶ οὐράνιον), transient and immortal (πρόσκαιρον καὶ

[91] *Or.38.9*.
[92] *Or.38.10*.

> ἀθάνατον), visible and intellectual (ὁρατὸν καὶ νοούμενον), in between greatness and lowliness (μέσον μεγέθους καὶ ταπεινότητος).[93]

While the newly created human being is "another angel" (ἄγγελον ἄλλον), he is also lesser than the angels insofar as he is intermediate between the invisible and visible creation. This intermediate status relative to the angels is indicated above all by the use of two terms derived from pagan mystery cults to describe the newly created human being as a "viewer" (ἐπόπτην) of the visible creation on the one hand, and an "initiate" (μύστην) of the intellectual creation on the other.[94] In the context of pagan mystery cults, these terms "viewer" and "initiate" were used to denote different levels of initiation in the mystery, with the term "initiate" referring to first-time participants in the mysteries who, as such, had limited access to the mysteries.[95] Gregory's claim that the newly created human being is an "initiate" (μύστην) of the intellectual creation, then, suggests that human beings have only limited access to the intellectual realm of the angels.

We can gain a clearer understanding of what it means for a human being to be an "initiate" by considering Gregory's description of his own struggles as an "initiate" (μύστιν) of heaven in

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[93] *Or.38.11* (SC 358: 126).

[94] Gregory refers to the newly created human being as an "initiate" a few times in his writings, calling the newly created human being a "prudent initiate of the heavenly realm" and "a luminous initiate of God and divine things"; *Carm.1.1.8.67-68* (Sykes and Moreschini: 36) and *Carm.1.2.1.89-90* (PG 37: 529): ἐχέφρονα μύστην οὐρανίων; *Carm.1.2.1.161* (PG 37: 535): μύστης τε Θεοῦ θείων τε φαεινός.

[95] See Kevin Clinton 'Stages of Initiation in the Eleusian and Samothracian Mysteries' in Michael B. Cosmopoulos (ed.) *Greek Mysteries: The Archaeology and Ritual of Ancient Greek Secret Cults*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 50-78. Scholars have long recognised Gregory's dependence on the terminology of pagan mystery cults in this passage. Brown and Swallow indicate their awareness of the mystagogical background to this terminology by translating ἐπόπτην as "fully initiated" and μύστην as "partially initiated", although they provide not further discussion of the technical significance of these terms. Jules Gross provides a more extensive discussion of this; Jules Gross *La divinisation du chretien d'apres les perès grecs* (Paris: LeCoffre, 1938), 246. See also Althaus *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*, 66; Claudio Moreschini (SC 358: 126, n.2); D.A. Sykes (Sykes and Moreschini: 239).

his poem *Lament over the Passions of his Soul* (*Carm.2.1.45*).[96] There, Gregory says that, as an "initiate", he is unable to see the divine light due to the interference of the "flesh" (σὰρξ) and "earthly things" (χθονίῳ):

> Yet I did not guard the noble mysteries of God (Θεοῦ μυστήρια) when my soul was an initiate (μύστιν) on the road to heaven, but thick dust (χοὸς πάχος) weighed me down, and I was unable to escape the mire and lift my eyes to the light (φάος). Indeed, I looked; but a cloud (νέφος) stood in between, veiling (καλύπτον) my eyes: the flesh (σὰρξ), together with earthly things (χθονίῳ), rising up before the spirit (ἐπανισταμένη πνεύματι).[97]

As an "initiate" of heaven, Gregory says he is unable to see the divine light. This in turn is because of the material conditions of human existence. Gregory's soul is weighed down by "thick dust" (χοὸς πάχος), while the "flesh" (σὰρξ) and "earthly things" (χθονίῳ) form a sort of "cloud" (νέφος) which intervenes before the eyes of the soul and prevent it from seeing the divine light. For Gregory, then, human beings are lesser than the angels because, being initiates of heaven, they are prevented from seeing the divine light on account of the material conditions of human existence.

Gregory's belief that human beings are prevented from seeing the light on account of the material conditions of human existence helps explain his belief that while the angels are divine from the moment of their creation, human beings are not. We saw in the previous chapter of this dissertation that Gregory believes that the angels are divine on account of their reception of God's "light" and "divinity". We further saw that the angels possess the direct noetic vision of the divine light on account of their reception of this light. Human beings, on the other hand, are not divine at the moment of creation because the flesh prevents them from seeing the divine light.

Given that, as we saw in the previous chapter, Gregory considers the angels to be divine because of their union with God, Gregory's claim that human beings are not divine suggests that

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[96] In addition to this text, Gregory refers to himself as an "initiate" on 6 further occasions: *Or.15.6*; *Or.18.28*; *Or.22.3*; *Or.28.3*; *Or.39.2*; *Carm.2.1.28.10*; *Carm.2.1.34.68*.

[97] *Carm.2.1.45.35-40* (PG 37: 1356).

they lack this deifying union with God. In order to establish this point, we must turn now to a further investigation of Gregory's view that the material conditions of human existence prevent them from seeing the divine light. This investigation will reveal that Gregory believes that human beings are incapable the direct noetic vision of God because human cognition is dependent upon the senses and mental images derived from the senses. Since, for Gregory, union with God entails direct noetic vision of God, by establishing that human beings lack the direct noetic vision of God we will be able to recognise that they also lack the union with God which characterises the divine life of the angels.

2.3 THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE

In the previous section we established that Gregory views human beings as lesser than the angels because the material conditions of human existence prevent them from seeing the divine light. This section explores this motif further. I will proceed by means of an analysis of Gregory's notion of the "thick flesh" (σάρξ παχύς) as the quality of human corporeality which prevents human beings from seeing the divine light. This analysis will reveal that Gregory understands human cognition to be dependent upon the bodily senses and mental images derived from the senses. Because human thought relies on sensible realities, human beings are incapable of the direct noetic vision of God. Recognition of this fact will in turn enable us to understand how the material conditions of the body render human beings lesser than the angels by preventing union with God.

In our discussion of *Carm.2.1.45* in the previous section of this chapter we observed that Gregory believes that human beings cannot see the divine light because the "flesh" and "earthly things" form a sort of "cloud" that intervenes between the soul and the divine light. The notion of "cloud" of the flesh is significant for grasping the sense in which the material conditions of the

body prevent human beings from seeing the divine light. The language of the flesh as a "cloud" belongs to a broader family of images Gregory uses to speak of the material conditions of human existence that prevent human beings from seeing the divine light. In addition to the "cloud" (νέφος/γνόφος),[98] of the flesh, Gregory frequently speaks of the "darkness" (σκότος),[99] "gloom" (ζόφος),[100] or "veil" (κάλυμμα/προκάλυμμα)[101] of the flesh as that which prevents the soul from seeing God or the divine light.[102] Gregory identifies these with the "thick flesh" (σαρκὸς παχείας):

> God is Mind, or Being, or something greater than this, apprehended by the mind alone (νοῦ μόνου ληπτὴ) in a bolt of lightning. If he is known perfectly (τελείως) by those above, God alone knows; but to us he is known dimly (ἀμυδρῶς), whom the cloud (νέφος) of thick flesh (σαρκὸς παχείας) covers as a resistant screen (δυσμενοῦς προβλήματος).[103]

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[98] *Or.21.2* (SC 270: 112); *Or.28.12* (SC 250: 124); *Or.32.15* (SC 318: 116); *Or.39.8* (SC 358: 164); *Ep.206.6* (Gallay *Lettres* II: 102); *Carm.2.1.45.39* (PG. 37: 1356).

[99] *Or.2.76* (SC 247: 188); *Or.17.4* (PG 35: 969); *Or.28.12* (SC 250: 124); *Or.32.15* (SC 318: 116).

[100] *Or.2.74* (SC 247: 186); *Or.4.44* (SC 309: 144); *Or.28.4* (SC 250: 108); *Carm.2.1.1.204* (PG 37: 985); *Carm.2.1.45.193* (PG 37: 1367).

[101] *Or.21.2* (SC 270: 114); *Or.32.15* (SC 318: 116); *Or.39.9* (SC 358: 164).

[102] Each of these images is derived from scripture. Gregory takes the image of "darkness" from Psalm 17.11 (LXX), where God is said to "make darkness his hiding place"; the notion of the "gloom" or "cloud" of the body from Moses's ascent into the cloud on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20.21: γνόφος; Exodus 24.15-18: νέφος; Hebrews 12.18: ζόφος); the image of the veil from the veil which prevented Israel from seeing Moses's glorious face (Exodus 34.35; c.f. 2 Corinthians 3.13).

I have not been able to identify a precursor who likewise interprets these various images as indicating the epistemological limitations imposed by the body. The closest parallel I have found is the notion of the "veil of darkness" (τὸ κάλυμμα τοῦ σκότους) in the Pseudo-Macarian Homilies. Macarius-Symeon, like Gregory, uses the image of a veil to denote the epistemological limitations which prevent humans from seeing the divine light; note especially his remarks in *Hom.II. 38.2* (PTS 4: 272; tans. Maloney, 1992): "just as a veil (κάλυμμα) was placed over the face of Moses so that the people could not look at his face, so also now a veil covers your heart so that you may not look upon the Glory of God (μὴ βλέπειν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ)". However, Macarius-Symeon's use of this imagery differs from that of Gregory in a couple of important respects. First, while Gregory identifies the "veil" with the (conditions of the) body or the flesh, Macarius-Symeon typically identifies it with demonic powers (c.f. *Hom.II. 8.3*; *Hom. II. 42.3*). Second, while Gregory appears to consider the veil of the flesh as given by God at creation, Macarius-Symeon views the veil as being placed across the heart of humankind by Satan as a result of the fall (*Hom. II. 17.3*).

[103] *Carm.1.2.10.90-94* (PG 37: 687).

Given that Gregory identifies the material conditions which prevent the soul from seeing God or the divine light with the "thick flesh" (σαρκὸς παχείας), an analysis of this concept is required in order to explain what these material conditions are and how they prevent the soul from see the divine light. At first glance it might seem that the "thick flesh" is simply the body in-itself. On this interpretation that which prevents the soul from seeing the divine light is the material body *simpliciter*, and only by escaping the material body and becoming altogether immaterial mind will the soul be able to see God or the divine light.

Gregory, however, makes it clear that he considers the body's "thickness" (παχύτης) to be an inessential quality of the body when he discusses why God gave human beings a body in his oration *On the Priesthood* (*Or.2*). In *Or.2.17* Gregory gives two reasons why God united the soul to the material body: first, so that the soul might "inherit the heavenly glory" by means of a struggle and, second, so that the soul might raise the body up to God by freeing it from its thickness (παχύτης):

> As far as I and those about me know, there are two reasons [why God gave human beings a material body]: first, in order that they might inherit the heavenly glory through struggling and contest with the things below, just as gold is placed in fire so that it might be tried[104] and so realise our hope as a prize of virtue and not merely as a gift of God… The second is so that it [the soul] might draw the lower element to itself and place it in heaven (ἄνω θείη), having gradually released it from its thickness (παχύτητος), so that the soul might become for the body (σώματι) what God is to the soul, educating through itself the matter (ὕλην) that attends it, and affiliating it to God as its fellow-slave.[105]

In this passage, Gregory speaks of the soul releasing the "body" (σώματι) and matter (ὕλην) from its "thickness" (παχύτητος) in order to raise it to heaven. Since, then, he here speaks of the material body losing its thickness, it is clear that when Gregory speaks of the "thickness of the flesh" or

[104] 1 Peter 1:7.
[105] *Or.2.17* (SC 247: 112).

"thick flesh" as that which inhibits the human being from encountering the divine light he is referring to some inessential quality of the body and not to the material body in-itself.[106]

It remains for us to see what this inessential quality of the body is. It is my contention that Gregory uses the language of the "thickness" of the body to refer primarily to the corporeal mode of cognition, dependent on the bodily senses, which characterises all human thought in this life. In order to demonstrate this, we must turn to a consideration of the anti-Eunomian epistemology Gregory develops in his *Second Theological Oration* (*Or.28*), since it is there that he gives his most extensive account of the "thickness" of the flesh. In this oration, Gregory seeks to counter the Eunomian claim that the divine essence is knowable and is named by the title "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος)[107] by arguing that human being cannot know the divine essence because all human cognition is dependent on the bodily senses and therefore human beings are incapable of directly knowing God, who is immaterial.[108] Gregory appeals to the notion of the flesh's "thickness" in

[106] See also *Or.40.45* where Gregory describes Christ's resurrected body as free from the thickness of the flesh.

There is some ambiguity as to whether Gregory views the body's "thickness" to be a result of its created condition or of the fall. In *Or.38.12*, Gregory identifies the garments of skin bestowed upon human beings after the fall with "the thicker, mortal, resistant flesh" (τὴν παχυτέραν σάρκα, καὶ θνητὴν, καὶ ἀντίτυπον); *Or.38.12* (SC 358: 128). Ellverson notes that παχυτέραν could here be taken in either a comparative or an absolute sense; Anna-Stina Ellverson *The Dual Nature of Man: a Study in the Theological Anthropology of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Uppsala: Almkvist and Wiksell, 1981), 30-31. The former would indicate that human beings already possessed thick flesh, and that the fallen flesh differs from this in degree only, while the latter would suggest that the fallen condition of the flesh is different in kind from its created condition. Ellverson argues for the former interpretation, correctly in my view, on the basis that Gregory elsewhere speaks about the thickness of the flesh as a condition of the body God gave to human beings in creation; c.f. *Or.2.17* (quoted above).

[107] C.f. Eunomius *Apol.* 8.

[108] For a fine recent study of Gregory's anti-Eunomian epistemology, see Ryan Clevenger *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language* PhD Diss. (Wheaton, 2017).

Or.28.12, where he argues that human beings, as embodied creatures, cannot encounter intellectual realities because of the "thick flesh" (παχὺ… σαρκίον):

> To us who are "prisoners of the Earth", as the divine Jeremiah says, and who are encompassed by this thick flesh (παχὺ… σαρκίον), it is well-known that, just as you cannot outpace your shadow, and no matter hard you try it always remains beyond your grasp – and just as the eyes cannot approach visible things without the medium of sight, and fish cannot swim without water – so also it is altogether impossible for embodied creatures (τοῖς ἐν σώμασι) to encounter intellectual realities (νοουμένων) apart from bodily things (δίχα τῶν σωματικῶν). For, something of ours (τι… τῶν ἡμετέρων) always intervenes, even if the mind (νοῦς) is has separated itself from visible things (ὁρωμένων) to a great degree, and recollected into itself, that it might try to encounter with that which is akin to it (τοῖς συγγενέσι) and invisible (ἀοράτοις).[109]

Gregory's argument in this passage concerns the inability of human beings to conceive of intellectual, immaterial realities. Gregory attributes this inability to the "thick flesh". Because human beings are "encompassed by this thick flesh", they cannot therefore escape the conditions of the body. Whenever human beings attempt to conceive of immaterial, intellectual realties, "bodily things" (τῶν σωματικῶν) or "something of ours" (τι… τῶν ἡμετέρων) always intervene.

The discussion that follows in *Or.28.13* adds more detail. There, examine various scriptural titles of God such as "spirit", "fire", and "light" in order to demonstrate the inability of human beings to conceive of intellectual realities. He begins by showing that human beings are incapable of conceiving of these titles immaterially. Having established this, Gregory then asks whether it is possible to abstract from the bodily things these titles name in order to conceive of God immaterially:

> Or is it necessary that we abstract from these things [viz. bodily things], each according to his own ability, in order to see (ἰδεῖν) the divine from these things, gathering together a certain partial mental image (φαντασίαν) from their likenesses (ἐκ τῶν εἰκασμάτων)? What artifice, then, is both from these things and not these things? Or how can He who is one, uncompounded and unimaginable in nature be are all these things, and each perfectly? Thus, our mind fails to transcend bodily realities (τὰ σωματικὰ) and to converse with naked and incorporeal realities (γυμνοῖς ὁμιλῆσαι τοῖς ἀσωμάτοις) so

[109] *Or.28.12* (SC 358: 124, 126).

> long as it investigates with its own weakness that which is beyond its power (τὰ ὑπὲρ δύναμιν).[110]

Gregory's remarks in this passage cast light on his insistence on the necessary role played by "bodily things" in human though in *Or.28.12*. Even the process of abstraction does not yield knowledge of immaterial realities but only a "mental image (φαντασίαν) gathered together from likenesses (ἐκ τῶν εἰκασμάτων) [of bodily things]". Gregory's denial that human beings can abstract beyond a mental image would seem to indicate that he understands human cognition to be dependent upon "mental images" (φαντασίαι/φαντάσματα) of bodily things.[111] More generally, Gregory considers all human cognition to be dependent upon the bodily senses, a view he states clearly in *Or.28.21*:

> The whole of the truth, and the entire account, then, is hard to trace and difficult to contemplate (δυσθεώρητος). It is as though we are using a small tool for a large construction, when we seek the knowledge of being using human wisdom, and to encounter intelligible realities (νοητοῖς) with the senses (μετὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων), – or at least not apart from the senses (οὐκ ἄνευ αἰσθήσεων) – by which we are carried here and there and led astray. We are unable to approach the truth any further, meeting naked realities (γυμνοῖς… πράγμασιν) with a naked mind (γυμνῷ… νοὶ); the mind cannot be imprinted upon by direct apprehension (τυποῦσθαι ταῖς καταλήψεσιν).[112]

Human cognition is dependent on the senses. As such, human beings must always seek to encounter intelligible realities "with the senses" (μετὰ τῶν αἰσθήσεων) or "not apart from the

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[110] *Or.28.13* (SC 358: 128).

[111] As a number of scholars have observed, this understanding of human cognition has affinities with Aristotle's belief that "the soul never thinks without a mental image (φαντάσματος)"; Aristotle *Anim.* 3.7 431a (W.S. Hett; LCL 288: 174); c.f. Aristotle *Anim.* 3.7 432a (W.S. Hett; LCL 288: 180-181): "even when we think speculatively, we must have some mental picture (φάντασμά) of which to think; for mental images (φαντάσματα) are similar to objects perceived except that they are without matter." For scholars who have argued that Gregory here holds to an Aristotelian view of the necessity of mental images in human cognition, see Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche-sur Yon, 1925), 49-50; Spidlik Grégoire de Nazianze *Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle*, 37; Anna Usacheva, *Knowledge, Language and Intellection from Origen to Gregory Nazianzen: a Selective Survey* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017), 185.

[112] *Or.28.21* (SC 250: 142).

senses" (οὐκ ἄνευ αἰσθήσεων). When, therefore, Gregory speaks of the "thick flesh", he is referring to the dependence of human cognition upon the senses – and mental images of physical objects derived from the senses – which prevents human beings from conceiving of intellectual realities immaterially.

This understanding of human cognition allows us to explain how the material conditions of the body prevent human beings from seeing the divine light. We saw in the previous chapter that Gregory understands angelic knowledge of God as consisting in the direct noetic vision of God and the divine light, in which the angels receive the imprints of the divine light by means of "direct apprehension" (κατάληψις). It is precisely this sort of direct noetic vision Gregory denies human beings are capable of in *Or.28.21*, when he says that the mind cannot be "imprinted upon by direct apprehension" (τυποῦσθαι ταῖς καταλήψεσιν) of intelligible realities. That is, because human thought in this life relies on sensible realities, human beings are incapable of the direct noetic vision of intelligible objects, including the divine light.

The inability of human beings to attain the direct noetic vision of the divine light means that human beings are lesser than the angels. Indeed, insofar as union with God entails direct noetic vision of God, the inability of human beings to have this kind of vision indicates that human beings also lack the union with God which characterises the divine life of the angels. In fact, Gregory states that God bestowed the quality of "thickness" upon human beings precisely in order to prevent human beings from receiving "the whole light" (τὸ φῶς ὅλον) as Lucifer did, and so fall from pride as a result. Gregory makes this point in *Or.28.12*, alongside two other explanations as to why God bestowed the "thickness" of the flesh on human beings:

> As far as we can tell – we who can only measure to a small degree that which is hard to grasp – one possible reason is to prevent us from easily losing possession of what easily came to be ours. For people love more that which they obtain through hard work, but quickly discard that which they acquire easily, since it is in their power to acquire

> it once more. Thus, to those who are intelligent, the fact that goodness is not readily available for us in fact turns out to be a good thing. A second reason is so that we would not suffer the same fall as Lucifer, who, receiving the whole light (τὸ φῶς ὅλον), exalted himself against the Lord Almighty, and suffered the most miserable fall of all, falling on account of his pride. A third reason is so that there might be a greater prize for the labour and radiant life of those who have purified themselves and been patient with regards to that object of their desire. It is because of this that this corporeal cloud (σωματικὸς… γνόφος) stands between us and God, just like the cloud (νεφέλη) in old times between the Egyptians and the Hebrews. And this, I suppose, is the reason "he made darkness his hiding place" – that is our thickness (παχύτητα), through which only a few can peer and only to a small degree.[113]

Here Gregory offers three explanations as to why God bestowed the "thickness" of the flesh on human beings. The second explanation specifically explains why God made human beings lesser than the angels. This explanation provides a reason for the lesser status of the human beings – to prevent pride – but it also confirms our reading of Gregory, in that it establishes that God bestowed the thickness of the flesh on human beings in order to prevent them from receiving the divine light. Since it is the reception of this light which makes the angels divine, and since this occurs by means of the union of the angels with God, the denial of this light entails that human beings are not united to God as the angels are. This in turn explains why human beings are not divine from the moment of their creation: they lack union with God.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that human beings, while intended to share in the life of the angels, are not divine from the moment of their creation because they lack union with the divine light. I first showed that Gregory portrays human beings as destined to share in the life of the angels by attaining "glory" and divinity" akin to that possessed by the angels, and that he views this as coming about by means of the soul's union with God. I then showed that Gregory believes that

[113] *Or.28.12* (SC 250: 124).

human beings are created lesser than the angels, since they are not divine from the moment of their creation and are unable to see the divine light on account of the material conditions of human existence. Specifically, human beings cannot attain the direct noetic vision of God because of the "thickness" of the flesh, that is, because of the dependence of human cognition on the senses and on mental images derived from the senses. God bestowed this thickness on human beings so that they would not receive the whole of the divine light as Lucifer did, and so would not fall from pride. As such, the thickness of the flesh prevents human beings from attaining deification by inhibiting their reception of and union with the divine light. The deifying union between God and human beings, then, is not realised at creation. Rather, it is in Christ that this union is first and most fully realised. It is to Gregory's account of the deification of Christ's humanity, then, that we now turn.

3

Theosis and Christ

If the angels exemplify what is possible for human beings because they are united to God before human beings, Christ both exemplifies what is possible for human beings and makes this possible. This is because the union of God and humanity which occurs in Christ provides the model and basis for the deification of human beings after Christ. This chapter, then, consists of an investigation of Gregory's account of the deification of Christ's humanity. The aims of this chapter are twofold. First, I aim to show that Gregory views Christ's humanity as being deified as a result of its union with Christ's divinity. Second, I aim to demonstrate that Gregory understands the union of Christ's humanity – and, therefore, the deification which results from this – in light of Neo-Platonic models of "mixture" (μίξις) or "blending" (κρᾶσις). In the chapters which follow, I will show that Gregory draws on the same models to explain the deifying union of the Spirit and the divine light with individual human beings.

This chapter will proceed in five sections. The first section investigates passages in which Gregory discusses the deification of Christ's humanity in order to show that Gregory views Christ's humanity as being deified as a result of its union by means of mixture with his divinity. Having established that Gregory's humanity is deified as a result of its union with his divinity, the remaining sections of this chapter comprise an exploration of the Gregory's conception of the Christological union. These sections will demonstrate that Gregory's conception of the Christological union – and thus, his understanding of the deification of Christ's humanity – should instead be understood in light of Neo-Platonic models which use the language of mixture to speak of the mutual interpenetration of immaterial natures. This will then allow us to conclude that Christ's humanity is deified by being completely interpenetrated by the divine Word.

3.1 THE DEIFICATION OF CHRIST'S HUMANITY

Gregory uses the language of deification with reference to Christ's humanity more than in any other context.[114] Yet in spite of this, recent studies of Gregory's understanding of deification have largely neglected Gregory's use of deification language in a Christological context.[115] This section makes up for the lack of sustained attention to this theme in previous scholarship through an initial investigation of some passages in which Gregory speaks of the Christ's humanity as having been "deified" or as being "God". This initial investigation will reveal that Gregory views Christ's

[114] Gregory uses deification terminology (Θεωσις/Θεοω, γιγνομαι θεον, Θεον ποιεω etc.) with reference to Christ's humanity on 17 occasions: *Or.29.19*; *Or.30.3*; *Or.30.14*; *Or.30.21*; *Or.30.21*; *Or.38.13*; *Or.39.16*; *Or.40.45*; *Or.45.9*; *Ep.101.21*; *Ep.101.46*; *Carm.1.1.2.48*; *Carm.1.1.10.61*; *Carm.1.2.14.92*; *Carm.2.1.1.16*; *Carm.2.1.34.84*; *Carm.2.2.7.165*. In addition to this, Gregory frequently refers to the result of the Christological union as "one God"; see, for instance, *Carm.1.2.1.149-154*.

[115] John McGuckin, 'Deification in Greek Patristic Thought: The Cappadocian Fathers' Strategic Adaptation of a Tradition' in M. Christensen & J. Wittung (ed.). *Partakers of the Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Madison WI: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007); Theodor Tollefsen, 'Theosis according to Gregory' in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* J. Børtnes, T. Hägg (eds.), (Museum Tusculanum press, 2006), 257-270; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2006) 214-215; Boris Maslov, 'The Limits of Platonism: Gregory of Nazianzus and the Invention of theōsis' *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 52 (2012) 440–468; Susanna Elm, 'Priest and Prophet: Gregory of Nazianzus's Concept of Christian Leadership as Theosis' in *Priests and Prophets among Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Leuven: Peeters, 2013). The studies of Nonna Harrison and Andrew Hofer are notable exceptions to this trend; N.V. Harrison, 'Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology' *GOTR* 34 (1989) 11-18; Andrew Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford: OUP, 2012).

Prior to these studies, Donald Winslow recognised the importance of deification for Gregory's Christology, arguing that Gregory's Christology "is centred upon his concept of theosis" and that the deification of Christ's humanity is the basis for Gregory's account of the unity of Christ. Yet later in the same study Winslow sought to minimise the significance of the deification of Christ's humanity to Gregory's account of deification as a whole by arguing that for Gregory, the deification of the human individual ''is analogous to the deification of Christ's human nature, but not identical", a view subsequently repeated by Nonna Harrison and Norman Russell; Donald Winslow *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus* (Cambridge MA: The Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979), 87, 189; Harrison, "Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology", 17; Russell, *Doctrine of* Deification, 222.

humanity as being deified as a result of its union with his divinity, a union which he characterises in terms of "mixture".

Probably the earliest reference to the deification of Christ's humanity in Gregory's corpus occurs in his poem *In Praise of Virginity* (*Carm.1.2.1*), which was most likely composed during his stay in the convent of St Thekla in Seleucia prior to his move to Constantinople in 379.[116] There, Gregory describes the incarnation as a union in which two natures (φύσεις) are blended together in Mary's womb so as to form "one God from both" (εἷς Θεὸς ἀμφοτέρωθεν).

> He came as God and mortal, two natures collected together into one (φύσεις δύο εἰς ἓν ἀγείρας), the one concealed, the other openly visible to men. Of these, one was God, the other was made later with us, when God was mixed (μίγη) with men in the womb. He is one God from both (εἷς Θεὸς ἀμφοτέρωθεν), since (ἐπεὶ) mortal man was blended (κερασθεὶς) with divinity, and by means of the divinity (ἐκ θεότητος) subsists as Lord and Christ (ἄναξ καὶ Χριστὸς ὑπέστη).[117]

In this passage Gregory names Christ's human nature "God" (Θεὸς), making this the earliest passage in his corpus to allude to the notion of the deification of Christ's human nature. However, it is the short explanation Gregory provides of how Christ's human nature comes to be "God"

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[116] Gregory stayed in the convent of St Thekla for three years (375 to 378) following the death of his parents in 374. While his poems are notoriously difficult to date, there are good reasons to suspect that he composed *Carm.1.2.1* for the virgins of the convent during this stay. On Gregory's time in Seleucia, see John McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: SVS Press, 2001), 229f. On the dating of *Carm.1.2.1*, see Gilbert's discussion in his unpublished doctoral dissertation; Peter Gilbert, *Person and Nature in the Theological Poetry of Gregory of Nazianzus* PhD Diss. (CUA, 1994), 54 n.49. Gilbert gives three reasons for the dating the poem to Gregory's stay in Seleucia. First, Gregory's re-use of material from this poem in the *Poemata Arcana* provides a *terminus ante quem* for this work. Since Gilbert dates the *Poemata Arcana* to Gregory's post-Constantinople retreat in 382, this suggests it must have been written either during or prior to Gregory's time in Constantinople. Second, Jerome's reference to this work in *De viribus illustrius* 117 also suggests it was written during or prior to Gregory's time in Constantinople, as it was there Jerome met and supposedly studied with Gregory. Indeed, while Jerome refers to several works by Gregory, none of these are thought to have been composed after their time together in Constantinople. Third, Gilbert notes that the subject matter is particularly suitable for the audience of virgins with whom Gregory was staying immediately prior to his call to Constantinople.

[117] *Carm.1.2.1.149-154* (PG 37: 533-534). Gregory repeats most of this material verbatim in *Carm.1.1.9.48-52.*

which is of particular interest to us. According to Gregory, Christ's human nature became "one God" (εἷς Θεὸς) with his divine nature because it was "blended" (κερασθεὶς) with divinity, and because in this blend Christ's divinity causes his humanity to "subsist as Lord and Christ" (ἄναξ καὶ Χριστὸς ὑπέστη). Thus, while brief, this explanation of how Christ's human nature comes to be "God" makes it clear that Gregory understands the deification of Chris's humanity results from the union of Christ's human and divine natures: Christ's human nature was deified by his divine nature when they were blended together in the womb of Mary.

Gregory makes several similar statements identifying the deification of Christ's humanity as a result of the Christological union throughout his writings. For instance, in *Or.38.13* he describes the Christological union as a "mixture" or "blend" in which Christ's divinity deifies his humanity:

> God came forth with what he had assumed, one (ἕν) out of two opposites, flesh and spirit, of which the one deified (ἐθεωσε), while the other was deified (ἐθεωθη). O new mixture (μίξεως)! O paradoxical blend (κράσεως)![118]

Again, in his poem *On the Incarnation Against Apollinarius* (*Carm.1.1.10*) Gregory says that in the incarnation the divine nature of the Word "mixed" (μιγεῖσα) with Christ's human mind (and, through this, with the flesh) and that, in the resulting union, Christ's divinity deifies his humanity with the result that Christ is "one God" (εἷς Θεός):

> The purifying Spirit came upon the virgin, and within here the Word was made man, a whole exchange for the whole of dying man. Since God is unmixed with flesh, while soul and mind are in the middle – of the flesh, on the one hand, as co-dweller, of God, on the other, as image – the divine nature mixed (μιγεῖσα) with that which was akin to it, and through this had communion (κοινωνίαν) with our thickness. Thus, the deifying (θεῶσαν) and the deified (θεωθὲν) are one God (εἷς Θεός).[119]

[118] *Or.38.13* (SC 358: 132, 134).
[119] *Carm.1.1.10.53-61* (PG 37: 469).

The relationship between the deification of Christ's humanity and its union with the divine Word is particularly evident in his discussion of this theme in his *Fourth Theological Oration* (*Or.30*). In *Or.30.3* Gregory appeals to the deification of Christ's humanity as part of his anti-Eunomian exegesis. This passage represents Gregory's the most extensive discussion of the exegetical basis for his claim that Christ's humanity is deified by its union with the divinity.[120] Gregory begins by discussing Isaiah 49.3-6 and Isaiah 53.11 before turning to Phil.2.6-11, and Acts 2.36:

> His being called 'Servant'[121] and 'serving many well',[122] and that it is a great thing for him to be called 'Child of God'[123] follow the same rule. For in reality he was serving the flesh, and birth, and our passions for the sake of our liberation, and for that of all those who he rescued from the dominion of sin. What is greater for lowly human than to be weaved (πλακῆναι) with God, and to become God from the mixture (γενέσθαι θεὸν ἐκ τῆς μίξεως), and what's more to be visited from the Dayspring on High, so that even 'the Holy One who is to be born'[124] is called 'Son of the Most High',[125] and to him is given 'the name which is above every name'(τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα)?[126] And what could this [name] be but 'God'(θεός)? And that 'every knee should bow'[127] to the one who was 'emptied'[128] for us, co-blending (συγκεράσαντι) the image of God with the 'form of a servant',[129] and that 'all the House of Israel shall know that God has made him Lord and Christ'?[130] For all this was achieved by the activity of the Begotten, and by the goodwill of the Begetter.[131]

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[120] Gregory outlines the hermeneutical principle which underpins his exegesis in the opening lines of this oration: "attribute (προσνείμαντες) to the divinity those expressions (φωνὰς) which are higher and more worthy of God, and those which are lower and more human to the New Adam for us, God passible for the sake of sin"; *Or.30.1* (SC 250: 226).

The *Fourth Theological Oration* largely comprises an attempt to refute Eunomian readings of scripture using this hermeneutical principle, with Gregory explaining that since he was not able to provide such a treatment in the previous oration, he will now provide "brief refutations" (ἐν βραχεῖ τὰς λύσεις) of Eunomian interpretations of specific passages.

[121] Is.49.3f.

[122] Is.53.11.

[123] Is.49.6; c.f. Lk. 1.32.

[124] Luke 1.36.

[125] Luke 1.32; c.f. Is.49.6.

[126] Phil.2.9.

[127] Phil.2.10.

[128] Phil.2.8.

[129] Phil.2.7.

[130] Acts.2.36

[131] *Or.30.3* (SC 250: 230).

In this passage, Gregory begins with a discussion of the Christological titles of "servant" and Child of God before moving to a discussion of passages such as Phil.2.6-11 and Acts 2.36, which speak of the exaltation of Christ. For Eunomius and his followers, the scriptural use of lowly titles such as "servant" to speak of Christ indicated the creaturely status of the Son.[132] Similarly, Eunomius and his followers interpreted passages which spoke of the exaltation of Christ as indicating that Son was not God by nature, but was rather a "thing made" (ποίημα) and only later promoted to divine status.[133]

It is Gregory's account of the exaltation of Christ which particularly concerns us here. Gregory explains the scriptural passages which speak of Christ's exaltation by arguing that these apply to Christ's humanity, not his divinity. For Gregory, that which is "given the name which is above every name" and "made Lord and Christ" is "the form of the servant", Christ's humanity, which is exalted as a result of being mixed with "the image of God", that is, the divine Word.[134] Gregory identifies the exaltation of Christ's humanity with the deification which occurs as a result of this mixture: "what is greater for lowly human than to be weaved (πλακῆναι) with God, and to become God from the mixture (γενέσθαι θεὸν ἐκ τῆς μίξεως)". Gregory appeals to Phil. 2.6-11 to defend this claim, arguing that "the name above every name" (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πᾶν ὄνομα) was given to Christ's humanity as a result of its "co-blending" (συγκεράσαντι) with the divine Word, and that this name was "God" (θεός). So, for Gregory the exaltation of Christ does not refer to the

[132] Eunomius *Apology for the Apology* apud. Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.8.45-57 (GNO II/II) trans. Hall *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III*).

[133] See Eunomius *Apology* 26.10-14.

[134] Similarly, Gregory explains that expressions such as "servant" are to be attributed to the Word insofar as he is "the New Adam for us, God passible for the sake of sin"; that is, they are true of the Word virtue of the economy, not by virtue of his nature.

exaltation of the Son, but to the deification of Christ's humanity, which occurs as a result of its union with the Son who is divine by nature.

It is evident, then, that for Gregory the deification of Christ's humanity results from its union with his divinity.[135] In order to determine Gregory's understanding of the deification of Christ's humanity, then, we must determine his understanding of the Christological union. Since, as we have seen, Gregory speaks of this deifying union in using the language of "mixture" (μίξις) or "blending" (κρᾶσις), this task requires that we determine what sort of union he understands "mixture" and "blending" to be. The remainder of this chapter takes up this question.

3.2 GREGORY'S MIXTURE CHRISTOLOGY: PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP

The importance of mixture language for Gregory's Christology is undisputed. Gregory uses the terms μίξις, μίγνυμι and cognates on 195 occasions and the terms κρᾶσις, κεράννυμι and cognates on 81 occasions throughout his writings.[136] Of these, 49 instances refer to the Christological union.[137] The significance of this language to Gregory's conception of the Christological union

[135] See also *Ep.101.19-21* (SC 208: 44): "The natures (Φύσεις) are two (δύο), God and human, since there is both soul and body. There are not two sons or two Gods, for neither do we here have two humans, even if Paul refers to the inner and outer human. And, if I must speak concisely, the Saviour exists from 'one thing' (ἄλλο) and 'another thing' (ἄλλο) - if indeed same thing is not invisible and visible, timeless and involved in time – not 'one' (ἄλλος) and 'another' (ἄλλος) – certainly not! For both are one (ἓν) in the co-blending (συγκράσει), because God is humanised (ἐνανθρωπήσαντος) and the human is deified (θεωθέντος), or whatever one calls it."

[136] According to a series of *TLG* searches conducted between 22/02/18 and 13/03/18.

[137] These are: μίξις: *Or.2.23, Or.30.3, Or.38.13, Or.45.9, Carm.1.1.11.11, Carm.1.2.1.155, Carm.2.1.12.318*; μικτὸς: *Carm.1.1.11.8*; μίγνυμι: *Or.38.13, Or.39.12, Or.45.9, Ep.101.36, 39, 49, Carm.1.1.10.12, 59, Caarm.1.1.11.8, Carm.1.1.27.61, Carm.1.2.1.152, 334, 336, Carm.1.2.2.675, Carm.1.2.10.567, Carm.2.1.1.14, Carm.2.1.13.34*; κρᾶσις: *Or.38.13*, *Or.45.9*; σύγκρασις: *Or.30.6*, *Or.30.8*, *Or.37.2*, *Ep.101.21*; ἀνακρασις: *Or.34.10*; κεράννυμι: *Carm.1.1.9.51*, *Carm.1.1.10.63*, *Carm.1.1.36.14*, *Carm.1.2.1.153, Carm.1.2.1.422, Carm.1.2.14.90, Carm.2.1.34.83, Carm.2.1.46.15*; συγκεράννυμι: *Or.30.3, Ep.102.9, Carm.2.1.34.24*; ἀνακεράννυμι: *Or.2.23, Ep.101.46*; συνανακεράννυμαι: *Or.29.19*; κιρνάω: *Ep.101.30, Carm.1.1.10.41, Carm.1.1.20.2*.

has long been recognised. Karl Holl recognised its importance in 1904, and subsequent scholarship has gone on to identify mixture as the primary category for Gregory's account of the Christological union.[138] The immediate source for this understanding of the incarnation is most likely Origen, whom Gregory follows not only in describing the Christological union in terms of mixture, but also in emphasising the mediatory function of the soul in this union.[139] At the same time, scholars have long read Gregory's use of this language as reflecting engagement with contemporary philosophical accounts of mixture.

In 1954, Franz Portmann argued that Gregory's use of mixture language draws on Stoic accounts of the interpenetration of material bodies.[140] According to Portmann, the language of mixture in ancient philosophical circles could be used either in an Aristotelian sense, to denote a union in which two natures mix and are altered to for a *tertium quid*, or in a Stoic sense, to denote union by means of mutual interpenetration, in which the constituent ingredients in the mixture are preserved along with their qualities. The former understanding of mixture, Portmann maintained, could not apply to the Christological union, since in Aristotelian mixture the constituent

[138] Karl Holl *Amphilochius von Ikonium in seinem Verhältnis zu den grossen Kappadoziern* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1904), 189-192. Portmann seems to have been the first to recognise the importance of the technical basis of this terminology in 1954, and subsequent studies have paid considerable attention to Gregory's use of this language, most recently – and extensively - in chapter three of Hofer's monograph on Gregory's Christology, which provides a useful survey of the state of previous scholarship on this question; Franz Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia bei Gregor von Nazianz* (St Ottilien: Eos Verlag der Erzabtei, 1954); Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 91-121.

[139] Several scholars have noted Gregory's dependence on Origen in this respect. See, for instance, Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia*, 122; Alloys Grillmeier *Christ in the Christian Tradition: from the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, (trans. John Bowden) 2nd edition (London: Mowbrays, 1975), 369; Donald Winslow *The Dynamics of Salvation*, 87; Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification*, 213; Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 131. On Origen's understanding of the Christological union as mixture, and of the mediatory function of the soul, see *De Princ.* 2.6.3.

[140] Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia*, 64-65, 110-112.

ingredients undergo change, whereas the divine nature is unchangeable. Therefore, Portmann concluded that Gregory must have understood the Christological union in the latter sense.

In 1970, however, Harry Wolfson challenged Portmann's interpretation, arguing instead for an Aristotelian background to Gregory's understanding of mixture.[141] While Wolfson agreed that the Aristotelian account of mixture does not present a viable model for the Christological union, he claimed to have identified a different category of union in Aristotle's thought that did: what Wolfson terms "unions of predominance". According to Wolfson, unions of predominance are a subset of Aristotelian mixture in which the resultant is not a *tertium quid,* but rather "is one of the two constituents, the one which happens to be greater or more powerful, and in which also the smaller is not completely destroyed but is related to the greater as matter to form".[142]

This category of union, Wolfson argued, provides a viable model for the Christological union, since it does not posit change in the greater ingredient, and so does not imply change in the divine nature. Moreover, Wolfson argued that this model of union also explains Gregory's claim that Christ's humanity is deified by being mixed with divinity. On this interpretation Gregory uses the language of mixture to express the Christological union as one in which Christ's humanity is converted into divinity – that is, deified – without being completely destroyed.

Subsequent scholarship has been unable to resolve the question as to which philosophical account of mixture – if any – underpins Gregory's understanding of the Christological union. Thomas Spidlik, Alloys Grillmeier, Jean Bernardi, N.V. Harrison and Norman Russell have all followed Portmann in identifying Gregory's understanding of the Christological union with Stoic

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[141] Harry Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol. 1 *Faith, Trinity and Incarnation* (Cambridge MA: HUP, 1970), 397.

[142] Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol.1, 385; for the claim that this kind of union comprises a subset of Aristotelian mixture, 386.

mixture theory.[143] However, none of these scholars have addressed Wolfson's argument that Gregory understands this union in terms of Aristotelian unions of predominance. Althaus, Winslow and Wesche, on the other hand, have endorsed Wolfson's interpretation, arguing that Gregory's claim that Christ's humanity is deified by being mixed with divinity points to an understanding of the Christological union in terms of Aristotelian unions of predominance.[144]

Nor have the most recent discussions of Gregory's mixture Christology resolved this dispute. Indeed, Christopher Beeley, while acknowledging the philosophical significance of mixture terminology in Stoic thought, de-emphasises this technical background. Instead, Beeley argues that Christian antecedents are more important for Gregory's use of these terms, and that they serve a narrative function rather than a metaphysical function in his Christology.[145]

More recently, Andrew Hofer has provided the most extensive discussion of Gregory's mixture Christology to date.[146] Yet even he is unable to identify the philosophical background to Gregory's use of mixture language, arguing instead that "Gregory's use of mixture terms for both himself and his Christ fit neatly into no single ancient model".[147] As such, recent studies have been unwilling or unable to resolve the question of the philosophical background to Gregory's

[143] Thomas Spidlik *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle*, OCA 189 (Rome: PISO, 1971), 95 n.82; Alloys Grillmeier *Christ in the Christian Tradition* v.1, 367-368; Jean Bernadi (SC 247: 120-121); Paul Gallay (SC 250: 217); Harrison, 'Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology'; id. 'Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers' *SVTQ* 35 (1991) 53-65; Russell *The Doctrine of Deification*, 213.

