GREGORY of NAZIANZUS:
The BIBLE and the REVELATION of the TRIUNE GOD

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Theology of the University of St. Michael’s College and the Historical Department of the Toronto School of Theology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Theology

Awarded by the University of St. Michael’s College and the University of Toronto

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between Gregory of Nazianzus’ pneumatology and his understanding of Scripture in light of his concept of God’s revelation. Although Gregory articulates a clearer pneumatology than his contemporaries, modern scholars tend to neglect his theological achievement. Therefore, in order to highlight Gregory’s uniqueness, the present work compares him to Basil of Caesarea. While Basil’s epistemology is based on the concept of the tradition of the knowledge of God, Gregory understands the attainment of that knowledge to be a gradual process in terms of relationship. Consequently, when discussing the Spirit’s identity, a doctrine that is not explicitly stated in Scripture, Basil only states that the Spirit is divine, while Gregory asserts that He is God. This difference emerges from how these two Fathers locate the Bible within their concepts of how humans can know God. According to his epistemology, Gregory successfully demonstrates the Spirit’s divinity as scriptural.
# Table of Contents

List of Translations ........................................................................................................ iv  
List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................................... v  
INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................... 1  
Chapter 1 Life of Gregory ............................................................................................ 7  
Chapter 2 Knowledge of God ....................................................................................... 18  
  1 Θεός in Gregory, Θεός in Basil ............................................................................... 18  
  2 Knowledge of God ................................................................................................. 23  
  3 The Possibility of Knowledge of God ..................................................................... 26  
  4 Knowledge of God and Salvation ......................................................................... 30  
   Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 35  
Chapter 3 The Revelation of God ................................................................................ 37  
  1 The Divine Initiative .............................................................................................. 37  
  2 Basil and the Tradition of the Church ..................................................................... 39  
  3 Gregory and a Living Relationship with God ......................................................... 48  
   Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 57  
Chapter 4 Scripture and the Triune God .................................................................. 61  
  1 The Silence of Scripture ......................................................................................... 61  
  2 Scripture for Gregory and Basil ............................................................................. 63  
  3 Basil and the Divine Spirit of God ......................................................................... 68  
  4 Gregory and God the Holy Spirit .......................................................................... 72  
   Conclusion .................................................................................................................. 80  
CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................ 82  
BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................................................................................. 84
List of Translations

I have used English translations of the ancient texts below for each writings respectively, unless otherwise noted in the footnotes.

Writings of Gregory:

*De Spiritu Sancto*  

*Epistulae*  

*Epistulae 101-102*  

*Orationes 27-31*  

*Orationes 1, 38-41*  

*De Vita Sua*  

Writings of Basil:

*Adversus Eunomium*  

*De Spiritu Sancto*  

*Epistulae*  
List of Abbreviations

I. Ancient Authors
Basil.
  Ep.  Basil of Caesarea
  Eun.  Épistulae
  Spir.  Adversus Eunomium
         De Spiritu Sancto

Gr. Naz.
  Ep.  Gregory of Nazianzus
  Or.  Epistulae
  Vita.  Orationes
         De Vita Sua

II. Editions


NPNF  Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers

PG  J.P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca, Paris 1857-66

SC  Sources Chrétinnes
INTRODUCTION

Despite the honourable traditional title of “the Theologian”, Gregory has enjoyed little popularity among modern scholars. The assessments of his theology have been harsh. For instance, in his discussion on the Trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians, Adolf Harnack completely ignores Gregory and bases his analysis solely on the theologies of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.¹ G.L. Prestige describes this Father in a rather disgraceful manner as an “inspired populariser”² who merely reproduced what his friend had established. Anthony Meredith also devalues Gregory, writing: “[I]f his performance is compared with that of either of the other two Cappadocians, the limited nature of his own contribution becomes clear.”³ R.P.C. Hanson offers a fairer view of Gregory, calling him “more than just a competent theologian;”⁴ however, Hanson adds, too, that the Theologian “was not as original and as much of a pioneer, perhaps, as were Basil and his brother.”⁵ Therefore, there seems to be a widespread tendency to neglect the importance of Gregory in the shadows of his friends, Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.