[144] Heinz Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz* (Münster: MBT, 1972), 131; Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 84; Kenneth Wesche, 'The Union of God and Man in Jesus Christ in the Thought of Gregory Nazianzen', *SVTQ* (1984) 83-94, 92. None of these authors addresses Stoic mixture theory.

[145] Beeley *Trinity and Knowledge of God*, 131: ''[mixture language] helpfully conveys both the narrative movement of the incarnation and also the mysterious union between God and humanity in Jesus.''

[146] Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 91-121.

[147] Hofer, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 120.

understanding of mixture. This being the case, Gregory's understanding of the Christological union, and therefore of the deification of Christ's humanity which results from this union, remains unclear.

As this chapter progresses, it will become evident that the unsettled state of previous scholarship results from an underappreciation of the full range of philosophical theories of mixture available in late antique philosophy, and a failure to recognise Gregory's more explicit statements on the question of mixture. The latter statements demonstrate that Gregory's understanding of the Christological union in terms of mixture draws on a specific philosophical understanding of mixture: namely, the Neo-Platonic account associated in particular with the later Athenian school of Syrianus and, later still, Proclus. This understanding of mixture rejected the Stoic account as an explanation for the union of material bodies, but adapted it to explain the union of immaterial natures. N.V. Harrison has already suggested that Gregory's understanding of mixture might better fit this model of mixture, owing to his understanding of the divine nature as immaterial.[148] In that article, Harrison stated her intent to follow up this suggestion with a more thorough study demonstrating Gregory's dependence on Neo-Platonic understandings of mixture. However, this study has yet to appear. Therefore, it is the task of this chapter to demonstrate that this is indeed Gregory's understanding of the Christological union, and that this understanding of the Christological union also underpins Gregory's understanding of the deification of Christ's humanity.

The remainder of this chapter will proceed in three sections. The first of these provides an overview of Aristotelian, Stoic, and Neo-Platonic understandings of mixture. I will then refute Wolfson's interpretation of Gregory's mixture Christology in terms of "unions of predominance"

[148] Harrison, 'Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology', 13.

before moving in the final section to make a positive case for interpreting Gregory's mixture Christology in light of Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture.

3.3 ANCIENT PHILOSOPHICAL ACCOUNTS OF MIXTURE

Previous scholarship on Gregory's mixture Christology have largely focussed on Stoic and Aristotelian accounts of mixture. In so doing, these scholars have neglected other philosophical accounts of mixture which would have been available to Gregory in the late-4th century. Richard Sorabji has cast light on the diverse understandings of mixture which developed after the accounts of Aristotle and Chrysippus.[149] Sorabji shows that Aristotle's account of mixture was variously developed and re-interpreted in later Peripatetic thought.[150] For instance, Galen reports that some peripatetics viewed mixture as applying to the qualities of a body alone, while Alexander of Aphrodisias, on the other hand, holds that both the qualities and the substance of bodies could be mixed together in a mixture.[151]

Notably, for our purposes, Sorabji also shows that various Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture emerged alongside the Stoic and Aristotelian accounts.[152] These accounts, following Plotinus, largely accepted peripatetic criticisms of the Stoic view that two material bodies could interpenetrate. At the same time, Neo-Platonic discussions of mixture were not satisfied with the Aristotelian account of mixture, but rather sought to answer the question of what prevents interpenetration. As different answers to this question emerged, so too did different accounts of

[149] Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion: Theories in Antiquity and Their Sequel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 60-122.

[150] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 72, 76-77.

[151] Galen *in Hipp. nat. hom.* (K.15: 32); Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Mixture* 15. 231.15-16. C.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 72.

[152] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 106-119.

when and what kind of bodies or substances could and could not interpenetrate. For instance, Simplicius argued that it is properties which prevent interpenetration, and so allowed the interpenetration of two material extensions so long as they are qualityless (ἀποῖον),[153] while Philoponus argued that it is matter which prevents interpenetration, and so allowed the interpretation of two immaterial extensions.[154]

It is my belief that lack of attention to these diverse understandings of mixture has prevented previous scholarly discussions of Gregory's Christology from correctly identifying the philosophical background to his understanding of mixture. For Gregory's understanding of mixture, I argue, belongs to a particular line of Neo-Platonic thought which applied Stoic mixture theory to explain the union of immaterial substances with each other and with material bodies. In order to understand this account of mixture, however, we must first review the Aristotelian and

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[153] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 106-107; c.f. Simplicius *in Phys.* 623.11-18 (text: H. Diels, *Simplicii in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria,* vol. 1: Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 9 (Berlin: Reimer, 1882); trans. is my own): "There is nothing contradictory in two matters (ὕλας) being co-incident. For matter does not prevent mutual interpenetration (τὴν δι' ἀλλήλων δίιξιν). Nor indeed is there anything contradictory in two extensions (διαστήματα) being co-incident, if one is corporeal (σωματικὸν) and the other is empty (κενόν), and one is a kind of place while the other is in place. For extension is said to exist in four ways. The first is non-extended in reason alone, as the limit of extension. The second is extended in conception, as in mathematics. The third refers to whatever is material (ἔνυλον) and which possesses qualities (ποιοτήτων) and a resistant nature (ἀντιτυπιῶν φυσικῶν), and is a body (σῶμά). The fourth refers to whatever is material and is qualityless (ἄποιον) and incorporeal (ἀσώματον)."

[154] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 107; Philoponus *in Phys.* 559.9-11, 14-18 (text: H. Vitelli, *Ioannis Philoponi in Aristotelis physicorum libros octo commentaria*, vol. 2: Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 17 (Berlin: Reimer, 1888); trans. David Furley in Richard Sorabji ed. *The Philosophy of the Commentators, 200-600 AD: a Sourcebook* v.2 (London: Duckworth, 2004), 312-313: "So it is not extension (διάστημα) simply, whatever kind of extension it may be, that is the cause of division (διαιρέσεώς), but extension with matter (ὕλης)– that is, body (σῶμα) … So, if the extension that forms the place, being extended in three dimensions, is bodiless (ἀσώματόν) and matter-less (ἄυλον), it will not produce any effect in the body that occupies it, nor will any effect be produced in it by the body, since only things that have the same matter produce effects on each other. So even if the void passes through the body there is no necessity that it divides it or is divided by it."

Stoic accounts of mixture it opposes and builds upon. In the remainder of this section, then, I will first review Aristotle's account of mixture, before moving to the Stoic account, and then the Neo-Platonic tradition which adapts this account to explain the union of immaterial substances.

3.3.1 Aristotle's Account of Mixture

Aristotle outlines his understanding of mixture in *On Generation and Corruption* 1.10. There, Aristotle identifies mixture as the union of two bodies in which the constituent ingredients undergo an alteration to produce a *tertium quid*, while nevertheless continuing to exist along with their qualities in potentiality:

> **GC 1.10: 327b22-31**
> Since, however, some things have a potential (δυνάμει), and other things an actual (ἐνεργείᾳ) existence, it is possible for things which combine in a mixture to "be" (εἶναί) in one sense and "not-be" (μὴ εἶναι) in another, the resulting compound formed from them being actually (ἐνεργείᾳ) something different (ἑτέρου) but each ingredient being still potentially (δυνάμει) what it was before they were mixed and not destroyed (οὐκ ἀπολωλότα)…it is clear that the ingredients of a mixture (μιγνύμενα) first come together after having been separate and can be separated (χωρίζεσθα) again. They do not actually persist (διαμένουσιν…ἐνεργείᾳ) as "body" and "white," nor are they destroyed (φθείρονται) (either one or both of them), for their potentiality (δύναμις) is preserved (σώζεται).[155]

For Aristotle, the ability to separate ingredients in a mixture demonstrates their continued existence in "potentiality" (δυνάμει).[156] While the ingredients do not persist in "actuality" (ἐνεργείᾳ), the ability to separate them out also shows that they are not destroyed. In this regard, Aristotle distinguishes cases of mixture from cases of "composition" (σύνθεσις).[157] For Aristotle, the

[155] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b22-31. Text and translation here and throughout this chapter are from E.S. Forster LCL 400 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1955).

[156] As Richard Sorabji notes (pp.68-69), it is unclear how Aristotle conceives of the ingredients and their qualities as continuing to exist "potentially". One possible solution is to take the language of δυνάμις as indicating not only potential existence, but the continued existence of an ingredient's "power". However, Sorabji notes that this solution is explicitly rejected by Alexander of Aphrodisias, and seems to go against what Aristotle says elsewhere in his writings; Richard Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 79; c.f. Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*15. 231.9; Aristotle *Meteorology* 4.

[157] C.f. Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b8-10; *GC* 1.10: 328a6-8.

continued existence of ingredients in actuality suggests union by means of "composition", in which the ingredients are preserved "unaltered" (μὴ ἠλλοιωμένων) and merely exist alongside each other.[158] Such a union is not true mixture because the resultant is not homogeneous – every part is not the same as every other part, not is every part the same as the whole – and so is not a true unity.[159] In cases of mixture, by contrast, the ingredients "change" (μεταβάλλει) so as to form a homogeneous *tertium quid*, with qualities intermediate between those of the original ingredients.[160] For example, in the case of the human body, which is a mixture of fire, water, earth and air, the coldness of the water and the heat of the fire "no longer exist in actuality… but are replaced by a single intermediate temperature characteristic of flesh".[161]

It is worth noting here that, while a number of scholars have argued for an Aristotelian background to Gregory's understanding of mixture, none of these have suggested that Gregory understands the Christological mixture in the sense just outlined, that is, as a kind of union in which two ingredients are changed to produce a homogeneous *tertium quid*. Indeed, such an

[158] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b1-2: "if the ingredients still exist and are not altered (μὴ ἠλλοιωμένων) at all they are no more mixed than they were before, but are in a similar state (ὁμοίως)."

[159] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 66; Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a6-8: "We must not say that the ingredients, if they are preserved in small particles, are mixed, for this will be "composition" (σύνθεσις) and not "blending" (κρᾶσις) or "mixing" (μίξις), nor will the part show the same ration between its constituents as the whole; but we say that, if mixing has taken place, the mixture (τὸ μιχθὲν) ought to be uniform throughout (ὁμοιομερὲς), and, just as any part of water is water, so any part of what is blended should be the same as the whole."

[160] *GC* 1.10: 328a29-32**: "**But when there is some sort of balance between the 'active powers' (ταῖς δυνάμεσιν ἰσάζῃ), then each [ingredient] changes (μεταβάλλει) from its own nature (ἐκ τῆς αὐτοῦ φύσεως) into the predominant ingredient (εἰς τὸ κρατοῦν), without, however, becoming the other but something between the two with common properties (μεταξὺ καὶ κοινόν)." C.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 68.

[161] Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*, 68; c.f. Aristotle *GC* 2.7: 334b8-18.

interpretation is *prima facie* untenable, since this understanding of mixture requires that both ingredients undergo alteration, whereas for Gregory the divine nature is incapable of change.[162]

Instead, scholars who advocate an Aristotelian background to Gregory's understanding of mixture follow Wolfson in interpreting Gregory's use of mixture language in light of what Wolfson terms "unions of predominance".[163] Wolfson introduces the category "unions of predominance" because he believes the other ancient understandings of mixture were inappropriate for orthodox Christological usage.[164] However, Wolfson's account does not deal with Neo-Platonic discussions of mixture. Further, Wolfson's rejection of Stoic mixture as a viable model is premised on a misunderstanding of Stoic thought. Wolfson, following the testimony of Nemesius, argues that the Stoics understood mixture as occurring by the juxtaposition of imperceptible parts, and that therefore Stoic mixture was incapable of accounting for the unity of Christ.[165] Sorabji's study of ancient theories of mixture has shown this interpretation to be errant.[166] The Stoics did not

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[162] See, for instance, *Or.34.8*. Portmann also notes this objection to an Aristotelian interpretation of Gregory's mixture Christology; Portmann, *Die gottliche Paidagogia*, 110-111.

[163] Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol.1, 397; c.f. Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*, 131; Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation*, 84; Wesche, 'The Union of God and Man in Jesus Christ in the Thought of Gregory Nazianzen', 92; Hofer *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus,* 113, 116. The sole exception to this is Telepneff, who argues for an Aristotelian background to Gregory's understanding of mixture without appealing to Wolfson's category of "unions of predominance". However, Telepneff confuses Aristotle's account of mixture with the Stoic account, defining the Aristotelian understanding of mixture as "a whole-body and reciprocal union of two or more bodies, so that in this union each (body or nature) preserves its own personal essence and its individuality". See Telepneff, 'Theopaschite Language in the Soteriology of Saint Gregory the Theologian', 407-408.

[164] Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol.1, 385-386.

[165] Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol.1, 382.

[166] On Stoic mixture as mutual interpenetration, rather than the juxtaposition of imperceptibles, see Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 79-81, 102. see also, Anthony Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture' *JTS* 64.2 (2013) 516-555, 524-525. As Briggman points out, Chrysippus rejects the possibility of the infinite division of matter, and in doing so also rules out the possibility of understanding mixture in terms of the juxtaposition of imperceptibles. On the impossibility of the infinite division of bodies for Chrysippus, see Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 102. On Stoic predominance, understood as the relationship between the active and

understand mixture to be the juxtaposition of imperceptibles, but rather understood it in terms of the total mutual interpenetration of bodies, resulting in a united and uniform body in which the constituent ingredients are nevertheless preserved.

This being the case, we have no *prima facie* reason to rule out the viability of the Stoic account of mixture for early Christian accounts of the Christological union.[167] Indeed, Ronald Heine and Anthony Briggman have shown that mixture language was used in precisely this sense in the Christologies of Callistus of Rome and Irenaeus, respectively.[168] To the Stoic account, then, we now turn.

3.3.2 Stoic Mixture Theory

Our principal sources for Stoic understandings of mixture are the accounts of Alexander of Aphrodisias and Arius Didymus, both of which purport to be reporting the teaching of Chrysippus. We begin with Alexander's account. According to Alexander, Chrysippus and the Stoics distinguish between three types of mixture: juxtaposition (παράθεσις), in which the ingredients are preserved and lay side by side, like beans and grains of wheat;[169] fusion (σύγχυσις), in which the ingredients are destroyed and a *tertium quid* is produced, as in the production of drugs; and blending (κρᾶσις), in which the ingredients are preserved while being united together by permeating and extending throughout each other:

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passive principles in a mixture, see Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 83-84. c.f. Anthony Briggman, "Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture" *JTS* 64.2 (2013), 516-555, 518.

[167] Indeed, Sorabji argues that "For the character of the mixture involved, one would expect orthodox believers in two natures to draw on Stoic, rather than Aristotelian theory. For the ingredients in a Stoic mixture persist actually, not potentially, and one can be dominant, as the divine nature was supposed to be."; Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 120.

[168] Ronald Heine 'The Christology of Callistus' *JTS* 49.1 (1998) 56-91; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture'.

[169] Aristotle uses a similar image (wheat and barley) to illustrate σύνθεσις; Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a2-4.

> Chrysippus' theory of blending (κράσεως) is as follows: he holds that while the whole of substance is unified (ἡνῶσθαι) because it is totally pervaded (διήκοντος) by a pneuma through which the whole is held together (συνέχεταί), is stable (συμμένει), and is sympathetic (σύμπαθές) with itself, yet some of the mixtures (μίξεις) of bodies mixed in this substance occur by juxtaposition (παραθέσει), through two or more substances being composed (συντεθειμένων) into the same mass and juxtaposed (παρατιθεμένων) with one another "by juncture" as he says, and with each of them preserving (σωζούσης) the surface of their own substance (οὐσίαν) and quality (ποιότητα) in such a juxtaposition, as one will grant, happen with beans and wheat-grains in their juxtaposition; other mixtures occur by total fusion (συγχύσει δι' ὅλων τῶν) with both the substances (οὐσιῶν) and their qualities (ποιοτήτων) being destroyed (συμφθειρομένων) together, as he says happens with medical drugs in the joint-destruction of the constituents and the production of some other body from them; the third type of mixture (μίξεις) he says occurs through certain substances and their qualities being mutually coextended (ἀντιπαρεκτεινομένων) in their entirety (δι' ὅλων) and preserving (σώζειν) their original substance (οὐσίας) and qualities (ποιότητας) in such a mixture (μίξει): this mixture (μίξεων) is blending in the strict sense of the term (κρᾶσιν ἰδίως).
>
> The mutual coextension (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν) of some two or even more bodies in their entirety with one another (ὅλων δι' ὅλων) so that each of them preserves (σώζειν) their own substance (οὐσίαν) and its qualities (ποιότητας) in such a mixture (μίξει) – this, he says, alone of the mixtures (μίξεων) is blending (κρᾶσιν); for it is a peculiarity of bodies that have been blended that they can be separated (χωρίζεσθαι) again from one another, and this only occurs through the blended bodies preserving (σώζειν) their own natures (φύσεις) in the mixture (μίξει).[170]

In Alexander's report of Chrysippus's theory of mixture, μίξις serves as a broader term covering three different kinds of union, of which κρᾶσις is only one. Arius Didymus, on the other hand, identifies μίξις as a specific category referring to "the mutual spreading out along with each other through and through (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν δι' ὅλων)" that is, what Alexander identifies as Chrysippus κρᾶσις.[171] According to Arius Didymus, Chrysippus further distinguishes κρᾶσις from μίξις, with

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[170] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixt.*3. 216.14-217.2. Text and translation here and throughout this chapter are from R.B Todd, *Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic Physics* (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

[171] This terminological ambiguity may reflect a distinction between a more general use of μίξις as referring to any form of union between two ingredients, and a more technical use of μίξις as referring to the mutual co-extension of two ingredients. Aristotle makes a distinction between the general and technical use of μίξις when he comments that, while σύνθεσις is not a true mixture, the term μίξις is frequently used to describe cases of composition; Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a1-4: "The term [μίξις] is certainly used in the former sense [viz. to refer to cases of σύνθεσις]; for instance, we say that barley is mixed μεμιχθαι with wheat when each grain of barley is placed side

the former referring to the mutual coextension of liquids and the latter to the mutual coextension of dry bodies.[172]

Arius Didymus, then, identifies four categories of union recognised by Chrysippus: juxtaposition, fusion, mixture and blending:

> For members of the Stoic school like to distinguish juxtaposition (παράθεσιν), mixture (μῖξιν), blending (κρᾶσιν) and fusion (σύγχυσιν). They say that juxtaposition (παράθεσιν) is the mutual contact of bodies at their surfaces, such as we see in the case of heaps in which are included wheat and barley and lentils and anything else like them, and in the case of pebbles and sand on the sea-shore.
> They say that mixture (μῖξιν) is the mutual spreading out along with each other through and through (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν δι' ὅλων) of two or more bodies, with their natural qualities (συμφυῶν... ποιοτήτων) persisting (ὑπομενουσῶν) as happens with fire and glowing iron. In their case, the mutual spreading out (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν) of the bodies [fire and iron] along with each other occurs through and through (ὅλων). And it happens in a similar way too with the souls within us: they are mutually spread out (ἀντιπαρεκτείνουσιν) along with our bodies through and through (δι' ὅλων). For the Stoics like body to be stretched along through body (σῶμα διὰ σώματος ἀντιπαρήκειν).
> They [the Stoics] say that blending (κρᾶσιν) is the mutual spreading out along with each other through and through (δι' ὅλων ἀντιπαρέκτασιν) of two or more fluid bodies, with their qualities persisting (ποιοτήτων ὑπομεν), (they say that mixture occurs with non-fluid bodies as well, like fire and iron, or soul and the body that speak this way of the blending of fluids), because the qualities of each of the blended fluids show forth together (συνεκφαίνεσθαι) out of the blend (ἐκ τῆς κράσεως), for example, the qualities (ποιότητα) of wine, honey, water, vinegar and the like. "That the qualities (ποιότητες) of the blended ingredients survive (διαμένουσιν) in such blends is clear from the fact that the ingredients are often separated from each other (ἀποχωρίζεσθαι) by some device. Certainly, if you dip an oil-drenched sponge into wine blended with water, you will separate the water from the wine, as the water runs back into the sponge.

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by side with a grain of wheat." This distinction between a general and a strict sense of the term might also explain Alexander's description of mutual coextension as "blending in-the-strict-sense-of-the-term" (κρᾶσιν ἰδίως).

[172] Aristotle makes a similar terminological distinction; Aristotle *Topics* 4.2. The terminological ambiguity may reflect a distinction between a more general and a more technical use of μίξις in Stoic thought. Aristotle makes such a distinction, commenting that, while σύνθεσις is not a true mixture, the term μίξις is frequently used to describe cases of composition

> They say that fusion (σύγχυσιν) is the change (μεταβολὴν) of two or more qualities (ποιοτήτων) in bodies, to produce another quality (ποιότητος) differing from the earlier ones, as happens in the combination (συνθέσεως) of perfumes and medical drugs.[173]

While Arius Didymus's account departs from Alexander's by identifying four categories of union instead of three, his account agrees with that of Alexander regarding the essential details of Stoic mixture theory. According to Arius Didymus, Chrysippus identifies "mixture" (μῖξις) and "blending" (κρᾶσις) as the "complete mutual coextension" (ἀντιπαρέκτασις δι' ὅλων) of bodies through each other, in which the "substance" (οὐσία), "natures" (φύσεις) and "qualities" (ποιότητα) of the bodies are preserved without undergoing "change" (μεταβολὴ), and without being "juxtaposed side by side" (παρατιθέμενος).

When comparing the Aristotelian and Stoic accounts of mixture, we must begin by noting some areas of agreement. First, the Stoics, like Aristotle, affirm that the ingredients are not destroyed, pointing to the separability of constituent ingredients of a mixture as evidence of their preservation.[174] Second, the Stoics follow Aristotle in rejecting juxtaposition as producing genuine mixture, or blend.[175] Like Aristotle, the Stoics reject juxtaposition as producing a mixture on the basis that the resultant is not truly unified, whereas a mixture is fully united so as to be uniform throughout.[176] In doing so, the Stoics agree with Aristotle in affirming the unity of the resultant mixture (although, as we shall see, the Stoic account of how the ingredients are unified differs from that of Aristotle). Alexander reports Chrysippus as saying that in cases of mixture, the

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[173] Arius Didymus, fr. 28, ap. Stobaeum *Eclogae* 1.17.4. Text here and throughout this chapter rom H. Diels, *Doxographi Graeci*, (Berlin: Reimer, 1879; reprinted Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965): 463.24-464.6; translation from Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 82-83.

[174] The separability of ingredients is illustrated by the example of a blend of water and wine, in which the water may be separated from the wine by means of an oil-soaked sponge. See Arius Didymus, fr. 28, ap. Stobaeum *Eclogae* 1.17.4.21-23. An experiment performed by Sorabji verifies the success of this method; Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 103 n.101.

[175] C.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 66, 79.

[176] C.f. Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a6-8.

ingredients are "united (ἑνοῦσθαι) together in their entirety"[177] because there is not one part of the ingredients which is not blended with the other:

> He [Chrysippus] assumes that such a mutual extension (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν) of constituents occurs as constituent bodies go through one another (χωρούντων δι' ἀλλήλων), so that there is no part (μόριον) of them that does not partake (μετέχον) of everything in such a product of mixture (μίγματι) through blending (κεκραμένῳ): otherwise the result would no longer be blending (κρᾶσιν) but juxtaposition (παράθεσιν).[178]

While Chrysippus's insistence on the unified, uniform nature of a mixture fits Aristotle's account of mixture, his understanding of the manner in which mixture is unified does not. For Aristotle, the uniformity of the resultant mixture is due to the "alteration" (ἀλλοίωσις**)** or "change" (μεταβολὴ) of its constituent ingredients into a *tertium quid*.[179] Chrysippus, on the other hand, explicitly denies the survival of ingredients which undergo a change in their qualities. From this it follows that, for Chrysippus, the change of ingredients into a *tertium quid* does not constitute a mixture. Rather, Chrysippus identifies such a union as "confusion" (σύγχυσις).[180] Instead, Chrysippus mentions that the unity of a mixture or blend results from the complete mutual coextension (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν δι' ὅλων) of the ingredients, in which the bodies of the constituent ingredients "go through one another" (χωρούντων δι' ἀλλήλων).[181] This different understanding of the union of bodies in a mixture gives rise to the distinctive Stoic terminology of κρᾶσις δι' ὅλων or "total blending". In Stoic thought, "total blending" denotes "the mutual coextension (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν) of some two or even more bodies in their entirety with one another (ὅλων δι'

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[177] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixt.*4. 217.27-28.

[178] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixt.*3. 217.9-12

[179] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328b23: "mixture (μίξις) is a union (ἕνωσις) of 'mixables' (μικτῶν), when they have undergone alteration (ἀλλοιωθέντων)".

[180] Didymus, fr. 28, ap. Stobaeum *Eclogae* 1.17.4.25-27.

[181] Aristotle and his followers rejected as absurd the notion of "body going through body"; see Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 66, 98-102.

ὅλων) so that each of them preserves (σώζειν) their own substance (οὐσίαν) and its qualities (ποιότητας)".[182]

A second difference between the Stoic account of mixture and that of Aristotle lies in what sense the ingredients and their qualities are understood to survive. For Aristotle, as we saw, the ingredients and their qualities survive only in potentiality, since in actuality the ingredients have been changed towards an intermediate state.[183] The Stoics, on the other hand, admit no such change. Instead, Alexander reports Chrysippus as saying that, in cases of κρᾶσις, the substances (οὐσίαν) and the qualities (ποιότητας) - and therefore the natures (φύσεις) - of the constitutive ingredients are preserved.[184] The actual preservation of the constituent ingredients and their qualities is evidenced not only by the fact that they may be separated out again, but also by the fact that the qualities of the constituent ingredients "show forth together" (συνεκφαίνεσθαι) in the mixture.[185]

Chrysippus, it seems, developed his account of mixture in order to address a broader concern within Stoic thought, namely, the relationship between the active principle

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[182] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*3. 216.30.

[183] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a29-32.

[184] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*3. 216.27, 217.1. In Stoic thought, "undetermined matter" (οὐσία ὕλη) or "substrate" (ὑποκείμενον), qualified by "common properties" (κοινή ποιότης), results in "nature" (φύσις). Thus, if the substance and properties of the constituent ingredients survive, so does their nature. On the Stoic understanding of nature, see Alloys Grillmeier *Christ in the Christian Tradition* v.1, 128, 372-374; Paul B. Clayton 'The Chalcedonian Formula and Twentieth Century Ecumenism' in *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: essays in honour of Bruce Chilton* eds. Alan Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans and Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 396-412, 399.

[185] Didymus, fr. 28, ap. Stobaeum *Eclogae* 1.17.4.20. Sorabji illustrates this aspect of Stoic thought with the examples of the mixture of lime with orange juice in the cocktail called a Saint Clements, and of the mixture of wine with water: "In the cocktail called a Saint Clement's, one can distinctly taste both the lime juice and the orange juice. And in a mixture of wine and water, one can detect the coldness, fluidity and transparency of the water and the flavour of the wine."; Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion,* 70.

(God/Pneuma/Logos) and the passive principle (matter). In Alexander's report, we see that Chrysippus used his theory of mixture to explain how Pneuma "pervades" (διήκω) matter, causing it to be unified (ἡνῶσθαι) to hold together (συνέχεταί), to be stable (συμμένει) and to be interactive (εἶναι σύμπαθές) with itself.[186] Here we may note two important corollaries of this depiction of the relationship between the active and passive principles, in which the active pervades the passive. First, it is the activity of the active element on the passive which causes the resultant of the blend to be unified. Second, the active principle causes the interaction between the two principles.[187] It is this mutual interaction between the active and passive principles which ensures the preservation of both in a blend: "the bodies that are being blended with one another must be reciprocally acted on by one another (this is why neither is destroyed, since the one acted on by the other reacts in the process of being acted on)".[188]

This notion of the mutual interaction between active and passive principles in a blend proved useful for Stoic conceptions of the soul-body union, which the Stoics also viewed as a union of active and passive principles in a blend:[189]

> They employ as clear evidence that this is the case the fact that the soul which has its own substantiality (ὑπόστασιν), just like the body that receives it, pervades (διήκειν) the whole of the body while preserving its own substantiality (ὑπόστασιν) in the

[186] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*3. 216.14-16; c.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 83-84; Heine 'The Christology of Callistus', 75-76; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture', 517-518.

[187] As Sorabji points out, the use of mixture theory to explain the interaction of Pneuma and matter – and, as we shall see, between body and soul - reflects Stoic materialism. In Stoic thought, only bodies are capable of acting or being acted upon. Since Pneuma interacts with matter, and the soul interacts with the body, both must be bodies. At the same time, both must be unified while interacting. As Alexander reports, the Stoics illustrated this point with the example of body and soul: if the soul did not pervade the body, then, rather than the soul being present throughout and giving life to the entire body, there would be alternating pockets of soul and dead matter; Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 83; c.f. Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*4. 217.36.

[188] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*11. 226.30-32.

[189] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 83; Heine 'The Christology of Callistus', 76; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture', 520.

> mixture (μίξει) with it (for there is nothing in the body possessing the soul that does not partake (ἄμοιρον) of the soul).[190]

In this passage, Chrysippus describes the soul pervading the body in similar terms to his description of the active principle (Pneuma) pervading matter.[191] The soul, by pervading the body, is present throughout the entire body and so is one with the body, yet without either losing its own substantiality. This complete mutual participation, by means of the soul's pervading the body, explains the sense in which the soul and the body are a unity. At the same time, this understanding of the soul and body as a blend of active and passive principles explains the interaction between soul and body. Cleanthes comments upon this relationship thus: "the soul is affected with (συμπάσχει) the body when the body is ill or cut, and body is affected with the soul, for when the soul is ashamed the body becomes red, and pale when it is afraid".[192] This interaction allows the activities and experiences of the soul and the body to be shared between the two without causing one to change into the other and thus compromise their distinctive existence.[193]

Gregory's understanding of mixture is close to the Stoic account. For, Gregory, as we shall see later in this chapter, understands the mixture of the divine and human natures as occurring by means of mutual interpenetration, and views the result of this mixture as a true unity in which the

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[190] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*4. 217.32-36.

[191] That Chrysippus understood the soul and body to be related as active to passive principle is confirmed by the fact that Chrysippus goes on to compare the soul's activity in pervading the body to the activity of the two active elements – fire and air – pervading the two passive elements – water and earth; Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*4. 218.2-5.

[192] Cleanthes ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.* 2.21. Text here and throughout this chapter is from M. Morani, *Nemesii Emeseni de natura hominis,* Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987); translation is from R.W. Sharples and P.J. van der Eijk *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

[193] Heine and Briggman have each shown that this understanding of the soul-body relationship was important to the mixture Christologies of Callistus of Rome and Irenaeus of Lyons as a means of explaining the relationship between Christ's human and divine actions and experiences; Heine 'The Christology of Callistus', 75- 76; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture', 545-547.

constituent ingredients nevertheless survive with their qualities. However, the immediate source for Gregory's understanding of the Christological mixture is not Stoic, but rather reflects later Neo-Platonic appropriations of the Stoic account. To these, then, we now turn.

3.3.3 Neo-Platonic Appropriation of Stoic Mixture Theory

In his study of ancient philosophical accounts of mixture, Sorabji reveals that, in spite of Plotinus's considered rejection of Stoic mixture theory in *Enneads* 4.7.8 and 2.7.1-2, several Neo-Platonic thinkers developed accounts of mixture which adapted the Stoic account to explain some cases of union in terms of interpenetration. As I noted at the start of this chapter, different Neo-Platonic thinkers placed different restrictions on when and with what kind of bodies or substances interpenetration could occur. For the purposes of this chapter, I will highlight here the Neo-Platonic position that argued that, while material bodies cannot interpenetrate each other, immaterial natures can interpenetrate both material and immaterial natures, thus applying Stoic mixture theory to explain the union of immaterial natures with each other and with material bodies.[194]

Plotinus, while explicitly rejecting Stoic mixture theory, paves the way for its application to immaterial beings, when he argues that what is immaterial may pass through material bodies. Plotinus provides two examples. First, he argues that qualities, which he regards as immaterial, may pass through bodies because they are incorporeal: "one should consider carefully the sense of the assertion that when a body passes through a body (σῶμα χωροῦν διά σώματος) it cuts it up completely: since we ourselves say that qualities (ποιότητας) go through bodies (διά τῶν σωματῶν

[194] The application of Stoic mixture theory to immaterial natures may not be as novel as first appears, given that later Stoics came to view Pneuma as "something not akin to matter, but rather to force"; Shmuel Sambursky, *Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1959), 36. At the same time, Neo-Platonic understandings of mixture exhibit a definite departure from Stoic thought by denying that material natures could interpenetrate.

χωρεῖν) without cutting them. The reason is that they too are incorporeal (ἀσώματοι)."[195] For Plotinus, material bodies divide each other by necessity when they go through each other.[196] Immaterial natures such as qualities, on the other hand, neither divine nor are divided when passing through bodies. Therefore, while material bodies cannot interpenetrate, immaterial natures can.

The same logic underpins Plotinus's second example, when he argues from the fact that soul goes through the body to establish the immateriality of the soul. Again, Plotinus's arrives at his position through criticism of Stoic mixture theory. If the soul is material, he reasons, it must be united to the body by blending (κρᾶσις). [197] Yet material bodies cannot interpenetrate, because in doing so they divide one another.[198] The inability of material bodies to interpenetrate, for Plotinus, proves the immateriality of the soul, since "the soul penetrates (χωρεῖν) through whole bodies (δι' ὅλων), <and> therefore it is immaterial (ἀσώματος)."[199] While his primary aim is to demonstrate to immateriality of the soul, Plotinus's affirmation that the soul can penetrate the body because it is immaterial further establishes the his position that, while material bodies cannot interpenetrate each other, immaterial natures can interpenetrate both material and immaterial natures.

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[195] Plotinus *Enn.*2.7.27-29. Text and translation here and throughout this chapter are from A.H. Armstrong LCL 441 (*Enn.* 2), 443 (*Enn.* 4), (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966; 1984). Plotinus goes on to state that what prevents penetration of bodies must either be the number of qualities it possesses, or a quality of a particular kind, such as "density" (πυκνότης), or "corporeality" (σωματότητα).

[196] This line of argument has its origins in peripatetic criticisms of Stoic mixture theory, which saw Stoic mixture as implying the progressive division of bodies into imperceptible parts; see, for instance, Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*7. 221.25-34; c.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 102.

[197] Plotinus *Enn.* 4.7.8^2.1-3.

[198] Plotinus *Enn.* 4.7.8^2.7-21.

[199] Plotinus *Enn.* 4.7.8^2.22-23.

Several later Neo-Platonic thinkers adopted a similar stance. One fragment attributed to Ammonius Saccas and preserved in Nemesius nicely illustrates how later Neo-Platonic thinkers adapted Stoic mixture theory to explain the interpenetration of immaterial natures.[200] The author of this fragment, whom I shall henceforth refer to as Pseudo-Ammonius,[201] draws on Stoic mixture theory to explain how the immaterial soul is united to the body. According to Pseudo-Ammonius the soul, unlike material natures, is able to permeate and mix with the body without being confused and destroyed or juxtaposed. The soul is capable of uniting itself to the body in this way, Pseudo-Ammonius says, because it is an "intelligible nature" (νοητός φύσις) and "incorporeal" (ἀσώματος):

> Intelligible (νοητὰ) things have such a nature (φύσιν) as to be both unified (ἑνοῦσθαι) with things capable of receiving them, as are things which perish together with one another (συνεφθαρμένα), and when unified (ἑνούμενα), to remain unconfused (ἀσύγχυτα) and not perish (ἀδιάφθορα), like things which are juxtaposed (παρακείμενα). For in the case of bodies (σωμάτων) unification (ἕνωσις) certainly brings about the alteration (ἀλλοίωσιν) of ingredients… But in the case of intelligible things (νοητῶν), unification (ἕνωσις) occurs, but alteration (ἀλλοίωσις) does not follow with it… Also, if soul, which is life, were to be changed (μετεβάλλετο) when blended (κράσει), it would be altered (ἠλλοιώθη) and would not still be life. But what would it contribute to the body unless it provided it with life? Therefore, the soul is not altered (ἀλλοιοῦται) with unification (ἑνώσει)… The soul is, then, unified (ἥνωται) with the body in an unconfused union (ἀσυγχύτως ἥνωται). Their interaction (συμπάθεια) shows that they are unified; for the whole living thing interacts

[200] Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3 39.17-42.8. Melchisedec Toronen's discussion of this passage in his study of Maximus the Confessor's conception of unity and distinction first brought this passage to my attention; Melchisedec Toronen *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 115-118.

[201] Modern scholars have not yet resolved the question of the authorship of this fragment, although scholarly consensus has tended to favour Dorrie's argument that this passage is in fact taken from Porphyry's *Miscellanious Questions on the Soul*; Heinrich Dorrie *Porphyrios' "Symmikta zetemata": ihre Stellung in System und Geschichte des Neuplatonismus, nebst einem Kommentar zu den Fragmenten* (Münich: Beck, 1959). Dorrie's argument builds on that of H. von Arnim 'Quelle der Uberlieferung über Ammonius Sakkas' in Rheinisches Museum 42 (1887) 276-285. John Rist, on the other hand, argues that Porphyry did not pen this fragment, which instead originates from a fourth-century anti-Porphyrian Christian source; John Rist 'Pseudo-Ammonius and the Soul/Body Problem in Some Platonic Texts of Late Antiquity' *The American Journal of Philology* 109.3 (1988) 402-415.

> (συμπαθεῖ) with itself, since it is one (ἓν). But it is clear that the soul is in a way separated (χωριζομένην) from the body in sleep… For being incorporeal (ἀσώματος) it has permeated [the body] throughout (δι' ὅλου κεχώρηκεν) as do things that have perished together with one another (συνεφθαρμένα), <yet> without perishing (ἀδιάφθορος) and <remaining> unconfused (ἀσύγχυτος), preserving itself as one (ἓν) and making the things in which it comes to be conformed (τρέπουσα) to its life while not being transmuted (τρεπομένη) by them.[202]

In this passage, Pseudo-Ammonius rejects the Stoic belief that material bodies can interpenetrate, arguing instead for a position similar to that of Aristotle regarding the mixture of material bodies, namely, that "in the case of bodies (σωμάτων) unification (ἕνωσις) certainly brings about the alteration (ἀλλοίωσιν) of ingredients". At the same time, Pseudo-Ammonius depends on Stoic mixture theory for his understanding of the soul-body union.[203] His description of the soul as "permeating [the body] throughout" (δι' ὅλου κεχώρηκεν) is reminiscent of Chrysippus's claim that the soul "pervades the whole of the body (δι' ὅλου του σώματος διήκειν)".[204] Similarly, his description of the soul as united to the body while remaining "unconfused" (ἀσύγχυτα) and "without perishing" (ἀδιάφθορα) is reminiscent of the Stoic definition of "confusion" (σύγχυσις) as a union in which the constituent ingredients are destroyed,[205] while also conforming to the Stoic view of the soul-body union as a mixture in which each is preserved without undergoing destruction. Further, he appeals to the separation of the soul in sleep as evidence of the preservation of the soul and body in their union, an appeal which fits the Stoic view that saw the separability of the constituent ingredients as proof of their survival in a blend.[206] Indeed, Pseudo-Ammonius goes

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[202] Pseudo-Ammonius ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3. 39.17-21; 40.5-6, 11-13, 19-22 (trans. Sharples and van der Eijk *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man*; alt.).

[203] On the Stoic background to this fragment's account of the soul-body union, see Heinrich Dorrie *Porphyrios' "Symmikta zetemata"*, 24-35.

[204] Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*4. 217.34-35.

[205] That Pseudo-Ammonius has a Stoic understanding of "confusion" is further indicated by his contrasting of "unconfused union" with a kind of union in which both ingredients are "destroyed together" (συνεφθαρμένα); Pseudo-Ammonius ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3. 39.19-22.

[206] Arius Didymus, fr. 28, ap. Stobaeum *Eclogae* 1.17.4.21-23.

so far as to write: "if soul, which is life, were to be changed (μετεβάλλετο) when blended (κράσει), it would be altered (ἠλλοιώθη) and would not still be life," thus using the language of blending to refer to the union of body and soul.

For Pseudo-Ammonius, it is the immateriality of the soul as an intelligible and incorporeal nature which enables it to permeate the body. He writes thus: "things intelligible (νοητά) are not impeded by bodies (σωμάτων), but spread throughout the whole body (διὰ παντὸς σώματος χωροῦντα).[207] In this regard his account of the soul-body union agrees with that of Plotinus. At the same time, Pseudo-Ammonius's account is particularly notable for his claim that the body and soul are unified on account of their "interaction" (συμπάθεια),[208] a claim which indicates the incorporation of the Stoic view that it is the interaction of the active and passive elements in a blend which causes them to be unified into a Neo-Platonic account of the soul-body union.

By the early fifth-century this view, that whereas material natures cannot interpenetrate each, immaterial natures can interpenetrate both material and immaterial natures, had become a commonly held position. Syrianus and his student Proclus both endorse the position that immaterial natures may interpenetrate.[209] Further, Syrianus's remarks on the subject indicate that he knew at least two philosophical groups who held similar positions.[210] As with Pseudo-Ammonius, Syrianus and Proclus's debt to Stoic thought can be seen in their description of immaterial natures as interpenetrating "unconfusedly" (ἀσυγχύτως), a description which depends

[207] Pseudo-Ammonius ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3. 41.10-12 (trans. Sharples and van der Eijk *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man*; alt.).

[208] Pseudo-Ammonius ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3. 39.11-13 (trans. Sharples and van der Eijk *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man*; alt.).

[209] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 84-86; Proclus *in Remp.* 2.162.20-163.9; *in Tim.* 254.13-14.

[210] Syrianus speaks of one group who believe that place and extension may interpenetrate with corporeal bodies, and another who think that any immaterial body may interpenetrate with other immaterial bodies and with corporeal bodies; Syrianus *in Metaph.* 84.27-85.26.

on the Stoic distinction between mixture and "confusion" (σύγχυσις), and in their description of immaterial bodies as "going through one another" (χωρεῖν δι' ἀλλήλων).[211] Thus, these Neo-Platonic thinkers continued to make use of Stoic mixture theory to explain the interpenetration of immaterial natures even as they rejected Stoic claims about the interpenetration of material bodies.

It is the contention of this chapter that Gregory's understanding of mixture is derived from these Neo-Platonic appropriations of Stoic mixture theory. However, Wolfson argues that Gregory's understanding of mixture belongs to a category not discussed above, namely, Aristotelian unions of predominance. In order to show that Gregory's understanding is Neo-Platonic, then, I must first refute Wolfson's argument that Gregory uses mixture language to express an Aristotelian "union of predominance". To this task I now turn.

3.4 UNIONS OF PREDOMINANCE AND GREGORY'S MIXTURE CHRISTOLOGY

Wolfson's interpretation of Gregory's mixture Christology rests on his claim to have identified a category of union different to those discussed above, namely, the category he terms "unions of predominance. However, Sorabji's work brings Wolfson's account of unions of predominance into question.[212] A close read of Aristotle's account of mixture shows that the category "unions of predominance" is not native to Aristotle's thought, but rather is a construction of Wolfson's intended to explain what he considered to be the only possible orthodox sense of mixture

[211] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 85.17, 21; text here and throughout this chapter is from W. Kroll, *Syriani in metaphysica commentaria* Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 6.1 (Berlin: Reimer, 1902). Proclus *in Tim.* 2.254.14; text: E. Diehl, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria* vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903; reprinted Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).

[212] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 60-122, esp. 66-72. That Sorabji's work undermines Wolfson claim to have identified a category of "unions of predominance" has already been noted by Briggman; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture', 523 n.34.

language.[213] Instead, the cases cited by Wolfson as examples of unions of predominance all refer to cases of a different Aristotelian category, namely, generation/corruption (γένεσις/φθορά).

In order to recognise this, we must first briefly outline Aristotle's understanding of generation/corruption. For Aristotle, generation/corruption occurs when one ingredient is destroyed and converted into the other, such that only one ingredient remains, or when both ingredients are destroyed to produce something new.[214] Thus, instances of generation/corruption are distinct from instances of mixture. For, whereas in cases of mixture both ingredients survive in potentiality, in cases of generation/corruption there is the destruction of one ingredient, and the increase of another, or else there is the destruction of both ingredients.

Wolfson cites four examples given by Aristotle which he takes to be illustrative of unions of predominance: (1) a drop of wine in ten thousand gallons of water (*GC* 1.10, 328a25-28); (2) tin and bronze (*GC* 1.10 328b13); (3) wine with a little water (*GC* 1.5, 321a33 – 321b2); (4) fire and wood (*GC* 1.5, 322a10-11, 14-16). Wolfson views these examples as cases of union in which "the resultant individual is one of the original constituent bodies, the one of greater power of action", yet "the body of the lesser power of action… does not disappear".[215] However, a closer analysis of these passages reveals that they all refer to cases of generation/corruption, in which the lesser is entirely converted into the larger. Indeed, Sorabji has already shown that case (2) the refers to the persistence of an inessential quality – a qualitative accident – in cases of

[213] As Briggman shows, Wolfson presupposes predominance as the only valid Christological model, and then uses this presupposition to guide his reading of early Christian authors. Thus: "Having established as his starting place that early Christians actively sought an analogy for the Christological model of predominance, Wolfson finds what they, and he, sought in 'unions of predominance'; Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture', 524.

[214] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b3-7.

[215] Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol.1, 378.

generation/corruption.[216] A close read of cases (1), (3) and (4) shows that Aristotle also intended them to be illustrations of generation/corruption.

Of these three cases, Aristotle deals with (3) first, producing it as an example of growth A little bit of water added to wine results in the growth of the wine, just as the addition of food results in the growth of the flesh. The use of this example to illustrate growth immediately suggests that Aristotle thinks of the conversion of water into wine in terms of generation/corruption, since Aristotle treats growth as a kind of generation/corruption, in which one ingredient is destroyed and comes to be another.[217] That this is Aristotle's understanding is confirmed by his description of what happens when water is mixed with wine:

> One might also raise this difficulty: What is it which grows (τί ἐστι τὸ αὐξανόμενον)? Is it that to which something is added? For example, if a man grows in his leg, is it his leg which is greater, while that which makes him grow, namely, his food, is not greater? Why have not both grown? For both that which is added and that to which the addition was made are greater, just as when you mix (μίξῃς) wine with water; for each ingredient is similarly increased. Or is it because the substance of the leg remains unchanged, but that of the other (i.e. the food) does not? For in the mixture (μίξει) of the wine and water it is the prevailing ingredient (τὸ ἐπικρατοῦν) which is said to increase, namely the wine; for the mixture (μῖγμα) as a whole performs the function (ἔργον) of wine and not of water.[218]

Aristotle's does use of the language of "mixture" here to speak of the combination of water and wine does not indicate he thinks of this union as an example of true mixture, since he elsewhere acknowledges that some unions may be called mixtures even if they are not in fact a true example of mixture.[219] Nor is there reason to think that Aristotle views the lesser ingredient, in this case water, as surviving this process. As Sorabji notes, the increase in volume of the predominant

[216] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 70.
[217] Aristotle *GC* 1.5 322a5-16.
[218] Aristotle *GC* 1.5: 321a33 – 321b2.
[219] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a1.

ingredient, in this case wine, indicates the destruction of the lesser ingredient, since it is converted into wine, and so loses its distinctive properties, gaining instead the form of wine.[220]

This fits with Aristotle's account of what happens to the smaller ingredient in cases of growth. Aristotle explains that in such cases that which causes growth in the larger ingredient, viz. the smaller ingredient which is added to it, is "destroyed" and becomes that which grows. For example, in the case where food becomes flesh, the food "has passed-away (φθαρὲν) and comes-to-be flesh (σὰρξ γέγονεν)". Aristotle similarly describes the case of fire and wood as an example of growth in which the wood is destroyed and comes to be fire:

> Now we do not say that wood has mixed (μεμῖχθαί) with fire nor that it mixes (μίγνυσθαι), when it is burning, either with its own *particles* or with the fire, but we say that the fire comes-to-be (γίνεσθαι) and the wood passes-away (φθείρεσθα).[221]

Contrary to Wolfson's assertion that cases of "predominance" are a subset of cases of "mixture", Aristotle here explicitly denies that wood "mixes" with fire. Rather, in this case it is clear that what Wolfson identifies as a "union of predominance" is in fact an instance of generation/corruption. Wood is not mixed with fire, but rather "the fire comes to be and the wood passes away". The same is true for the case of a drop of wine in ten thousand gallons of water:

> When many of one of them [viz. one ingredient capable of mixture] are compounded with few of another or a large bulk with a small, do not produce a mixture (μίξιν) but an increase (αὔξησιν) of the predominant ingredient (τοῦ κρατοῦντος), for there is a change (μεταβάλλει) of the other ingredient into the predominant. (For example, a drop of wine does not mix with ten thousand measures of water, for its form (εἶδος) is dissolved (λύεται) and it changes (μεταβάλλει) so as to become part of the total volume of water.)[222]

Here, Aristotle again clearly distinguishes what Wolfson refers to as an instance of "predominance" from cases of mixture. A drop of wine added to ten thousand measures of water

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[220] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 71.
[221] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b12-14.
[222] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 328a25-28.

does not result in mixture but in the increase of the predominant ingredient. Once again, the increase in the predominant ingredient indicates the destruction of the lesser ingredient. For Aristotle, the drop of wine placed in ten thousand measures of water "changes" into the predominant ingredient, and that its "form" is "dissolved". Commenting on this passage, Sorabji notes that, as we saw in cases where a smaller volume of water is added to a larger volume of wine, the destruction of the form and distinctive properties of the ingredient entails the destruction of the ingredient itself.[223]

The above analysis makes it clear that the Aristotelian category Wolfson identifies as "unions of predominance" in fact refers to Aristotle's account of generation/corruption. This observation raises some *prima facie* problems for Wolfson's interpretation of Gregory's mixture Christology. First, Wolfson's argument rests on his successfully having identified cases in which mixture language is used for instances of generation/corruption. Yet, as we have just established, Aristotle distinguishes instances of generation/corruption from instances of mixture. In fact, Aristotle explicitly denies that generation/corruption is a form of mixture: "if one ingredient is destroyed (φθαρέντος), they have not been mixed, but one ingredient exists while the other does not, whereas mixture (μίξιν) is composed of ingredients which remain what they were before (ὁμοίως ἐχόντων εἶναι); and in the same way, even if, both the ingredients having come together, each of them is destroyed, there is no mixture; for things which have no existence at all cannot have been mixed."[224]

A second difficulty lies in Aristotle's claim that the destruction of the lesser ingredient in cases of generation/corruption results in the increase of the predominant ingredient. Applied to the

[223] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 66-67.
[224] Aristotle *GC* 1.10: 327b3-7.

Christological union, this suggests that the conversion of Christ's humanity into divinity divinity would result in the increase of his divinity. Yet this contradicts Gregory's conception of the divine nature as perfect and incapable of increase.[225]

Still more, for Aristotle cases of generation/corruption result in the complete destruction of the lesser ingredient. This requirement renders the notion of generation/corruption incompatible with Gregory's understanding of the Christological union, in which the continuing existence of Christ's humanity plays an important role. To recognise this, we must look briefly at several passages from Gregory's *Theological Orations* that show that Gregory conceives of Christ's humanity, along with his human qualities, as surviving its mixture with the divine Word.

The first passage I wish to discuss is Gregory's description of the incarnation in *Or.29.19*:

> For, the one who you now disparage was once above you. He who is now human was once incomposite. What he was he remained (διέμεινεν); what he was not he assumed (προσέλαβεν). In the beginning he is without cause – for what could cause God? But later he came to be through a cause: to save you O proud one, who scorn the divinity because he took on your thick materiality, and communicated with the flesh through the mediation of the mind, making lowly humanity to become God (γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ὁ κάτω θεός),[226] because it was co-blended throughout (συνανεκράθη) with

[225] C.f. *Or.31.4* (SC 250: 226): "Indeed, what is divinity (θεότης) if it is not perfect (τελεία)? And how is it perfect (τελεία), if it is lacking (λείπει) something for its perfection (τελείωσιν)." See also *Or.30.18*; *Or.45.13*.

[226] Wickham translates the phrase "καὶ γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ὁ κάτω θεός" as referring to Christ's divinity becoming human, rather than Christ's humanity becoming divine: "…being made that God on earth, which is man"; Fred Williams and Lionel Wickham *On God and Christ* (Crestwood, NY: SVS, 2002), 86. As Althaus notes (Althaus, *Die Heilslehre des heiligen Gregor von Nazianz*, 131 n.38), the correct interpretation of this phrase is partially dependent on a question of punctuation. My translation reads a comma following ὁ κάτω, indicating that ὁ κάτω goes together with ἄνθρωπος, and makes ἄνθρωπος ὁ κάτω the subject of γενόμενος, with θεός the object. Wickham, on the other hand, reads a comma after ἄνθρωπος, indicating that ὁ κάτω goes together θεός, and makes ἄνθρωπος and ὁ κάτω θεός together the object of γενόμενος, and thus identifies the subject with the subject of the immediately preceding lines, viz. the Son. The correct reading may be determined with reference to the lines immediately following this phrase, which read: "ἐπειδὴ συνανεκράθη θεῷ, καὶ γέγονεν εἷς, τοῦ κρείττονος ἐκνικήσαντος, ἵνα γένωμαι τοσοῦτον θεός, ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος". The use of the conjunction ἐπειδὴ - "since/when" indicates that Gregory is continuing his thought from the immediately preceding line. Since no new subject is introduced following ἐπειδὴ, the subject of συνανεκράθη must be taken from the

> God, and became one (εἷς), the greater part prevailing (τοῦ κρείττονος ἐκνικήσαντος), so that I might become God to the extent that he became man (γένωμαι τοσοῦτον θεός, ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος).[227]

Wolfson argues that Gregory's statement in this passage that Christ's divinity "prevailed" (ἐκνικήσαντος) over his humanity indicates that Gregory understood the Christological mixture in terms of "Aristotelian predominance",[228] according to which Jesus's humanity would be converted into divinity and so destroyed.[229] However, this interpretation does not fit the broader exegetical argument of this passage. In *Or.29.19* and the surrounding passages of this oration, Gregory is arguing that Christ's divine nature can be distinguished from the humanity he assumed, and that this distinction explains those passages of scripture which appear to subordinate Christ. This distinction requires the continued existence of Christ's humanity, since Gregory is arguing that this humanity, in distinction to Christ's divinity, is the subject of those passages of scripture which appear to subordinate Christ.

That Gregory believes that Christ's humanity persists in the Christological mixture is confirmed by his discussion of the Christological union in *Or.30.8*. There, Gregory seeks to refute

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preceding clause. Clearly it is Christ's humanity, rather than the Son, which was blended with God (συνανεκράθη θεῷ). Therefore, the subject of "καὶ γενόμενος ἄνθρωπος ὁ κάτω θεός" must be ἄνθρωπος, and so the passage is to be read as a reference to the deification of Christ's humanity. This reading is confirmed by the purpose clause introduced by ἵνα, which makes the deification of Christ's humanity the basis for the deification of human beings in general.

[227] *Or.29.19* (SC 250: 216-218).

[228] Wolfson states that Gregory's use of mixture language in this passage "exactly corresponds to Aristotle's description of 'predominance' as a union in which the weaker element 'changes into that which predominates'."; Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* vol. 1, 397.

[229] As we saw above, the category Wolfson identifies as predominance refers in fact to Aristotle's account of generation/corruption, in which the lesser element is completely destroyed and transformed into the greater element. In fact, Wolfson cites in GC 1.10: 328a26 in support of his interpretation of *Or.29.19*, a passage in which Aristotle uses the example of a drop of wine in ten thousand measures of water is converted into water to illustrate his understanding of generation/corruption.

Eunomius's interpretation of John 20.17.[230] In his *Apology,* Eunomius interpreted Jesus's use of the phrase "my God" as indicating the creaturely status of the Son, since the Father is the Son's 'God', as he is for all other creatures.[231] In *Or.30.8*, Gregory responds specifically to Eunomius's more developed argument in his *Apology for the Apology*, where Eunomius argues that the pairing of "my God" and "my Father" with "your God" and "your Father" indicates that the Son has of the same ontological status as his disciples:[232]

> [The passage 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, and my God and your God' indicates] that either, through the terms expressing the relationship, sharing of being between the disciples and the Father is simultaneously attested, or else the Lord himself is not directing us by this expression to sharing the nature of the Father; and just as the fact that the God over all is named 'their God' argues the servile status of the disciples, by the same argument it is conceded by these words that the Son is in servitude to God.[233]

Gregory responds to Eunomius's exegesis of this passage thus:

> "God" would be spoken not by the Word, but by the visible one (του ὁρωμένου). For how could there be a "God" of the one who is properly (κυρίως) God? In the same way also, "Father" is not spoken by the visible one, but by the Word. For indeed he was double: so that the one is properly (κυρίως) said and one is not properly (κυρίως) said by each. The opposite holds for us: for us, God is properly (κυρίως) "God", but not properly (κυρίως) "Father".[234]

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[230] "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God."

[231] Eunomius *Apology* 21.10-12; c.f. Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.10.1.

[232] C.f. Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.10.7, where Nyssen provides the following summary of Eunomius's argument: "The goal of their whole effort is directed to this: to prove that, in terms of the majesty of his nature, the Son is as far distant from the rank, power and being of the Father, as he also surpasses the essential being of man, and they claim this saying in support of that idea, because it applies the same terms 'Father' and 'God' equally in relation to the Lord and to the disciples of the Lord, as though no difference of natural rank were envisaged between them, when he is reckoned to be in the same kind of way Father and God both to him and to them." (GNO II/II: 307; trans. Stuart Hall in Johan Leemans ed. *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III: an English translation with commentary and supporting studies: proceedings of the 12th International Colloquium on Gregory of Nyssa (Leuven, 14-17 September 2010)* (Leiden: Brill, 2014)).

[233] Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.10.8 (GNO II/II: 307; trans. Hall *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III*).

[234] *Or.30.8* (SC 250: 240).

Gregory first responds to Eunomius's claim that the phrase "my God" indicates the creaturely status of the Son. He does this by distinguishing between the Word in its divine nature and the "visible Word": the phrase "my God" is spoken from the perspective of the visible Word, while the phrase "my Father" is spoken from the perspective of the divine Word.[235] Thus, God is "properly" (κυρίως) God of the visible Word, that is, of Christ's humanity. Conversely, God is God is "properly" Father of the divine Word. This distinction explains the sense in which God is "God" and "Father" of the disciples. Just as God is "properly" God of Christ's humanity but not "properly" Father, so too God is "properly God of the disciples, but not "properly" Father. Thus, the pairing of "my God" and "my Father" with "your God" and "your Father" does not indicate sameness of ontological status between the divine Word and his disciples, but between the disciples and Christ's humanity. Again, this means that Christ's humanity is the subject of certain scriptural passages. Specifically, when Christ says "my God" it is Christ's humanity that is the subject of these words. Again, this indicates the continuing existence of Christ's humanity, since this humanity could not be the subject of these words if it did not exist.

That Christ's humanity is not converted into divinity in the Christological mixture is confirmed by Gregory's remarks on the metaphysical principles behind his exegesis of Christological texts which immediately follows the passage from *Or.30.8* quoted above:

> Indeed, this is the cause of the error of the heretics: the conjoining (ἐπίζευξις) of the names (ὀνομάτων), when the names overlap (ἐπαλλαττομένων) because of the co-blending (διὰ τὴν σύγκρασιν). The sign is this: whenever the natures (αἱ φύσεις) are distinguished (διίστανται) by conceptualisation (ἐπινοίαις), the names (ὀνόματα) are distinguished as well. Listen to what Paul says: "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory". 'God' of Christ, but 'Father' of Glory. For, even though the two

[235] Gregory of Nyssa makes a similar argument, attributing the phrase "my God" to "what is visible, solid, mobile, and akin in nature to the disciples"; Gregory of Nyssa *Eun.* 3.10.2-6, here 6 (GNO II/II: 307; trans. Hall, *Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium III*; alt.).

> together are indeed one (ἕν), yet this is not in nature (φύσει), but in the meeting together (συνόδῳ) of these.[236]

We can distinguish between those scriptural "names" (ὀνόματα) of Christ which refer to his humanity and those which refer to his divinity because we can distinguish between the "natures" (φύσεις) of Christ by means of "conceptualisation" (ἐπινοίαις). We can do this because, while Christ is indeed "one" (ἕν), he is not one in "nature" (φύσει), but in the "meeting together" (συνόδῳ) of his natures. In other words, Christ's human nature persists in the Christological blend, and it is the persistence of Christ's human nature which allows us to distinguish between those scriptural names of Christ which refer to his humanity and those which refer to his divinity

For Gregory, then, Christ's humanity and divinity are preserved in the Christological mixture. Therefore, neither Wolfson's category of "unions of predominance", nor the Aristotelian account of generation/corruption upon which it is based, suits Gregory's understanding of the Christological union.

3.5 THE CHRISTOLOGICAL UNION AS NEO-PLATONIC MIXTURE

Having refuted Wolfson's interpretation of Gregory's mixture Christology – and, by extension, that of Althaus, Winslow and Wesche, who follow Wolfson – I must now establish an alternative interpretation of his Christology. As we saw in the previous section of this chapter, Gregory understands the Christological union as a mixture in which the constituent ingredients survive along with their distinctive qualities. This understanding fits both Stoic and Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture. While I have already stated my belief that Gregory draws on a Neo-Platonic theory of mixture to explain the Christological union, it is now time to demonstrate it.

[236] *Or.30.8* (SC 250: 242).

As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, Gregory uses mixture language on 49 occasions to speak of the Christological union. The large number of occasions on which Gregory speaks of the Christological union as mixture, and the economies of space, prevent a comprehensive analysis of these texts at this time. Fortunately, such analysis is not necessary. For, Gregory provides an explicit discussion of his understanding of mixture on two separate occasions: *Or.28.8* and *Ep.101.37-45.* Taken together, these two passages establish Gregory's dependence on Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture as the basis for his understanding of the Christological union. I will address them in order.

3.5.1 Gregory on Mixture I: Or.28.8

Gregory does not discuss the Christological union in *Or.28.8*. Nevertheless, this passage is key to grasping his understanding of mixture, since here he provides an explicit discussion of philosophical theories of mixture as part of an argument against divine corporeality. In what follows, I wish to draw attention to three features of Gregory's argument in this passage. The first of these is Gregory's explicit rejection of the view that material natures can interpenetrate. In rejecting this view, I argue, Stoic mixture theory must be ruled out as the basis for Gregory's understanding of the Christological union. The second feature I wish to point out is Gregory's characterisation of the mixing of liquids in terms of juxtaposition, a characterisation which, I suggest, Gregory derives from peripatetic and Neo-Platonic critiques of Stoic mixture theory. The third feature I wish to point out is Gregory's tacit endorsement of the belief that material bodies can penetrate a vacuum, a position also endorsed by the Neo-Platonic philosopher Syrianus. Taken together, I argue, these three features point to a broadly Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture.

In *Or.28.8* Gregory discusses the belief that God is corporeal, arguing against this view of God by appealing to the scriptural claim that God fills the universe.[237] For Gregory, the one who believes that God is corporeal must understand this scriptural claim in one of three ways: either (1) God fills the universe as body fills a vacuum; or (2) God fills the universe as body going through body; or (3) God fills the universe by being set alongside it, as in the mixing of liquids. While Gregory ultimately dismisses each of these explanations, his discussion of each is revealing with regards to his understanding of mixture:

> How is God's 'pervading all' (διὰ πάντων διήκειν) and 'filling all' (πληροῦν τὰ πάντα) preserved, as it is written "'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord" and "The Spirit of the Lord fills the world', if God both circumscribes and is circumscribed. For, either he goes through an entire vacuum (διὰ κενοῦ χωρήσει τοῦ παντός), and so our 'all' disappears – so that you might blaspheme God, making him both to be a body and to not possess that which he made – or else body will be in bodies (σῶμα ἐν σώμασιν ἔσται), which is impossible (ἀδύνατον). Or he will be weaved (πλακήσεται) and set alongside it (ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται),[238] as in the mixing of liquids (τῶν ὑγρῶν μίγνυται), the one cutting (τέμνει), the other being cut (τμηθήσεται), which is an even more ridiculous old wives tale than the atoms of Epicurus.[239]

In analysing this passage, I would like to begin by noting that Gregory's discussion of the second explanation constitutes a rejection of Stoic mixture theory. In peripatetic and Neo-Platonic discussions of mixture, the language of "body in bodies" (σῶμα ἐν σώμασιν), along with similar phrases such as "body receiving body in itself" (σῶμα, δεχόμενόν σῶμα ἐν αὐτῷ) or "body going through body (σῶμα διά σώματος), is used to speak of the Stoic view of mixture as the interpenetration of material bodies.[240] By arguing that it is impossible for body to be in body, then, Gregory repudiates the Stoic claim that material bodies may interpenetrate.

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[237] C.f. Jer. 23.24; Wis. 1.7.

[238] Here following the Maurist reading, instead of Gallay's emendation to ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται; see my discussion of this below.

[239] *Or.28.8* (SC 250: 114).

[240] See, for instance, Plutarch *Comm. Not.* 1077E, 1078B; Alexander of Aphrodisias *Mixt.*5 218.10-6. 220.12; 7.220.23-24; Themistius *in Phys.* 134.22-134.31; Philoponus *in Phys.* 560.33-561.3

The third explanation Gregory proposes also provides insight into his understanding of mixture. Gregory suggests that God fills the universe by being "weaved (πλακήσεται) and set alongside it (ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται), as in the mixing of liquids (τῶν ὑγρῶν μίγνυται)". Scholars have long suspected that Gregory is interacting with Stoic mixture theory in these lines. In a piece published in 1938, Bernard Wyss argued that these lines are concerned with the Stoic view that liquids are united by means of interpenetration when mixed together in a blend.[241] However, this interpretation does not fit with Gregory's use of the term ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται – "to set alongside" – a term which suggests juxtaposition rather than Stoic mixture, inasmuch as it speaks of objects laying alongside each other rather than interpenetrating each other. Therefore, Wyss suggested that ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται is a scribal error, and that this passage should read ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται – "co-extended" – a word that better fits Stoic understandings of mixture.[242] Subsequently, Lionel Wickham and Fred Williams noted that a Syriac translation of this oration preserved in a manuscript in the British Library (*Br. Libr., Add. 14549*)[243] reads ܡܬܪ̈ܟܒܢ ܡܬܪܟܒܘܬܐ – "cleaving/adhering"– for ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται,[244] a reading which, they noted, could provide support for Wyss's suggested emendation.[245] On the basis of these two studies, Gallay accepted Wyss's emendation in his critical edition of the oration.[246]

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[241] Bernhard Wyss 'Gregorius Nazianzenus Or.28.8 (P. Gr. 36.36 a Migne)' *Hermes* 73 (1938), 360.

[242] Wyss 'Gregorius Nazianzenus Or.28.8 (P. Gr. 36.36 a Migne)'.

[243] For details of this manuscript, and other manuscript witnesses to Syriac translations of Gregory's *Or.28*, see Jean-Claude Haelewyck (CCSG 65: VIII-XIII).

[244] *Or.28.8;* Syriac *Versio Nova* (CCSG 65: 29).

[245] Lionel Wickham and Fred Williams 'Some notes on the text of Gregory Nazianzen's First Theological Oration' *SP* 14 (1976) 365-370, here 369-370. The language of "cleaving/adhering" suits ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται since it suggests union rather than juxtaposition.

[246] Gallay (SC 250: 114).

While I agree that Gregory's reference to the mixing of liquids reflects philosophical accounts of mixture, Wyss's suggested emendation, I argue, should be rejected as lacking textual support: ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται is not attested in the Greek manuscript tradition of this oration, which show no variation on ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται.[247] Instead, Wyss must appeal to an outside source – namely, the fragments of Chrysippus – to support his substitution.[248] Yet this is hardly sufficient justification for amending the text of *Or.28.8*. While the Syriac reading preserved in *Br. Libr., Add. 14549* could reflect an original reading of ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται, the best Syriac witnesses[249] read ܘܣܘܩܒܠܐܝܬ ܢܬܦܚܡ – "contrasted in opposition" – suggesting juxtaposition and therefore supporting the extant Greek reading of ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται.[250] Wyss's proposed emendation of ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται to ἀντιπαρεκταθήσεται, then, lacks robust textual support.[251]

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[247] The only variation of ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται listed by Gallay is the apparent scribal shortening ἀντιπαραθήσεται.

[248] Wyss refers to *SVF* fr. 479; Gallay cites Wyss; Wyss 'Gregorius Nazianzenus Or.28.8'; Gallay (SC 250: 114).

[249] The Syriac tradition of Gregory's *Or.28* has come to us in three versions, the *Versio Antiqua* (*S1*), the *Versio Media* (*Sm*), and the *Versio Nova* (*S2*), of which *S1* is the oldest, followed by *Sm*, with *S2* thought to be the most recent version. The reading ܡܬܪ̈ܒܣܡ ܡܬܪܒܣܘܬ, preserved in *Br. Libr., Add. 14549*, belongs to *S2* (CCSG 65: 29). *S1* and *Sm* both read ܘܣܘܩܒܠܐܝܬ ܢܬܦܚܡ (CCSG 65: 28). See Jean-Claude Haelewyck (CCSG 65: V-VII).

[250] Wickham and Williams recognised this variation in the Syriac tradition, noting that another manuscript in the British Library (*Br. Libr. Add. 17146*) reads ܘܣܘܩܒܠܐܝܬ ܢܬܦܚܡ. On this basis they concluded that the scribe who produced the translation preserved in *Br. Libr. Add. 17146* "clearly read ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται"; Lionel Wickham and Fred Williams 'Some notes on the text of Gregory Nazianzen's First Theological Oration' 369.

[251] Wyss's proposed emendation also creates the problem as to function of the conjunction ἢ - "or" – with which Gregory introduces these lines. Gregory's use of ἢ is most naturally read as indicating a contrast with what precedes it, in this case the suggestion that God fills the universe as body going through body. If we accept Wyss's emendation, then Gregory would be contrasting Stoic mixture with itself. For, as we have already noted, in ancient philosophical discussions of mixture the language of "body in bodies" referred to the Stoic account of mixture as the mutual coextension of bodies, as in a mixture of water and wine. If, on the other hand, we retain the original Greek, then Gregory will be contrasting Stoic mixture with juxtaposition. This reading makes better sense.

In fact, the original reading makes perfect sense when we recognise that Gregory is here drawing on a peripatetic and Neo-Platonic critiques of Stoic mixture theory. As Jean-Marie Mathieu has shown, Gregory's association of the mixing of liquids with juxtaposition reflects a line of criticism which alleged that material bodies divide each other when mixed together, and that the resulting compound was composed of imperceptible particles arranged in juxtaposition with one another.[252] While Mathieu identifies this line of criticism as Neo-Platonic, it seems to have appeared first in peripatetic criticisms of Stoic mixture theory, being only later adopted by Neo-Platonic thinkers such as Plotinus.[253]

A passage from Alexander of Aphrodisias nicely illustrates this line of criticism. There, Alexander considers the possibility that blending occurs through the progressive division of bodies. Alexander argues that, even if the Stoics were to account for blending in this way, they still would not have true mixture by means of the interpenetration of bodies, but rather juxtaposition:

> Furthermore, if blending (κρᾶσις) occurred through the constituents dividing (διαιρούντων) one another (for blending occurs this way particularly in liquids because they are easily divisible (εὐδιαίρετα) and one [constituent] will easily pervade (δίεισι) the other and divide it (διαιροῦν), as we see in the case of wine poured into water and blended with it), then if the bodies dividing one another leave behind some mutually undivided parts, those would not be blended (for undivided parts must be unmixable and unmixed – if, that is, blending and mixture qua blending occur by division and have this as their defining characteristic; thus blending would again occur by juxtaposition (παραθέσει) and certainly not through the bodies that have been blended pervading (διηκόντων) one another totally.[254]

[252] Jean-Marie Mathieu 'Sur une correction inutile (Or. 28, 8, lignes 8-9 Gallay) et sur la critique néoplatonicienne de la κρᾶσις δι' ὅλου chez Grégoire de Nazianze' in *Symposium Nazianzenum II: Louvain la Neuve, 25-26 août, 1981* ed. Justin Mossay (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1983), 53-59.

[253] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 102. That Gregory distinguishes this explanation of how God fills the universe from the notion of God filling the universe as body goes through body may indicate that he is aware that this is not what the Stoics actually teach.

[254] Alexander of Aprhodisias *Mixt.*7. 221.25-34.

As Sorabji notes, and as Alexander seems to recognise, it does not seem that any Stoics actually believed that blending occurred through progressive division.[255] Nonetheless, this line of criticism became popular in later Neo-Platonic thinkers, who argued that material bodies necessarily divide each other when mixed together.[256]

I would like to suggest, in agreement with Mathieu, that this line of criticism lies behind Gregory's proposed third explanation of how a corporeal God could fill the universe in *Or.28.8*. This suggestion has the merit of being able to explain three otherwise peculiar features of the text as we have it. First, it explains Gregory's use of the verb ἀντιπαρατεθήσεται to characterise the mixing of liquids, since according to this line of criticism, the result of mixing material bodies is a juxtaposition. Second, it explains Gregory's specific appeal to the mixing of liquids. For, in the passage quoted above, Alexander claims that the theory of progressive division pertains to liquids in particular. Finally, it accounts for Gregory's otherwise enigmatic remark that liquids in a mixture "cut" (τέμνω) each other, a remark which makes sense in light of the peripatetic and Neo-Platonic line that material bodies divide each other when mixed together.

Gregory's adoption of this line of criticism, along with his explicit rejection of the Stoic view of mixture as the interpenetration of material bodies, suggests he holds either an Aristotelian/peripatetic or a Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture. Based on what we have seen so far, a Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture seems to best fit Gregory's thought, since it allows for the survival of the constituent ingredients and their properties in certain cases of mixture, as Gregory does in the case of Christ and the Trinity. That this is the case is further suggested by the third feature of *Or.28.8* I wish to discuss here, namely, Gregory's tacit endorsement of the belief

[255] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 102.
[256] See Plotinus *Enn.* 2.7.1.23-33; see also Proclus ap. Simplicium *in Phys*. 612.16-17.

that material bodies can penetrate a vacuum. I reproduce the relevant lines from *Or.28.8* here for convenience:

> How is God's 'pervading all' (διὰ πάντων διήκειν) and 'filling all' (πληροῦν τὰ πάντα) preserved, as it is written "'Do I not fill heaven and earth?' says the Lord" and "The Spirit of the Lord fills the world', if God both circumscribes and is circumscribed. For, either he goes through an entire vacuum (διὰ κενοῦ χωρήσει τοῦ παντός), and so our 'all' disappears – so that you might blaspheme God, making him both to be a body and to not possess that which he made.[257]

Gregory's appeal to the analogy of body going through a vacuum in this passage is significant, as it once more indicates his engagement with contemporary philosophical discussions of mixture. The question of whether body could penetrate a vacuum (κενόν) has its origins in Aristotle's objections against the notion of vacuum in his *Physics.*[258] While Aristotle most likely intended simply to oppose the notion of vacuous space, later peripatetic thinkers, including Gregory's contemporary Themistius, applied Aristotle's argument to the question of mixture, arguing that a body and a vacuum cannot interpenetrate, since extension going through extension implies body going through body, a notion which the peripatetic tradition rejected as absurd.[259] Neo-Platonic discussions of mixture also engaged the question of whether body could penetrate a vacuum. Notably, Syrianus, argued that body could go through a vacuum, on the basis that vacuum is extension minus matter, while it is matter that prevents interpenetration:

> It is not impossible in all cases for a couple of three-dimensional solids (στερεὰ) to be in the same place (ἅμα). In attending to this point, one should look not to the Stoics who allowed even material volumes (ἐνύλους ὄγκους) to pass through each other

[257] *Or.28.8* (SC 250: 114).

[258] Aristotle *Physics* 4.8, 216a26-b12; c.f. Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 76.

[259] Themistius *in Phys.* 134.25-26, 31 (text: H. Schenkl, *Themistii in Aristotelis physica paraphrasis* Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 5.2. (Berlin: Reimer, 1900); trans. Sorabji *The Philosophy of the Commentators* v.2 (London: Duckworth, 2004), 314): "If a body is in a vacuum, then an extension is in an extension (διάστημα ἐστιν ἐν διαστήματι), for the body will not withdraw from the vacuum, and being in place is a property of body only when extended. But if extension is in an extension, then a body can also be in a body (σῶμα ἐν σώματι ἔσται) … But it would be odd for body to be in a body. So, it is also impossible for a body to be in a vacuum (σῶμα ἐν κενῷ εἶνα)."

> (χωρεῖν δι' ἀλλήλων), but should look rather to those who postulate that an extension (διάστημα) goes through the whole world and receives into itself the whole of corporeal nature.[260]

Gregory here, I suggest, tacitly endorses a position similar to that forwarded by Syrianus. In contrast with the criticism of Stoic mixture theory which follows, Gregory does not here attack the notion that material body can penetrate a vacuum. Rather, he attacks this putative explanation of how God fills the universe on the grounds of it implying that the universe is a vacuum, and therefore non-existent. Gregory's argument thus rests on the tacit assumption that a material body can penetrate a vacuum. In this regard, he is closer to a Neo-Platonic position, as represented by Syrianus, in allowing material bodies to penetrate immaterial extensions, than to the peripatetic position as represented by Themistius.

The above analysis of *Or.28.8* allows us to draw three conclusions regarding Gregory's understanding of mixture. First, Gregory rejects Stoic mixture theory, understood as the claim that two material bodies may interpenetrate. Second, Gregory endorses the peripatetic and Neo-Platonic line of criticism that material bodies divide each other when blended. Third, Gregory seems to align himself with Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture that allow immaterial natures and extensions to interpenetrate immaterial and material natures, specifically, in this instance, the case of body going through a vacuum. Taken together, then, Gregory's remarks in *Or.28.8* gesture towards a Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture. However, they do not provide a positive account of his own understanding of mixture, nor do they provide a discussion of mixture in relation to the incarnation. Gregory provides both of these in *Ep.101.37-45*.

3.5.2 Gregory on Mixture II: Ep.101.37-45

[260] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 84.28-33 (trans. Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*, 112).

Ep.101.37-45 is Gregory's clearest endorsement of a Neo-Platonic understanding of mixture in the context of his Christology. In this passage Gregory responds to Apollinarius's claim that Christ's human mind could not co-exist with the divine Word.[261] Against Apollinarius, Gregory argues that whereas material bodies cannot coexist in the same space, immaterial bodies can:

> But there is no room (ἐχώρει), he says, for two perfect entities (τέλεια). Indeed there is not – if, that is, one investigates the matter corporeally (σωματικῶς). For a vessel holding one bushel cannot contain (χωρήσει) two bushels, nor can the space of one body (σώματος ἑνὸς τόπος) hold two or more bodies. If, however, one investigates the matter intellectually (νοητὰ) and incorporeally (ἀσώματα), one finds that one has in oneself room for (ἐχώρησα) soul, reason, mind, and the Holy Spirit. And before me, this universe – I mean that which is composed out of visible and invisible things - had room for the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. For the nature (φύσις) of intellectual things (νοητῶν) is such that they mix (μίγνυσθαι) with each other and with bodies incorporeally (ἀσωμάτως) and without division (ἀμερίστως).[262]

In this passage, Gregory once again hints at peripatetic and Neo-Platonic critiques of Stoic mixture theory. First, Gregory's concluding statement that intellectual natures can mix with each other and with bodies "without division" (ἀμερίστως) suggests once more that Gregory endorses the peripatetic and Neo-Platonic view that material bodies divide each other when blended together. Second, Gregory's example of a vessel holding one bushel as incapable of containing two bushels may reflect what Sorabji terms the 'sea in a cup' objection.[263] According to this objection, if one ladleful of sea water added to a cup of wine coexists in the same place as the wine without

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[261] C.f. Apollinarius *frg.* 81 (Lietzmann 224.15; trans. is my own): "if God was joined to man as perfect to perfect (τέλειος τελείῳ), there would be two things (δύο), one the Son of God by nature (φύσει), the other by adoption (θετός)."

[262] *Ep.101.37-39* (SC 208: 52).

[263] Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion,* 73, 101. This objection is found in Aristotle (*Phys.* 4.6:213b5-12). Later commentators developed this objection and illustrated it with the image of the sea being contained in a cup; see, for instance, Alexander of Aphrodisias *De Anima* 20.8-15.

increasing the volume of the overall mixture (since both bodies occupy the same volume),[264] then by the process of progressive mixture one could eventually fit the entire sea into a cup of wine. But the notion of the sea fitting into a cup of wine is absurd. Therefore, two bodies cannot exist in the same place. Gregory's assertion that a vessel holding one bushel cannot contain two bushels would appear to be a truncated form of the same objection. If two bodies could coexist in the same place, then a vessel possessing a volume of one bushel could contain two bushels worth of stuff, since these each of these bushels would occupy the space of the other. But a vessel holding one bushel cannot contain two. Therefore, bodies cannot coexist in the same space.

But, according to Gregory, while material natures cannot coexist in the same place, intellectual natures can. Gregory cites the coexistence of soul, reason, mind and the Holy Spirit in the human being as evidence of his claim. This argument fits broadly with some Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture. Indeed, we have already seen that a number of Neo-Platonic thinkers argued that immaterial bodies are capable of interpenetration, while rejecting Stoic accounts of the interpenetration of material bodies. The fundamental logic of this understanding of mixture is expressed in Pseudo-Ammonius's claim that "things intelligible (νοητά) are not impeded by bodies (σωμάτων), but spread throughout the whole body (διὰ παντὸς σώματος χωροῦντα)".[265] Gregory's statement that "the nature (φύσις) of intellectual things (νοητῶν) is such that they mix (μίγνυσθαι) with each other and with bodies incorporeally (ἀσωμάτως) and without division (ἀμερίστως)"[266] indicates that a similar underlying logic is at work in Gregory's account of mixture.

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[264] Sorabji questions this interpretation of Stoic mixture theory arguing that the Stoics are not committed to the view that no increase of volume takes place in a mixture; Sorabji, *Matter, Space and Motion*, 101. Nonetheless, this objection was popular amongst late antique authors.

[265] Pseudo-Ammonius ap. Nemesius *Nat. Hom.*3. 41.10-12 (trans. Sharples and van der Eijk *Nemesius: On the Nature of Man*; alt.).

[266] *Ep.101.37-39* (SC 208: 52).

We can, however, be more specific. For, Gregory's account particularly resembles that of the later Athenian school, as reported by Syrianus.[267] Like Gregory, Syrianus argues that material bodies cannot interpenetrate, while affirming the interpenetration of immaterial natures. Although Syrianus writes a generation after Gregory, he does not claim his position to be original, but rather attributes it to a pre-existing philosophical tradition. Commenting on Aristotle's claim that "it is impossible for two solids to coexist in the same place",[268] Syrianus refers to "those who hold that simple (ἁπλᾶ), immaterial (ἄυλα) bodies pass through each other (χωρεῖν δι' ἀλλήλων) without dividing each other (ἀδιαιρέτως)".[269] He summarises this position thus:

> What they say is that it is absolutely impossible for two material (ἔνυλα) and resistant (ἀντίτυπα) bodies to occupy the same place (τὸν αὐτὸν…τόπον), but that immaterial (ἄυλα) bodies[270] resemble the light emitted from different lamps which goes right through (κεχωρηκόσι) the whole of the same building, (διὰ παντὸς τοῦ αὐτοῦ οἰκήματος) the light of each lamp passing through that of the other without being fused (ἀσυγχύτως) or divided (ἀδιαιρέτως). Even if someone wants to call the light incorporeal (ἀσώματά), it still has the same extension (συνδιαστάντα) as bodies and stretches with them over three dimensions, and nothing prevents the light of each lamp occupying the same place as that of every other and of the various bodies. The reason is none other than that the light of each lamp is simple (ἁπλᾶ) and immaterial (ἄυλα) and is not divided (μερίζεται) or parted (διαιρούμενα), but is united with its source (ἀρχῇ) and so attached to it that it exists when it is shining, and departs when the source leaves.[271]

Two features of above passage are noteworthy. First, Syrianus views the ability of immaterial natures to interpenetrate as, in part, a consequence of their indivisibility. He argues that multiple lamps can illuminate the same space because their light is "simple" (ἁπλᾶ), "immaterial" (ἄυλα),

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[267] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 85.16-28 (trans. Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*: 112-113).

[268] Aristotle *Metaph.* 13.2:1076b (LCL 287: 176; trans. is my own).

[269] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 85.16-17 (trans. Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*: 112).

[270] For Syrianus, the term "body" (σῶμα) refers to anything possessing "extension" (διάστημα), regardless of whether or not it is enmattered; see Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*, 111-113. In this regard, Syrianus differs from Gregory, who, in his poem *Brief Definitions* (*Carm.1.2.34*) defines body as matter plus extension; *Carm.1.2.34.21* (PG 37: 947): τὸ σῶμα δ' ὕλη, καὶ διαστατὸν πάχος.

[271] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 85.18-28 (trans. Sorabji *Matter, Space and Motion*: 112-113).

not "divided" (μερίζεται) and not "parted" (διαιρούμενα), and therefore their light can interpenetrate the same space "without being divided" (ἀδιαιρέτως). Gregory adopts a similar stance when he notes that "intellectual things" (νοητῶν) mix without "division" (ἀμερίστως), suggesting he views indivisibility as one of the qualities of immaterial natures which enables them to interpenetrate.

The second noteworthy feature of this passage is the illustration of the interpenetration of immaterial natures using the image of multiple lamps lighting the same building. In *Ep.101* Gregory uses a near identical image to describe the interpenetration of Christ's human mind by his divinity. Having argued that intellectual natures may coexist in the same place, Gregory goes on to respond to Apollinarius's more specific claim that two "perfect entitites" (τέλεια) cannot occupy the same place. Gregory's response proceeds in two stages. Gregory begins by stating that Christ's human mind is only perfect relative to its species, not compared to his divinity.[272] Thus, the union is not of two perfects, but rather of greater and lesser. Gregory then argues that two immaterial natures may coexist in the same place even when one is much greater than the other, as in the case of a human mind and divinity. In order to illustrate this point, Gregory uses the image of two lights, that of the sun and that of a lamp, lighting the same house:

> And how, indeed, is the human or angelic mind perfect in comparison with divinity, such that the former is squeezed out (ἐκθλιβῇ) by the presence of the greater (μείζονος)? For neither some light in relation to the sun, nor a small amount of moisture in relation to a river is such that one must first remove the former – the light of the

[272] *Ep.101.41-43* (SC 208: 54): "Let us now consider how there is room for two perfect things (χωρήσει δύο τέλεια) – the light and the sun in the house, and the moisture and the river in the earth, for this matter is very much worthy of attention. Or do they not know that what is perfect (τέλειον), relative to one thing is imperfect (ἀτελές) relative to another, as a hill is relative to a mountain, or a mustard seed is relative to a bean or another larger seed, even if it is said to be greater than those of the same species (ὁμογενῶν)? Or, if you like, as an angel is relative to God, and a human is relative to an angel? Our mind and ruling principle, then, is perfect, but relative to the soul and the body, not absolutely perfect (ἁπλῶς τέλειον), since it is the slave and subordinate of God, having neither the same authority nor the same honour."