However, when closely examined, the writings of Basil and Gregory reveal a striking contrast concerning their treatment of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. While Basil only claims that the Spirit is divine [θεότης], Gregory is not ashamed to call Him God [Θεός]. This is not a slight but a significant difference between Gregory and Basil. However, even in this regard, scholars tend to underestimate the value of Gregory’s claim. For example, Hanson analyses the differences between Gregory and Basil as follows:

In his Trinitarian doctrine…Gregory can be said to display no great originality. He differs in some points from Basil, but in none of great importance. His articulation of Trinitarian doctrine is clearer, rather more forceful and expressive than that of his friend, as becomes a great stylist, but that is all.⁶

¹ Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma, trans. Neil Buchanan (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1976), 4:84-89. As a result, Harnack concludes that the Cappadocian Trinitarian theology identifies the Father with the entire Godhead, emphasising the hierarchical order within the Trinity. While this summary is true of Basil, it is not so of Gregory, as we shall see below.
⁴ Richard Hanson, The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 707.
⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Hanson, The Search, 714. An opposite view is presented by Christopher A. Beeley; as he writes, “Basil’s pneumatology has several enduring strengths, yet most of them are better represented by Gregory Nazianzen.” Beeley even points out that Basil failed to convince his opponents’ charge against him that his pneumatology is not
Hanson’s comment assumes that Gregory’s articulation of Trinitarian doctrine is clearer than Basil’s merely because of a better rhetorical skill. However, considering the social and theological implications of calling the Holy Spirit “God,” Hanson’s statement seems questionable. Firstly, at the time of controversy when doctrinal statements could lead to a life in exile, whether or not to publicly articulate the doctrine of the Holy Spirit was a matter of life and death, in terms of one’s social status. Moreover, in the fourth century, people were ready, literally, to die for their beliefs; therefore, considering how seriously people engaged in the doctrinal issues in those days, it is unlikely that even a minute difference in the degree of clarity in pneumatology would be dismissed as a matter of, as Hanson says, “that is all.”

Secondly, the problem of the Spirit’s divinity was a concern not simply of great theologians. As Gregory eagerly argued at the end of his Theological Orations, the goal of the whole theological endeavor was to “persuade all men to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power.” Therefore, the theological debate over the Spirit had an immediate bearing on the worship of the Church: if the Spirit were God, He must be worshipped; if not, He should not be worshipped. In fact, Basil, who never referred to the Spirit as God, did not teach that He should be worshipped. Thus, the pneumatological controversy involved matters not of marginal importance; rather, it was crucial for determining the object of the Church’s worship.

Thus, the difference between Gregory and Basil is, indeed, an important one. Therefore, the present study will explore the cause of Gregory’s unwavering confidence on the issue of the Spirit’s divinity. To highlight Gregory’s uniqueness, his approach will be compared to that of Basil. Both Gregory and Basil evidently based their arguments on scriptural passages: as J.N.D. Kelly writes about ancient theologians in general, “almost the entire theological effort of the Fathers, whether their aims were polemical or constructive, was expended upon what amounted to the exposition of the Bible.” However, a problem arises in the case of the doctrine of the

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8 After all, people did fight viciously over one letter in the case of homoousios and homoiousios, showing that there could have been no compromise.
9 Gr.Naz., Or. 31. 33.17ff (SC 250, 342).
10 Although the Greek word for spirit [τὸ πνεῦμα] is neuter, I am following Norris to use the masculine pronoun since it is conventional to do so in English.
11 Basil Studer states that Gregory’s emphasis on the divinity of the Spirit can be explained by the influence of Origen on him. However, the scholar does not expound on his statement. Basil Studer, Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church, trans. Matthias Westerhoff (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 151.
Holy Spirit, since no biblical passage clearly affirms that the Spirit is God in the same sense as the Father is God.