> building or the moisture of the earth – so that there might be room for (χωρηθῇ) that which is greater (μείζω) and more perfect (τελεώτερα).

The logic of Gregory's analogy of the sun and the light of the house corresponds to that of Syrianus's analogy of multiple lamps lighting a single room. For Syrianus, the light of each lamp illuminates the same space without confusion or division by wholly interpenetrating the space of the house and each other. Similarly, for Gregory, the light of the sun may illuminate the same place as the light of the building without destroying the lesser light, since the light of each interpenetrates so as to occupy the same space.

These remarks reveal the philosophical account of mixture that underpins Gregory's understanding of the Christological union. Gregory stands in the same tradition we see later in Syrianus, which rejected the Stoic account of mixture as the interpenetration of material natures while allowing the interpenetration of immaterial natures. Hence, while material bodies cannot interpenetrate, the divine Word interpenetrates the human mind of Christ, since "the nature (φύσις) of intellectual things (νοητῶν) is such that they mix (μίγνυσθαι) with each other and with bodies incorporeally (ἀσωμάτως) and without division (ἀμερίστως)."[273] This model of mixture explains not only the union of the Word with Christ's human mind, but also the union of the Word with Christ's flesh. For, as Gregory explains in the subsequent lines of *Ep.101*, Christ's human mind plays a mediatory function, such that the Word's interpenetration of Christ's mind enables it to also interpenetrate Christ's flesh:

> The Mind [viz. the Word] was mixed (μίγνυται) with mind (νοῒ), being closer and more akin, and through this – because it mediated (μεσιτεύοντος) between divinity (θεότητι) and thickness (παχύτητι) – with the flesh (σαρκί).[274]

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[273] *Ep.101.39* (SC 208: 52).

[274] *Ep.101.49* (SC 208: 56). C.f. *Or.2.23* (SC 247: 120): "God was blended throughout (ἀνεκράθη) the flesh through the mediation of the soul (διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς) and that which was separate was bound together by the affinity (οἰκειότητι) of each to the mediating element (μεσιτεύοντος)"; *Carm.1.1.10.56-60* (PG 37: 469): "Since God is unmixed (ἄμικτός) with flesh,

Gregory's use of the language of mixture to speak of the Word's union with both Christ's human mind and Christ's flesh suggests he envisages the same model of union as applying to each. This move accords with his claim that intellectual things can mix with bodies as well as with other intellectual things. It also accords with the Neo-Platonic model of mixture as the interpenetration of intellectual natures. For, as we have already seen, Neo-Platonic thinkers including Plotinus and Pseudo-Ammonius use this model to explain how immaterial natures penetrate material natures, such as when qualities penetrate matter, or when the soul penetrates the body.

Gregory's account of the Christological union becomes clear once we recognise the philosophical model upon which it draws. The Neo-Platonic model of mixture explains how the Word is united to Christ's complete humanity by means of interpenetration. At the same time, is accounts for the preservation of Christ's human and divine natures and their attendant qualities. Given that, as we saw in the first section of this chapter, Gregory considers Christ's humanity to be deified by means of this union, we may conclude that this deification consists precisely in his humanity being interpenetrated throughout by the divine Word.

Chapter Conclusion

The preceding analysis shows that Gregory understands the Christological union – and so deification of Christ's humanity which results from this union – in light of Neo-Platonic models of mixture. On this understanding, Christ's humanity is deified by being interpenetrated

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while the soul (ψυχή) and mind (νοῦς) are in the middle (ἐν μεταιχμίῳ), as it were, of the flesh (σαρκὸς) on the one hand, as co-dweller (σύνοικος), and of God on the other, as image, the divine nature (ἡ Θεοῦ φύσις) was mixed (μιγεῖσα) with what is akin to it, and from there had communion (κοινωνίαν) with our thickness (πάχους)".

throughout by the divine Word and not, as Wolfson and those following have argued, by being converted into divinity in a "union of predominance".

The question remains as to the relationship between the deification of Christ's humanity and the deification of individual human beings after Christ. A number of previous studies have sought to weaken the connection between these two aspects of Gregory's doctrine of deification. According to Donal Winslow and Norman Russell, Gregory considers the deification of Christ's humanity is ultimately only analogous to the deification of the human individual.[275] Similarly Nonna Harrison, while correctly noting the soteriological significance of Gregory's use of mixture language for his Christology, downplays the importance of this for his account of deification as a whole.[276]

Yet this line of interpretation goes against the multiple passages in which Gregory explicitly cites the deification of Christ's humanity as the basis for the deification of human beings in general. For instance, in *Or.29.19*, Gregory states that Christ's humanity became God "so that I might become God to the extent that he became man (γένωμαι τοσοῦτον θεός, ὅσον ἐκεῖνος ἄνθρωπος)."[277] Again, in *Or.40.45*, Gregory states that Christ is "human because of you to the extent that you will become God because of him (τοσοῦτον ἄνθρωπον διά σε, ὅσον σὺ γίνῃ δι' ἐκεῖνον Θεός)".[278] Gregory's use of τοσοῦτος ("as much as/to the extent that") in each of these

[275] See Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 189; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 224.

[276] Harrison, "Some aspects of Gregory the Theologian's Soteriology", 17. Harrison argues that the notion of mixture does not play a role in Gregory's account of the deification of the individual human being on the basis that this terminology is absent from his account of the deification of the human individual. As we shall see in remaining chapters of this dissertation, this is not the case.

[277] *Or.29.19* (SC 250: 218).

[278] *Or.40.45* (SC 358: 306).

passages suggests he thinks of human beings as being united to God in the same manner that the divine Word was united to his humanity, that is, through mixture.

Inasmuch as this is the case, the deification of Christ's humanity is not merely analogous to the deification of humans in general, but is the basis for it, with both the deification of Christ's humanity and the deification of the individual human being understood in terms of Stoic and Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture. That Gregory does think of the deification of the human individual in these terms will be seen throughout the remainder of this study. In chapters 5 and 6 I will show that Gregory uses the language of mixture to explain the mind's contemplative union with the divine light. First, however, I will show in the next chapter that Gregory understands the Holy Spirit as united to and deifying the believer in terms of this model of mixture.

4

Theosis and the Holy Spirit

> Let us stand in awe before the Great Spirit, who is my God, by whom we know God, who is God above and who makes people here to be god.
>
> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carm.1.1.3*.[279]

After Christ, Gregory uses the language of deification when speaking of the Spirit's salvific activity more than when speaking about any other subject.[280] Scholars have long recognised the importance of Gregory's identification of the Spirit as the agent of deification, given that it is one of the means by which Gregory establishes the divine identity of the Spirit.[281] Even so, there has

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[279] *Carm.1.1.3.3-4* (Sykes and Moreschini: 10): Πνεῦμα μέγα τρομέωμεν, ὁμοίθεον, ᾧ Θεὸν ἔγνων, ὃς Θεός ἐστιν ἔναντα, καὶ ὃς Θεὸν ἐνθάδε τεύχει.

[280] Gregory uses deification language to speak of the salvific activity of the Holy Spirit on at least 10 occasions; *Or.23.12*; *Or.31.4*; *Or.31.28*; *Or.31.29*; *Or.34.12*; *Or.39.17*; *Or.40.42*; *Or.41.9*; *Carm.1.1.3.4*; *Carm.2.1.54.16-20*. In addition to these passages, a number of other texts may also refer to the activity of the Spirit, as in *Carm.2.1.11.165,* where Gregory uses the verb Θεοω to speak of the deifying effects of baptism. As I argue later in this chapter, I take this to be a reference the Spirit's agency in baptism.

[281] For instance, Donald Winslow states that Gregory's "pneumatology is grounded upon and arises out of specifically soteriological convictions"; Donald Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation* (Cambridge MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979), 127, c.f. also 130-131. More recently Christopher Beeley has forcefully argued that "Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit represents fundamentally soteriological concerns"; Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008) 154. Beeley develops this argument further on pages 174-180. See also his piece 'The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen: The Pneumatology of Oration 31' in *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 151-162. In a similar vein, Philip Kariatlis remarks that "it is the Spirit's indispensable role in salvation… that constituted the reason *par excellence* for the Spirit's divinity"; Philip Kariatlis, "'What then? Is the Spirit God? Certainly!': St Gregory's teaching on the Holy Spirit as the basis of the world's salvation" *Phronema* 26.2 (2011) 81-102, 91. Likewise, Gregory Hillis comments in his piece comparing Gregory's Pneumatology with that of Cyril of Alexandria that "both Gregory and Cyril develop their doctrines of the Holy Spirit primarily around soteriological concerns; Gregory Hillis, "Pneumatology and soteriology according to Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria" *SP* 67 (2013) 187-197, 188.

Gregory's arguments for the divine identity of the Spirit are directed against a number of different theological positions, although identifying these precisely is rendered challenging by the fact that he never explicitly identifies the group against whom he is writing. Most likely, his arguments are directed against a range of positions, including that of those who accepted the Son's

not yet been an in-depth and accurate scholarly treatment of Gregory's conception of the Spirit's deifying activity.

The aim of this chapter is to advance our understanding of this aspect of Gregory's thought. A treatment of this aspect of Gregory's thought is essential to this present study, since Gregory views the Holy Spirit as the agent whose activity communicates the deifying union made possible in Christ to those who come after Christ. Previous scholars have correctly characterised the Spirit's deifying activity as the means by which the deifying power of the incarnation is communicated to individual human beings and to the Church as a whole.[282] What has not been offered is a

divinity while denying the divinity of the Spirit (the so-called "Pneumatomachoi"), as well as those who denied the divinity of both (most notably Eunomius, who argues for the created nature of the Spirit in *Apol.* 25). For an introduction to the different non-Nicene positions on the divinity of the Spirit, see Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 18-49; Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: an Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 211-218; Lewis Ayres, 'Innovation and Ressourcement in Pro-Nicene Pneumatology,' *Augustinian Studies* 39.2 (2008), 187-205, 187-191. See also, C. R. B. Shapland *The Letters of Saint Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit* (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1951), 11–43; R.C.P. Hanson *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1988), 738-748. For a specific discussion of the views Gregory was opposing, see F.W. Norris *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 66-69. Norris argues that Gregory's *Fifth Theological Oration* (*Or.31*), and other writings on the Spirit (principally, *Or.32* and *Or.41*) were written in opposition to both Eunomian and Pneumatomachian theologies of the Spirit.

[282] Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 131; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God*, 154, 177-178; Hillis, 'Pneumatology and soteriology according to Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria', 189-190. Winslow characterises the relationship between the deification of Christ's humanity and that wrought by the Holy Spirit as a distinction between the "universal" and the "particular". That is, the Spirit achieves in particular individuals what was achieved universally in Christ. Beeley takes issue with this characterisation as rendering the Spirit's work too "individualistic" and therefore failing to recognise the Spirit's salvific work in the Church as a whole. Beeley prefers to characterise this relationship in terms of the distinction between deification in potential and in actuality. That is, the Spirit makes actual in human beings the deification achieved in potential through Christ. Even so, the basic idea is the same in both authors: the Spirit is the means by which the deification of Christ's humanity is communicated to individual human beings and the Church.

satisfactory account of the mechanism by which the Spirit communicates this power.[283] This chapter offers such an account. It is my contention in this chapter that Gregory believes that the Holy Spirit deifies when he indwells the human person and thereby unites them to God by causing them to participate in and be "mixed" with the divine nature.

I will proceed in two sections. In the first, I will show that Gregory's identification of the Spirit as the agent of deification draws upon a particular strand of pro-Nicene thought which identifies the Holy Spirit with the undiminished giver of sanctification. According to this line of thought, the Holy Spirit sanctifies, perfects and deifies those in whom he dwells by causing them to participate in the divine nature and thereby uniting them to God. In the second section I will explore Gregory's conception of this union further. I will show that Gregory draws upon the same Neo-Platonic model of mixture which he uses to explain the Christological union in order to account for the union of the Holy Spirit with the one whom he indwells. At the same time, the Spirit's union with human beings may be distinguished from the Christological union on account Gregory's claims that the Holy Spirit is only "partially" united to human beings when he indwells them, and that human beings can lose this union with the Spirit through sin.

[283] Kariatlis remarks in passing that the Spirit is the means by which "the uncreated transformative light of God" is communicated to humanity, thereby enabling "participation in the life of God", but does not expand upon these remarks; Kariatlis 'St Gregory's teaching on the Holy Spirit as the basis of the world's salvation', 84. Hillis suggests that "those who receive the Spirit are united to Christ", but does not develop this suggestion further; Hillis, 'Pneumatology and soteriology according to Gregory of Nazianzus and Cyril of Alexandria', 190. Donald Winslow, while providing the most extensive treatment of this topic to date, conflates the Spirit's deifying and creative activities, identifying the former with the Spirit's function as "perfecting cause" of creation; Winslow, *Dynamics of Salvation*, 127-134. This reading, as Christopher Beeley has recently argued, misrepresents Gregory's conception of the Spirit's creative activity; see Christopher Beeley, ''The Holy Spirit in the Cappadocians: Past and Present'' *Modern Theology* 26.1 (2010), 90-119, 100.

4.1 THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE UNDIMINISHED GIVER

Gregory's conception of the Spirit's deifying activity draws upon a strand of pro-Nicene thought that sought to interpret the Spirit's sanctifying activity in terms of "the doctrine of the 'undiminished giver'".[284] In this section I will show that Gregory's engagement with this strand of pro-Nicene thought leads him to identify the Spirit with the undiminished giver who communicates his own being to creatures by causing creatures to participate in himself. This identification in turn leads Gregory to believe that the Spirit deifies, sanctifies, and perfects when he causes human beings to participate in the divine nature by means of his indwelling.

4.1.1. The Holy Spirit as the Undiminished Giver in Pro-Nicene Thought

Before considering Gregory's engagement with the pro-Nicene tradition that regarded the Spirit as the "undiminished giver", it will be helpful to first consider the origins of the doctrine of the undiminished giver and how it came to be applied to the person of the Holy Spirit. As we shall see, in this tradition the Spirit's sanctifying and indwelling functions (amongst others) are identified with the participation of the created being in the divine nature.

The "doctrine of the 'undiminished giver'", as Lewis Ayres explains, refers to "the principle that the divine (or the first principle in a given account of the cosmos) gives without loss

[284] As identified by Lewis Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver': Didymus the Blind's *De spiritu sancto* and the development of Nicene pneumatology" in D.V. Twomey and J.E. Rutherford eds. *The Holy Spirit in the Fathers of the Church: the Proceedings of the Seventh International Patristics Conference, Maynooth, 2008* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 57-72, 58. For further treatment of this theme in pro-Nicene thought, see Kellen Plaxco, "Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation", *SP* 67 (2013), 227-37; *idem.* "'I Will Pour Out My Spirit': Didymus against Eunomius in Light of John 16:14's History of Reception", *VC* 70 (2016), 479-508. For a discussion of the reception of this line of argument in the Latin West, see my piece "Where the Sanctification is One the Nature is One: Pro-Nicene Pneumatology in the Baptismal Theology of Ambrose of Milan" *SP* 84 (2017): 77-86, 81-86.

(or while remaining in-itself)."[285] Philo is the first to provide a clear statement of this principle, in his treatises *On the Creation of the World* (*opif. mund.*) and *On the Giants* (*gig.*).[286] His statement in the latter text will suffice as an illustration of the principle. There, Philo elaborates the doctrine in order to explain the pouring out of the "divine spirit" (πνεῦμα θεῖον) or "all-wise spirit" (πανσόφου πνεύματος) on the seventy elders in Numbers 11:17.[287] Philo compares the pouring out of the divine spirit to the lighting of many torches from one torch and to the distribution of knowledge. When lighting torches, fire is distributed from one torch with another without the original fire being changed or diminished. Similarly, knowledge may be shared by a teacher with their disciples without that knowledge being diminished. So too, when the divine spirit is taken from Moses and poured upon the seventy Elders, it is shared without being divided or diminished.[288]

Ancient authors frequently use the doctrine of the undiminished giver in conjunction with the language of participation.[289] In this context, the notion of participation functions to explain how God – or the first principle – gives without undergoing change, division or diminishment.

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[285] Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver'", 60.

[286] Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver'", 59-60. C.f. Philo *opfic. mund.* 6.23; *gig.* 24-28. Wisdom 7.27 may provide the ultimate source of this doctrine: "though she [Wisdom] is one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself renews all things."

[287] "I will take from the Spirit which is upon you and will pour it upon the seventy Elders".

[288] Philo *gig.* 26-28 (text and trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker (trans. alt.), LCL 227: 458): "If, then, it were Moses' own spirit, or the spirit of some other created being, which was according to God's purpose to be distributed to that great number of disciples, it would indeed be cut up (κατακερματισθὲν) into so many pieces and thus diminished (ἐμειοῦτο). But as it is, the spirit which is on him is the wise, the divine, the un-cuttable (ἄτμητον), the indivisible (ἀδιαίρετον) and the excellent spirit, which fills all things throughout (πάντῃ δι' ὅλων ἐκπεπληρωμένον), so, when this spirit is received (ὠφελοῦν) it is not damaged (βλάπτεται), nor does it diminish (ἐλαττοῦται) in understanding, wisdom or knowledge when it is shared with (μεταδοθὲν) or given to (προστεθὲν) others."

[289] Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver'", 60. The notion of "participation" is expressed in a wide range of terms in Greek and Latin. The principal Greek terms are μετάληψις (participation) and μεταλαμβάνω (to participate).

Thus God, while remaining as he is, communicates his own nature to created beings by causing them to participate in himself.

Origen, it seems, was the first Christian author to apply the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the person of the Holy Spirit.[290] Origen uses the doctrine to explain the Spirit's sanctifying activity, arguing that the Spirit sanctifies the saints without being corporeally divided amongst them because the Spirit sanctifies the saints by causing them to participate in himself.[291] At the same time, while Origen explains the Spirit's sanctifying activity in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver, he does not appear to identify the Spirit as the undiminished giver himself, reserving this status instead for the person of the Father whom alone he identifies as being participated in without participating.[292] Rather, according to Origen the Spirit receives holiness, wisdom and other such qualities through participation in the Son, and in turn communicates these qualities to human beings when they participate in him.[293] Thus, while Origen applies the doctrine

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[290] Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver'", 61-62. Prior to Origen Clement of Alexandria applied this doctrine to the Father and to the Son in order to explain how God shares the life, goodness and knowledge proper to his nature with creation; see R.E. Witt, "The Hellenism of Clement of Alexandria" *Classical Quarterly* 25.3/4 (1931), 195-204, 200.

[291] Origen *Princ.*1.1.3 (text and trans. Behr: 26-27): "And although many saints participate (*participant*) in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit cannot on that account be thought of as a kind of body that, divided into bodily parts, is partaken of by each one of the saints; but he is rather a sanctifying power (*uirtus…sanctificans*), in which all, who have deserved to be sanctified (*sanctificari*) by his grace, are said to have a share (*participium*). And so that what we say may be more easily understood, let us take an illustration from things very dissimilar. There are many who take part in the sciences and art of medicine: are we to suppose that all those who participate (*participant*) in medicine have some body, called medicine, placed before them, and remove particles [of it] for themselves and this take a share (*participium*) in it? Must we not rather understand that all who with a quick and trained mind grasp the art and science itself may be said to participate (*participare*) in medicine?"

[292] C.f. Ayres 'The Holy Spirit as the "Undiminished Giver"', 62.

[293] Origen's clearest statement of the Spirit's participation in the Son occurs in the second book of his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (*Comm. Jn.*), where he states that the Spirit receives both its existence and qualities such as wisdom, understanding etc. through "participation (μετοχὴν) in the aspects of Christ"; Origen *Comm. Jn.* 2.10.76-77 (SC 120: 256; trans. Heine, FotC 80). On this aspect of Origen's thought, see D.L. Balas 'The Idea of Participation in the Structure

of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's sanctifying activity, he places this activity within a broader hierarchy of participation whereby the Spirit shares with the saints what it has received from the Son through participation.[294]

Pro-Nicene engagement with the doctrine of the undiminished giver builds on Origen's account of the Spirit's sanctifying activity while simultaneously rejecting his notion of a hierarchy of participation. Kellen Plaxco has shown that this development depends upon a shift in understandings of the metaphysics of participation, from a hierarchical model, as seen in Origen and Eusebius of Caesarea, to a non-hierarchical model which strictly distinguishes that which is participated in from that which participates along the lines of the creator-creature distinction.[295] This non-hierarchical model is founded upon the principle that whatever is participated in cannot

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of Origen's Thought: Christian Transposition of a Theme of the Platonic Tradition' in H. Crouzel ed. *Origeniana* (Bari: Università di Bari, 1975), 257-275; Kellen Plaxco 'Participation and Trinity in Origen and Didymus the Blind' in Anders-Christian Jacobsen ed. *Origeniana Undecima: Origen and Origenism in the History of Western Thought* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 767-782.

Origen is ambiguous regarding the manner in which the Son possesses his divine qualities, sometimes stating that he receives these by means of his participation in the Father, at other times suggesting that he possesses these qualities in his own right. For a nuanced discussion of this question, see Micah Miller *Origen of Alexandria and the Theology of Holy Spirit* PhD Diss. (Emory, 2019), chapter 1. Miller convincingly argues that Origen believes that the Son receives all his divine qualities through participation in the Father. As Miller points out, Origen's application of the language of participation to the persons of the Trinity has an anti-Monarchian function; on this see also Plaxco '"I Will Pour Out My Spirit"', 492.

[294] See Micah Miller *Origen of Alexandria and the Theology of Holy Spirit*, passim. As a result of his understanding of the Trinity as a hierarchy of participation, Origen's beliefs regarding the ontological status of the Spirit are ambiguous. The troubling implications of this ambiguity, from a pro-Nicene perspective, are nicely illustrated in Eusebius of Caesarea's appropriation of Origen's participation imagery in his *Preparation for the Gospel* (*Praep. Evang.*), where Eusebius uses Origen's hierarchy of participation to support an account of the Trinity as a hierarchy of ontological subordination, in which the Son and the Spirit are ontologically lesser than the Father because they share in the divine perfections through participation, while the Father possesses these by nature; see Eusebius of Caesarea *Praep. Evang.* 7.15, discussed in Ayres 'The Holy Spirit as the "Undiminished Giver"', 63; Plaxco '"I Will Pour Out My Spirit"', 494-497.

[295] Plaxco, "Didymus the Blind and the Metaphysics of Participation". Plaxco's argument builds on Ayres's earlier discussion of the shifting "grammars of participation" in the fourth century in *Nicaea and its Legacy*, 321-324.

participate in something else, and whatever participates cannot be participated in.[296] According to pro-Nicene authors, then, the Spirit's sanctifying activity proves that the Spirit is "participated in" and therefore belongs on the divine side of the creator-creature divide.[297]

A notable feature of the pro-Nicene identification of the Spirit with the undiminished giver is its adaptability as a tool for explaining a wide variety of activities attributed to the Spirit by scripture. For instance, Athanasius uses it to explain scripture's depiction of the Spirit as giving life to, anointing and indwelling creatures. Didymus similarly uses it to explain the scriptural language of the Spirit as indwelling, filling and being poured forth upon created beings.[298] Another example of this adaptability may be found in the writings of Basil of Caesarea, who adapts this line of thought to explain the Spirit's illuminating and perfecting functions.[299] Taken together, the effect of these exegetical moves is that each of these activities is identified as aspects of the same singular work, namely, the Spirit's bestowal of itself upon creatures by means of participation.

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[296] For a statement of this principle, see Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 17-18 (SC 386: 158; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43): "Now because he is good, God is the source (*fons*) and principle (*principium*) of all goods. Therefore he makes good those to whom he imparts (*impertit*) himself; he is not made good by another, but is good. Hence it is possible to participate in him, but not for him to participate (*capabilis, non capax*). Furthermore, his only-begotten Son is Wisdom and sanctification; he does not become wise but makes wise, and he is not sanctified but sanctifies (*non sanctificatur, sed sanctificat*). For this reason too it is possible to participate in him but not for him to participate (*capabilis est, et non capax*). Therefore, since an invisible creature – which we customarily call a rational and incorporeal substance – cannot be participated in, but is capable of participating (*non sit capabilis, sed capax*) – for if it could be participated in (*capabilis*), it would not be capable of participating (*capax*) in any good – although it is simple, and receive another's good, it must have its good by participation (*participatione habeat bonum*) and must not be thought to be placed among those possessed by others." For another articulation of this principle by a different pro-Nicene author, see Basil of Caesarea *Against Eunomius* 3.2, discussed in Ayres, "The Holy Spirit as the 'Undiminished Giver'", 65.

[297] For this line of argument, see for instance Athanasius *ep. Serap.* 1.23.1; Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 10-13; Basil of Caesarea *Spir.* 9.22; 16.38.

[298] Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 22-24 (indwelling); 30-34 (filling); 49-51 (pouring forth).

[299] Basil of Caesarea *Spir.* 9.22; 16.38. On Basil's engagement with the pro-Nicene "Spirit as undiminished giver" tradition, see Ayres 'The Holy Spirit as the "Undiminished Giver"', 65-67.

4.1.2 The Holy Spirit as the Undiminished Giver in Gregory of Nazianzus

It is now time to consider the role this line of thought plays in Gregory's pneumatology, and in particular with regards to his conception of the Spirit's deifying activity. Gregory makes use of the doctrine of the undiminished giver in three passages: *Or.23.11*; *Or.31.29*; *Or.41.9*. All three passages occur in orations written in 380, when Gregory was in charge of the small pro-Nicene faction based in the church of the Anastasia.[300] We begin with the first of these, which contains Gregory's clearest – and earliest[301] – engagement with this line of thought. His aim in this passage is to describe the divine nature shared by the Trinity as a whole. In order to characterise the distinction between the divine nature – and the three persons that share fully in it – and created beings, Gregory appeals to the principle of an absolute distinction between that which is participated in and that which participates. I reproduce this passage here in full:

> We consider and hold that knowledge of the relationship and order of these is reserved for the Trinity itself alone, and to those who have been purified and to whom the Trinity reveals it, either now or in the future. We ourselves, however, know that the divine nature (φύσιν θεότητος) is one and the same, distinguished (γνωριζομένην) in lack of source (ἀνάρχῳ), generation (γεννήσει), and procession (προόδῳ), like mind, reason and spirit in us – insofar as one may represent in an image the intellectual with the sensible, or the great with the small, since no image reaches the truth. It is coincident with itself, being eternally the same, eternally perfect, qualityless, quantityless, timeless, uncreated, incomprehensible. It is never lacking of itself, nor will it ever be lacking. It is lives and life, lights and light, goods and good, glories and glory, true, truth and the Spirit of truth, holy and holiness in-itself. Each is God if contemplated on its own, the mind dividing the indivisible; the three are God when considered with each other, because their movement and nature are the same. It has neither left behind something greater than itself, nor has it surpassed some other – for such a being does not exist. Nor will anything leave it behind or surpass it, for there will never be such a thing. Nor will there co-exist with it anything of the same honour. For, nothing created or servile, participating (μετεχόντων) and contained by the uncreated, ruling, participated in (μεταληπτικῆς) and infinite nature can attain to it. For, some things are completely distant from it, while others draw near to it – or will

[300] On Gregory's time in the church of the Anastasia, see John McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: SVS, 2001), 236f.

[301] Gregory probably delivered this oration between Easter and Pentecost in the Spring of 380; see McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography*, 262-264.

> draw near to it – to a certain degree, and this not by nature but by participation (οὐ φύσει, ἀλλὰ μεταλήψει), and precisely when, by serving the Trinity well, they come to be above servitude – if indeed freedom and kingship do not consist in this itself, namely, to think correctly about the [one] rule without confounding the distinctions because of one's poverty of mind.[302]

The closing lines of this passage represent Gregory's first engagement with the pro-Nicene "Spirit as undiminished giver" tradition. Here, Gregory asserts the absolute distinction between the unique divine nature, which is "participated in" (μεταληπτικῆς), and the nature of creatures, which are "participating" (μετεχόντων). The distinction is precisely that articulated by Didymus in *Spir.* 17-18, and functions similarly to distinguish the divine persons – in this case Gregory is not concerned with one person in particular but with the entire Trinity – from created beings. At the same time, this passage differs from previous manifestations of the "Spirit as undiminished giver" tradition insofar as Gregory does not argue for the identification of the Spirit with the undiminished giver, but simply assumes the inclusion of all three persons of the Trinity in the divine nature.[303] The arguments of Athanasius, Didymus and Basil are assumed, but not articulated

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[302] *Or.23.11* (SC 270: 302, 304).

[303] Compare Didymus the Blind's extended argument in *Spir.* 10-13, in which he seeks to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the angels by establishing that the Holy Spirit is the undiminished giver; Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 10-11, 13 (SC 386: 152, 154; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43): "Nor is he [the Spirit] placed among any invisible creatures (*iniusibilibus creaturis*), for all such realities are capable of participating (*capacia*) in wisdom, the other virtues, and sanctification. On the contrary, the substance we are now discussing produces (*effectrix*) wisdom and sanctification. Nor is it possible to find in the Holy Spirit any strength which he receives from some external activity of sanctification and virtue (*ab extranea quadam operatione sanctificationis uirtutisque*), for such a nature as this would have to be mutable (*mutabilis*). Rather, the Holy Spirit, as all acknowledge, is the immutable sanctifier and the bestower of divine knowledge and all goods (*immutabilis est sanctificator, scientiae diuinae et uniuersorum attributor bonorum*)… Moreover, that which is good cannot be capable of participating (*capax*) in an external goodness, since it is what bestows goodness on other things. Therefore, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is distinct from not only corporeal but also incorporeal creatures, because other substances receive (*accipiunt*) this substance for their sanctification."

Athanasius makes a similar argument in *ep. Serap.* 1.22-23, where he appeals to the Spirit's sanctifying activity as proof that the Spirit is "participated in" and therefore distinct from the angels, which are sanctified by participation in the Spirit; Athanasius *ep. Serap.* 1.23.1 (Athanasius Werke I.1.4: 507-508; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43): "So he who is not

explicitly.[304] Indeed, the fact that Gregory assumes this stance rather than arguing for it indicates that he is drawing upon previous accounts whose conclusions he is content to draw upon without restating their arguments in full. As Ayres notes (while commenting on a different passage of Gregory's), the principles of their arguments are simply integrated into his general account of the divine nature.[305]

Gregory's remarks in *Or.23.11* establish the place of the modified, pro-Nicene form of the doctrine of the undiminished giver in his account of the Trinity. Our concern, however, is not principally with how Gregory uses this doctrine when articulating his Trinitarian theology, but with the implications of his engagement with this pro-Nicene line of thought for his understanding of the Spirit's deifying activity.[306] To consider this, we must turn to the two other occasions on which Gregory engages the doctrine of the undiminished giver: *Or.31.29* and *Or.41.9*. Unlike *Or.23.11*, these two passages are both concerned specifically with the person of the Holy Spirit. Both passages, I suggest, present the Spirit's deifying activity in light of pro-Nicene engagements with the doctrine of the undiminished giver. As with *Or.23.11*, in neither of these texts does Gregory argue for the identification of the Holy Spirit as the undiminished giver. Rather, he simply assumes this identification and makes it the basis for his presentation of the Spirit's nature and

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sanctified by another, nor participates in sanctification, but is himself the one who is participate in, the one in whom all creation are sanctified: how can he be one of the all things and proper to those who participate in him."

[304] C.f. Athanasius *ep. Serap.* 1.23.1; Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 10-13, 22-24, 30-34, 49-51; Basil of Caesarea *Spir.* 9.22; 16.38.

[305] Ayres 'The Holy Spirit as the "Undiminished Giver"', 69.

[306] Gregory does not discuss the activities of the Spirit in *Or.23.11*, although his statement that created natures may approach the divine nature "by participation" (μεταλήψει) suggests he holds a similar account of the Spirit's sanctifying activity to that which we find in Athanasius, Didymus and Basil. That this is the case may be seen from his treatment of the Spirit's activities in *Or.31.29* and *Or.41.9*, which I will discuss shortly.

activities. In so doing, I argue, Gregory identifies the Spirit's deifying activity with its sanctifying, indwelling, and perfecting activities, explaining all of these in terms of participation.

We begin with a consideration of the passage from *Or.41*, which Gregory delivered just a few weeks after *Or.23*, in Pentecost of 380.[307] The passage in question concludes a brief discourse (*Or.41.6-9*) against those who "drag down the Holy Spirit to the level of a creature".[308] It is unclear precisely who Gregory has in mind here since, as usual, he does not name any specific individuals or group.[309] However, the tone and content of the discourse suggest that he has in mind the Pneumatomachians associated with Eustathius of Sebaste.[310] It is in the context of this dispute that he makes use of the doctrine of the undiminished giver in *Or.41.9.* There, Gregory makes the absolute distinction between that which is participated in and that which participates the basis of a lengthy description of the nature and activities of the Spirit. The purpose of this descriptive account is to establish the full divinity of the Spirit by showing that the Spirit possesses by nature everything proper to the Father and the Son. In the process, he casts the Spirit's activities of

[307] McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography*, 273. *Or.31* was delivered a few months after this oration, in the autumn of 380.

[308] *Or.41.6* (SC 358: 326): τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον οἱ μὲν εἰς κτίσμα κατάγοντες.

[309] Moreschini and McGuckin both identify Gregory's opponents in this oration as "Arians"; Moreschini (SC 358: 327, n.4); McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography*, 274. However, scholars now generally agree that such a category is of limited use for describing non-Nicenes in the late-fourth century.

[310] In *Or.41.7*, Gregory attacks the suggestion that the Spirit is something "in between" (μέσον) between the status of master and slave. The suggestion he is attacking issues from Eustathius, who argued that the Spirit is "neither master nor slave, but free"; c.f. Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Corinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, 154. At the same time, the tone of this discourse makes it clear that his immediate concern in attacking Eustathius's pneumatology is to win over members of his audience who are unwilling to apply the name "God" (θεός) to the Spirit, and whom Gregory fears may therefore be susceptible to pneumatomachian arguments against the divinity of the Spirit. His tone towards these is conciliatory: Gregory exhorts his audience simply to "confess the nature with other words" rather than "arguing trivially about letters", before stating his wish that, in time, "the word 'God' will be given to you by the Spirit."; *Or.41.7-8* (SC 328, 330).

perfecting, filling, sanctifying and deifying creatures in light of the doctrine of the undiminished giver:

> The Holy Spirit always was and is and will be, having neither a beginning nor an end but always both ranked and numbered with the Father and the Son. For it was never appropriate for the Son to be lacking to the Father, or the Spirit to the Son. For the divinity would be in the greatest dishonour if it came to the fullness of perfection by means of a change in its intentions. Therefore, he is eternally participated in, not participating (μεταληπτὸν, οὐ μεταληπτικόν); perfecting not perfected (τελειοῦν, οὐ τελειούμενον); filling not filled (πληροῦν, οὐ πληρούμενον); sanctifying not sanctified (ἁγιάζον, οὐχ ἁγιαζόμενον); deifying not deified (θεοῦν, οὐ θεούμενον). He is always the same as himself and as those with whom he is ranked: invisible, timeless, uncontainable, unchanging, qualityless, quantityless, formless, intangible, self-moving, always-moving, self-governing, self-powered, all-powerful. Whatever it is, if it is attributed to the First Cause and the Only-Begotten, then it is attributed to the Spirit. He is life and giver of life (ζωὴ, καὶ ζωοποιόν); light and bestower of light (φῶς, καὶ χορηγὸν φωτός); the good-itself and source of goodness (αὐτοαγαθὸν, καὶ πηγὴ ἀγαθότητος). He is the upright Spirit, ruling, Lord. He commissions, distinguishes, makes temples of himself (ναοποιοῦν ἑαυτῷ), guides, acts as he wills, distributes gifts. He is the Spirit of sonship, of truth, of wisdom, of understanding, of knowledge, of piety, of willing, of strength, of fear, of reckoning. Through him the Father is known and the Son is glorified and, from these alone is he known. They are one in shared rank, one in adoration, worship, power, perfection (τελειότης), sanctification (ἁγιασμός).[311]

Gregory again draws upon the doctrine of the undiminished giver when he describes the Spirit as "participated in, not participating" (μεταληπτὸν, οὐ μεταληπτικόν). As in *Or.23.11*, Gregory does not argue for the identification of the Spirit with the undiminished giver, but simply assumes it, and bases his subsequent description of the nature and activities of the Spirit on this assumption. Again, it seems, Gregory is content to draw upon the conclusions of other pro-Nicene thinkers without restating their arguments in full. The statement that the Spirit is "sanctifying not sanctified" (ἁγιάζον, οὐχ ἁγιαζόμενον), for instance, recalls the argument found in pro-Nicene authors such as Athanasius and Didymus that the Spirit, since it sanctifies creatures, is participated

[311] *Or.41.9* (SC 358: 334, 336).

in.[312] Similarly, the identification of the Spirit as "the good-itself and source of goodness" (αὐτοαγαθὸν, καὶ πηγὴ ἀγαθότητος) recalls Didymus's argument that the Spirit must be good by nature, since it causes other beings to be good, and is therefore distinct from the angels, which are good only by participation.[313]

Gregory's description of the Spirit as "filling not filled" (πληροῦν, οὐ πληρούμενον) suggests that he is familiar with Didymus's argument that the Spirit is divine because it fills creation, whereas creatures are filled.[314] His application of the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's "perfecting" activity, and his reference to the Spirit's role as the light which bestows light, on the other hand, suggests the influence of Basil,[315] while his description of the Spirit as

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[312] For instance, see Athanasius's argument in *ep. Serap.* 1.22-23, where he appeals to the Spirit's sanctifying activity as proof that the Spirit is "participated in" and therefore distinct from the angels, which are sanctified by participation in the Spirit; Athanasius *ep. Serap.* 1.23.1 (Athanasius Werke I.1.4: 507-508; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43): "So he who is not sanctified by another, nor participates in sanctification, but is himself the one who is participate in, the one in whom all creation are sanctified: how can he be one of the all things and proper to those who participate in him."

Didymus makes a similar argument in *Spir.* 10-13, in which he seeks to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is distinct from the angels because the Spirit sanctifies the angels, and so is participated in by the angels, while the angels are sanctified, and so participate in the Spirit; Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 10-11, 13 (SC 386: 152, 154; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43): "Nor is he [the Spirit] placed among any invisible creatures (*iniusibilibus creaturis*), for all such realities are capable of participating (*capacia*) in wisdom, the other virtues, and sanctification. On the contrary, the substance we are now discussing produces (*effectrix*) wisdom and sanctification. Nor is it possible to find in the Holy Spirit any strength which he receives from some external activity of sanctification and virtue (*ab extranea quadam operatione sanctificationis uirtutisque*), for such a nature as this would have to be mutable (*mutabilis*). Rather, the Holy Spirit, as all acknowledge, is the immutable sanctifier and the bestower of divine knowledge and all goods (*immutabilis est sanctificator, scientiae diuinae et uniuersorum attributor bonorum*)… Moreover, that which is good cannot be capable of participating (*capax*) in an external goodness, since it is what bestows goodness on other things. Therefore, it is clear that the Holy Spirit is distinct from not only corporeal but also incorporeal creatures, because other substances receive (*accipiunt*) this substance for their sanctification."

[313] Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 13, 17-18.

[314] Didymus the Blind *Spir.* 30-34.

[315] C.f. Basil of Caesarea *Spir.* 9.22; 16.38.

"life and giver of life" (ζωὴ, καὶ ζωοποιόν) may indicate acquaintance with Athanasius's application of the doctrine to the Spirit's life-giving activities in *ep. Serap.* 1.23.2-3. Ultimately, the condensed nature of Gregory's allusions to these different aspects of the pro-Nicene "Holy Spirit as undiminished giver" tradition means it is difficult to identify the specific sources of his description of the Spirit and its activities in this passage. Indeed, it is likely he is drawing on several different authors. Regardless of the identity of his sources, it is clear that Gregory understands the various activities of Spirit listed in this passage in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver. According to Gregory, the Spirit perfects, fills and sanctifies creatures, and therefore must be participated in as God, and not a creature that participates.

So far, we have seen that Gregory draws upon the doctrine of the undiminished giver in order to present the Spirit as possessing a nature which is participated in rather than participating and that he uses this notion to characterise several of the Spirit's activities as aspects of the participation of the human being in the divine nature through the Spirit. For the purpose of this study, however, it is Gregory's application of the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's deifying activity which is of particular significance.

In the passage above, Gregory includes the Spirit's deifying activity amongst other examples of the Spirit's activities which he views as evincing the Spirit's identity as the undiminished giver. Just as the Spirit is "participated in, not participating", "perfecting not perfected", "filling not filled", and "sanctifying not sanctified", so also the Spirit, Gregory says, is "deifying not deified" (θεοῦν, οὐ θεούμενον). Gregory applies the doctrine to the Spirit's deifying activity once more in *Or.31.29*. There, as in *Or.41.9*, Gregory incorporates the doctrine of the undiminished giver into a lengthy description of the nature and activities of the Spirit:

> He is called "Spirit of God", "Spirit of Christ", "Spirit of the Lord", "another Lord", "Spirit of Sonship", "of truth", "of freedom", "Spirit of wisdom", "of understanding",

> "of counsel", "of strength", "of knowledge", "of piety", "of the fear of God". For he is the maker of all these, filling all with his essence (πάντα τῇ οὐσίᾳ πληροῦν), containing all (πάντα συνέχον). He fills the universe according to his essence (πληρωτικὸν κόσμου κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) yet is uncontained by the universe according to his power (ἀχώρητον κόσμῳ κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν). Good, upright and ruling – by nature, not by adoption (φύσει οὐ θέσει) – sanctifying not sanctified (ἁγιάζον, οὐχ ἁγιαζόμενον), measuring not measured (μετροῦν, οὐ μετρούμενον), participated in not participating (μετεχόμενον, οὐ μετέχον), filling not filled (πληροῦν, οὐ πληρούμενον), containing not contained (συνέχον, οὐ συνεχόμενον). Inherited, glorified, reckoned with [the Father and the Son], given as a threat. The Finger of God, fire like God – an indication, I think, of their consubstantiality (τοῦ ὁμοουσίου). The Creator-Spirit, who re-created through baptism and through the resurrection. The Spirit who knows all things, who blows where he wills, who guides, speaks, commissions, divides, is angry or is tempted, who reveals, who illumines, who enlivens – or rather, is light and life itself – who makes temples (ναοποιοῦν), who deifies (θεοποιοῦν), who perfects (τελειοῦν), who is anticipated in baptism and sought after again in baptism. He works everything that God does, divided in tongues of fire, dividing gifts, making apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers. Intellectual, manifold, clear, penetrating, unhindered, undefiled – that is to say, he is most wise and manifold in his activities, he clarifies all things and penetrates all things, he bears his own authority and is unchanging. He is all-powerful, overseeing all, going through all intellectual spirits – the angelic powers, I think, as well as the prophets and the apostles – and these at the same time and not in the same place (οὐκ ἐν τοῖς αὐτοῖς τόποις), dispersed through one and the other (ἄλλων δὲ ἀλλαχοῦ νενεμημένων), by this demonstrating that he is uncircumscribed (ἀπερίγραπτον).[316]

Once again, Gregory assumes the identification of the Spirit with the undiminished giver. And, once again, the fact that he does not provide an argument for this position indicates that he is aware that he stands in a tradition upon which he can draw without having to replicate the arguments of previous writers. In this particular passage, in addition to deploying the distinction between that which is participated in and that which participates, Gregory once more echoes the arguments of other pro-Nicene theologians by describing the Spirit as "sanctifying not sanctified" (ἁγιάζον, οὐχ ἁγιαζόμενον) and "filling not filled" (πληροῦν, οὐ πληρούμενον).[317] It is his mention

[316] *Or.31.29* (SC 250: 334, 336).

[317] In particular, Gregory's argument that the Spirit is uncircumscribed in the closing lines of this passage suggests he is drawing upon Didymus's argument for the identification of the Holy Spirit as undiminished giver, insofar as he asserts that the Spirit is uncircumscribed on the basis of its being present in different locations in the angels, prophets and apostles, a statement which mirrors the argument put forward by Didymus in *Spir.21-23,* where Didymus claims that the Spirit

of the Spirit's deifying activity, however, which is of particular concern to us here. Just as Gregory's application of the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's sanctifying, filling and perfecting activities reflects his engagement with pro-Nicene arguments concerning these activities, so too his inclusion of the Spirit's deifying activity amongst these other activities reflects his engagement with a tradition which conceived of this activity in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver. A consideration of the pro-Nicene arguments upon which he is drawing, therefore, will help elucidate the conception of the Spirit's deifying activity which is implicit in these passages.

Gregory's application of the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's deifying activity connects his thought to the pneumatology of Athanasius. In *ep. Serap*. 1.24 Athanasius explains the Spirit's deifying activity in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver. There, Athanasius interprets 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, which speaks of the human being in whom the Spirit dwells as the temple of God, as evidence that the Spirit deifies human beings by causing them to participate in the divine nature and thereby uniting them to God:

> And it is through the Spirit that all of us are said to be partakers of God (μέτοχοι τοῦ θεοῦ): "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which you are."[318] If the Holy Spirit were a creature, we would not have participation (μετουσία) in God through him. But if we were joined (συνηπτόμεθα) to a creature, we would become strangers to the divine nature, inasmuch as we did not partake (μετέχοντες) of it in any way… But if we become "sharers of the divine nature"[319] by partaking of the Spirit (τῇ τοῦ πνεύματος μετουσίᾳ), someone would have to be insane to say that the Spirit has a created nature and not the nature of God. For it is because of this that those in whom the Spirit dwells

is uncircumscribed on account of its simultaneous presence indwelling of the apostles in different locations.

[318] 1 Cor. 3:16-17.

[319] 2 Pet. 1:4.

> are deified (θεοποιοῦνται). And if he deifies (θεοποιεῖ), there can be no doubt that his nature is of God.[320]

Athanasius's starting point in this passage is the scriptural description of the Spirit indwelling the human being and making them a temple of God. This, he argues, should be understood in terms of participation. The human being in whom the Spirit dwells is a temple of God because they have "participation" (μετουσία) in God through the Spirit and are thus "joined" (συνηπτόμεθα) to the divine nature. Thus, the Spirit "deifies" (θεοποιεῖ) the one in whom it dwells by causing them to participate in the divine nature.

While Gregory does not provide an extensive discussion of the Spirit's deifying activity in either of the passages quoted above, certain terminological parallels between Gregory's thought and this passage from *ep. Serap*. 1.24 suggest that Gregory is drawing upon Athanasius's argument when he conceives of the Spirit's deifying activity in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver. First of all, in *Or.31.29* Gregory uses the same verb as Athanasius to speak of this deifying activity, namely, θεοποιέω. Second, both Gregory and Athanasius associate this activity with the Spirit's indwelling of the human being, by means of which the Spirit causes them to become a temple of God, with Gregory linking the Spirit's deifying activity to his "temple-making" activity in both *Or.41.9* and *Or.31.29*.[321] Finally, that Gregory is dependent on *ep. Serap.* 1.24 is further suggested by his reference to the Spirit's deifying activity earlier in *Or.31.4*. There, Gregory appeals to the Spirit's deifying activity in order to establish that the Spirit is co-eternal with the Father and the Son:

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[320] Athanasius *ep. Serap.* 1.24.1-2, 4 (Athanasius Werke I.1.4: 510-511; trans. DelCogliano, Radde-Gallwitz and Ayres, PPS 43, alt.).

[321] In addition to this, we may note that Gregory elsewhere associates the becoming a temple of God with being deified; see *Or.33.15* (SC 318: 188): "They have the houses, we have the indweller (τὸν ἔνοικον). They have the temples, we have the God and have become living temples of the living God (ναοὶ γενέσθαι Θεοῦ ζῶντος καὶ ζῶντες), reasonable sacrificial victims, rational whole-burnt offerings, perfect sacrifices, gods (θεοὶ), through the worship of the Trinity."

> If he was not "from the beginning" then he is ranked with me, albeit perhaps a little before me. For we are separated from God by time. And if he is ranked with me how can he make me God (ποιεῖ θεόν) or how can he join me to divinity (συνάπτει θεότητι)?[322]

For Gregory, the Spirit cannot be "ranked with me" – that is, a creature – since it deifies the human being by joining them to divinity. Both the logic of this argument, and the terminology Gregory uses are the same as that found in *ep. Serap.* 1.24. There, as we have seen, Athanasius argues that the Spirit must be divine and not a creature because it joins humans to the divine nature through participation and thereby deifies them. Both use the verb συνάπτω to describe the union effected by the Spirit,[323] while Gregory's terminology for deification in this passage (θεός ποιέω) simply resolves the portmanteau θεοποιέω, used by Athanasius, into its constituent terms. The presence of the same terminology, serving the same function strongly suggests that Athanasius's argument in *ep. Serap.* 1.24 lies behind Gregory's reference to the Spirit's deifying activity in this passage, and therefore also adds weight to the suggestion that the same argument – namely, that the Spirit deifies human beings by joining them to the divine nature through participation – lies behind Gregory's reference to the Spirit's deifying activity in *Or.41.9* and *Or.31.29.*

Recognition of the argument upon which Gregory is drawing when he applies the doctrine of the undiminished giver to the Spirit's deifying activity helps us grasp his understanding of this activity. Gregory's identification of the Spirit as the agent of deification draws upon a particular strand of pro-Nicene thought which identifies the Holy Spirit with the undiminished giver, and specifically upon Athanasius's argument that the Spirit deifies those in whom he dwells by causing

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[322] *Or.31.4* (SC 250: 282).

[323] Athanasius's argument that if the Spirit were a creature we would be "joined" (συνηπτόμεθα) to a creature implies that, since the Spirit is divine, it instead unites us to the divine nature, a point he goes on to make using the language of participation. Thus, while Gregory departs slightly from Athanasius in using συνάπτω to describe the human being's union with God, this usage follows from Athanasius's use of the term in *ep. Serap.* 1.24.

them to participate in the divine nature and thereby uniting them to God. By conceiving of the Spirit's deifying activity in terms of the doctrine of the undiminished giver, then, Gregory indicates that this activity – like the Spirit's perfecting, filling and sanctifying activities – involves the participation of the creature in the Spirit. Moreover, the specific parallels we have seen between Gregory's and Athanasius's though on this topic indicate that Gregory, like Athanasius, associates this deifying activity with the indwelling of the Spirit, by means of which the Spirit deifies human beings by uniting them to God.

Section Conclusion:

The above investigation allows us to draw a number of conclusions about Gregory's conception of the Spirit, and of the Spirit's deifying activity. First, Gregory appropriates the doctrine of the undiminished giver in order to present the Spirit as possessing a nature which is participated in rather than participating (and, therefore, is divine). Second, he uses this notion to characterise several of the Spirit's activities – including the Spirit's deifying activity – as aspects of the participation of the human being in the divine nature through the Spirit. Notably, this move means Gregory associates the Spirit's deifying activity with its sanctifying, perfecting, filling and indwelling of the human being. Thus, we may conclude that, for Gregory, the Spirit sanctifies, perfects and deifies human beings by filling and indwelling them, thereby causing them to be joined to the divine nature by participation. We take up the question of the nature of this union in the next section of this chapter.

4.2 THE UNION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH THE HUMAN PERSON

In the previous section we saw that Gregory believes that the Spirit deifies human beings when it indwells them, causing them to participate in the divine nature and uniting them to God. In this section I will show that Gregory draws upon Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture (μίξις/κρᾶσις) to explain this union between the Spirit and the human person. This will show that Gregory uses the same model of union to explain both the Christological union and the Spirit's indwelling of human beings. At the same time, I will show that Gregory differentiates the union human beings have with the Spirit from the Christological union inasmuch as human beings are only partially united the Spirit and can lose this union through sin, whereas the Christological union is complete and indivisible. This section, then, will demonstrate that the Spirit deifies human beings by uniting them to God in the same way that Christ's humanity was united to the divine Word, but not to the same degree and not indivisibly.

Gregory uses the language of mixture to speak of the union of the Spirit with the human being on three occasions: *Or.41.12*; *Carm.2.1.1.630-634*; and *Carm.2.1.54.16-18*. I will consider each of these passages in turn, beginning with *Or.41.12*. In this passage, Gregory provides an extended exegesis of the Pentecost story as related in Acts 2:1-4. For present purposes, it is his discussion of the setting of Pentecost – which Gregory says took place "in the upper room"[324] – which is of interest:

> And [Pentecost happened] "in the upper room" – if I may avoid being more elaborate than necessary – because of the ascent of those receiving the gift and their elevation from the earth, since certain "upper rooms" are covered with fire, because of which God is praised. And Jesus himself gave the communion of the mystery to those who had been perfected in the higher things in order that, by this, he might show that, on the one hand, it is necessary for God to descend (καταβῆναι) towards us, as I know he did first with Moses, and, on the other, that we must ascend (ἀναβῆναι), and that in

[324] Gregory's claim that Pentecost took place "in the upper room" appears to be based on a combination of Acts 2:2, which states that Pentecost took place while the disciples were sitting in a house, and Acts 1:13, which states that the disciples were staying in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem at that time.

> this way there shall come to be a communion of God with humanity (κοινωνίαν Θεοῦ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους) by his co-blending (συγκιρναμένης) with the worthy. [325]

For Gregory, the setting of Pentecost "in the upper room" is symbolic of the need for both God to descend and human beings to ascend in order for there to be "a communion of God with humanity" (κοινωνίαν Θεοῦ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους). Significantly, he characterises this communion in terms of mixture: God comes to have communion with humanity by means of his "co-blending" (συγκιρναμένης) with those who are worthy. Since Gregory is commenting here specifically on the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, the co-blending of God with the worthy he speaks of here is best understood as referring to the Spirit blending with the apostles.

Gregory speaks of the Spirit's indwelling in terms of mixture on a second occasion in his poem *On his own Affairs* (*Carm.2.1.1*). The passage in question occurs in the closing lines of this poem. These constitute a prayer to the Trinity, in which Gregory addresses first the Father, and then the Son, before proceeding to address the Spirit.[326] It is this final portion of the prayer which interests us. There, Gregory prays that the Spirit may come to him and mix him with divinity:

> O Spirit who is truly from the Father, light of our minds (νόου φάος ἡμετέροιο), coming to the pure and causing them to be God and light (Θεὸν δέ τε φῶτα τίθησιν): have mercy on us and grant that, when the years have turned their course, having here and hereafter been mixed with the whole divinity (ὅλῃ θεότητι μιγέντα), I may worship you with unceasing hymns of gladness.[327]

In this passage, Gregory states that the coming of the Holy Spirit causes the one who receives the Spirit to be "mixed with the whole divinity" (ὅλῃ θεότητι μιγέντα). He again uses the language of mixture – in this instance the verb μίγνυμι – to speak of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Notably, Gregory also associates the arrival of the Spirit with the deification of the one who receives it. The Spirit, he says, causes those to whom it comes to become "God" (Θεὸν). Since he

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[325] *Or.41.12* (SC 358: 342).
[326] The complete prayer consists in lines 624-634 of the poem.
[327] *Carm.2.1.1.630-634* (PG 37: 1017).

proceeds to speak of the Spirit as causing the one who receives it to be "mixed" (μιγέντα) with divinity, this passage would appear to suggest mixture as the means by which the Spirit deifies the one in whom it indwells.

Now that we have seen that the Spirit indwells by means of mixture, we can better understand our third passage, from Gregory's poem *Against the Evil One* (*Carm.2.1.54*). Dayna Kalleres has suggested that this poem constitutes an apotropaic prayer designed to protect the Christian from demonic influence.[328] Gregory opens the poem by addressing Satan directly and providing details of his method of attack. He concludes with a short formula in which he commands Satan to "yield to God, and to his divine formation".[329] The intended function of this formula, it seems, is to ward off demonic attacks. However, for our present purpose it is his reference to the human being as a "divine formation" (πλάσματι θείῳ) which is of particular interest. The meaning of this phrase can be found in the immediately preceding lines of the poem. There, Gregory begins the formula by asserting his status as a "temple" of God and even a "god" himself. He is these things, he claims, because his soul has been "mixed with divinity" (θεότητι μιγείσης):

> But I am a portion of Christ. I have been formed into a temple (νηός τε τέτυγμαι) and as a sacrifice. But then I am a god (θεὸς), because my soul has been mixed with divinity (θεότητι μιγείσης ψυχῆς). Yield, then, to God and to his divine formation (πλάσματι θείῳ), fearing the wrath of God, the choir of pious souls who sing with eternal hymns.[330]

Gregory makes not explicit mention of the Spirit in this poem. Nevertheless, it seems likely that he is thinking of the Spirit's indwelling when he speaks of his soul as having been mixed with divinity, for he associates his deification by means of mixture with his having been "formed into

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[328] Dayna S. Kalleres 'Demons and Divine Illumination: A Consideration of Eight Prayers by Gregory of Nazianzus' *VC* 61.2 (2007): 157-188.

[329] *Carm.2.1.54.18* (PG 37: 1399): ὑπόεικε Θεῷ, καὶ πλάσματι θείῳ.

[330] *Carm.2.1.54.16-20* (PG 37: 1399).

a temple" (νηός τε τέτυγμαι). As we have already seen, Gregory elsewhere associates the Spirit's deifying activity with the formation of the human being into a temple of God by its indwelling. His reference to becoming a temple of God in the above formula, then, would seem to alert us to the pneumatological motif underlying his thought in this passage.[331]

Gregory's use of mixture language to speak of the union of the Holy Spirit with an individual human being can partly be explained by the fact that this way of speaking about the indwelling of the Spirit is traditional. This tradition begins, it seems, with Irenaeus, who, writing in the second century, also speaks of the Holy Spirit as united to the human being through mixture. He writes in *Against Heresies* (*AH*) 5.6.1:

> The perfect human being is the commingling (*commixtio*) and union (*adunitio*) of the soul receiving the Spirit of the Father, and the admixture (*admixtae*) of that flesh which was formed after the image of God… For neither the formation (*plasma*) of the flesh by itself, is the perfect human being, but the body of a human being, and part of the human being; nor is the soul by itself, a human being, but the soul of a human being and a part of a human being; nor is the Spirit a human being, for it is called the Spirit and not a human being. But the commingling (*commixtio*) and union (*unitio*) of these constitutes the perfect human being.[332]

[331] *Or.31.29*; see my discussion of this passage in the first section of this chapter.

[332] Irenaeus *AH* 5.6.1 (SC 153: 72, 76, 78; trans. Briggman *Irenaeus of Lyon and the Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Oxford: OUP, 2012): 173, 174). John Behr correctly notes that Irenaeus's failure to describe the Spirit as "a part of a human being", in contrast to his remarks on the body and the soul, along with his reference to the Spirit as "not a human being", indicates that he is here talking about the divine person of the Holy Spirit, and not some created human spirit. See John Behr *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 99-100.

For Irenaeus, human beings receive the Holy Spirit through the "commingling" (*commixtio*) of the Spirit with their soul.[333] This mixing with the Spirit renders the human being "perfect" (*perfectum*); through it, the human individual possesses the likeness of God.[334]

Clement of Alexandria also speaks of union with the Holy Spirit in terms of mixture on a handful of occasions.[335] On one occasion, in the *Stromata* (*Strom.*), he says that the Christian Gnostic who achieves the highest level of perfection is "interblended" (ἀνεκράθητε) with the Holy Spirit.[336] Elsewhere he identifies the Eucharist as the specific means by which the Christian comes to be "blended" (κίρνται) with the Spirit.[337] Origen likewise speaks of the Holy Spirit as being united to the human being by means of mixture.[338] For instance, in *Comm. Jn.* 1.28.197, Origen states that the human individual is saved and made spiritual through the interblending of their soul with the Holy Spirit:

> For the Saviour had made "both one,"[339] having made them according to the first-fruits of both which came to be in himself before all things. And I say "of both" also in the case of men in whose case each man's soul has been interblended with the Holy Spirit (ἀνακέκραται τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι) and each of those who are saved has become spiritual.[340]

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[333] In addition to the passage quoted above, Irenaeus speaks of the mixture of the human being with the Holy Spirit on at least two other occasions: *AH* 4.31.2 and *Prf.* 97. Briggman has shown that the latter passage should be read as a reference to the Holy Spirit's union with individual human beings rather than the Christological union; see Briggman *Irenaeus of Lyon and the Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 187-191. Irenaeus's understanding of mixture is Stoic; c.f. Anthony Briggman, 'Irenaeus' Christology of Mixture' *JTS* 64.2 (2013) 516-555.

[334] For a discussion of this theme, see Briggman *Irenaeus of Lyon and the Theology of the Holy Spirit*, 173-181.

[335] For a summary of these, and of Clement's use of mixture language in general, see Columba Stewart *Working the Earth of the Heart: The Messalian Controversy in History, Texts and Language to AD 431* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 180.

[336] Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* 7.14.87.1 (SC 428: 266).

[337] Clement of Alexandria *Paed.* 2.2.20.1 (SC 108: 48).

[338] See Stewart *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 180-181.

[339] Ephesians 2:4.

[340] Origen *Comm. Jn.* 1.28.197 (SC 120: 156, 158; trans. Heine, FotC 80, alt.). Origen speaks of the Holy Spirit as being mixed with the human being on at least two other occasions: *De*

Perhaps the most prolific user of mixture language to describe the Spirit's union with human beings is the author of the Pseudo-Macarian homilist[341] – whom I will hereafter refer to as Macarius-Symeon.[342] A passage in *Homily 27* from Collection II of the Pseudo-Macarian homilies (the so-called *Fifty Spiritual Homilies*) nicely illustrates this pneumatological application of mixture language. There, Macarius-Symeon seeks to explain what Paul is referring to when he speaks of "those things the eye has not seen, nor ear heard" but which have been revealed by the Spirit, in 1 Corinthians 2.9-10. He interprets this text as a reference to the mysteries of Christ's passion and of Pentecost. Discussing the latter, Macarius-Symeon states that, at Pentecost, the souls of the disciples were "co-blended" (συγκιρνῶνται) with the Spirit and were thereby "filled with the divinity" (πληροῦνται τῆς θεότητος):

> In that time, the great and just ones, and the kings and the prophets knew that the saviour was coming. But they did not know, nor had they heard that he would suffer, had to be crucified, and would pour out his blood on the cross…[Nor did they know] that the Apostles and Christians would receive the Paraclete and would be "endowed with power from on high"[343] and be filled with the divinity (πληροῦνται τῆς θεότητος), and that their souls would be co-blended (συγκιρνῶνται) with the Holy Spirit.[344]

Orat. 10.2 and *Frg. ex Comm. in 1 Cor.*, frg. 10; see Miller *Origen of Alexandria and the Theology of Holy Spirit*, 168, n.391.

[341] In his study of the language used to speak of spiritual experience in the homilies, Columba Stewart identified 28 instances in which Macarius-Symeon uses the terms μίξις, κρᾶσις, μίγνυμι, κεράννυμι and cognates to speak of the union of the Holy Spirit with the individual human being, along with a further 13 instances in which he uses these terms to speak of the intermingling of grace into the soul, and 30 instances in which he uses these terms to speak of the union of the human being with "Christ" or "the Lord. See Stewart *Working the Earth of the Heart*, 173-178, 285-287.

[342] For a summary of scholarship on the authorship of the Pseudo-Macarian homilies, see Markus Plested, *The Macarian Legacy: The Place of Macarius-Symeon in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 12-16.

[343] Luke 24:49.

[344] Macarius-Symeon *Hom. II.27.17* (PTS 4: 227; trans. Maloney, CWS, alt.).

The observation that the use of mixture language to describe the Spirit's union with human beings is traditional is sufficient to explain Gregory's use of this language.[345] At the same time, Gregory does something new with this tradition, in that he engages Neo-Platonic models of mixture to explain this traditional way of speaking about the Spirit's indwelling of human beings. Two passages indicate that Gregory understands the Spirit's union with human beings in terms of Neo-Platonic models of mixture. The first of these is Gregory's discussion of the Spirit's presence in the angels, prophets and apostles in *Or.31.29*. We have already discussed this passage with reference to the doctrine of the undiminished giver in the previous section of this chapter. I reproduce the relevant selection here:

> He is all-powerful, overseeing all, going through all intellectual spirits (διὰ πάντων χωροῦν πνευμάτων νοερῶν) – the angelic powers, I think, as well as the prophets and the apostles – and these at the same time and not in the same place, dispersed through one and the other (ἄλλων δὲ ἀλλαχοῦ νενεμημένων), by this demonstrating that he is uncircumscribed.[346]

Gregory's description of the Spirit as "going through all intellectual spirits" (διὰ πάντων χωροῦν πνευμάτων νοερῶν) alerts us to the presence of philosophical accounts of mixture in this passage. For, both Stoic and Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture use the verb χωρέω to describe the interpenetration of constituents in a mixture. For instance, according to Alexander of Aphrodisias, Chrysippus taught that constituents in a mixture were united because the bodies of these ingredients "go through one another" (χωρούντων δι' ἀλλήλων), resulting in their "complete

[345] In particular, Gregory's use of πλάσμα language in *Carm.2.1.54.18* is reminiscent of Irenaeus's reference to the Spirit's union with the human *plasma* in *AH* 5.6.1, while his claim that the human being is mixed with "divinity" (θεότης) when indwelled by the Spirit recalls Macarius-Symeon's claim in *Hom.II.27.17* that the disciples were filled with "divinity" (θεότητος) when the Spirit mixed with their souls at Pentecost. These parallels may indicate these two authors are specific sources for Gregory's use of mixture language to describe the union of the Spirit with the human being.

[346] *Or.31.29* (SC 250: 336).

mutual coextension" (ἀντιπαρέκτασιν δι' ὅλων).[347] Similarly, Plotinus says that the soul "penetrates" (χωρεῖν) the body with which it is mixed,[348] while Syrianus likewise speaks of immaterial bodies as "going through one another" (χωρεῖν δι' ἀλλήλων) when mixed together.[349] Gregory's use of this verb to speak of the Spirit's presence in the angels, prophets and apostles in *Or.31.29*, then, adds weight to the suggestion that, when he uses mixture language to speak of the Spirit's union with the one it indwells, he is using this language in the same, technical sense outlined in Stoic and Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture.

Given that Gregory elsewhere rejects the Stoic understanding of mixture as the interpenetration of material bodies, I suggest that Neo-Platonic models better account for his use of mixture language to explain the Spirit's union with human beings. This suggestion receives confirmation from Gregory's remarks in *Ep.101.37-39*. I have already discussed Gregory's argument in this passage, and the Neo-Platonic account of mixture which underpins this argument, in the third chapter of this study.[350] As we saw there, Gregory in this passage draws upon Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture in order to respond to Apollinarius's claim that Christ's human mind could not co-exist with the divine Word. For our present purposes, however, this passage is significant because of the example Gregory uses there to illustrate his conception of mixture. Gregory uses the example of the Spirit's indwelling in order to illustrate the interpenetration of intelligible natures, of which he takes the incarnation to be another instance. He writes:

> …a vessel holding one bushel cannot contain (χωρήσει) two bushels, nor can the space of one body hold two or more bodies. If, however, one investigates the matter

[347] Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Mixt.*3. 217.9-12. See chapter 3, section 3.3.1.

[348] Plotinus *Enn.* 4.7.8[2].22-23.

[349] Syrianus *in Metaph.* 85.17, 21; text here and throughout this chapter is from W. Kroll, *Syriani in metaphysica commentaria* Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 6.1 (Berlin: Reimer, 1902). Proclus *in Tim.* 2.254.14; text: E. Diehl, *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Timaeum commentaria* vol. 1 (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903; reprinted Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1965).

[350] See chapter 3, section 3.5.2.

> intellectually and incorporeally, one finds that one has in oneself room for (ἐχώρησα) soul (ψυχήν), reason (λόγον), mind (νοῦν), and the Holy Spirit (ἅγιον Πνεῦμα). And before me, this universe – I mean that which is composed out of visible and invisible things - had room for the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. For the nature of intellectual things (νοητῶν) is such that they mix (μίγνυσθαι) with each other and with bodies incorporeally and without division.[351]

Gregory's appeal here to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as an example of the mixture of intelligible natures confirms what the previous discussion suggested. That is, Gregory understands the union of the Spirit with the human person in terms of Neo-Platonic models of mixture as the interpenetration of intelligible natures. This being the case, Gregory draws upon the same model of mixture to explain both the Christological union and the union of the Spirit with the human person, asserting in both cases that this union results in the deification of the humanity which is mixed with divinity.

Gregory's use of the same model of mixture to explain both the Christological union and the union of the Spirit with the human beings raises the question as to how he differentiates between the two unions. In fact, Gregory nowhere provides a clear statement of how he understands these two unions to be different. He does, however, provide a possible basis for distinguishing them in two claims he makes regarding the Spirit's indwelling of human beings: his claim that the Spirit indwells human beings "partially" (κατὰ μέρος) and according to their "power" (δυνάμει), and his claim that human beings can lose their union with Spirit by failing to guard the Spirit from sin.

Gregory makes the first of these claims as part of his famous argument regarding the gradual revelation of the Spirit's divinity in *Or.31.25-27*.[352] For present purposes, it is his

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[351] *Ep.101.37-39* (SC 208: 52).

[352] There have been several scholarly treatments of this passage. See, for instance, R.C.P. Hanson *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 782-783; Norris *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen*, 206; McGuckin *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Biography*, 309; Joseph Trigg 'Knowing God in the Theological

discussion of the role in the indwelling Spirit in *Or.31.26* which is particularly significant. There, Gregory associates the gradual revelation of the Spirit's divinity with the Spirit's gradual indwelling of the disciples from the beginning of Christ's ministry to Pentecost:

> It is like this: the Old Testament declared the Father clearly, the Son dimly. The New Testament declared the Son and intimated the divinity of the Spirit. Now the Spirit resides amongst us (ἐμπολιτεύεται), supplying us with a clearer manifestation of himself. For it was not safe, when the divinity of the Father was not yet confessed to openly declare the Son; nor, when that of the Son had not yet been received to burden us – if I may speak so boldly – with the Holy Spirit, lest, like people filled with food beyond their power and those who present their eyes to the Sun when they are still too weak, that which was within our power should also be risked. So the light of the Trinity shines upon those who are more radiant by means of partial additions (μέρος προσθήκαις) and, as David said, by "ascents",[353] advancing and progressing "from glory to glory". This is the reason, I think, that he [viz. the Spirit] came to dwell (ἐπιδημεῖ) in the disciples partially (κατὰ μέρος), measuring itself according to the power (δυνάμει) of those receiving him, in the beginning of the gospel, after the passion and after the ascension, perfecting their powers when breathed upon them, appearing in fiery tongues.[354]

Gregory's description of the Spirit coming to dwell in the disciples "partially" (κατὰ μέρος) according to their "power" (δυνάμει) and only gradually coming to indwell these to a greater degree provides us with one means by which the Christological union may be differentiated from the union of the Spirit with the human person. For, whereas human beings only receive the Spirit "partially" in proportion to their "power", Christ's humanity is wholly united to his divinity from the first moment of its existence, as is evinced by the fact that Gregory describes it as being "one God" with his divinity from the moment of Christ's conception in the womb of Mary.[355]

Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus: the Heritage of Origen' in McGowan, Daley and Gaden eds. *God in Early Christian Thought: Essays in Memory of Lloyd G. Patterson* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 83-104; Christopher Beeley 'The Holy Spirit in Gregory Nazianzen: The Pneumatology of Oration 31', 151-162.

[353] Psalm 83:6 (LXX).

[354] *Or.31.26* (SC 250: 326, 328).

[355] See *Carm.1.2.1.149-154* (PG 37: 533-534): "He came as God and mortal, two natures collected together into one (φύσεις δύο εἰς ἓν ἀγείρας), the one concealed, the other openly visible to men. Of these, one was God, the other was made later with us, when God was mixed (μίγη) with

Gregory provides his clearest statement of the need to guard and preserve the indwelling Spirit in *Or.41.13*. There, Gregory comments on Jesus's promise in John 14:16 that the Spirit "will abide with you forever". He says:

> "He will abide in you forever", and will remain with you – either now, with the worthy of this age, or later, with those who have been deemed worthy of the things to come, when we have guarded (φυλάξωμεν) him whole (ὁλόκληρον) by our way of life (πολιτείᾳ) and have not driven him out (ἀποβάλωμεν) to the extent that we sin (ἁμαρτάνωμεν).[356]

Gregory interprets the promise of the Spirit's abiding presence as applying to both the Spirit's presence in the worthy in this life, and the Spirit's presence with those deemed worthy of it in the next life. According to Gregory, both the retention of the Spirit in this life and the reception of the Spirit in the next are contingent upon one's conduct. The one in whom the Spirit abides must guard the Spirit whole by avoiding sin, which drives the Spirit out of the soul. By contrast, Gregory repeatedly affirms the indivisibility of the Christological union.[357] Thus, the Spirit's union with the human person differs from the Christological union in that the human person in whom the Spirit dwells can lose the Spirit's presence by sinning, whereas Christ's humanity is inseparably united to his divinity.

Chapter Conclusion

The preceding analysis has revealed that Gregory believes that the Holy Spirit deifies those in whom he dwells by causing them to participate in the divine nature and thereby uniting them to God. I have further shown that Gregory uses Neo-Platonic models of mixture to explain this union, explaining the Spirit's union with the human person in terms of the interpenetration of intelligible

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men in the womb. He is one God from both (εἷς Θεὸς ἀμφοτέρωθεν), since mortal man was blended (κερασθεὶς) with divinity, and by means of the divinity subsists as Lord and Christ."

[356] *Or.41.13* (SC 358: 344).

[357] See, especially, *Ep.101.13-14*; *Carm.1.1.11.1-6.*

natures. While this is the same model as he uses to explain the Christological union, the Spirit's union with human beings may be distinguished from the union of Christ's human and divine natures on the basis of Gregory's claims that the Holy Spirit is only "partially" united to human beings according to their "power", and that human beings can lose this union with the Spirit through sin.

Having explained the model of union which underpins both Gregory's account of the deification of Christ's humanity and his account of the Spirit's deifying activity, it is now time to turn to a consideration of Gregory's account of the ascent and deification of the human individual, both in this life and in the next. As we shall see, Gregory once more uses the same model of union in his account of the heavenly ascent of the human being to explain the deifying union of the ascended human being with the divine light. At the same time, we will see that Gregory incorporates this understanding of deifying union into a broader soteriological model, according to which the one who ascends to heaven and is united to the divine light is transformed to become like the angels.

5

Theosis and the Monastic Life

In this chapter we turn to Gregory's account of monasticism as a way of life which deifies its practitioners. Several scholars have observed that Gregory views the practice of monasticism as leading to deification.[358] These treatments have largely focussed on situating Gregory's thought in the context of a Platonic and Neo-Platonic understanding of purification.[359] For instance, Henri Pinault argues that Gregory follows Plotinus by converting Plato's account of purification into "une discipline ascétique" which sought the separation of the soul from the body.[360] Rosemary Radford Ruether also argues that a Platonic conception of purification (κάθαρσις) underpins Gregory's conception of the monastic life, the goal of which is the purification of bodily passions and "withdrawal from the sense world".[361] Thomas Spidlik likewise views Gregory's ascetic theology as indebted to a Platonic conception of purification, emphasising in particular the notion

[358] See Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche-sur Yon, 1925), 113-115; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 139-140; Thomas Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze: Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome: PISO, 1971), 34; Donald Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation* (Cambridge MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979), 154-155; Norman Russell *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 216-218, 222. Russell suggests that Gregory is the first Christian writer to present the monastic life as "the setting which enables human beings to attain divine status" (222).

[359] For an alternative take on Gregory's account of purification, which emphasises the proximate Christian background to his account, see Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 81-83. Beeley does discuss Gregory's conception of deification as the goal of this process of purification.

[360] Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 115. Pinault's work builds on that of Ricardus Gottwald, who had previously identified many of the textual parallels between Gregory and Plato or Plotinus that Pinault adduces in his study; Ricardus Gottwald *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico* (Bratislava: H. Fleischmann, 1906), especially 39-48.

[361] Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 149.

of the soul's retreat from the world of sense as the goal of ascetic practice.[362] Norman Russell, for his part, views Gregory's account of the monastic life as a combination of Platonic and Pauline imagery, but ultimately concludes that "the purpose of the ascetic life is to become like God as much as possible through separation, purification and ascent", understood in terms of "the soul's separation from the body and ascent to God in a Platonic manner."[363]

While I do not wish to deny the importance of purification to Gregory's account of the ascetic life, the focus of previous scholarship on this topic has resulted in a lack of sufficient attention to Gregory's conception of the ultimate goal of this process of purification.[364] As a result, this scholarship has provided only an incomplete picture of Gregory's claim that the monastic life deifies its practitioners.[365]

The goal of this chapter, then, is to provide a more complete account of this claim. In this chapter I will both build on and qualify previous accounts by arguing that Gregory associates the monastic life with deification because he believes that the monastic life purifies its practitioners,

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[362] Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 30-37. Spidlik qualifies this interpretation by noting that, while Gregory's thought is Platonic insofar as he views the goal of ascetic practice to be the soul's retreat from the senses, Gregory also follows Aristotle insofar as he views human cognition as dependent on mental images derived from the senses and, as a result of this, asserts that the soul's retreat from the world of sense can be fully realised in this life.

[363] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 218, 222.

[364] A notable exception to this tendency is Henri Pinault's 1925 study, which remains one of the most extensive considerations of Gregory's understanding of ascetic purification; Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, chapters 5-8. Pinault identifies five steps in Gregory's account of the purification of the monk, identifying contemplative union as the goal of purification: (1) the purification of the body, understood as the separation of the soul from the body's passions and from the senses; (2) the recollection of the soul into itself, leading to introspection and self-knowledge; (3) resemblance to God; (4) contemplative union with the beautiful, leading to; (5) a happy and divine life, characterised by the experience of light. However, Pinault's observation regarding the importance of contemplative union as the goal of this process has received little attention in subsequent scholarship.

[365] Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, chapters 6-8.

and that he believes that this process of purification deifies the human being because it causes them to share in the life of the angels and because it leads the mind to union with the divine light.

In order to demonstrate this thesis, this chapter will proceed in four parts. In the first part I will show that Gregory believes that the monastic life deifies its practitioners. In the second part I will show that Gregory associates the monastic life with the motif of deification because he believes that this life enables human beings to purify the body by means of the soul's detachment from the bodily passions and withdrawal from the senses. I will then proceed in the third part to demonstrate that Gregory believes that this process deifies human beings by bringing them to share in the life of the angels. Finally, in the fourth section I will show that Gregory views the soul's escape from the conditions of the body as causing it to ascend interiorly to heaven and to attain deification by means of its union with the divine light. Taken together these sections will chart both the process and end(s) of purification attained through the monastic life.

5.1 THE MONASTIC LIFE AND DEIFICATION

Gregory makes one of his earliest and clearest statements regarding the deifying effects of the monastic life in his oration *To Those Who Had Invited Him, and Not Come to Receive Him* (*Or.3*). Gregory delivered this oration after returning from his retreat to Pontus, which he made following his ordination to the priesthood.[366] In the opening lines of this oration, Gregory comments briefly on the relationship between the solitary life of the monk and the life of active ministry as a priest, a topic he addresses in greater length elsewhere in his corpus.[367] These remarks reflect his personal circumstances. Having initially sought to pursue a solitary life of contemplative retreat, Gregory

[366] John McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus: an Intellectual Bibliography* (Crestwood, NY: SVS, 2006), 110.

[367] See *Or.2*, *Or.10*, *Or.12*, *Or.20* and *Carm.2.1.11.280-312*.

was forced into active ministry when his father ordained him to the priesthood in 361/362.[368] It is against this background that he affirms the deifying effects of the monastic life in the opening lines of this oration. There, Gregory addresses a group of monks who, it seems, had been among those who had originally called for his ordination, but who had subsequently refused to come and to hear him preach at his father's church in Nazianzus owing to a dispute with Gregory the Elder.[369] He opens the oration by censuring this group for, first, forcing him to abandon his pursuit of the solitary life, and, second, refusing to come and hear him preach:

> Why are you slow to hear my speech, O friends and brothers? Indeed, you were quick to tyrannise me, and to seize me away from our citadel of solitude (ἐρημίας), which I had embraced above all and, as co-worker (συνεργὸν) and mother (μητέρα) of divine ascent (θείας ἀναβάσεως) and deification (θεοποιὸν), and which I had admired to the utmost and placed above all other forms of life (παντὸς τοῦ βίου).[370]

In this passage, Gregory identifies the life of "solitude" (ἐρημία) as a means of ascent and deification.[371] The citadel of solitude Gregory is speaking of may refer to his time spent in monastic retreat with Basil in Pontus immediately following his ordination, although it more likely refers to the period of three years he spent practicing asceticism on his family estate in Arianzum prior to

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[368] Gregory was ordained either on December 25th 361 or January 6th 362; see John McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 101, n.58. Susanna Elm has questioned the sincerity of Gregory's description of himself as reluctant to accept his ordination to the priesthood (and, subsequently, his elevation to the episcopate), arguing instead that these remarks are calculated to demonstrate his suitableness for public leadership; see Sussana Elm *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California press, 2012), 147-181. Regardless of the accuracy of his narrative of events, there can be no doubt that Gregory felt a genuine affection for the solitary life, and that his interest in the relationship between this and the life of active ministry reflects his desire to pursue both.

[369] On the background to this dispute, see McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 106-112. The precise cause of the dispute is unclear, although it seems to have been at least partly doctrinal; McGuckin suggests Gregory the Elder's decision to sign the Homoian creed promulgated at the Council of Rimini in 361 as a possible cause.

[370] *Or.3.1* (SC 247: 242).

[371] Gregory's statement in *Or.3.1* that he had considered solitude to be superior to "all other forms of life" (παντὸς τοῦ βίου) indicates that "solitude" here should be understood as referring to a particular form of life, namely, the solitary life or βιός ἐρημικός.

his ordination.[372] In either case, what Gregory has in mind here is a form of the monastic life. When, therefore, he states that the life of "solitude" (ἐρημία) is a means of ascent and deification, Gregory indicates that he considers the monastic life to be a means by which the human being can ascend to heaven and be deified.

Gregory's lengthy description of the lives of true Christian philosophers in his *First Invective against the Emperor Julian* (*Or.4*) provides a detailed illustration of the sort of life he is envisaging when he refers to the solitary life as a means of ascent and deification in *Or.3.1*. Gregory provides this description in *Or.4.71* in order to contrast what he considers to be the life of true philosophy – namely, the Christian monastic life – with the lives led by false pagan philosophers held in esteem by the Emperor Julian.[373] In the course of this description, Gregory again associates the notion of solitude with the motifs of ascent and deification, identifying each of these as distinctive characteristics of the life of true Christian philosophy:

> Do you see these men, without livelihood or home, being almost fleshless and bloodless, and who, because of this, are drawing close to God? Who have unwashed feet and sleep on the ground (to use the words of Homer, so that he might honour your demons with his fictions)? They live below yet are above things below; they live amongst human beings yet are above human affairs. They are bound yet free, self-controlled and uncontrollable. They own nothing in the universe and everything that is above the universe. Their life is double, despising one part and valuing the other. They are immortal through mortification and are united to God through their dissolution. They are outside of desire and possess the loving desire which is divine and impassible. To them belongs the source of light, and they possess already its radiance. Theirs are the angelic psalms, the night-long vigils, and the mind's journey to God, being caught up before its time.[374] They possess purification and the power to purify themselves, knowing no limit to their ascent (ἀναβάσεως) and deification

[372] John McGuckin suggests the former, Norman Russell the latter; McGuckin, *Gregory of Nazianzus* 109-110; Russell *Doctrine of Deification*, 216.

[373] Susanna Elm provides a useful summary of the immediate polemical context and function of this passage in her article "Gregory of Nazianzus: mediation between individual and community," in Eric Rebillard and Jorg Rupke eds. *Group Identity and Religious Individuality in Late Antiquity* (Washington, D.C.: CUA Press, 2015), 89-107, 102-103.

[374] προαρπαζομένου; a possible allusion to Paul being "caught up" (ἁρπαγέντα) to the third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12.2; c.f. Russell *Doctrine of Deification*, 216.

> (θεώσεως). Theirs are the rocks, theirs the heavens; theirs the casting down, theirs the thrones. They are naked, yet they possess the garment of incorruptibility. They live in solitude (ἐρημία) and from there they participate in the festal assembly. They have mastery over pleasure and possess instead the pleasure which is indestructible and indescribable. Their tears are a flood purifying the sins of the world. The stretching out of their hands quenches fires, calms wild beasts, blunts swords, causes legions to falter and will – you know it well – silence your impiety, even though you may be gratified for a while, as you dance the drama of impiety with your demons.[375]

As Norman Russell observes, Gregory is clearly envisaging a monastic setting: the true philosopher is the Christian monk, who lives in poverty and solitude (ἐρημία), singing psalms and keeping night-long vigils.[376] Those who practice this life, Gregory says, know "no limit to their ascent (ἀναβάσεως) and deification (θεώσεως)". Thus, for Gregory, the solitary life of the monk is a means by which human beings can ascend to heaven and attain deification in this life.

Indeed, Gregory identifies the solitary or monastic life[377] as a means of deification on several occasions throughout his writings. In *Ep.6* Gregory makes a brief reference to the "brothers deified (θεουμένων) and elevated (ὑψουμένων)" by Basil at his monastic community in Pontus;[378] in his *Second Poem On Virtue* (*Carm.1.2.10*) Gregory speaks of the deification of the monks and

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[375] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 182, 184).

[376] Russell *Doctrine of Deification*, 216.

[377] Gregory uses the language of the "solitary life" (βιός ἐρημικός) to refer to a specific form of the monastic life associated with retreat from society and contemplative prayer, in contrast to the "communal" or "mixed" life (βιός κοινωνικός/μιγάς), which is characterised by active involvement in human society and the pursuit of virtuous acts. Gregory uses the terms "monastic life" (βιός μοναδικός) and "monks" (μόνος) to refer to the Christian "celibate" or "unmarried" life (βιός ἄγαμος/ἄζυξ) in general. On the identification of the unmarried or celibate life with the βιός μοναδικός, see *Or.18.22* (PG 35: 1012): ζῶσιν ἐν μοναδικῷ βίῳ καὶ ἄζυγι. For a general treatment of Gregory's monastic terminology, see the excellent analysis Francis Gautier, *La Retrait et le Sacerdoce chez Gregoire de Nazianze* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), 56-68. Gautier's analysis builds upon the earlier treatment of Sussana Elm which, while briefer than Gautier's, provides a useful and accurate summary of the meaning and significance of these terms; Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 207-211. Throughout this chapter I follow Gregory's usage by using the term "monastic life" as a general term referring to all forms of the Christian celibate life, while reserving the term "solitary life" for specifically contemplative forms of the monastic life.