Therefore, we shall distance ourselves from the immediate context of scriptural interpretation, and investigate how Gregory and Basil understand knowledge and revelation of God, in order to discern how they understand the Bible in light of those concepts. Ultimately, the objective of my ThM thesis is to examine the place of the Bible for Gregory within the context of revelation in general and observe how that understanding of the nature of Scripture led him to regard his bold and untraditional pneumatology as biblical. My intent is to argue that Gregory’s unyielding pneumatology was not merely a reproduction of Basil’s theology with more clarity, but was a result of his concepts of knowledge and revelation of God, and his interpretation of the Bible within that context.

It is appropriate to study Gregory’s understanding of knowledge and revelation of God in order to examine the source of his pneumatology, because, as Christopher A. Beeley comments, “it is impossible to separate Gregory’s doctrine of God from his doctrine of the means by which God is known.” Beeley’s work focuses on a topic relevant to the present study, namely the knowledge of God; however, his aim is to offer “a comprehensive analysis of Gregory’s Trinitarian doctrine as it is situated within his theological and practical vision of the Christian life.” Therefore, Beeley presents Gregory’s views on revelation and the Bible in order to determine the function of this Father’s Trinitarian theology (as an already established thought) within those contexts. This approach of Beeley’s is significant; nevertheless, the investigation of the emergence of Gregory’s Trinitarian theology from a specific context (e.g. Scripture, liturgy, tradition and other Christian practices) is also valid and meaningful. And among possible contexts for such study, Scripture, holding a central authority in Christianity, demands particular attention.

Concerning Gregory’s understanding of the Bible and his Trinitarian theology, T.A. Noble has written an article precisely on that topic. Noble’s conclusion is that Gregory’s “confidence seems to have arisen at least in part from Gregory’s belief that the deity of the Spirit was the

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clear teaching of Holy Scripture.”\(^{15}\) Although Noble’s statement is vague enough to be true, two points need clarification: what is meant by “the clear teaching,” and what “Holy Scripture” refers to. Gregory doubtlessly believed that his teaching simply was the teaching of the Bible. However, what complicates the matter is that probably everyone involved in the controversy, regardless of their positions, considered their own interpretations to be the ‘plain,’ untainted, and obvious readings of Scripture. As Lewis Ayres points out, “Patristic exegesis takes as its point of departure the ‘plain’ sense of the text of Scripture.”\(^{16}\) Ironically, it was the ‘plain’ meaning of the biblical texts which caused severe disagreements and endless debates in the fourth century. Therefore, to truly determine how Gregory gained his confidence in the divinity of the Spirit, one must examine how this Cappadocian Father tries to discern the ‘plain teaching of Holy Scripture.’

Still another problem arises when discussing the ‘plain teaching of Holy Scripture.’ In the age when the Bible as a book was not at all a common possession of people, “Holy Scripture” did not automatically denote one volume containing a collection of canonical books. The Scriptural canon itself was still in the process of being defined. In fact, what Gregory means by “Scripture” differs significantly from the modern notion, which acutely isolates the Bible from rest of the revealing work of God; therefore, Hanson points out that Gregory is not properly distinguishing between the natural and the revealed knowledge of God.\(^{17}\)

However, according to Beeley, “Gregory’s doctrine does not recognize the sort of division between knowledge and experience, theory and practice, or theology and spirituality to which many moderns are so accustomed.”\(^{18}\) Thus, to ascertain how Gregory perceived Scripture and determined its ‘plain’ meaning, it is appropriate to investigate the concept of the Bible from the wider context of revelation; as Norris rightly states, “Gregory would be reticent to think of the Bible as a totally separate component in theology, but what it says is of utmost importance; no position should ever be taken without scriptural support. Yet the totality of revelation should be involved in the interpretation of each text.” \(^{19}\)


\(^{17}\) Hanson, *The Search*, 708.

\(^{18}\) Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, x.