[378] *Ep.6.3* (Gallay I: 7).

virgins who practice night-long psalmodies;[379] while in his poem *Blessings of Various Lives* (*Carm.1.2.17*) Gregory says that the one who pursues the solitary life has "deified (ἐθέωσε) his mind".[380]

It is clear from these passages that Gregory believes that the monastic life deifies its practitioners. Having established this, we must now investigate how the monastic life deifies human beings. We begin this task in the next section of this chapter.

5.2 THE MONASTIC LIFE AND PURIFICATION

In his lengthy description of the solitary life of the monk in *Or.4.71*, quoted above, Gregory associates the ascent and deification of the monk with the motif of purification, saying that monks "possess purification (κάθαρσις) and the power to purify themselves (τὸ καθαίρεσθαι), knowing no limit to their ascent (ἀναβάσεως) and deification (θεώσεως)."[381] Scholars have long viewed Gregory's account of κάθαρσις as dependent on Plato's (and, to a lesser extent, Plotinus's) understanding of purification as the separation of the soul from the body.[382] My argument in this section supports this interpretation inasmuch as I will show that Gregory understands the purification, ascent, and deification of the human being as coming about by means of the escape from the body. At the same time, I nuance this interpretation by showing that when Gregory speaks of purification as the soul's escape from the body he is in fact referring to the soul's detachment from the bodily passions and withdrawal from the senses, rather than its complete separation from

[379] *Carm.1.2.10.920-922* (PG 37: 746).
[380] *Carm.1.2.17.1* (Simelides: 104).
[381] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 184).
[382] See Gottwald, *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico*, 41-42; Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, chapters 6-7; Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 149; Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 30-37; Russell *Doctrine of Deification*, 218, 222.

the material body. In what follows, I will begin first show that Gregory associates the monastic life with deification because he believes that this life enables the liberation of the soul or mind from the body by means of purification. I will then show that he understands this escape to involve the detachment of the soul from the bodily passions and senses.

In both *Or.4.71* and *Ep.6.3* Gregory asserts the deifying power of the monastic life as part of a description of this life which emphasises the incorporeal character of the monastic life, and which presents this as enabling the monk to ascend to God. In *Or.4.71* Gregory describes the monks as "almost fleshless (ἀσάρκους) and bloodless (ἀναίμονας)" and "because of this, are drawing close to God (Θεῷ… πλησιάζοντας)".[383] Again these monks "are united to God (Θεῷ συνημμένους) through their dissolution (λύσιν) [of the body]".[384] Both of these lines associate the monk's approach to God with their escape from or dissolution of the body. It is the mind specifically, it seems that, is able to approach God as a result of the body's dissolution, with Gregory describing these monks as experiencing "the mind's journey to God" (ἡ τοῦ νοῦ πρὸς Θεὸν ἐκδημία).[385] Gregory's describes the monastic life in similar terms in *Ep.6* – a letter addressed to Basil and most likely composed shortly after Gregory's first stay in the monastic community Basil had established at Annesoi in Pontus in 359.[386] In *Ep.6.3* Gregory laments his separation from Basil and from the monastic community at Annesoi:

> Would that someone would give me those former days in which I shared with you in your hardships, since voluntary hardship is more honourable than involuntary delights. Who will give me those psalmodies, vigils, and the departure towards God (πρὸς Θεὸν ἐκδημίας) through prayer (δι' εὐχῆς), and the life which was almost immaterial (ἄϋλον)

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[383] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 182).

[384] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 182). Gregory uses the language of "dissolution" (λύσις/λύω) to speak of the soul's separation from the body and the body's destruction, above all in death; see, for instance, *Or.7.18*, *19*.

[385] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 184).

[386] See Bradley Storin, *The letters of Gregory of Nazianzus: Discourse and community in late antique epistolary culture* PhD Diss. (Indiana University: 2012), p.20, n.27.

> and incorporeal (ἀσώματον)? Which of the brothers deified (θεουμένων) and elevated (ὑψουμένων) by you will give me kinship and harmony of soul? What of the competition and incitement for virtue, which we safeguarded through written rules and canons? What of our industrious study of the divine scriptures, and the discovery of the light within them with the aid of the Spirit?[387]

Again, Gregory's affirmation of the monastic life as a setting which enables human beings to attain deification is combines with a description which emphasises the incorporeal character of the monastic life. The monastic life as one which allows its practitioners to escape from the body, in that it is a "life which was almost immaterial (ἄϋλον) and incorporeal (ἀσώματον)". While both *Or.4.71* and *Ep.6.3* suggest a connection between the notion of the deifying power of the monastic life and the notion that the monastic life enables the monk to escape the conditions of the body, we require a third text to see the nature of this connection more clearly. In *Carm.1.2.10*, Gregory makes the connection between deification, purification, and liberation from the body explicit when he refers to monks and virgins who practice intense fasting as "those who deify themselves by purification of the body" (καθάρσει σωμάτων θεούμενοι) and who are thus "free from the body" (σωμάτων ἐλεύθεροι).[388] The monastic life deifies human beings because it is a means of purification. This purification in turn enables monks and virgins to free themselves from the body.

Still, it remains to be seen what Gregory means when he speaks of purification as a process which enables the monk to escape from the body. As we observed above, several scholars have argued that Gregory follows Plato in that he understands purification to be the separation of the soul from the body. Indeed, there can be no doubt that Gregory makes use of Platonic idioms and paraphrases to express his conception of the life of "philosophy" (φιλοσοφία) – a term Gregory,

[387] *Ep.6.2-4* (Gallay I: 7).
[388] *Carm.1.2.10.630-632* (PG 37: 726-727).

like Basil, uses to speak of the monastic life[389] – as one of purification. The Christian philosopher or monk, he says, seeks to escape the "tomb" (σῆμα),[390] "chains" (δεσμός),[391] or "prison" (δεσμωτήριον)[392] of the body. The philosophical or monastic life is thus a preparation for death, the goal of which is the release of the soul from the body.[393] Yet the mere use of Platonic terminology does not on its own tell us how Gregory conceives of the soul's escape from the body. The remainder of this section, therefore, seeks to elucidate this aspect of Gregory's thought.

Gregory, I argue, conceives of the soul's escape from the body in terms of its detachment from the passions (πάθη) of the body and from the bodily senses (αἰσθήσεις), rather than from the body itself.[394] In one of his earliest extended discussions of purification, Gregory describes

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[389] See Anne Marie Malingrey *"Philosophia." Étude d'un groupe de mots dans la littérature grecque, des Présocratiques au IVe siècle après J.-C.* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1961), 237-261; Gautier, *Retrait et le Sacerdoce*, chapter 1.

[390] *Ep.31*; c.f. Plato *Gorgias* 493A; *Cratylus* 400B-C.

[391] *Or.7.21*; *Or.14.7*; *Or.28.12*; c.f. Plato *Phaedo* 67D; *Republic* 7, 525C.

[392] *Or.14.6*; *Or.28.2*; *Or.43.6*; c.f. Plato *Republic* 7, 525C; *Cratylus* 400C.

[393] *Ep.31.2-4* (Gallay I: 38, 39): "I do not wish – nor indeed to I consider it good – for you, being Philagrius and having been trained to a high degree in divine things, to suffer as the many do, nor to fall along with your body, nor to lament your sickness as incurable. Rather, I wish you to practice philosophy (ἐμφιλοσοφεῖν) in suffering and to now purify your intellect (διάνοιαν… ἐκκαθαίρεσθαι) to a higher degree; to show yourself to be greater than your chains; to regard your disease as a training for that which is more advantageous – that is, disdaining the body and bodily things, and destroying everything of that is in flux and turbulence; to become devoted entirely to the higher part; and to live for the future instead of the present, making this life a meditation on death (θανάτου μελέτην), as Plato calls it (c.f. Plato *Phaedo* 81A) and releasing the soul (λύοντα τὴν ψυχὴν) from the body or tomb (to speak like him) (Plato *Gorgias* 493A; *Cratylus* 400B-C) as much as possible." For a more extensive discussion of Gregory's reception of this aspect of Plato's thought, see Gottwald *De Gregorio Nazianzeno Platonico*, 34; Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 134-135. See also Justin Mossay *La Mort et l'au-delà dans saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1966), 14, n.5; Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 31.

[394] Pinault recognises this point; Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 132-133, 144; see also, Ruether *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 146-149; Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 30-37. Christopher Beeley notes that the identification of purification with the soul's separation from the material body in-itself is incompatible with Gregory's affirmation of the resurrection of the body; Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 81-83.

purification as the soul's escape from the "internal war" (ἔνδον… πόλεμον) of the passions and the distractions of the senses:

> I have said nothing yet of the internal war (ἔνδον… πόλεμον) of the passions (πάθεσι) within us, in which we are engaged in conflict night and day against our body of humiliation (τῆς ταπεινώσεως σώματος),[395] sometimes secretly, sometimes openly, from above and from below, agitating and distracting us by means of the senses (διά τε αἰσθήσεως) and other pleasant things of this turbulent life – and against the muddy slime to which we have been bound, and against the law of sin[396] which fights against the law of the Spirit, and which attempts to destroy the royal image in us (τὴν βασιλικὴν ἐν ἡμῖν εἰκόνα) and as much of the divine emanation as has been given to us. Thus, would be difficult for anyone – whether they have trained themselves for a long time with philosophy (φιλοσοφίᾳ) and gradually detached the noble and luminous part of the soul (τὸ τῆς ψυχῆς εὐγενὲς καὶ φωτοειδὲς) from that which is humble and joined to darkness (τοῦ ταπεινοῦ καὶ τῷ σκότει συνεζευγμένου), or have received the mercy of God, or have attained both of these things, and constantly meditate so that they might look upwards as much as possible – to prevail against the matter dragging them downwards (τῆς κατασπώσης ὕλης).[397]

For Gregory, philosophical training seeks to detach "the noble and luminous part of the soul" from "that which is humble and joined to darkness". By "the noble and luminous part of the soul" Gregory is most likely referring to that part of the soul which is made after the image of God, namely the faculties of "mind" (νοῦς) or "reason" (λόγος).[398] What he means when he speaks of "that which is humble and joined to darkness" is less clear. This phrase, along with Gregory's subsequent mention of the "matter" (ὕλη) that drags the soul downwards, could be interpreted as references to the material body in-itself. Within the broader context of this passage, however, this phrase is more naturally read as referring to the "body of humiliation" (τῆς ταπεινώσεως σώματος)

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[395] Philippians 3.12.

[396] Romans 7.23.

[397] *Or.2.91* (SC 247: 206, 208).

[398] The identification of the "noble and luminous part of the soul" in *Or.2.91* with the *imago dei* is suggested by Gregory's description of the passions and senses as waging war against "the royal image in us" (τὴν βασιλικὴν ἐν ἡμῖν εἰκόνα). On the identification of the *imago dei* with the noetic/rational soul, see *Or.28.17*; *Or.38.11*. Gregory's reference to these as the "luminous part of the soul" in *Or.2.91* fits with his description of the mind and reason as "light" elsewhere in his writings. On the mind as light, see *Or.32.*15; on reason as light, see *Or.40.5*.

that he refers to in the opening line of this passage. There the "body of humiliation" is identified with those aspects of the body which cause the soul to be dragged down, namely, the "inner war" of the passions and the distractions caused by the senses.

That Gregory understands the goal of purification to be the detachment of the soul from the bodily passions and from distractions caused by the senses is confirmed by remarks he makes elsewhere in his writings. The first indication that he considers the goal of purification to be the detachment of the soul from the bodily passions may be found in his endorsement of mastery over the passions as a goal of the monastic and philosophical life. Gregory endorses this goal in his depiction of the ideal philosopher or monk in his oration *In Praise of Maximus the Philosopher* (*Or.25*). In *Or.25.2* Gregory says that Maximus is the "best and most perfect of philosophers" (φιλοσόφων ἄριστε καὶ τελεώτατε)[399] because he has detached himself from matter through his mastery over the passions:

> He appoints philosophy (φιλοσοφίαν) as master of the passions (τὴν δέσποιναν τῶν παθῶν) and vigorously pursues the good, and detaches himself from matter (ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης τέμνεται) before he is separated (διαζευχθῆναι) from matter [viz. in death]. He rises above the visible world (τῶν ὁρωμένων κατεξανίσταται) through his greatness of nature and nobility of choice, and advances towards that which is permanent.[400]

Importantly, Gregory distinguishes between the philosopher's detachment from matter in this life and the separation from matter at death. According to Gregory, Maximus is the "best and most perfect of philosophers" because he has detached himself from matter by becoming a master of the passions and by pursuing the good. It is, then, the philosopher's detachment from matter through mastery of the passions and not the separation of the soul from the body itself that the Christian philosopher or monk is to strive towards.

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[399] *Or.25.2* (SC 284: 158).
[400] *Or.25.4* (SC 284: 164).

Gregory appears to understand the philosopher's mastery over the passions in terms of the Stoic ideal of "impassibility" (ἀπάθεια).[401] Although he uses the noun ἀπάθεια only once in his writings (in *Or.8.16*), Gregory does use the adjective ἀπαθής ("impassible") on twenty occasions,[402] including five times to refer to the attainment of impassibility by the individual Christian.[403] For our purposes, three of these are particularly notable. First, in *Or.4.71*, Gregory says that monks are "outside of desire (ἔξω πόθου) and possess the loving desire which is divine and impassible (τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀπαθοῦς ἔρωτος)".[404] Second, in *Or.26.13*, Gregory describes the ideal Christian philosopher as one who is "impassible in the midst of suffering" (ἐν πάθεσιν

[401] Several scholars have discussed the role of ἀπάθεια in Gregory's thought, although none of their treatments of this topic extends to more than a couple of pages; see Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 133, 138-140; Ruether *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 141, 146; Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 32; Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and peace of mind: from Stoic agitation to Christian temptation* (Oxford: OUP, 2000), 392. Each of these scholars argues that Gregory considers ἀπάθεια to be the goal of the purification of the passions. Robert Gregg provides a lengthier consideration of the relationship between the ideals of ἀπάθεια and μετριοπάθεια in the Cappadocians as a whole, although his account largely focusses on Basil of Caesarea; Robert Gregg *Consolation Philosophy: Greek Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Cambridge MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1975), 228-243.

It should be noted that Gregory also endorses the Aristotelian ideal of "moderation of the passions" (μετριοπάθεια) on one occasion, in *Ep.165.2* (Gallay II: 55), where he warns against being either too ἀπαθής or too περιπαθής when dealing with the subject of consolation, saying instead that it is necessary to take the "middle way" (μέσην) between being lack of control over the passions on the one hand, and being immoderately philosophical on the other. Gregory's apparent endorsement of μετριοπάθεια in *Ep.165.2* appears to suggest a tension in his thought, since he elsewhere states that the true Christian philosopher should be ἀπαθής. Sorabji proposes a plausible solution when he argues that Gregory understands the states of μετριοπάθεια and ἀπάθεια to be appropriate to different people depending on their circumstances and temperament, suggesting that Gregory endorses ἀπάθεια as a goal for the Christian philosopher which is not attainable for all Christians. On the distinction between ἀπάθεια and μετριοπάθεια, see Sorabji, *Emotion and peace of mind*, 194-211.

[402] According to a TLG search conducted 28/06/19.

[403] These are: *Or.4.71* (referring to the "impassible desire" of monks); *Or.8.12* (referring to his sister); *Or.18.43* (referring to his father); *Or.26.13* (referring to the ideal Christian philosopher) and *Or.43.52* (referring to Basil).

[404] *Or.4.71* (SC 309: 182, 184).

ἀπαθὴς).[405] Finally, in *Or.43.56* Gregory describes Basil as being "so impassible (ἀπαθοῦς) that even the angels revered him".[406] Of these three passages, the first two represent general depictions of the ideal Christian philosopher or monk, while the third comes as part of Gregory's attempt to depict Basil as a particular individual who fulfilled this ideal. For Gregory, then, the philosopher detaches himself from matter by mastering the passions so as to attain a state of "impassibility", rather than by separating himself from the body itself.[407]

In addition to identifying "impassibility" as a goal of purification, Gregory also speaks of the purification of the body as enabling the soul to escape the distractions of the senses. So, for instance, in his oration *In Praise of his Sister Gorgonia* (*Or.8*), Gregory states that Gorgonia practiced fasting and mortification of the body in order to free the soul from the senses:

> O soul maintaining the body almost without food, as though immaterial (ὥσπερ ἄϋλον)! Or, rather, constraining the body by mortification (νεκρωθῆναι), even before their separation [at death], so that the soul might attain freedom and might no longer be impeded by the senses (μὴ παραποδίζηται ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν)![408]

In order to understand what Gregory means when he says that the soul is "impeded by the senses" (παραποδίζηται ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν), we must first recall our observation in chapter 2 of this study that Gregory considers human beings incapable of directly contemplating God because of the dependence of human cognition on the senses and on mental images derived from the senses.[409] Gregory's reference to the soul's escape from the senses in the above passage, then, suggests that

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[405] *Or.26.13* (SC 284: 256).

[406] *Or.43.56* (SC 384: 244).

[407] In addition to the passages discussed above, Gregory at times speaks of the need to cut off the passions without using the technical vocabulary of ἀπάθεια. So, for instance, in *Or.37*, Gregory exhorts his audience to "cut off the passions" (ἐκτέμνωμεν… των παθών) (*Or.37.22*; SC 318: 314), while in *Carm.1.2.34* Gregory identifies the "peaceful state of the soul" (εἰρήνη… ψυχῆς) with the "cessation of passions" (λώφησις παθῶν) (*Carm.1.2.34.167-168*; PG 37: 957).

[408] *Or.8.14* (SC 405: 276).

[409] See chapter 2, section 2.3.

the soul's escape from the body includes its liberation from the epistemological constraints imposed by the senses and the mental images which arise from them.[410]

Indeed, this is precisely the sort of process Gregory describes in *Or.27.3*, where Gregory speaks of purification as the removal of "imprints" (τύποι) and "fictions" (πλανώμενοι) from the "ruling part of the soul" (ἡγεμονικός).[411] In Stoic thought, a mental image is an "imprint" (τύπωσις) which the soul receives in a manner akin to wax receiving the imprint of a seal.[412] Gregory appears to use the language of "imprint" (τύπος/τύπωσις) in a similar manner to refer to that which is imprinted upon the soul by the senses and subsequently stored in memory.[413] For Gregory, then,

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[410] In *Or.39.8* Gregory identifies purification of the flesh with the purification of "the cloud covering the soul (τοῦ ἐπιπροσθοῦντος τῇ ψυχῇ νέφους) and preventing it from seeing purely the divine ray"; *Or.39.8* (SC 358: 164). As we saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation, Gregory uses the language of the "cloud" (νέφος) of the flesh to speak of the epistemological limitations imposed by the bodily senses, and in particular of the role of "mental images" (φαντάσματα/φαντασίαι) derived from the senses in human cognition. The notion of purifying the "cloud" of the flesh, then, also suggests the soul's escape from the epistemological constraints imposed by the senses and mental images.

[411] See Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.45 (= *SVF* 2.53): φαντασίαν εἶναι τύπωσιν ἐν ψυχῇ.

[412] *Or.27.3* (SC 250: 76). See also Gregory's definition of purification in *Carm.1.2.34.173-174* (PG 37: 958): "Purification (κάθαρσίς) is the washing away of defilements (μολυσμάτων). A defilement, I know, is the imprint of evil things (τύπωσιν τῶν κακῶν)." In Stoic thought, a mental image is an "imprint" (τύπωσις) which the soul receives in a manner akin to wax receiving the imprint of a seal; see Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.45 (= *SVF* 2.53): φαντασίαν εἶναι τύπωσιν ἐν ψυχῇ. Gregory appears to hold a similar understanding. In *Carm.1.2.34*, he defines memory as "the retention of mental impressions" (κάθεξις τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων) (*Carm.1.2.34.32*; PG 37: 948). This definition follows immediately from his definition of sense-perception as "the reception of something external" (εἰσδοχή τις ἔκτοθεν) (*Carm.1.2.34.31*; PG 37: 948). Ryan Clevenger points out that while Gregory does not identify the "something external" which is received through sense-perception in this poem, the immediate context of this line, combined with his remarks on sense-perception and memory elsewhere in his writings (see especially *Or.32.12*), suggests that that which is received through the senses is an impression or imprint of the form of some object; Ryan Clevenger *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language* PhD Diss. (Wheaton, 2017), 163-164. So, for Gregory, it seems, a τύπωσις, τύπος or τυπώμα is that which received by the mind through the senses and which is subsequently retained by memory.

[413] See Ryan Clevenger *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language* PhD Diss. (Wheaton, 2017), 163-164. In *Carm.1.2.34* Gregory defines sense-perception as "the reception of

purification involves the soul's withdrawal from the senses, a process which includes the removal from the soul of imprints and mental images derived from the senses. This results in the liberation of the soul from the epistemological constraints imposed by the senses.

For Gregory, then, the monastic life enables human beings to purify themselves by detaching the soul from bodily passions and withdrawing it from the senses and mental images derived from the senses. As we observed at the beginning of this section, Gregory associates this process of bodily purification with the deification of the monk. The next two sections of this chapter seek to explain this connection. In the next section I will argue that Gregory believes that the bodily purification of the monk deifies them by bringing them to them share in the life of the angels. I will then argue in the final section that Gregory believes that the monk's escape from the conditions of the body allows their mind to ascend to heaven and attain deification through union with the divine light.

5.3 DEIFICATION AND THE ΒΙΟΣ ΑΓΓΕΛΙΚΟΣ

In the previous section, we saw that Gregory associates the monastic life with the motif of deification because he believes that this life enables human beings to purify the body by escaping the bodily passions and the senses. In this section I will show that Gregory views this process as deifying human beings by causing them to become like the angels and bringing them to share in the life of the angels.

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something external" (εἰσδοχή τις ἔκτοθεν); *Carm.1.2.34.31* (PG 37: 948). While he does not state what this "something external" is, his subsequent definition of memory as "the retention of mental impressions" (κάθεξις τῶν νοὸς τυπωμάτων) suggests it is the imprint of sensible things upon the soul which is received in sense-perception, as do his remarks in *Or.28.22*, where Gregory states that the ears receive the "imprints" (τυπώσεως) of the sounds they hear; *Or.28.22* (SC 250: 148).

In order to demonstrate this, I will first show that Gregory views the monastic life as causing its practitioners to become like the angels, showing that monks or virgins who purify themselves become like the angels through their detachment from bodily passions. I will then show that Gregory also views the monastic life as enabling its practitioners to share in the life of the angels by entering into communion with the angelic choir. Finally, I will show that Gregory identifies deification as involving both becoming like the angels and sharing in life of the angels.

Gregory frequently describes the monastic or virginal life as resembling that of the angels.[414] For instance, in *Carm.1.2.10*, Gregory describes the "choir of virgins" (χορὸς τῶν

[414] That Gregory views the monastic or virginal life as resembling the life of the angels has not gone unnoticed. Jacques Rousse was the first to comment upon this dimension of Gregory's thought, observing that, for Gregory, the life of virginity "assimile, d'une certain manière, la nature humaine à la nature angélique." Jan Szymusiak followed with a brief remark noting that Gregory views solitaries as participating in the life of the angels but without losing their need for bodily necessities. Shortly afterwards Ruether also observed this aspect of Gregory's thought, commenting that "through asceticism the monk is able partially to free himself from the conditions of corporeal existence" and so to become "angelic in the literal sense". A couple of decades later, Nonna Harrison observed that Gregory "envisages the ascetic, though embodied, as participating in the angelic mode of existence to the extent possible". More recently, Francis Gautier has argued that, for Gregory, the virginal life of the Christian monk or solitary enables them to live the angelic life by freeing them from the flesh. Jacques Rousse 'Les Anges et Leurs Ministre chez Gregoire de Nazianze' *MSR* 22 (1965) 133-152, 151; Jan Szymusiak "Amour de la solitude et vie dans le monde à l'école de saint Grégoire de Nazianze" *La vie spirituelle* 114 (1966) 129-160, 145; Ruether *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 147; N.V. Harrison "Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology", *JTS* 47.1 (1996), 38-68, 52; Gautier, *Retrait et le Sacerdoce*, 34-35, 49-50.

Gregory is not alone in his belief that monks share in the life of the angels. The literature of the Egyptian desert is replete with depictions of monks who are said to resemble angels or to have ascended to heaven and joined the choir of the angels while still on earth. This conception of the ascetic life is also found in the Syrian ascetic tradition. For instance, Aphrahat claims that the Christian celibate dwells with the angels in heaven as the bride of Christ, while the *Book of Steps* likewise presents the celibate as leading to fellowship with the angels, arguing that through celibacy one can become "like angels (ܟܡܠܐܟ̈ܐ) without passions and physical lust"; Aphrahat *Dem.* 6.6; *Book of Steps* Memra 15.4-5 (PS 3: col. 344; trans. R.A. Kitchen, CSS 196). Gregory's fellow Cappadocians Basil and Gregory of Nyssa both share in this conception of the monastic life. In the prologue to his *Longer Rules*, Basil states that the one who practices ascetic discipline will attain "a life of blessedness and equal citizenship with the saints, and joy among the angels (μετ' ἀγγέλων) in the presence of Christ",[414] while Gregory of Nyssa, in his *On Virginity*, calls virginity an imitation of "the way of life of the incorporeal powers" (τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων δυνάμεων

παρθένων) as "imitating the fleshless life of the angels (ζωὴν ἄσαρκον ἀγγέλων μιμούμενος), living for themselves and God alone (μόνου)."[415] Again, in his oration *On Basil the Great* (*Or.43*), Gregory says that virginity is "ranked with the angels" (μετ᾽ ἀγγελῶν τετάχθαι).[416] Finally, in in his oration *On Matthew 19.1-12* (*Or.37*) Gregory refers to the virginal life as "the way of life of the angels" (ἀγγέλων… πολιτείαν).[417] These remarks indicate that the monastic or virginal life resembles the life of the angels, but they do not on their own inform us as to the nature of this resemblance. This becomes clear, however, when we recognise that Gregory describes the monastic life as "angelic" because he believes it causes those who practice it to become like the angels through bodily purification.

In the passage from *Or.37.10* we have just quoted Gregory states that virginity is "angelic" (ἀγγελικὸν) because it allows those who practice it to live "not according to the flesh" (μὴ κατὰ σάρκα) and to live "above their nature" (τῆς φύσεως ὑψηλοτέραν) whilst still being "bound to the flesh" (τὸ σαρκὶ συνδεδεμένην).[418] This suggests that Gregory thinks that the monastic or virginal life resembles that of the angels because those who practice it are freed from the conditions of the body. Yet we can be more precise, since, as we observed in the previous section, Gregory believes that the soul of the monk or virgin escapes the body is by detaching itself from the bodily passions.

πολιτείαν), and says that the virgin shall be changed "from the dignity (ἀξίας) of human nature into that of Angels (εἰς τὴν ἀγγελικήν)". Basil of Caesarea *Longer Rules* prol. 4 (PG 31: 897; trans. Silvas, *The Asketikon of St Basil the Great* (Oxford, OUP, 2005); Gregory of Nyssa *virg.* 4.8, 23.7 (SC 119: 280, 556; trans. is my own). The ultimate basis for this conception of the monastic life was Jesus's words in Luke 20.35-36, where the unmarried are said to be "sons of the resurrection", and, as a result, to be "equal to the angels": "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are held worthy of the age to come and of the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels (ἰσάγγελοι) and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

[415] *Carm.1.2.10.891-893* (PG 37: 744).

[416] *Or.43.62* (SC 384: 258).

[417] *Or.37.10* (SC 318: 292).

[418] *Or.37.11* (SC 318: 294).

It is the monk or virgin's detachment from the passions in particular which makes them become like the angels, a point Gregory makes in his *On his Return following the Maximus Affair* (*Or.26*). In *Or.26.13* Gregory states that the Christian philosopher becomes like God and the angel by escaping the influence of the bodily passions:

> Nothing is more impregnable (ἀναλωτότερον), nothing more unconquerable (ἀληπτότερον) than philosophy (φιλοσοφίας). All things will give way before a philosopher (φιλόσοφος) … Whenever he shall shut himself off from all earthly things (πάντων ἐξείργηται τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς), he furnishes himself with wings like an eagle. He will return to the house of his guardian; he will fly up to God (πρὸς Θεὸν ἀναπτήσεται).[419] Let me say something by way of summary (κεφάλαιον). These two things are free from external control (δυσκράτητα): God and the angel. The philosopher is a third: immaterial in matter (ἄϋλος ἐν ὕλῃ), uncircumscribed in the body (ἐν σώματι ἀπερίγραπτος), heavenly while on earth (ἐπὶ γῆς οὐράνιος), impassible in the midst of suffering (ἐν πάθεσιν ἀπαθὴς), yielding in all things except his purpose, victorious in his victory over those who think they are superior.[420]

Gregory considers the Christian philosopher to be free from the body not because he has separated himself altogether from the material body – the philosopher still lives "in matter" (ἐν ὕλῃ) and "in the body" (ἐν σώματι) – but because he has "shut himself off from all earthly things" (πάντων ἐξείργηται τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς), and become "impassible" (ἀπαθὴς) by detaching himself from the passions. By freeing himself from the bodily passions, the philosopher becomes δυσκράτητος – "free from external control"[421] – like God and the angels. The claim that the philosopher's freedom from the bodily passions renders him like God and the angels helps to explain Gregory's statement that virginity resembles the angelic life because those who practice it are freed from the conditions of the body. The idea would seem to be that the monastic/virginal/philosophical life

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[419] Isaiah 40.31.

[420] *Or.26.13* (SC 284: 256).

[421] Translated literally, this term means "difficult to control" (δυς + κράτητος). In the context of this passage the sense appears to be more one of freedom from external control or influence, which is how I have translated this term in the passage above. Indeed, this is the theme of the lines which immediately precede Gregory's summary of the ideal philosopher, in which Gregory describes the philosophical life as "impregnable" (ἀνάλωτος) and the philosopher as one who does not yield to external forces.

resembles the angelic life because monks/virgins/philosophers who practice this way of life themselves become like the angels through their detachment from bodily passion.

Monks/virgins/philosophers become like the angels when they detach themselves from bodily passions because lack of passion is a defining feature of the angelic nature, a view Gregory sets out numerous times in his poems on the subjects of virginity and celibacy, and above all in his poem *In Praise of Virginity* (*Carm.1.2.1*).[422] In this poem Gregory says that virginity resembles both God and the angels, since both God and the angels are "celibate" (ἀζυγέες):

> Rejoice, O mighty Virginity, God-given giver of good things, mother of innocence, office of Christ, joined to the unmarried heavenly beautiful ones. For celibate (ἀζυγέες) are, first, God; second, God's eternally existing choir.[423]

Gregory proceeds to elucidate this claim by explaining that God and the angels are both celibate because of their freedom from bodily passions. The Holy Trinity, he says, is the "first virgin" (πρώτη παρθένος), because within the Trinity the Father generates the Son "in a different manner to mortals"[424] – that is, without sexual intercourse or passion.[425] Likewise, with the angels, he says, "there is no marriage (γάμος), pains, or sorrows, nor is there the ungovernable agitation of the passions (παθέων)".[426] This is because the angels are immaterial, incorporeal beings, "neither coming from the flesh…nor entering into the flesh".[427] Gregory's belief that the angels are "virginal" because they lack bodily passions explains the resemblance of the monks/virgins/philosophers to the angels. The monk/virgin/philosopher who purifies themselves

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[422] This is also the subject of *Carm.1.2.2-7.* For a discussion of the theory of the monastic life and virginity Gregory espouses in these poems, see Harrison "Gender, Generation, and Virginity in Cappadocian Theology".

[423] *Carm.1.2.1.11-14* (PG 37: 523).

[424] *Carm.1.2.1.20-29* (PG 37: 523-524).

[425] On the impassible generation of the Son, see also *Or.25.27*, *Or.30.20*, and *Carm.1.1.2.15*.

[426] *Carm.1.2.1.35-36* (PG 37: 525).

[427] *Carm.1.2.1.48-50* (PG 37: 526).

is like the angels because both the purified monk/virgin/philosopher and the angels are free from bodily passions.

In addition to becoming like the angels through their freedom from bodily passions, the angelic life also allows monks/virgins/philosophers to share in the angelic life by entering into communion with the angels in heaven. The opening lines of his *Exhortation to Virgins* (*Carm.1.2.3*)[428] provides a succinct expression of this aspect of Gregory's thought. There, Gregory exhorts the virgin to escape the body by imitating the heavenly life of the angels, thereby ascending to join the "single ones" (μόνοι) of heaven:

> O virgin, bride of Christ (νύμφη Χριστοῦ), glorify your bridegroom always. Purify yourself in word and wisdom so that you might always live your entire life shining with radiance: for this far excels perishable marriage. While in the body (ἐν σώματι), imitate the noetic powers (τὰς νοερὰς δυνάμεις ἐμιμήσω); approach the angelic way of life (ἀγγελικὴν… πολιτείαν) while still on earth. Here is bondage and dissolution, and bodies coming from bodies. But in heaven each single one (μονὰς) is never destroyed. The first bear the rays of the pure Trinity, spirit and fire, ministers of God's commands, while matter seeks out mixture, and its nature is eternal flux, whose limits God defined when he established marriage. You, having fled the work of matter, have been joined to heaven as a mind joined to minds (νοῦς ἁρμόζεται νοῖ) in divine harmony, and by warring against the flesh you have brought aid to the image.[429]

The emphasis here is not simply on the resemblance of the virgin to the angels, but in their communion with the angels and participation in the heavenly life of the angels. By practicing virginity, human beings are able to imitate the "noetic powers" (νοερὰς δυνάμεις) – that is, the angels – and approach the "angelic way of life" (ἀγγελικὴν… πολιτείαν) while still living on earth and in the body. Moreover, in spite of their earthly location virgins are able to participate in the

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[428] In the mid-twentieth century the authenticity of this poem was brought into question by Rudolf Keydell, who argued against its attribution to Gregory on the basis of meter. However, Jean-Marie Mathieu subsequently refuted Keydell's arguments and established the poem's status as an authentic work of Gregory; Rudolf Keydell, "Ein dogmatisches Lehrgedicht Gregors von Nazianz" *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951), 315– 321; J.-M. Mathieu "Authenticité de l' «Exhortatio ad virgines» (Carmen I, ii, 3)" in *Symposium Nazianzenum II: Louvain la Neuve, 25-26 août, 1981* ed. Justin Mossay (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1983), 145-158.

[429] *Carm.1.2.3.1-15* (PG 37: 632-634).

heavenly life of the angels: the virgin is "joined to heaven" and enters into communion with the angels as a "mind joined to minds" (νοῦς ἁρμόζεται νοῒ).[430] Thus, virgins not only become like the angels through their detachment from bodily passions, they also share in the angelic life by attaining communion with the angels.

These twin notions of becoming like the angels and sharing in the heavenly life of the angels, I suggest, help explain Gregory's identification of the monastic life as a way of life which leads towards deification. For, Gregory views deification as involving both becoming like the angels and sharing in life of the angels. The notion that the monk becomes like the angel through bodily purification appears to lies behind Gregory's association of deification with purification of the body through intense fasting in *Carm.1.2.10*. When read in its broader context, it becomes clear that Gregory views those who practice intense fasting as resembling the angels, who need no bodily food but instead feed upon the Word:

> But if the bread of the angels (ἀγγέλων… ἄρτος), is the food of the Word (ἡ λόγου τροφὴ) – for they are by nature incorporeal, and so do not feed the body – how many among us live the life of the angels (ἀγγέλων ζῶσιν βίον), by digesting the small sparks of this life![431] And this not by their own will, but according to the grace of divine dogma: for it is necessary to be bound until God shall release you, as the books and things of old say.[432] How many deify themselves by purification of the body (καθάρσει σωμάτων θεούμενοι), passing day and night without tasting food as though free from

[430] In this text the notion of participation in the heavenly life of the angels is closely linked to the notion of the virgin as the "bride of Christ" (νύμφη Χριστοῦ). The virgin has exchanged earthly marriage for heavenly marriage, and so is a "single one" (μονὰς) like the angels in heaven, the first "single ones". Gregory again combines these notions in the concluding lines of this poem; *Carm.1.2.3.91-100* (PG 37: 640): "Beauty will fade; glory is fleeting; wealth is an untrustworthy flux; power is but a small thing. But you, escaping the vicissitudes of the deceitful universe shall enter into the Holy of Holies laughing and will dance the eternal dance with the angels (σὺν ἀγγέλοις χορεύσεις τὴν ἄπαυστον χορείαν), obtaining a greater lot than sons or daughters. Yet remain vigilant for Christ, O virgins, and receive your bridegroom with shining torches, so that coming together you might see the beauty of the bridegroom and be mixed with the heavenly mysteries (μιγῆτε τοῖς ἄνω μυστηρίοις)."

[431] A reference, it would seem, to the innate "spark" of the good Gregory believes to be present in every human being; see *Or.37.21*.

[432] I have not been able to identify the source of this saying.

> the body (σωμάτων ἐλεύθεροι), like those who endured the threat of fire and the jaws of lions so that they would not profane themselves by accepting food in a foreign land at the command of barbarians![433]

For Gregory, the monks and virgins who have deified themselves through fasting resemble the angels because they live without bodily nourishment.[434] As such they are like the angels in that they, like the angels, are "free from the body" (σωμάτων ἐλεύθεροι).

A slightly different understanding of deification is at play when Gregory speaks of the deification of monks and virgins a second time later in *Carm.1.2.10*. This time it is practices of singing psalmodies and keeping vigil that, Gregory says, deifies monks and virgins, and Gregory's emphasis is how these practices enable monks and virgins to share in the angelic life by entering into communion with the angels:

> You should look upon the wakeful psalmodies of the virgins; men, women, forgetting their nature (φύσεως λελησμένων); how many of them there are, and how great is their deification (ὅσον θεουμένων); harmonious, antiphonal, a two-fold company of angels (ἀγγέλων στάσιν δισσὴν), stationed above and below (ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω τεταγμένην), singing hymns to God's majesty and nature![435]

Gregory, it seems, envisages the monastic practices of singing psalmodies and keeping vigil as joining human beings to the choir of the angels. The result is a "two-fold company of angels" (ἀγγέλων στάσιν δισσὴν), with Christian monks and virgins singing God's praise from below,

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[433] *Carm.1.2.10.623-635* (PG 37: 725-726). The concluding lines of this passage refer to the persecution of the Maccabees for their refusal to eat profane foods, which Gregory discusses at length in his *Oration on the Maccabees* (*Or.15*).

[434] The notion of human feedings feeding on the bread of angels recurs a couple of times in Gregory's writings: in *Carm.2.1.12.595* (PG 37: 1209) Gregory describes the ideal bishop as a monk who fasts from bodily foods and nourishes himself instead with the "the knowledge of God (οἶδεν.. Θεόν), the simple food of the angels (τροφὴν… ἀγγέλων ἁπλῆν)", while in *Or.43.36* (SC 384: 206) Gregory says that Basil fed those under his charge with the "food of the Word" (τοῦ λόγου τροφῆς) before adding that "the Word is the bread of angels (ἄρτος ἀγγέλων), by which the soul is fed and watered".

[435] *Carm.1.2.10.920-925* (PG 37: 746-747).

while the angels sing above.[436] Notably, Gregory clearly considers this liturgical union as conferring angelic status upon these monks and virgins – monks and virgins, though stationed below, nevertheless belong to the "two-fold company of angels". Once more, then, Gregory discusses deification in terms of the participation of monks and virgins in the life of the angels. The practices of singing psalmodies and keeping vigil deify monks and virgins because they enable monks and virgins to share in the angelic life as an earthly member of the angelic choir.

Participation in the heavenly life of the angels is again the theme when Gregory speaks of the deification of virgins in *Carm.1.2.1*. There, he says that virgins become "heavenly beings" when they escape the earth "to be a god" (θεὸς εἶναι):

> The blameless choir (χορὸς ἀμφὶ) stands around the light-bearing King (ἀμφὶ Ἄνακτα φαεσφόρον ἵστατ'), heavenly beings (οὐράνιος), hurrying from earth to be a god (θεὸς εἶναι), Christ-bearing, servants of the cross, despising the world, they are dead to earthly things, occupied with heavenly things, they are beacons of the world (λαμπτῆρες κόσμοιο), transparent mirrors of light (διαυγέα φωτὸς ἔσοπτρα), who look upon God, possess God, and belong to God.[437]

Gregory's reference to the "blameless choir" (χορὸς ἀμφὶ) which stands around God recalls his description of the angels in the opening lines of this poem, where he describes the angels as "God's eternally existing choir"[438] who "stand around the great throne [of God]".[439] Here, however, the choir standing around God is the blameless choir of virgins – those who are "hurrying from earth". His description of these as located "around the light-bearing King" (ἀμφὶ Ἄνακτα φαεσφόρον) while also being "beacons of the world" (λαμπτῆρες κόσμοιο) suggests that he is referring to the virgin join the angelic choir – and so sharing in the heavenly life of the angels – in this life, while

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[436] This image evokes Gregory's depiction of the creation of the human being as "another angel", designed to mirror the angelic function of worship on earth. See especially *Carm.2.1.38.23-26*.

[437] *Carm.1.2.1.209-214* (PG 37: 538).

[438] *Carm.1.2.1.14* (PG 37: 523).

[439] *Carm.1.2.1.31-32* (PG 37: 524).

they are still on earth and therefore capable of acting as a beacon of light upon the earth. The suggestion that these virgins have joined the heavenly choir of the angels is confirmed by Gregory's remarks later in this poem, where Gregory exhorts his audience: "let us enter into the radiant life and be entirely chaste, of one mind with the pure heavenly beings (καθαροῖσιν ὁμόφρονες οὐρανίοισιν) so that, having become attendants of the Great God (μεγάλοιο Θεοῦ… ὀπηδοὶ), we might sing the festal hymn to the King."[440] Here, then, Gregory speaks of deification as involving the virgin's ascent to heaven and participation in the heavenly life of the angels as a member of the angelic choir.

Gregory uses the language of deification in the same way in his poem *Hemiambic Verses to his own Soul* (*Carm.1.2.88*):

> Do you want to become a god (θεὸς γενέσθαι) – a god, a radiant attendant of the great God (Θεοῦ μεγίστου παραστάτης φαεινὸς), dancing with the angels (σὺν ἀγγέλοις χορεύων)? Come, stretch out the wings of hawk-like desire, circling towards the heights. I shall purify your feathers, I shall elevate you with words. Like some well-winged bird, I shall send you forth into the aether.[441]

In this poem Gregory addresses his soul, promising to help it ascend to heaven and attain deification if this is what it desires. The method by which the soul will ascend and be deified is ascetic: later in the poem Gregory instructs the soul that in order to be deified it must take up ascetic practices such as dwelling in caves, avoiding work as much as possible, wearing simple and coarse clothing, and eating only uncultivated vegetables and herbs.[442] In the lines above, Gregory equates deification with becoming a "radiant attendant of the great God" (Θεοῦ μεγίστου παραστάτης φαεινὸς) and "dancing with the angels" (σὺν ἀγγέλοις χορεύων). These phrases refer to communion with the angels and participation in the angelic life, insofar as Gregory is speaking

[440] *Carm.1.2.1.720-723* (PG 37: 577).
[441] *Carm.2.1.88.65-75* (PG 37: 577).
[442] *Carm.2.1.88.101-116.*

of joining the angels. More than that, though, the deified human being has an angelic identity of their own, since they become an "attendant" (παραστάτης) of God. Gregory elsewhere identifies the "attendants of God" (παραστάται Θεοῖο) with those angels who stand in God's presence, distinguished by rank from the guardian angels which exercise dominion over nations and on earth.[443] Therefore, to become a god – to become deified – is to ascend to heaven and participate in the angelic life as one of the angels that stands in God's presence.

For Gregory, then, the purification which results from monastic practice deifies monks and virgins by making them like the angels and enabling them to ascend to heaven and share in the life of the angels. The next section shows that this ascent and participation in the angelic life deifies the mind of the monk because it unites the mind to the divine light.

5.4 CONTEMPLATIVE ASCENT AND THE DEIFICATION OF THE MIND

In the previous section we saw that Gregory believes that the monk or virgin's bodily purification deifies them by making them like the angels and by enabling them to share in the angelic life. In this section I will show that Gregory believes that the monk's escape from the conditions of the body deifies their mind because it leads the mind to union with the divine light. In order to show this, I must first demonstrate that Gregory believes that the monastic life enables the mind to escape the material world and ascend to God by means of its withdrawal from the senses. Having established this, I will then show that Gregory views this process of withdrawal as culminating in the transformation of the mind into a "mirror of God", arguing that he understands this transformation as resulting from the super-addition of divine light to the mind. I will then show that Gregory views this addition of divine light as occurring by means of the union of the mind

[443] *Carm.1.1.7.22-26* (Sykes and Moreschini: 28).

with said light – a union he characterises once more in terms of "mixture" – and that he views this union as deifying the mind.

On several occasions Gregory says that the solitary life of the monk or virgin allows the mind to withdraw from the world and ascend to God through contemplation.[444] By enabling the monk or virgin to practice contemplation, I suggest, the solitary monastic life enables the mind to withdraw from the world and ascend to God. We begin, then, with an analysis of Gregory's account of this practice of contemplation.

Gregory describes this practice of contemplation at length in three passages: *Or.2.7*; *Or.12.4*; *Or.20.1*. In these passages, Gregory depicts the practice of contemplation as enabling the mind to withdraw from the senses and material world and into itself. Once we have established this understanding of contemplative practice, we will then be able to see that Gregory also views this practice as enabling the mind to ascend to God. In what follows I will first quote Gregory's accounts in *Or.2.7* and *Or.12.4* in full, omitting *Or.20.1*, since this largely consists in verbatim repetition of material from *Or.2.7*, with the addition of some material from *Or.12.4* in its final lines.[445] I will then provide an analysis of these passages.

I begin with *Or.2.7*, in which Gregory seeks to explain his reluctance to accept his appointment as a priest on account of his love for the solitary life. In the course of this explanation,

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[444] *Or.2.6-7*; *Or.10.1*; *Or.12.4-5*; *Or.20.1*; *Or.26.7*; *Carm.2.1.1.261-270*; *Carm.2.1.11.303-309*; *Carm.2.1.32.1-8*.

[445] For the reader's reference, I produce a translation of this passage here: "For to me nothing seemed greater than this: to live above the visible world, having shut the senses and become apart from the flesh and the world – no longer participating in human affairs more than is necessary but conversing with myself and with God alone – and to always carry within myself the divine reflections, pure and unmixed with the impressions and fictions of the lower world, both being and always becoming a sort-of spotless mirror of God and divine things, light added to light, what is more distinct to what is more obscure, until we shall come to the source of the radiances we have here, and have attained our blessed end, because our mirrors have been dissolved by the truth."; *Or.20.1* (SC 270: 56).

Gregory describes the solitary life as one which enables the monk to escape the world and ascend to God by withdrawing from the senses:

> Next a loving desire for the beauty of stillness (ἡσυχίας) and of withdrawal (ἀναχωρήσεως) came upon me… For to me nothing seemed greater than this: to live above the visible world (ὑπὲρ τὰ ὁρώμενα), having shut the senses (μύσαντα τὰς αἰσθήσεις) and become apart from the flesh and the world (ἔξω σαρκὸς καὶ κόσμου γενόμενον), and having being gathered together into myself (εἰς ἑαυτὸν συστραφέντα) – no longer participating in human affairs more than is necessary but conversing with myself and with God alone (ἑαυτῷ προσλαλοῦντα καὶ τῷ Θεῷ) – and to always carry within myself the divine reflections (τὰς θείας ἐμφάσεις), pure and unmixed with the impressions (χαρακτήρων) and fictions (πλανωμένων) of the lower world, truly both being and always becoming a spotless mirror of God and divine things (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων), light being added to light (φωτὶ προσλαμβάνοντα φῶς), what is more distinct to what is more obscure, already enjoying by hope the goods of the world to come and moving about with the angels (συμπεριπολεῖν ἀγγέλοις), leaving the earth even now, having been raised above by the Spirit.[446]

The context of the next passage is Gregory's elevation to the episcopacy. In this text Gregory once again seeks to explain his reluctance to take up his ecclesial office, describing himself as torn between his desire for the solitary life, and the Spirit's calling to public ministry. As in *Or.2.7*, his account of his desire for the solitary life includes a description of the monk's ascent to God by means of their withdrawal from the senses:

> Help me, any of you who can, and give a hand to one weighed down and divided by desire and the Spirit. The former proposes flights, mountains and solitudes (ἐρημίας), and stillness of soul and body (ἡσυχίαν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος); to withdraw the mind into itself (τὸν νοῦν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀναχωρῆσαι) and be gathered together from the senses (συστραφῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων) in order to converse with God undefiled (ὁμιλεῖν ἀκηλιδώτως Θεῷ) and to be shined upon (ἐναστράπτεσθαι) purely by the rays of the Spirit (ταῖς τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐγαῖς), no longer mixed together (ἐπιμιγνυμένου) with that which is lowly and turbulent, nor with anything else that intervenes before the divine light (τῷ θείῳ φωτὶ παρεμπίπτοντος), until we shall come to the source of the radiances (ἀπαυγασμάτων) we have here and shall cease from desire and longing, because our mirrors have been dissolved by the truth (λυθέντων τῶν ἐσόπτρων τῇ ἀληθείᾳ).[447]

[446] *Or.2.6, 7* (SC 247: 94, 96).
[447] *Or.12.4* (SC 405: 354).

In both of these passages, Gregory describes the solitary life as enabling the mind to withdraw from the world in order to contemplate God. He describes a similar technique in each passage. First, one must seek solitude, a state characterised by "stillness" (ἡσυχίας) in *Or.2.7* and "stillness of soul and body" (ἡσυχίαν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος) in *Or.12.4*.[448] Second, one must "shut the senses" (μύσαντα τὰς αἰσθήσεις) or "be gathered together from the senses" (συστραφῆναι ἀπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων). Gregory's reference to the removal of "impressions (χαρακτήρων) and fictions (πλανωμένων) of the lower world" in *Or.2.7*, and to "anything else that intervenes before the divine light" (τῷ θείῳ φωτὶ παρεμπίπτοντος) in *Or.12.4* recalls his view that mental images (φαντασίαι) received though the senses are imprinted upon the mind and prevent it from directly apprehending the divine nature.[449] When, then, Gregory speaks of the removal of these, he indicates that he understands the mind's withdrawal from the senses to involve a process much like that later advocated by his student Evagrius, according to which the monk who wishes to attain a state of pure prayer should seek to remove all impressions and mental images derived from the senses.[450]

The third step of this process of withdrawal is the mind's retreat inwards. One must "be gathered together into oneself" (εἰς ἑαυτὸν συστραφέντα) and "withdraw the mind into itself" (τὸν

[448] Gregory provides no clear statement as to what he means by the state of "stillness" (ἡσυχία). On one occasion Gregory appears to identify stillness with "freedom from affairs" (ἀπραγμοσύνη; *Or.10.1* [SC 405: 316]). The language of "stillness of soul" (ἡσυχίαν ψυχῆς) in *Or.12.4*, however, suggests that he has in mind an "interior" stillness in addition to the exterior stillness granted by freedom from worldly affairs. While Gregory nowhere defines this "interior" sense of stillness, it is possible he has something similar in mind to his definition of "tranquility of life" (Βίου γαλήνη) in *Carm.1.2.34*, which he defines as indicating the "peaceful state of the soul" (εἰρήνη… ψυχῆς) that is obtained through the "cessation of passions" (λώφησις παθῶν); *Carm.1.2.34.167-168*; PG 37: 957). If this is the case, the language of "stillness of soul" would indicate that attaining a state of ἀπάθεια is a necessary prerequisite for the practice of contemplative prayer.

[449] See chapter 2, section 2.3.

[450] See, for instance, Evagrius *Thoughts* 40; c.f. Columba Stewart "Imageless Prayer and the Theological Vision of Evagrius Ponticus" *JECS* 9.1 (2001), 173-204.

νοῦν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀναχωρῆσαι). In his poem *On Bishops* (*Carm.2.1.13*) Gregory speaks of "gathering the wandering mind within itself (πλάγκτην νόον ἔνδον ἀγείρας) and looking entirely interiorly (εἴσω πᾶς ὀρόων)" as a means of approaching and seeing God.[451] The notion of the wandering mind recurs a few times throughout Gregory's poems; he uses the phrase to refer to a mind distracted from God by the senses, anxieties, the passions, and Beliar.[452] To retreat into oneself, then, is to withdraw from these exterior distractions, and to focus the inner vision of the mind towards God.[453]

The solitary life, then, enables the monk or virgin to practice contemplation, a practice which allows the mind to withdraw from the senses into itself. This process allows the mind to ascend to God. In *Or.2.7* Gregory states that this process causes the solitary to move about with the angels because they have left behind the earth and been "stationed on high by the Spirit",[454] suggesting that the mind's withdrawal from the senses allows it to ascend to heaven and share in the life of the angels. On another occasion, in *Or.28.2-3*, Gregory states that this process enables the mind to ascend interiorly up Mount Sinai and towards God:

> I was running so as to apprehend God, and thus I ascended the mountain (ἀνῆλθον ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος) and penetrated the cloud (τὴν νεφέλην διέσχον), becoming interiorly (εἴσω) apart from matter and material things (ἀπὸ τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὑλικῶν) and being compacted within myself as far as possible (εἰς ἐμαυτὸν ὡς οἷόν τε συστραφείς). When, however, I looked towards him, I barely saw the back-parts of God – and this while being sheltered by the rock, that is, by the incarnation of the divine Word for our sake. And I peered to a small degree, not on the first un-blended and self-known – that is to say, by the Trinity – nature, insofar as it remains within the first veil (τοῦ πρώτου

[451] *Carm.2.1.13.209-210* (PG 37: 1243-1244).

[452] See *Carm.1.2.2.313-319* (anxieties and Beliar); *Carm.2.1.1.208-210* (images derived from the senses); *Carm.2.1.45.41-42* (anxieties); *Carm.2.1.85.3-9* (anxiety, lust, anger).

[453] Gregory's statement that one should gather the mind within itself and "look entirely interiorly (εἴσω πᾶς ὀρόων) recalls his definition of mind as "inner sight" (ὄψις ἔνδον); *Carm.1.2.34.26* (PG 37: 947). For a discussion of this definition, see chapter 1, section 1.2.

[454] *Or.2.7* (SC 247: 96): "…already enjoying by hope the goods of the world to come and moving about with the angels (συμπεριπολεῖν ἀγγέλοις), leaving the earth even now, having been raised above by the Spirit."

καταπετάσματος) and hidden behind the Cherubim (ὑπὸ τῶν χερουβὶμ συγκαλύπτεται), but rather that which reaches us, being at its furthest extreme.[455]

In this passage, the mind's withdrawal from "matter and material things" (τῆς ὕλης καὶ τῶν ὑλικῶν) and into itself causes it to ascend interiorly to God just as Moses ascended to God on Mount Sinai. Thus, for Gregory, the mind's withdrawal from the senses causes it to ascend to God. The solitary life of the monk or virgin is the cause of this ascent, insofar as it is this life which Gregory identifies as enabling human beings to pursue this practice of contemplation.

Having shown that Gregory thinks that the solitary life of the monk or virgin enables the practice of contemplation, which in turn allows the mind to escape the material world and ascend to God by means of its withdrawal from the senses, I must now show that he views this process as culminating in the deification of the mind by means of its union with divine light. In order to demonstrate this, we must first consider Gregory's idea that the mind which ascends to God in this way becomes a "mirror of God". This notion, I argue, shows that the mind's withdrawal from the senses causes it to resemble God and that this resemblance comes about through the super-addition of divine light to the mind.

In both *Or.2.7* and *Or.12.4* Gregory states that, by withdrawing their mind from the senses and into itself, the solitary becomes a "spotless mirror of God and divine things" (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων). Scholars have generally viewed Gregory's mentions of the solitary becoming a "mirror of God" as referring specifically to the soul or mind of the solitary.[456]

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[455] *Or.28.3* (SC 250: 104, 106).

[456] See, for instance, Spidlik *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 44; John Egan, *The Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen: A Study of the Images of Mirror and Light* PhD Diss. (Institut Catholique de Paris, 1971), chpt. 1-2; Stratis Papaioannou, "Gregory of Nazianzus and the Constraints of Sameness", in J. Børtnes (ed.) *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum press, 2006), 59-83, 70-75; Francis Gautier "Grégoire de Nazianze. Le miroir de l'Intelligence ou le dialogue avec la Lumière" *Théologiques* 16.2 (2008), 31–47.

This reading is confirmed by Gregory's remarks in his third poem *On Silence during Lent* (*Carm.2.1.36*),[457] in which Gregory describes the practice of silent contemplative prayer as forming the mind into a mirror of the Word:

> I will hold converse within, inscribing my mind (νοῦν) with the mysteries of God and, cleansing it from both the stains (σπίλων) and the distractions (πλάνων) of the senses (αἰσθήσεων), I will offer it as a mirror (ἔσοπτρον) to the Word, until it should receive his perfect reflection (τελείας ἐμφάσεις).[458]

Here the "mirror" is the "mind" (νοῦν), which Gregory says he will hold up before the Word during prayer. The identification of "mirror" with "mind" in this passage, then, confirms the suggestion of previous scholars that it is the soul or mind of the solitary that is the mirror of God.

In his extensive study of Gregory's use of the images of "mirror" and "light", John Egan showed that Gregory deploys the image of the solitary as a mirror of God to indicate both the notion of true resemblance to God and that of indirect vision of God.[459] In both *Or.2.7* and *Carm.2.1.36*, the image of the mirror serves to denote the soul's capacity to reflect the divine. By withdrawing from the senses into itself, the mind seeks to carry within itself "the divine reflections" (τὰς θείας ἐμφάσεις)[460] and to receive the "perfect reflection" (τελείας ἐμφάσεις) of the Word. The claim that the mind reflects the divine suggests that the mind which has become a "mirror of God" has come to resemble the divine in some sense, insofar as the notion of reflection also implies the notion of resemblance to the thing being reflected.

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[457] This is the title of four of Gregory's autobiographical poems: *Carm.2.1.34, Carm.2.1.35, Carm.2.1.36, Carm.2.1.37*.

[458] *Carm.2.1.36.7-10* (PG 37: 1324).

[459] John Egan, *The Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen*.

[460] C.f. *Or.2.7* (SC 247: 96).

In *Or.2.7* Gregory speaks of the transformation of the mind into a mirror of God as involving the addition of light to light,[461] while in *Or.12.4* he replaces the image of the solitary becoming a mirror of God with that of the solitary being "shined upon (ἐναστράπτεσθαι) purely by the rays of the Spirit (ταῖς τοῦ Πνεύματος αὐγαῖς)".[462] These comments suggest that the transformation of the mind into a mirror of God comes about by means of the addition of divine light to the mind.[463] A couple of passages from elsewhere in his corpus support this suggestion. First, in the opening lines his poem *On the Folly and Faithlessness of Life and the Common End of All* (*Carm.2.1.32*) Gregory speaks of the solitary life as one in which the mind is "always gathering light" (φάος αἰὲν ἀγείρων):

> I used to wish I was a long-winged dove or swallow, so that I might flee this mortal life, or to live in to inhabit a desert (ἔρημον) and dwell amongst beasts – for these are more faithful than men – and to spend each day of my life free from sorrows, free from punishment, and carefree. One thing alone would I have which the beasts lack: a mind capable of knowing divinity (θεότητος ἴδριν νόον), roaming heaven (οὐρανοφοίτην), thereby always gathering light (φάος αἰὲν ἀγείρων) in a tranquil life.[464]

While Gregory make no reference to the notion of the mind as a mirror of God in this passage, the description of the solitary life as one of tranquillity in which the mind is free to roam heaven and is "always gathering light" (φάος αἰὲν ἀγείρων) fits his remarks regarding the mind's reception of light in *Or.2.7* and *Or.12.4*. In each of these passages, Gregory depicts the solitary life as enabling the mind to receive light.

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[461] *Or.2.7* (SC 247: 96): "…truly both being and always becoming a spotless mirror of God and divine things (ἔσοπτρον ἀκηλίδωτον Θεοῦ καὶ τῶν θείων), light being added to light (φωτὶ προσλαμβάνοντα φῶς)…"

[462] *Or.12.4* (SC 405: 354).

[463] Thomas Spidlik suggests that the transformation of the soul into a mirror of God simply involves the restoration of its natural likeness to God as the *imago dei*; Spidlik, *Grégoire de Nazianze*, 46. However, Gregory's references to the "light being added to light" in *Or.2.7* and to Holy Spirit shining upon the mind of the solitary in *Or.12.4* suggest that this process also involves the addition of something external, namely, the divine light of the Spirit.

[464] *Carm.2.1.32.1-8* (PG 37: 1300).

The notion that the transformation of the mind into a mirror of God involves the addition of light to light can be explained by the fact that Gregory ties the ability of the human mind to receive the divine light to the idea that it is a "light" itself, on account of its possession of reason. In one passage, Gregory speaks of the mind's vision of the divine light as an encounter between the divine light and the natural light of the mind which causes the mind to become "entirely light" (φῶς ὅλος):

> Now we bless you my Christ, Word of God, light from beginningless light (φῶς ἐκ φωτὸς ἀνάρχου) and distributor of the Spirit, threefold light gathered together into one Glory (τριττοῦ φωτὸς εἰς μίαν δόξαν)… who illumined (ἐφώτισας) the mind (νοῦν) of man with reason (λόγῳ) and wisdom (σοφίᾳ), and placed it below as an image of the radiance above (λαμπρότητος τῆς ἄνω), so it might see the light by light (φωτὶ βλέπῃ τὸ φῶς), and so become entirely light (γένηται φῶς ὅλος).[465]

In order to understand what happens when the natural light of the mind encounters the divine light, we must first briefly discuss what Gregory means when he speaks about the mind's natural light. Gregory's claim that this illumination of the mind with reason" (λόγῳ) and "wisdom" (σοφίᾳ) makes the mind an "image" (εἰκόνα) of God's splendour alludes to his identification of the *imago dei* with the soul which possesses that the faculties of "mind" (νοῦς) and "reason" (λόγος).[466] The illumination of the mind with "reason" (λόγῳ) and "wisdom" (σοφίᾳ), then, refers to the creation of the human being as the image of God. Thus, according to Gregory the human mind is "light" by nature, since it was created as the image of God's own radiance.

Gregory describes the mind's vision of God as an encounter between the created light of the mind and the divine light, stating that the mind's natural light enables it to "see the light by light (φωτὶ βλέπῃ τὸ φῶς),[467] and so become entirely light (γένηται φῶς ὅλος)". The mind, then, sees God by means of an encounter between its own, natural light and the divine light. While it is

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[465] *Carm.1.1.32.1-5, 12-17* (PG 37: 511-512).
[466] See *Or.28.17*; *Or.38.11*.
[467] An allusion to Psalm 35.9 (LXX): ἐν τῷ φωτί σου ὀψόμεθα φῶς.

not entirely clear what Gregory means here when he says that the mind becomes "entirely light" (φῶς ὅλος) as a result of this encounter, it seems that this process involves the addition of divine light to the natural light of the mind, inasmuch as the mind becomes "wholly light" as a result of its encounter with the external light of God.[468]

Gregory, I argue, views the addition of divine light to the mind as coming about by means of the mind's union with the divine light, a union which, he says, deifies the mind. Gregory sets out this belief in his description of the ascent and deification of the Christian philosopher in his oration *On Athanasius the Great* (*Or.21*). There, Gregory states that "the one who practices true philosophy" (τὸ γνησίως φιλοσοφῆσαι)[469] separates themselves from matter and the flesh through "reason" (λόγου) and "contemplation" (θεωρίας). This ascent results in their union with divine light and "deification" (θεώσεως):

> Whoever who has been allowed, when they have separated themselves from matter and this fleshly cloud (νέφος) or veil (προκάλυμμα) – whichever it is to be called – through reason (λόγου) and contemplation (θεωρίας), to converse with God, and to be blended (κραθῆναι) – as much as is possible for human nature – with the purest light, blessed are they: both for their ascent (ἀναβάσεως) from here and for their deification (θεώσεως) there, which is given to the one who practices true philosophy (τὸ γνησίως φιλοσοφῆσαι), and by coming to be above the dualism of matter through the unity apprehended in the Trinity.[470]

As we saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation, Gregory uses the images of the "cloud" (νέφος) or "veil" (προκάλυμμα) of the flesh to indicate the epistemological limitations imposed on human

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[468] This interpretation perhaps also accounts for Gregory's view that the mind becomes a mirror of God by means of the addition of light to light, since on this view the mind that withdraws from the senses and into itself comes to mirror God by means of the addition of the divine light to the natural light of the mind.

[469] Gregory uses this phrase on one other occasion in his writings, describing his friend the monk-priest Sacerdos as "one who practices true philosophy and is united to God by his way of life"; *Ep.170.2* (Gallay II: 60): γνησίως φιλοσοφοῦντα καὶ τῷ Θεῷ διὰ τῆς πολιτείας ἑνούμενον. On the identity of Sacerdos, see Marie-Madeleine Hauser-Meury *Prosopographie Zu Den Schriften Gregors von Nazianz* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1960), "Sacerdos".

[470] *Or.21.2* (SC 270: 112).

beings by the bodily senses.[471] To separate oneself "from matter and this fleshly cloud or veil", therefore, is to escape from these epistemological limitations by withdrawing from the senses. Again, Gregory identifies the mind's separation from the senses as causing the mind to receive the divine light: by separating himself from the senses, he says, the philosopher ascends to converse with God and is blended (κραθῆναι) with the divine light.

Gregory's appeal to the notion of "blending" (κρᾶσις) in this passage helps explain the manner of the mind's reception of the divine light. As we have seen in the previous two chapters of this study, Gregory uses the language of mixture to explain how God unites himself to human beings, both in the incarnation with respect to Jesus' humanity and when the Spirit unites himself to human beings generally. Gregory's use of this terminology to explain the ascended philosopher's union with the divine light, then, indicates that the same model of union accounts for the mind's reception of the divine light once it has ascended to God by withdrawing from the senses. That is to say, given that Gregory elsewhere states that both Christ's humanity and other individual human beings are deified when united to God by means of "blending" (κρᾶσις) or "mixture" (μίξις),[472] we can surmise that it is the philosopher's blending with the divine light which constitutes the basis for the "deification" (θεώσεως) Gregory mentions a few lines later.[473] This

[471] See chapter 2, section 2.3.

[472] See chapter 3, *passim.* and chapter 4, section 4.2 for further discussion and examples of the relationship between these concepts in Gregory's thought.

[473] Pinault, Russell, and McGuckin each interpret Gregory's mention of "deification" (θεώσεως) in this passage as a reference to the Platonic concept of "assimilation to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ). See Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 161; Russell, *Doctrine of Deification*, 218; John McGuckin, "Deification in Greek Patristic Thought: The Cappadocian Fathers' Strategic Adaptation of a Tradition" in M. Christensen & J. Wittung (eds.) *Partakers of the Divine Nature. The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Madison WI: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2007), 102-104. Yet this interpretation lacks textual support, since Gregory makes no use of this phrase in *Or.21*. Moreover, the language of ὁμοίωσις play a substantial role in his soteriology as a whole, as we discussed in the introduction to this dissertation.

being the case, we may conclude that, for Gregory, the practice of withdrawing the mind from the senses causes the deification of the mind since it leads to the mind's union with the divine light.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Gregory believes that the monastic life deifies its practitioners because he considers monasticism to be a means of purification, and that he views this process of purification as deifying monks and virgins because it causes them to share in the life of the angels and enables their mind to ascend to union with the divine light. First, I showed that Gregory views the monastic life as a means of deification, before showing that he associates the monastic life with deification because he considers it to be a means of purification. Our investigation of Gregory's understanding of purification revealed that Gregory views the goal of purification to be the detachment of the soul from the bodily passions and its withdrawal from the senses. This process deifies monks and angels by making them both become like the angels and share in the life of the angels. In addition to this, the solitary life of the monk or virgin enables the practice of contemplation, in which the mind withdraws from the world, ascends to God, and is deified by its union with the divine light.

In both bringing human beings to the angelic life and in enabling their mind to ascend to union with the divine light, the monastic and solitary life enables human beings to experience in this life a foretaste of eschatological beatitude. As Gregory says in *Or.2.7*, the solitary who has withdrawn his mind withdrawn from the senses and become a mirror of God enjoys "by hope the goods of the world to come".[474] As we turn to Gregory's account of the afterlife in the next and final chapter of this dissertation, we will see that the same notions of participation in the angelic

[474] *Or.2.7* (SC 247: 96).

life and union with divine light also undergird his account of the post-mortem deification of the human being.

6

Theosis and the Afterlife

The previous two chapters have shown that the deifying union with God, of which the angels are exemplars, and which Christ both exemplifies and makes possible for human beings, is actualised in individual persons by the agency of the Holy Spirit and through monastic practice. While these chapters reveal that union with God is attainable in this life, it is in the afterlife that this union is experienced in the fullest degree. As such the goal of this chapter is to provide an account Gregory's conception the deified state of the righteous dead.

My argument in this chapter takes as its starting point Jacques Rousse's observation that Gregory of Nazianzus frequently describes the eschatological state of the human being in angelic terms: at the eschaton, human beings will be like the angels and will join the angels in the eternal praise and contemplation of God.[475] A handful of scholars have since made similar comments in passing since.[476] To my knowledge, however, no scholar has taken up and developed Rousse's proposal in order to explain what Gregory means when he speaks of eschatological humanity as akin to the angels, nor has the connection between this aspect of Gregory's thought and his soteriology as a whole been explored.[477]

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[475] Jacques Rousse 'Les Anges et Leurs Ministre chez Gregoire de Nazianze' *MSR* 22 (1965) 133-152, 149-151.

[476] See Anne Richard *Cosmologie et Theologie chez Gregoire de Nazianze* (Paris: Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2003), 29, 139, 148; John McGuckin "Gregory: the Rhetorician as Poet" in J. Børtnes and T. Hägg (eds.) *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum press, 2006), 171-212, 193 n.1.

[477] As I noted in the introduction to this dissertation, the cursory nature of previous scholarship on this aspect of Gregory's thought has led to its denigration, with Winslow dismissing Gregory's use of angelomorphic language to describe the saved human being as an "exaggeration"; Donald Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation* (Cambridge MA: Philadelphia Patristics Foundation, 1979), 49.

In this chapter I will argue that Gregory believes the righteous dead share in the heavenly life of the angels on account of their union with God. I will first show that Gregory believes that the righteous dead are akin to the angels both because of what they do – they participate in the heavenly liturgy and contemplate God – and because of what they receive – "light" and "glory". I will then show that the deifying union of human beings with God is the basis for their likeness to the angels, since human beings receive light and Glory akin to that of the angels by being united to God. This union between human beings and God, I argue, furnishes knowledge of God's nature and essence by enabling the direct noetic vision of God which is unattainable in this life on account of the dependence of human cognition on the bodily senses. Before I proceed to these tasks, however, I will first provide a brief examination of two passages in which Gregory interprets Psalm 81.1 (LXX) as referring to the eschatological judgement and deification of human beings. These passages establish that Gregory believes that righteous human beings attain deification in the afterlife. They do not, however, explain his understanding of this divine state, which is the question the remainder of this chapter will then seek to answer.

6.1 THE DEIFICATION OF THE RIGHTEOUS DEAD

On two occasions Gregory describes the eschatological state of the righteous as one in which they will stand before God as "gods". The first of these occurs in Gregory's *Fourth Theological Oration* (*Or.30*). In *Or.30.4* Gregory seeks to refute the Eunomian claim that the rule of the Son will come to an end at the eschaton, when the Son will submit to the Father.[478] He does this by providing an alternative interpretation of the Eunomian "proof-texts" offered in support of this

[478] Frederick W. Norris *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzen* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), 162. C.f. Eunomius *Apol.* 26-27.

claim. According to Eunomius and his followers, the manner in which the scriptures use the words ἄχρι and ἕως ("until") when describing Christ's heavenly rule implies that there is a time at which this rule will come to an end. Gregory counters this interpretation by arguing that scripture uses the word "to rule" in two senses: to refer to Christ's dominion over all things as God, and to refer to his salvific work in bringing human beings into voluntary submission to his kingdom.[479] It is only in the latter sense, he says, that Christ's rule comes to an end, when his saving mission ends at the eschaton:

> "What, then, is end in the second sense? His taking us under his hand and saving us. For what need will there be for him to work for our submission once we have submitted? After which he will arise to judge the earth, and to distinguish the saved (τὸ σωζόμενον) from the damned (τὸ ἀπολλύμενον). After this, God will stand in the midst of gods (ἵσταται θεὸς ἐν μέσῳ θεῶν)[480] – of the saved (τῶν σωζομένων) – judging and deciding of which honour (τιμῆς) and abode (μονῆς)[481] each is worthy.[482]

The second passage occurs in Gregory's oration *On Baptism* (*Or.40*), in which Gregory concludes his discourse on the different senses of "light" (φώς) by speaking of the radiance that the righteous will receive at the eschaton:

> Light also is the radiance hereafter (ἡ ἐκεῖθεν λαμπρότης) to those who have purified themselves here (ἐνταῦθα), when the righteous (οἱ δίκαιοι) shall shine forth (ἐκλάμψουσιν) like the sun,[483] and God will stand in the midst of those who are gods and kings (θεῶν ὄντων καὶ βασιλέων),[484] distinguishing and dividing those who are worthy of the beatitude there (τὰς ἀξίας τῆς ἐκεῖθεν μακαριότητος).[485]

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[479] *Or.30.4* (SC 250: 230, 232) "For it is necessary for him to rule until (ἄχρι) then" (1 Cor.15), and "to be received by heaven until (ἄχρι) the time of the restoration" (Acts 3.21), and "to be seated as the right hand until (ἕως) his enemies are overthrown" (Ps.109.1; LXX) … For it says "to rule" in one sense as ruler of all things (παντοκράτωρ), king of those who are willing and those who are not; and in another sense as one working towards the our submission (ἐνεργῶν τὴν ὑποταγήν), and to establish us under his kingship as willing recipients of his rule."

[480] Ps.81.1 (LXX).

[481] C.f. John 14.2.

[482] *Or.30.4* (SC 250: 232).

[483] Matthew 13.43.

[484] Ps.81.1 (LXX).

[485] *Or.40.6* (SC 358: 208).

The scriptural basis for Gregory's reference to the saved as "gods" in both of these passages is Psalm 81.1 (LXX): "God stands in the assembly of gods, in the midst of gods he judges".[486] Gregory interprets this verse as a reference to the eschatological judgement. According to Gregory, the "gods" amongst whom God will stand are "the saved" (τὸ σωζόμενον) and "the righteous" (οἱ δίκαιοι), whom he identifies in *Or.40.6* with those individuals who purified themselves in their lives on earth ("here"; ἐνταῦθα).

The identification of the righteous dead with the "gods" of Psalm 81.1 reveals that Gregory believes that righteous human beings will attain divine status in the afterlife. Neither of these passages, however, reveals what this divine state consists in, saving that those who attain it will receive "radiance" (λαμπρότης) and will "shine forth (ἐκλάμψουσιν) like the sun". In order to determine what this divine state consists in, then, we must investigate those passages in which Gregory describes in greater detail the post-mortem destiny of righteous human beings. An exegesis of these passages will reveal that Gregory considers the righteous dead to be akin to the angels because they perform the same activities and receive similar light and glory to the angels. This observation will in turn allow us to account for Gregory's claim that the righteous dead will stand before God as "gods" at the eschaton.

6.2 BECOMING LIKE THE ANGELS

This section begins our investigation of Gregory's conception of the divine state of the righteous dead. In this section I will demonstrate that Gregory portrays the righteous dead as like the angels both because of what they do – they participate in the heavenly liturgy and contemplate God – and because they receive light and glory akin to the angels. This observation serves as a point of

[486] ὁ θεὸς ἔστη ἐν συναγωγῇ θεῶν ἐν μέσῳ δὲ θεοὺς διακρίνει.

departure for the next section, since Gregory understands both post-mortem contemplation and the reception of light and glory as occurring by means of the human being's union with God.

It will be helpful to begin by outlining some of the key recurring features of Gregory's depictions of the afterlife. Having done this, we will then be able to see how these features indicate that the righteous are like the angels. Gregory provides his most extensive description of the afterlife in his *Funeral Oration On his Brother Caesarius* (*Or.7*). In *Or.7.17* Gregory prays for his brother Caesarius's ascent into heaven:

> But we pray that you might reach the heavens, O divine and sacred head, and might rest in the bosom of Abraham – whatever this is – and behold the choir of angels (ἀγγέλων ἐποπτεύοις χορείαν) and the glory (δόξας) and radiance (λαμπρότητας) of blessed men. Greater than this, may you be united to that choir (συγχορεύοις) and rejoice together with them… standing in attendance before the Great King (βασιλεῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ παριστάμενος) and there being filled with light (φωτὸς πληρούμενος), of which you will receive not some small emanation, as imagined in mirrors and enigmas (ἐν ἐσόπτροις φαντάζεσθαι καὶ αἰνίγμασιν), but shall attain to the source of the Good itself, beholding the pure truth with a pure mind (καθαρῷ νῷ). And you will find this reward for your hard work for the good here below: the more perfect participation in (μετουσίαν) and contemplation of (θεωρίαν) the Good there. This is what our books and theological souls declare the goal of our mysteries to be.[487]

This passage contains several features which bear on his understanding of the post-mortem destiny of the righteous. First, Gregory portrays the one who ascends to heaven after death as participates in the heavenly ministry of the angels. This is indicated not only by Gregory's reference to Caesarius being united to the angelic choir, but also by his description of him "standing in attendance before the Great King" (βασιλεῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ παριστάμενος), a comment which echoes his description of the class of angels which stand in the presence of God as the "attendants of the Great God" (μεγάλοιο παραστάται… Θεοῖο).[488] Second, Gregory associates the post-mortem entrance into heaven with the contemplation of God. Caesarius now sees God no

[487] *Or.7.17* (SC 405: 222).

[488] C.f. *Carm.1.1.7.22-23* (Sykes and Moreschini: 28): "some [angels] are attendants (παραστάται) of the Great God; others help and preside over their own portion of the universe".

longer "in mirrors and enigmas" (ἐν ἐσόπτροις… καὶ αἰνίγμασιν) but beholds him instead "with a pure mind" (καθαρῷ νῷ) and receives the "more perfect… contemplation (θεωρίαν)" of him. Third, Gregory also says that the one who ascends to heaven after death will receive light and glory. The blessed in heaven – that is, human beings who have died and ascended to heaven – possess a "glory" (δόξας) and "radiance" (λαμπρότητας) which Caesarius beholds upon his entrance into heaven. Subsequently, Caesarius himself is "filled with light" (φωτὸς πληρούμενος).

The same features are present in the various descriptions of the post-mortem ascent and entrance into heaven which are to be found elsewhere in Gregory's writings. In his *Funeral Oration for his Sister Gorgonia* (*Or.8*) Gregory describes his sister's ascent into heaven in similar terms to his description of his brother's ascent, stating that Gorgonia has joined the "angelic choir" (ἀγγέλων χορεία) and "heavenly rank" (τάξις οὐρανία) and received the "contemplation of glory" (δόξης θεωρία) and the "illumination of the Most High Trinity" (τῆς ἀνωτάτω Τριάδος ἔλλαμψις).[489] The themes of elevation to the rank of an angel and the contemplation of God's "glory" (δόξα) again feature in Gregory's oration *On the Love of the Poor* (*Or.14*), where he describes "the hope of the kingdom of heaven" (βασιλείαν οὐρανῶν ἐλπίζειν) as "equality of honour with the angels" (ἀγγέλων ἰσοτιμίαν) and "the contemplation of Glory" (δόξης θεωρίαν).[490] Gregory combines the themes of communion and worship with the angels, the reception of light and glory, and contemplation of God in his definition of the Kingdom of Heaven in his poem *Brief Definitions* (*Carm.1.2.34*), where he defines the Kingdom of Heaven as the "contemplation of God (Θεοῦ θεωρία), and glory (δόξα) and worship (ὑμνῳδία) with the angels (σὺν ἀγγέλοις)."[491]

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[489] *Or.8.23* (SC 405: 296).

[490] *Or.14.23* (PG 35: 888).

[491] *Carm.1.2.34.257-258* (PG 37: 964): Τίς δ' ἡ βασιλεία; τοῦ Θεοῦ θεωρία, σὺν ἀγγέλοις τε δόξα καὶ ὑμνῳδία.

The depiction of the righteous dead as participating in the angelic liturgy, contemplating God, and receiving light and glory, I suggest, indicates that Gregory thinks of them in angelomorphic terms – that is, as having attained angelic qualities or status and perform angelic activities, without necessarily being identified as angels in a strict sense.[492] First of all, Gregory's claims that the righteous dead will join the angelic choir and contemplate God indicate that they perform the same activities as the angels. His frequent references to human beings joining the angelic choir after death is sufficient to establish that righteous human beings will share in the heavenly worship of the angels.[493] On top of this, Gregory occasionally suggests that some humans serve a priestly function in the heavenly liturgy after death. For instance, in *Or.43.80* he describes Basil as continuing to perform his priestly ministry in heaven: "and now he [Basil] is in heaven where, I expect, he is offering sacrifices (προσφέρων θυσίας) on our behalf and praying for the people."[494] In another place (in an epigram he composed for himself) Gregory depicts himself as having died and become a high priest in the angelic choir:

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[492] My definition of "angelomorphic" is a combination of that of Charles Gieschen, who uses the term "angelomorphic" to refer to something which possesses an angelic "form or function" without thereby being identified as an angel, and that of Crispin Fletcher-Louis, who uses the term to refer to "an individual or community [that] possesses specifically angelic characteristics or status, though for whom identity cannot be reduced to that of an angel."; see Charles Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 27-28; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts: Angels, Christology and Soteriology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 14-15.

[493] In addition to the passages noted above, Gregory frequently xpresses his own desire to be released from this life so that he can join the choirs of angels in heaven. For instance, he concludes *Carm.2.1.42* with a prayer to Christ to "Give me release from this life by death" and bear him to "the angelic chorus (ἀγγελικοῖς δὲ χοροῖσι φέρων)… where shines the glory (κλέος) of one Great God in threefold lights (τρισσοῖς ἐν φαέεσσιν)"; *Carm.2.1.42.26, 29-31* (PG 37: 1346). Similarly, in *Carm.2.1.49* Gregory prays for Christ to "release me from these earthly chains, and appoint me a place in the heavenly choir (με χοροστασίην τάξον ἐς οὐρανίην)"; *Carm.2.1.49.7-8* (PG 37: 1385). See also *Carm.2.1.94.5* [= *Epig.80*]; *Carm.2.1.99*.

[494] *Or.43.80* (SC 384: 302).

> You hardly live on earth, having freely devoted everything to Christ, including his winged reason. But now, glorious (κύδιμε) Gregory, you are held by heaven as a high priest (ἱερῆα μέγαν) of the heavenly choir (οὐρανίοιο χορείης).[495]

In addition to serving in the heavenly liturgy, the righteous dead are like the angels because they perform the angelic activity of contemplation. In his *Funeral Oration for his Father* (*Or.18*), Gregory says his father is now able to encounter God "naked" (γυμνὸς) because he has been deemed worthy of "the rank and confidence of an angel" (τάξεως καὶ παῤῥησίας ἀγγελικῆς)"

> Indeed, I am convinced that he is a greater aid now by his intercession than he was previously by his teaching, insofar as he has approached closer to God, and has shaken off his bodily fetters and has released his mind from the mud which clouded it (τῆς ἐπιθολούσης…ἰλύος) and as one naked has encountered the naked, first and most-pure mind (γυμνῷ γυμνὸς ἐντυγχάνων τῷ πρώτῳ καὶ καθαρωτάτῳ νοῒ), having been deemed worthy – if it is not bold to say so – of the rank and confidence of an angel (τάξεως καὶ παῤῥησίας ἀγγελικῆς).[496]

We saw in chapters 1 and 2 of this study that, while the angels possess the direct noetic vision of God, Gregory believes that human beings are incapable of attaining this vision because they are prevented from doing so by the conditions of the material body.[497] In particular, we saw that Gregory denies that human beings are capable of "meeting naked realities (γυμνοῖς… πράγμασιν) with a naked mind (γυμνῷ… νοὶ)", on the basis that human cognition (in this life) is dependent upon the senses and so unable to encounter "intelligible realities" (νοητοῖς).[498] Gregory's statement in this passage, then, that his father is able to directly encounter God as one "naked" indicates he has been freed from the interference of senses and so is now capable of seeing God directly.[499] This is precisely how he characterises post-mortem contemplation in *Or.8.23*, where he states that his sister now contemplates God free from the interference of the senses:

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[495] *Carm.2.1.97* (PG 37: 1450) = *Epig.82* (LCL 68: 434).

[496] *Or.18.4* (PG 35: 989).

[497] See chapter 2, section 2.3.

[498] *Or.28.21* (SC 250: 142).

[499] This is further suggested by his statement that his father has "shaken off his bodily fetters" and "released his mind from the mud which clouded it (τῆς ἐπιθολούσης…ἰλύος)", claims

> I know well that your [viz. Gorgonia's] present state is better and more honourable than your previous one amongst visible things: the choir of the angels (ἀγγέλων χορεία), a heavenly rank (τάξις οὐρανία), the of glory (δόξης θεωρία) and the purer (καθαρωτέρα) and more perfect (τελεωτέρα) illumination of the Most High Trinity (τῆς ἀνωτάτω Τριάδος ἔλλαμψις), no longer escaping the imprisoned mind and diffused through the senses (διαχεόμενον ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν) but wholly contemplated and possessed by the whole mind (ὅλης ὅλῳ νοῒ θεωρουμένης τε καὶ κρατουμένης), and flashing the whole light of the divinity (ὅλῳ τῷ φωτὶ τῆς θεότητος) upon our souls.[500]

Here, Gregory identifies the "purer" and "more perfect" illumination of the next life with that which is "no longer… diffused through the senses" (διαχεόμενον ταῖς αἰσθήσεσιν). Again, this description of post-mortem contemplation recalls his view that the interference of the senses prevents direct contemplation of God in this life. Gregory's claim that the post-mortem vision of God is "no longer… diffused through the senses", then, suggests that this vision, unlike that which is available in this life, is not mediated through the senses. This understanding of post-mortem contemplation explains Gregory's claim in *Or.18.4* that his father is able to encounter God directly because he has been deemed worthy of angelic status. Gregory's father now shares in the contemplation of the angels since the conditions of knowing while in the body no longer prevent him from performing this activity.

For Gregory, however, it is not just their performance of the angelic activities of heavenly worship and contemplation that renders human beings like the angels, but also their reception of light and glory akin to that possessed by the angels. As we observed in our discussion of *Or.7.17* above, Gregory claims that the righteous dead who have been made members of the angelic choir as possessing their own "glory" (δόξας) and "radiance" (λαμπρότητας). We can better understand this claim when we recognise that Gregory stands in a tradition that speaks of the righteous as

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which indicate that his father is able to encounter God "naked" because his mind is no longer obscured by the conditions of the body.

[500] *Or.8.23* (SC 405: 296).

being clothed or transfigured with light and glory in order to denote their transformation into an angelomorphic being. A particularly striking example of this tradition is the ascent and transformation of Enoch in the presence of the divine Glory in *2 Enoch* 20-22. There, Enoch ascends into heaven, where he beholds "exceptionally great light", the various ranks of angels which serve God in heaven, and, further away, the Lord God seated upon his heavenly throne.[501] He then comes to stand before the luminous face and Glory of God, where he is surrounded by angelic choirs which sing God's praises.[502] Finally, Enoch is himself transformed into one of the angels which stand in God's presence by being clothed in light and glory:

> And Michael, the Lord's archistratig, lifted me up and brought me in front of the face of the Lord. And the Lord said to his servants, sounding them out, "Let Enoch join in and stand before my face forever!" And the Lord's Glorious ones did obeisance and said, "Let Enoch yield in accordance with your word, O Lord!" And the Lord said to Michael, "Go, and extract Enoch from his earthly clothing. And anoint him with my delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of my glory." And so Michael did, just as the Lord had said to him. He anointed me and he clothed me. And the appearance of that oil is greater than the greatest light, and its ointment is like sweet dew, and its fragrance myrrh; and it is like the rays of the glittering sun. And I looked at myself, and I had become like one of the glorious ones, and there was no observable difference.[503]

In this text the archangel Michael transforms Enoch in the presence of God by clothing him in God's clothes of glory and anointing him with radiant oil. As a result, Enoch's appearance is transfigured, since he has been covered in glory and anointed with oil which is "greater than the greatest light" and "like the rays of the glittering sun". It is clear that this process makes Enoch like one of the angels, as once he has been clothed in glory and anointed with light Enoch finds there to be "no observable difference" between himself and the other "glorious ones" standing before God's presence.

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[501] *2 Enoch* 20.1-3.
[502] *2 Enoch* 22.1-4.
[503] *2 Enoch* 22.6-10 [Long recension] (trans. F. Anderson in OTP I).

While *2 Enoch* speaks of the transformation of a living human being (Enoch), other Second-Temple and post-Second-Temple Jewish and Jewish-Christian texts speak in similar terms of the righteous as becoming like the angels by being transfigured or clothed in glory. For instance, the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71) depicts the righteous dead as dwelling with the angels and shining like fire.[504] In a similar vein, *2 Baruch* says that the righteous will be changed "into the splendour of angels" in the afterlife,[505] while the Jewish-Christian *Ascension of Isaiah* depicts the righteous dead as resembling the angels because they possess "great glory" like the angels.[506]

That Gregory draws upon this tradition is rendered probable when we consider the fact that he appears to have been acquainted with a version of *2 Enoch*.[507] Gregory's acquaintance with

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[504] *1 Enoch* 39.4-7 (trans. E. Isaac in OTP I): "There I saw other dwelling places of the holy ones and their resting places too. So there my eyes saw their dwelling places with the holy angels, and their resting places with the holy ones… and the righteous and elect ones before him shall be as intense as the light of fire."

[505] *2 Baruch 51.3, 5* (trans. A.F.J. Klijn in OTP I).

[506] *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.6-9 (trans. M.A. Knibb in OTP II): "And he took me up into the seventh heaven, and there I saw a wonderful light, and also angels without number. And there I saw all the righteous from the time of Adam onwards. And there I saw the holy Abel and all the righteous. And there I saw Enoch and all who (were) with him, stripped of (their) robes of the flesh; and I saw them in their robes of above, and they were like the angels who stand there in great glory."

[507] The dating and provenance of *2 Enoch* is uncertain. While some scholars have attempted to argue for a late (post-11th century) date for the composition of *2 Enoch* (see, most notably, J.T. Milik and Matthew Black *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 109f.), these arguments have not been widely accepted. By contrast, other scholars have identified three aspects of the text which, they argue, indicate a provenance in the Second Temple milieu: (1) the absence of obvious Christian imagery, (2) the apparent interest in the ongoing performance of the Temple sacrifice (c.f. *2 Enoch* 59); (3) the probable use of *2 Enoch* as a source for early Rabbinic Hekhalot texts. The most prominent advocates of an early dating are John Collins and, more recently, Andrei Orlov: see John J. Collins, ''The Genre Apocalypse in Hellenistic Judaism,'' in D. Hellholm (ed.) *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism*, *Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983) and Andrei Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005). Given the strong parallels we see between this text and Gregory's *Or.38.11*, we may have good grounds for making the late-fourth century the *terminus ante quem* for this text.

this text is evident when we compare his account of the creation of humankind as "another angel" in *Or.38.11* with the account of creation found in *2 Enoch* 30.12:

> **Gregory of Nazianzus *Or.38.11*:**
> He placed him on earth as a sort of second world, great in smallness, another angel (ἄγγελον ἄλλον), a mixed worshipper, viewer of the visible creation, initiate of the intellectual, king over the earth, ruled by the king above, earthly and heavenly, transient and immortal, visible and intellectual, in between greatness and lowliness.[508]
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> ***2 Enoch* 30.12:**
> From invisible and visible substances I created man. From both his natures come both death and life. And (as my image) he knows the word like (no) other creature. But even at his greatest he is small, and again at his smallest he is great. And on earth I assigned him to be a second angel, honoured and glorious. And I assigned him to be a king, to reign on earth and to have my wisdom. And there was nothing comparable to him on earth, even among my creatures that exist.[509]

While the lack of an extant Greek text of 2 Enoch prevents us from identifying verbatim quotations, we may nevertheless on the basis of the Slavonic translation identify four phrases used by Gregory in *Or.38.11* which are closely paralleled in the text of *2 Enoch*. First, Gregory's claim that God made humankind "out of invisible and visible natures" parallels *2 Enoch*'s claim that God made Adam "from invisible and visible substances". Second, Gregory's description of the newly created human being as "great in smallness" parallels *2 Enoch*'s statement that "at his smallest he [Adam] is great". Third, Gregory's reference to the newly created human being as "another angel" parallels *2 Enoch*'s description of Adam as a "second angel". Finally, Gregory's claim that the newly created human was a "king over the earth" parallels *2 Enoch*'s statement that God "assigned him [Adam] to be a king, to reign on earth".

This dense combination of near-identical parallel phrases is a clear indication that Gregory drew upon *2 Enoch* when composing *Or.38*, and so establishes his acquaintance with this text. Given this knowledge of 2 Enoch, the parallels between Gregory's account of Caesarius's ascent

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[508] *Or.38.11* (SC 358: 126).
[509] *2 Enoch* 30.12 [long recension] (trans. F. I. Anderson in OTP I).

to heaven in *Or.7.17* and the account of Enoch's ascent and angelomorphic transformation in *2 Enoch* 20-22 are significant. In *Or.7.17* Caesarius ascends to heaven and there beholds the choir of angels. He is subsequently united to the angelic choir and comes to stand in the presence of God. This process culminates in his transfiguration as he is filled with God's light. Similarly, *2 Enoch* depicts Enoch as first beholding and then joining the angels as he ascends into heaven, an ascent which culminates with him standing the presence of God and being transfigured with God's own Glory. In light of his use of *2 Enoch* in *Or.38* it is tempting to explain these parallels as once again indicating that Gregory is drawing upon this text. At the same time, many of the parallels between *Or.7.17* and *2 Enoch* 20-22 also feature in other early Jewish and Jewish-Christian heavenly ascent texts, such as the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which we mentioned above.[510] Perhaps, then, it would be best to view Gregory's depiction of the ascent and transformation of the righteous dead in *Or.7.17* as standing in a tradition – to which 2 Enoch belongs – which uses the images of transfiguration and the reception of glory to depict the angelomorphic transformation of human beings.

Gregory's acquaintance with this tradition not only accounts for his belief that the righteous will receive "glory" and "radiance" in the afterlife, but it also explains what we see elsewhere in Gregory, where he speaks of the reception of light and glory as making the righteous like the angels. Gregory indicates that he believes the reception of light and glory makes the righteous like the angels in two passages in which he speaks of righteous human beings "becoming light" after their death. First, in the closing lines of *Or.18* Gregory speaks of the dead as leaving the agitations of this world to become "lesser lights circling the Great Light" (φῶτα μικρὰ, φῶς τὸ μέγα

[510] See *Ascension of Isaiah* 9.27-31, in which the ascended Isaiah stands before God's throne, joins in the heavenly worship of the angels and is transformed so as to resemble the glory of the angels with whom he is worshipping.

περιχορεύοντες).[511] The image of lights "circling" (περιχορεύοντες) God associates the notion of "becoming light" with that of angelomorphic transformation, since Gregory also speaks of the angels as going around God in a "circle" (κύκλον):

> Luminescent angels (ἀγγελοι αἰγλήεντες), going around in a circle (κύκλον) before the one splendor of the triple-lighted divinity (τρισσοφαοῦς Θεότητος ὁμὸν σέλας), receive Gregory, unworthy, but a priest.[512]

In this passage Gregory expresses his desire to join the "luminescent angels" (ἀγγελοι αἰγλήεντες) who encircle God. Both passages, then, speak of human beings as circling God, either as "lesser lights" or as one who has joined the angels who also encircle God. It seems, therefore, that to become a light "circling the Great Light" is to join the luminescent angels who go around God's splendor "in a circle".

Gregory again associates "becoming light" with angelomorphic motifs in his oration *On the Holy Lights* (*Or.39*), where exhorts his audience to purify themselves so that they might stand in the presence of God as "perfect lights" (φῶτα τέλεια)

> But purify yourself entirely… so that you may stand (παραστάντες) as perfect lights (φῶτα τέλεια) before the Great Light, and there be initiated into the spiritual illumination (φωταγωγίαν), being shined upon (ἐλλαμπόμενοι) more purely and distinctly by the Trinity, of which we now receive by a single ray from the one divinity.[513]

The image of the human being becoming a light that "stands" (παραστάντες) before God recalls his description of Caesarius as one who, having been united to the angelic choir, is now "standing in attendance before the Great King" (βασιλεῖ τῷ μεγάλῳ παριστάμενος). As we saw in our prior discussion of this image from *Or.7.17*, the description of Caesarius as one who stands in attendance

[511] *Or.18.42* (PG 35: 1041).
[512] *Carm.2.1.99.1* (PG 37: 1450).
[513] *Or.39.20* (SC 356: 194, 196).

before God identifies him as belonging to the class of angels which stand in the presence of God. Once again, then, the language of "becoming light" serves to indicate resemblance to the angels.

The preceding discussion has revealed that Gregory believes that the righteous dead are like the angels because they perform the angelic activities of worship and contemplation and because they are made to resemble the angels by their reception of light and glory. Having shown this, we are now in a position to account for Gregory's identification of the righteous dead with the "gods" of Psalm 81.1. For, as we shall see in the next section of this chapter, Gregory understands the human being's post-mortem contemplation of God and reception of light and glory as coming about by means of their union with God. In this regard, the deification of righteous human beings in the afterlife allows them to share in the divine life of the angels whom, as we saw in chapter 1 of this dissertation, Gregory considers to be divine on account of their union with the divine light.

6.3 UNION WITH GOD

In the previous section we saw that Gregory believes that the righteous dead are like the angels because they perform the angelic activities of worship and contemplation and because they receive light and glory akin to the angels. In this section we will see that Gregory understands the human being's reception of light and glory as coming about by means of their union with God, a union which entails the direct noetic vision of God. In order to demonstrate this, I will first show that the reception of divine light in the afterlife comes about by means of mixture which unites the human being to God, and that this union is the basis for the deification of the righteous dead. I will then show that Gregory believes that this union gives knowledge of God's nature and essence because it entails the direct noetic vision of God.

6.3.1 Union and Deification

In *Or.16.9* Gregory states that, at the eschaton, the righteous will receive the divine light of God by being "mixed" with it:

> The good (τὰ ἀγαθὰ) shall go to the resurrection of life, which is now hidden in Christ and later will be manifested together with him. The wicked, however, will be brought unto a resurrection of judgement, where the unbelievers will be judged according to the condemnation of their own reason. The former will receive inexpressible light (ἄφραστον φῶς) and the contemplation of the Holy and Royal Trinity (ἡ τῆς ἁγίας καὶ βασιλικῆς θεωρία Τριάδος) illuminating them more clearly (τρανώτερόν) and purely (καθαρώτερον), and wholly mixing with their whole mind (ὅλης ὅλῳ νοῒ μιγνυμένης), which alone and above all I consider to be the Kingdom of Heaven. The latter, however, along with and above other torments, will be cast away from God and will receive a shame which has no end in their conscience.[514]

Gregory here identifies "mixture" (μίξις) as the means by which the mind will receive light at the eschaton. The righteous, he says, will receive "inexpressible light" (ἄφραστον φῶς), which he speaks of as "wholly mixing with their whole mind" (ὅλης ὅλῳ νοῒ μιγνυμένης). Gregory, as we have seen in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, uses the language of "mixture" (μίξις/μίγνυμι) or "blending" (κρᾶσις/κεράννυμι) and cognates to speak of the union of God with human beings. Gregory's use of the same terminology to describe the mind's reception of divine light at the eschaton indicates he understands this reception of light as also coming about by means of union with the divine light.

Given that Gregory elsewhere states that human beings are deified when united to God by means of "blending" (κρᾶσις) or "mixture" (μίξις), the claim that human beings receive the divine light by being "mixed" with the divine light points once more union with God as the basis for the deification of the righteous dead. Two passages support such a reading. The first of these is Gregory's interpretation of 1 Cor.15.28 ("God will be all in all") in his *Fourth Theological Oration* (*Or.30*). In *Or.*30.6, Gregory argues against what he calls the "Sabellian" interpretation of this

[514] *Or.16.9* (PG 35: 945).

passage, according to which God's being "all in all" refers to the absorption of the Son into the Father "like a torch into a great flame".[515] Gregory counter this interpretation by arguing that "God will be all in all" refers the eschatological state of human beings, when they will be "wholly godlike" (ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς) because they will receive the whole of God:

> "God will be all in all"[516] at the time of the restoration (ἀποκαταστάσεως). Not "the Father", absorbing the Son entirely into himself, like a torch into a great flame, from which it is for a time separated and then returns – lest the Sabellians corrupt this passage – but rather the whole "God" (ὅλος θεός), when we shall no longer be "many" (πολλὰ), as we are now with our movements (κινήμασι) and passions (πάθεσιν), bearing little or nothing at all of God in us, but will be wholly godlike (ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς), receiving the whole of God (ὅλου θεοῦ χωρητικοὶ) alone. This is the perfection (τελείωσις) towards which we speed.[517]

How we understand the language of human beings "receiving" (χωρητικοὶ) God is significant for our interpretation of this text. The term χωρητικός is derived from the verb χωρέω, which could mean either "to contain"/"to go through". Used in the latter sense χωρέω and cognates belong to one of the families of words used to describe the interpenetration of constituents in Stoic and Neo-Platonic accounts of mixture.[518] That this is the sense in which Gregory is using the term – and not in the sense of "to contain" – may be determined from the fact that Gregory believes the define nature to be "uncontainable" (ἀχώρητος).[519] Given that God is uncontainable, Gregory's reference to human beings "receiving the whole of God" (ὅλου θεοῦ χωρητικοὶ) at the eschaton is better understood as indication that God will go through and pervade human beings and not that human beings will contain God.

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[515] Fred Norris suggests that this argument is an attempt by Gregory to distance himself from the theology of Marcellus, whom Eunomius accused of Sabellianism, although Gregory does not mention Marcellus by name; Norris *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 165.

[516] 1 Cor.15.28.

[517] *Or.30.6* (SC 250: 238).

[518] See chapter 4, section 4.2.

[519] See, for instance, Gregory's remarks on the Spirit in *Or.31.29* (SC 250: 334): "He fills the universe according to his essence (πληρωτικὸν κόσμου κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν) yet is uncontained by the universe according to his power (ἀχώρητον κόσμῳ κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν)."

This interpretation receives support from the fact that Gregory often uses χωρέω and related words to denote the interpenetration of human beings by means of mixture, as for instance when he uses the example of the human being – who "has room" (ἐχώρησα) in themselves for soul, reason, mind, and the Holy Spirit – to illustrate the Christological union,[520] or as when he speaks of the Holy Spirit as "going through" (χωροῦν) intellectual natures.[521] The language of "receiving the whole of God" (ὅλου θεοῦ χωρητικοὶ) in *Or.30.6*, then, indicates union, inasmuch as it belongs to the notions of mixture and interpenetration which form the primary models for Gregory's understanding of the union of God and human beings. This being the case, it by means of union with God that human beings will be made "wholly godlike" (ὅλοι θεοειδεῖς) at the eschaton.

A clearer statement of this belief can be found in Gregory's oration *On the Theophany* (*Or.38*). There it is Psalm 81.1 which (once more) provides the scriptural basis for Gregory's depiction of eschatological humanity in divine terms. In *Or.38.7* Gregory alludes to this text as part of a broader discussion of divine unknowability. Having asserted that God cannot be known because of his infinity, Gregory proceeds to argue that divine unknowability has a pedagogical function describing the spiritual progress of human beings from wonder at God's incomprehensibility, to desire for greater knowledge, to purification and deification:

> He [God] is unattainable so that he might cause wonder (θαυμάζηται); he causes wonder (θαυμαζόμενον) so that he might be more greatly desired (ποθῆται πλέον); he causes desire (ποθούμενον) so that he might purify us (καθαίρῃ) and by purifying (καθαῖρον) make us godlike (θεοειδεῖς), and with those who have become like this, as with his kin, he shall at that time converse (ἤδη προσομιλῇ) – if I dare say something so bold – as God both united to and known by gods (Θεὸς θεοῖς ἑνούμενός τε καὶ

[520] *Ep.101.37-39* (SC 208: 52). For a discussion of this passage, and the understanding of mixture which underpins it, see chapter 3, section 3.5.2.

[521] *Or.31.29* (SC 250: 336). For a discussion of this passage, and the understanding of mixture which underpins it, see chapter 4, section 4.2.

> γνωριζόμενος),[522] and this perhaps to the extent that he already knows those who are known to him (ὅσον ἤδη γινώσκει τοὺς γινωσκομένους).[523]

Although Gregory does not explicitly state that he is speaking about the eschatological deification of human beings, we can understand this passage as referring to eschatological realities for three reasons. First, as we have already seen, Gregory elsewhere interprets Psalm 81.1 as referring to the eschatological judgement of human beings. Second, Gregory alludes to 1 Corinthians 13.12, in which Paul speaks of the knowledge and vision of God human beings which have at the eschaton, in order to specify the sort of knowledge human beings will have when united to God. Finally, the grammar of this passage supports this reading, inasmuch as the subjunctive mood of προσομιλῇ ("shall converse") indicates a state of affairs which is contrary to fact, and therefore suggests that Gregory is referring to future realities.

Having established that this passage refers to the deification of human beings at the eschaton, we are now in a position to comment on its significance. Gregory identifies the "gods" of Psalm 81.1 with those human beings who have been made "godlike" (θεοειδεῖς) through purification, with whom God converses "as God both united to and known by gods" (Θεὸς θεοῖς ἑνούμενός τε καὶ γνωριζόμενος). To be a "god" at the eschaton, therefore, is to be in union with God and to know God. That is to say, union is the basis for deification.[524] In the next section we will see that union also entails direct noetic vision.

6.3.2 Union and Vision

[522] C.f. Ps.81.1 (LXX).

[523] *Or.38.7* (SC 358: 116). The final lines are an allusion to 1 Cor.13.12.

[524] This union, it is worth noting, extends to the body as well as the soul. See, for instance, *Or.7.21* (SC 405: 234) : « Gregory states that, at the resurrection, the soul is re-united with the body so that they may "inherit together (συγκληρονομεῖ) the glory (δόξης) there [in heaven]" and so "be wholly absorbed into itself (ὅλον εἰς ἑαυτὴν ἀναλώσασα) and become together with it one (ἓν) and spirit (πνεῦμα) and mind (νοῦς) and god (θεός), since that which is mortal and in flux has been swallowed (καταποθέντος) up by life".

In the passage from *Or.38.7* that we quoted above Gregory associates the eschatological union of human beings with God with their gaining knowledge of God. This section explores this dimension of union further. I argue that Gregory believes that the deifying union of human beings with God at the eschaton will furnish knowledge of God's nature and essence, and that the union of God with human beings furnishes this knowledge because union with God involves direct noetic vision of God.

In *Or.38.7* Gregory does not specify the nature of this knowledge except by means of an allusion to 1 Corinthians 13.12, stating that God will be known by those united to him "perhaps to the extent that he already knows those who are known to him (ὅσον ἤδη γινώσκει τοὺς γινωσκομένους)".[525] Elsewhere, however, Gregory indicates that he understands the eschatological union with God as supplying knowledge of the divine nature and essence:

> No human being has ever discovered what the divine nature (φύσιν) and essence (οὐσίαν) is, nor shall they discover it. As to whether it will be discovered at some point in the future, you may investigate and philosophise about this as you wish, but according to my theory you will discover it when this godlike (θεοειδὲς) and divine (θεῖον) thing – I mean, our mind (νοῦν) and reason (λόγον) – shall be mixed together with its kin (τῷ οἰκείῳ προσμίξῃ) and the image shall ascend to its archetype (εἰκὼν ἀνέλθῃ πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον), of which it now has the desire. Indeed, it seems to me that this is the meaning of that most philosophical saying, "we will know him then as much as (ὅσον) we are known"[526]

Gregory's citation of 1 Corinthians 13.12 in the closing lines of this passage again indicates that he is referring to the knowledge of God human beings will attain at the eschaton. According to Gregory, Paul's statement that we will know God "even as we are known" in 1 Cor.13.12 refers to the knowledge that will come about as a result of the union of the human being's mind and reason with its "kin" (οἰκείῳ), a union Gregory once more describes in terms of "mixture".[527]

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[525] *Or.38.7* (SC 358: 116); c.f. 1 Cor.13.12.

[526] *Or.28.17* (SC 250: 134, 136). The final line is a loose quotation of 1 Cor.13.12.

[527] The mind's "kin" is God to whom the noetic soul of human beings is akin since it is the image of God. Compare *Ep.101.49*, in which Gregory says that the Word "mixed" (μίγνυται) with

Gregory identifies this knowledge with the knowledge of God's "nature" (φύσιν) and "essence" (οὐσίαν). The mind's union with God at the eschaton thus furnishes the mind with new knowledge, namely, knowledge of God's nature and essence.

This union grants knowledge of God's nature and essence, I suggest, because eschatological union with God involves direct noetic vision of God. As we saw in chapter 2 of this dissertation, Gregory believes that human beings cannot attain the direct noetic vision of God in this life because of the dependence of human cognition upon the senses and "mental images" (φαντασίαι) derived from the senses.[528] By contrast, human beings are able to know God without the interference of the senses or mental images in the life to come.[529] Gregory indicates the distinction between these two different modes of knowing in *Or.7.17*, when he describes the post-mortem contemplation of God as no longer "imagined (φαντάζεσθαι) in mirrors and enigmas".[530]

Christ's humanity by means of his human mind because this was "most akin" (οἰκειοτέρῳ) to him; *Ep.101.49* (SC 208: 56). Gregory's subsequent mention of the image of God ascending to its archetype suggests that it is the "archetype" (ἀρχέτυπον) – which he elsewhere identifies with the person of the Father (c.f. *Or.45.9*; *Carm.1.1.2.6-8*) – that mind and reason (the "image") are united to. However, he elsewhere he says that the righteous human being is mixed with the whole of the Trinity after death; see *Epig.* 140 (LCL 68: 460): "Look upon the tomb of Nicomedes, if you have heard of him. Who, having built a temple to Great Christ, gave first himself and then the famous virginity of his children as a holy sacrifice, having nothing better to give, the greatest priest and father. Therefore, he was soon mixed (μίγη) with the Great Trinity."

[528] See chapter 2, section 2.3.

[529] We have already noted this point regarding the participation of the righteous dead in the angelic activity of contemplation; see section 6.2 of this chapter.

[530] *Or.7.17* (SC 405: 222). Gregory's claim that Caesrius contemplates God "no longer in a mirror" is an allusion to Paul's distinction between the vision in a mirror and enigmas which is had in this life and the face to face vision which will be had in the next (1 Cor. 13.12). Gregory's often uses this Pauline imagery when describing post-mortem contemplation. For instance, in *Or.14.23* Gregory states that the Kingdom of God consists in, amongst other things, "the contemplation of glory (δόξης θεωρίαν) which now appears in mirrors (ἐσόπτροις) and in enigmas (αἰνίγμασι), but then will be more perfect (τελεωτέραν) and purer (καθαρωτέραν)"; *Or.14.23* (PG 35: 888). Again, in *Or.24.19* he describes the Kingdom of Heaven as "the abode of all those who rejoice…[where there is] the more perfect (τελεωτέρα) and purer (καθαρωτέρα) illumination of the divinity (θεότητος ἔλλαμψις), which is now enjoyed in enigmas (αἰνίγμασι) and shadows (σκιαῖς)"; *Or.24.19* (SC 284: 82). On Gregory's use of this Pauline imagery, see John Egan *The*

Gregory's use of the verb φαντάζω – "to imagine"/"to form a mental image of" – reveals his understanding of how contemplation of God in this life differs from contemplation of God in the next. Gregory elsewhere uses this verb to denote the knowledge of God which is had in this life by means of the mind's activity of forming concepts and mental images of God from the observation of the material creation. Gregory describes this way of knowing God in his *Second Theological Oration* (*Or.28*):

> Of the existence of God, the creating and sustaining cause of all, sight and the law of nature is our teacher: the former by meeting with visible things (ὁρωμένοις) that are well-fixed in their travels and, as it were, changelessly moving from one place to another; the latter by deducing (συλλογιζόμενος) the cause of what is perceived and its orderly arrangement. For, how could all this exist and be sustained, unless it was all given being and maintained by God? Indeed, no-one, when they see a beautifully crafted lyre, harmonious and well-proportioned, or when they hear this lyre being played, could fail to form a concept (ἐννοήσει) of the maker and player of the lyre, and to recur to this one in their intellect (διανοίᾳ), even if they were perhaps ignorant of them by means of sight. In the same way, the creator, who moves and preserves the things he has created, is evident to us, even if he is not comprehended by the intellect (διανοίᾳ περιλαμβάνηται). Anyone who does not willingly advance this far, following these natural demonstrations (φυσικαῖς… ἀποδείξεσιν), is exceedingly ignorant. But whatever it is that which we have imagined (ἐφαντάσθημεν) or represented (ἀνετυπωσάμεθα), or that reason sketches (λόγος ὑπέγραψεν), will not be God.[531]

By observing "visible things" (ὁρωμένοις) and "deducing" (συλλογιζόμενος) their cause, human beings can attain some knowledge of God, namely the knowledge "that God is" (ὅτι ἔστιν).[532] Yet this knowledge remains a mere concept, "imagined" (ἐφαντάσθημεν), "represented" (ἀνετυπωσάμεθα) or "sketched" (ὑπέγραψεν) by reason or the intellect.[533] Gregory makes similar

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Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen: A Study of the Images of Mirror and Light PhD Diss. (Institut Catholique de Paris, 1971).

[531] *Or.28.6* (SC 250: 110).

[532] Gregory's overall argument in this passage is that, *contra* Eunomius, human beings cannot attain the knowledge of God's nature – knowledge of "what he is" (ἥτις ἐστίν) – but can only know "that he is" (ὅτι ἔστιν), a distinction he introduces in *Or.28.5* (SC 250: 108-110). The distinction is Basil's; see Andrew Radde-Gallwitz *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), 122-129.

[533] Edgard Narkevics argues that Gregory's argument in this passage is modelled in Basil of Caesarea's account of the process of "conceptualisation" (ἐπίνοια) as the means by which

statements elsewhere, stating that, in this life, knowledge of God is acquired by gathering together "mental images" (φαντασίαι) so as to form a "rough outline" (σκιαγραφία) of God in the mind.[534] Gregory's claim that the post-mortem vision of God is one which is no longer "imagined (φαντάζεσθαι) in mirrors and enigmas", then, indicates that human beings will no longer rely on this process of forming concepts and mental images from the observation of visible things in the life to come.

Gregory's remarks in *Or.7.17* indicate what post-mortem contemplation of God is not: it does not involve the process of forming concepts and mental images of God which characterises human knowing in this life. Gregory provides a more positive statement of his understanding of post-mortem vision in his poem *On Virtue* (*Carm.1.2.10*). There Gregory once more uses the Pauline distinction between vision in a mirror and face-to-face vision in order to discuss the difference between how God is known in this life and how he will be known in the next life. He again uses the verb φαντάζω to describe the knowledge which is had in this life. In addition to this,

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human beings come to knowledge in this life; Edgard Narkevics, 'Skiagraphia: Outlining the Conception of God' in *Gregory of Nazianzus: Images and Reflections* eds. Jostein Børtnes and Tomas Hägg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 83–112. On Basil's account of "conceptualisation", see Lewis Ayres *Nicaea and its Legacy: an Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2004), 192-193; Radde-Gallwitz *Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Transformation of Divine Simplicity*, 143-154; Mark DelCogliano *Basil of Caesarea's anti-Eunomian Theory of Divine Names* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 163-176. More recently, Ryan Clevenger has suggested that the anti-Eunomian epistemology Gregory expounds in *Or.28* and elsewhere in his writings builds upon Basil's account of "conceptualisation", but also develops it in his own distinct ways by emphasising the role of "mental images" (φαντασίαι), a move which, Clevenger argues, reflects his engagement with rhetorical theories of cognition and communication; Clevenger, *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language*, 198-239.

[534] *Or.30.17* (SC 250: 260, 262); *Or.38.7* (SC 358: 114, 116). See also *Or.28.13*, in which Gregory argues that human beings cannot know God apart from "a mental image gathered together from likenesses [of physical objects] (φαντασίαν ἐκ τῶν εἰκασμάτων)"; *Or.28.13* (SC 358: 128). For further discussion of these passages, see Clevenger, *"Like a Swift Fleeting Flash of Lightning Shining in Our Eyes": The Role of Mental Images in Gregory of Nazianzus's Account of Theological Language*, 204ff.

however, Gregory also provides a positive description of sort of knowing human beings will have in the life to come:

> For, since the soul, as both I judge it to be and have heard from wise men, is a sort of divine stream which comes to us from above – either the whole thing or the presiding and governing mind – its one and only natural work (ἕν ἔργον…φυσικόν τε καὶ μόνον) is to bear itself above (ἄνω φέρεσθαι) and unite itself to God (συνάπτεσθαι Θεῷ), to always and entirely look towards its kin (πρὸς τὸ συγγενὲς βλέπειν), not at all enslaved to the passions of the body (πάθει σώματος), which flow towards the earth and draw us downwards, sending into us both the sweet errors of visible things and the darkness of the senses (τὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων σκοτῶδες), by which the soul, unless it is ruled by reason, elapses and falls little by little. But if it is restrained and frequently kept in check by reason, as though by a bridle, it would presumably be raised up by reason and, after a short time, would arrive at the sacred and heavenly city, and would there receive what it formerly desired. That is, moving beyond every veil (κάλυμμα) and shadow (σκιὰς) of this present life, and the imagining (φαντάζεται) of the good as though in enigmas (αἰνίγματα) and in mirrors (ἐσόπτροις)[535] it shall look (βλέψῃ) upon the naked Good-itself (αὐτό τ'ἀγαθὸν γυμνούμενον) with a naked mind (γυμνῷ τε τῷ νῷ), and might thus pass from error and be filled with the light (φωτὸς κορεσθεῖσ') which it has been deemed worthy to attain, having there the final good.[536]

In this passage Gregory contrasts "the imagining (φαντάζεται) of the good as though in enigmas (αἰνίγματα) and in mirrors (ἐσόπτροις)" with soul's mode of knowing God in the life to come, in which the soul "shall look (βλέψῃ) upon the naked Good-itself (αὐτό τ'ἀγαθὸν γυμνούμενον) with a naked mind (γυμνῷ τε τῷ νῷ)". Gregory's use of βλέπω – "to see" – indicates that he thinks that the mind will know God in the life to come by means of some sort of mental vision, in contrast to the process of forming concepts and mental images which characterises human knowledge of God in this life. The language of "nakedeness" and the use of the emphatic "αὐτό" ("itself") reveal the direct and immediate nature of this vision. Thus, while God is known in this life through the formation of concepts and mental images, in the next life God will be known by means of direct noetic vision.[537]

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[535] C.f. 1 Corinthians 13.12.

[536] *Carm.1.2.10.59-82* (PG 37: 685-686).

[537] Recognition of this distinction clarifies previous scholarly debates regarding the difference between the knowledge of God in this life and the knowledge of God in the next. While

The belief that God will be known by means of direct noetic vision in the life to come helps explain how human beings come to have knowledge of God's nature and essence at the eschaton.

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a number of scholars have recognised that Gregory distinguishes the knowledge of God in this life from that which is had in the next, there is no scholarly agreement as to the precise nature of this distinction. Prior to the work of John Egan the scholarly tendency was to emphasise the ambiguity of Gregory's thought on this subject. Vladimir Lossky, for instance, suggests there is a tension between Gregory's writings between his affirmation of the complete incomprehensibility of God and his statement that, at the eschaton, the soul will be "wholly united" to God. Jan Maria Szymusiak notes that Gregory distinguishes the contemplation of God had in this world from that had in the next, but remarks that the texts in which Gregory discusses this distinction are "peu explicites" as to the nature of this distinction. Justin Mossay observes that the perfect vision of God is reserved for the dead in the afterlife and suggests that this is because the dead possess a distinct mode of intellection, but declines to specify the nature of this post-mortem vision. In this regard, Spidlik speaks for those who came before him when he concludes that "il est difficile de dire en quoi le theoria céleste de Grégoire diffère de la theoria terreste". See Vladimir Lossky *The Vision of God*, trans. A. Moorhouse (London: Faith Press, 1963), 67-70; Jan Maria Szymusiak *Elements de theologie de I'homme selon S. Gregoire de Nazianze* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, 1963), 75; Mossay *La Mort et l'au-delà dans saint Grégoire de Nazianze*, 114-116 ; Thomas Spidlik *Grégoire de Nazianze Introduction à l'étude de sa doctrine spirituelle* (Rome: PISO, 1971), 43.

John Egan challenged this way of thinking in what remains the most extensive investigation of this issue to date. Egan argues that Gregory uses the Pauline imagery of vision in a mirror and face-to-face vision to distinguish the knowledge of God in this life from that which will be had in the next; Egan *The Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen*. Recently, however, Christopher Beeley has challenged Egan's main conclusion by arguing that Gregory views the knowledge of God in this life as being on a continuum with that in the next. According to Beeley, the distinction between the two is merely one of degree and not, as Egan's reading suggests, one of kind; Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 105-109, here 105: "it is important not to overstate the postponement of full divine knowledge as a radical distinction between two different kinds of knowledge. Central to Gregory's theological vision is the reality of knowledge of God's nature in this life, and the continuity of that knowledge with the eschatological vision, with which it differs only in degree."

The observation that Gregory distinguishes between the knowledge of God which is had through the formation of concepts and mental images in this life, and the knowledge of God by means of direct noetic vision in the next life God supports Egan's position inasmuch as it indicates that the difference is one of kind not one of degree. This observation also supports Henri Pinault's brief remarks on the Gregory's conception of the beatific vision in his 1925 study. According to Pinault, Gregory interprets the face-to-face vision of 1 Cor.13.12 as referring to vision of God which is no longer diffused through the senses; Henri Pinault, *Le Platonisme de Saint Grégoire de Nazianze* (La Roche-sur Yon, 1925), 202.

[537] Beeley *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 105-108,

For, according to Gregory, direct noetic vision allows the mind to see "the truth of concrete realities" (πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν):

> For the prize of virtue is to become a god (θεὸν γενέσθαι), and to be dazzled by the most-pure light (τῷ καθαρωτάτῳ φωτὶ καταστράπτεσθαι), which is contemplated (θεωρουμένῳ) in the triune monad, and whose rays (αὐγάς) we now possess in moderation (μετρίως). Hasten towards these; spread-out the wings of your intellect, lay hold of eternal life, never stilling your hopes until you shall come to the desired-for and blessed summit… there you shall find no empty beatitude (κενὴν μακαρίαν), nor formations of the intellect (διανοίας ἀναπλασμούς), but the truth of concrete realities (πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν).[538]

In the afterlife the deified human no longer sees "formations of the intellect" (διανοίας ἀναπλασμούς), but instead finds the "truth of concrete realities" (πραγμάτων ἀλήθειαν). The distinction is once again between the process of forming concepts and mental images which characterises human knowledge of God in this life and the direct noetic vision which characterises human knowing in the next life. Direct noetic vision provides superior knowledge because it involves the vision of "concrete realities" rather than something formed by the mind, and so supplies true knowledge concerning these realities.

While Gregory does not specify what these "concrete realities" are, his reference to the reception of divine light in the preceding lines would seem to indicate that the divine light is one of these concrete realities. In either case, the view that direct noetic vision furnishes true knowledge of the objects of its vision helps explain the view that human beings will attain knowledge of God's nature and essence at the eschaton. For if human beings will attain the direct noetic vision of God – as Gregory says they will – then insofar as they see God they will be able to attain true knowledge of God. This observation allows us to make the further observation that the deifying union of human beings with God at the eschaton furnishes knowledge of God's nature and essence because this union involves direct noetic vision of God.

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[538] *Ep.178.11-12* (Gallay II: 68-69).

Chapter Conclusion

For Gregory, the righteous dead share in the heavenly life of the angels on account of their union with God. Gregory believes that the righteous dead are like the angels inasmuch as they perform the angelic activities of worshipping and contemplating God and receive light and glory akin to the angels. This reception of light and glory, however, comes about by means of their union with God, and so it is the union of the human being with God which is the ultimate basis for their likeness to the angels. This union both deifies human beings and also furnishes knowledge of God's nature and essence by enabling the direct noetic vision of God. In this regard, the deifying union with God which is effected by the wholly Spirit and realised through ascetic practice in this life is brought to completion in the afterlife.

Conclusion

In this study I have demonstrated that Gregory views deification as consisting in union with God. This notion of union with God forms an overarching category which integrates Gregory's complex and multifaceted approach to deification into a coherent unified account of salvation. This account begins with the angels, who are united to God from the moment of their creation and so serve as exemplars for human beings. Next comes Christ, who is both the basis and model for the deifying union of God and human beings, since he is the union of God and humanity *par excellence.* The Spirit communicates this union to human beings after Christ as the agent of deification, while the monastic life provides the practices by means of which human beings attain deification and union with God in this life. The is process culminates in the deification of the righteous in the afterlife, whereby human beings share in the life of the angels and attain the direct noetic vision of God through their union with God.

This study began with an examination of Gregory's angelology. I argued that the angels are divine because they receive light and divinity from God. This reception of light and divinity comes about by means of the union of the angels with God. This union in turn entails the direct noetic vision of God, in which the angels see God when united to God by being directly imprinted upon by the divine light. By grasping Gregory's understanding of the sense in which the angels are divine we are better able to understand his account of both the created state of human beings, in which humans are not divine and so lesser than the angels, and the deified state of human beings, inasmuch as the angels serve as exemplars of the divine life for which humans should strive.

In chapter 2 we turned to Gregory's account of the created state of human beings. I argued that Gregory views human beings as intended to share in the life of the angels while also being lesser than the angels in their created state, since human beings are not divine from the moment of

their creation. Human beings are not divine at the moment of creation because of the "thickness" of the flesh, which was given to human beings so that they would not receive the whole of God's light and fall like Lucifer. This "thickness" prevents human beings them from receiving the divine light in the manner of the angels and, by implication, inhibits the union of human beings with God

The deification of human beings is made possible by the deification of Christ's humanity, and we turned to this in chapter three. I argued first that Gregory believes that Christ's humanity is deified in virtue of its union with the divine Word. I then demonstrated that Gregory appropriates Neo-Platonic models of mixture in order to explain this union. According to this understanding of mixture, Christ's humanity was united to God – and so deified – by means of its interpenetration by the Word. By identifying the notions of mixture which underpin Gregory's account of the Christological union we are able to recognise how the deification of Christ's humanity serves as a basis for the deification of other human being, inasmuch as Gregory uses the same understanding of mixture to explain the deification of those who come after Christ. As such, Christ is both the model and the basis for the deifying union of God and human beings.

The fourth chapter considered Gregory's account of the deifying activity of the Holy Spirit. I showed that Gregory views the Spirit as deifying human beings by indwelling them and causing them to participate in the divine nature, thereby uniting them to God. I further showed that Gregory draws once more upon Neo-Platonic models of mixture to account for the union of the Holy Spirit with the one whom he indwells. Thus, the Spirit is the agent whose activity communicates the deifying union made possible in Christ to those who come after Christ.

In the fifth chapter we turned to Gregory's view of the monastic life as a way of life which deifies its practitioners. I argued that Gregory considers monasticism to be a means of purification, understood in terms of detachment from the passions and withdrawal from the senses. This process

of purification deifies monks and virgins because it causes them to share in the life of the angels and enables their mind to ascend to union with the divine light. In both of these regards the deified monk or virgin experiences in this life a foretaste of eschatological beatitude.

Finally, in the sixth chapter I argued that Gregory believes the righteous dead share in the heavenly life of the angels on account of their union with God. The righteous dead are like the angels because they both perform the same activities as the angels – worship and contemplate God – and receive light and glory akin to that possessed by the angels. This reception of light and divinity comes about by means of the deifying union of God with righteous human beings in the afterlife. This union furnishes knowledge of God's nature and essence because it involves the direct noetic vision of God. The deifying union of God and human beings in the afterlife, then, represents the final stage in the deification of human beings after Christ.

The goal of this dissertation was to explain what Gregory means when he speaks of the human as being, in some sense, "divine", "a god", or "deified". I have shown that Gregory believes that the deification of human beings consists in their union with God. This union makes human beings like both Christ, who is the basis and ultimate model for the union of God and human beings, and the angels, who exemplify this union because they are united to God from the moment of their creation. In the afterlife this union also furnishes human beings which knowledge of God's nature, since it involves the direct noetic vision of God. Thus, while Gregory believes that deification consists in union with God, he also views deification in terms of becoming like Christ and the angels, and as involving the direct noetic vision of God, because he views all of these as corollaries of union with God.

In addition to casting light on Gregory's thought, this study can serve as a useful resource for future studies of the origins and historical development of the doctrine of deification. Gregory

stands as a prominent figure in the historical development of the doctrine of deification. Gregory uses deification language more than almost any other early Christian author; according to Russell "only Athanasius employs deification terms more frequently."[539] Moreover, Gregory holds the distinction of being the first author to use the term "theosis", the principal term for deification in the later Byzantine tradition, and a term which he appears to have coined himself.[540] In fact, Gregory exercised an enormous influence on the later Byzantine tradition. In addition to being "l'auteur le plus cité, après la Bible dans la littérature ecclésiastique byzantine",[541] Gregory played a formative role in later discussions of theosis in particular, with figures including Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus, and Symeon the New Theologian all citing and discussing passages from Gregory's works in their own writings on the subject.[542] By providing an in-depth investigation of Gregory's doctrine of deification, then, this dissertation provides a foundation from which to investigate later developments in the history of this doctrine.

[539] Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 214.

[540] Russell, *Doctrine of Deification,* 214 n.12, 340-341.

[541] Jacques Noret, "Grégoire de Nazianze, l'auteur le plus cité, après la Bible dans la littérature ecclésiastique byzantine" in J. Mossay (ed.) *Symposium Nazianzenum II: Louvain la Neuve, 25-26 août, 1981* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1983), 259-266.

[542] See Russell, *Doctrine of Deification,* 277-283, 299-303.

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All translations of Gregory's writings in this dissertation are my own.

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