Fortunately, Gregory has been given more positive attention by recent scholarship. For example, beside the detailed work by Beeley mentioned above, Donald Winslow’s study of Gregory’s soteriology has demonstrated the dynamic nature of Gregory’s theology. 20 Frederick Norris has published a commentary on the *Five Theological Orations*. 21 John McGuckin is not hesitant to display his sympathy with and respect for Gregory in his extensive works, because he regards this ancient Father as “the chief architect for the classical doctrine of Trinity.” 22 Among many of his works on Gregory, McGuckin’s biography of this Father provides comprehensive information about his life and theology. 23 Also, there are considerable numbers of scholarly articles published by several authors within these thirty years, and I will consult and dialogue with them as needed. However, the aim of this study is to focus on the primary sources and let them speak for themselves. I have examined Gregory’s letters, poems, and orations, as well as Basil’s letters and treatises; however, the discussion will be mainly based on Gregory’s *Five Theological Orations (Or. 27-31)*, 24 the Epiphany series (*Or. 38-40*), and Basil’s *De Spiritu Sancto*. 25

The first chapter provides a brief overview of Gregory’s life and his association with Basil. The aim of this chapter is to highlight Gregory’s friendship with Basil, as well as these Fathers’ conflicts and theological differences. Since the lives of those two Fathers reveal their personalities and concerns, which naturally impacted their theologies, it is important to be acquainted with the context of their time and the events in their careers.

The second chapter deals with the concept of knowledge of God in Gregory and Basil. However, a necessary task of determining what “God [Θεός]” meant for each Father precedes the main discussion. There is also a need for distinguishing two kinds of knowledge of God in Gregory and Basil: that God is, and what God is. According to these Fathers, the latter kind of knowledge is impossible by logical inference alone. Therefore, Basil introduces the Church as a

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24 Although the authenticity of the last three of the *Five theological Orations* has sometimes been challenged, Fredrick Norris has demonstrated the reliability of the traditional view that supports Gregory’s authorship. Fredrick Norris, “The Authenticity of Gregory Nazianzen’s Five Theological Orations,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, 39.4 [Dec. 1985]: 331-339.
25 For the list of translations used in this thesis, see p. iv.
means to obtain the knowledge, and Gregory appeals to his theory of *theosis*. A considerable amount of discussion on *theosis* is found in this chapter, since it is crucial in understanding Gregory’s concept of God’s revelation.

The third chapter examines Gregory and Basil’s perception of the revelation of God. Both Gregory and Basil acknowledge that knowledge of God is possible only by God’s act of divine revelation. For Basil, this revelation comes in the forms of Scripture and the Church tradition. According to him, those means of revelation are congruent with each other, because of their common origin, and are both equally valid and authoritative. Gregory perceives revelation as a gradual process in terms of relationship. This process is experienced as *theosis*, on a personal level: but on a corporate level, it manifests itself as the concept of progressive revelation. This concept is often considered a very unique feature in Gregory; however, the function of it within Gregory’s thought system must be properly recognised, and the fourth chapter addresses that issue.

In light of what has been discovered in the previous chapters, the final chapter discusses Gregory and Basil’s treatment of the Bible in relation to their pneumatologies. In order to defend their doctrines as scriptural, these Fathers need to place the Bible in a certain context, in which the scriptures can be interpreted properly. This attempt to set a context involves the task of accounting for the silence of Scripture concerning the Spirit’s divinity. Basil appeals to the distinction between dogma and proclamation, arguing that some teachings of the Church are intentionally hidden. Relying on the obscurity of Scripture and the Church’s secret tradition, Basil concludes that the Spirit is “divine.” However, Gregory believes that his pneumatology is a clear teaching of the Bible, and he uses his theory of progressive revelation to explain the late recognition of the Spirit’s divinity. In this way, Gregory is able to make a bold claim that the Spirit is God.

In conclusion, I will argue that Gregory’s pneumatology is not a mere reproduction of Basil’s theology with more clarity, but is founded on his understanding of knowledge and revelation of God, which significantly differs from that of Basil. However, this is not to claim that one is superior to the other. Gregory and Basil worked together to achieve the common goal of defending their faith. In a way, then, their differences eventually strengthened their bonds and teamwork as the “Cappadocian Fathers.”
Chapter 1
Life of Gregory

Gregory was born in a wealthy family in 329 or 330. His father, Gregory the elder, and his mother, Nonna, celebrated the birth of their son, not realising how much this boy would impact the history of Christianity together with two other gifted Cappadocian Fathers: Basil of Caesarea, whose first cry was heard around the same time as our Gregory, and his brother Gregory of Nyssa. The deep and complex relationship between Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil began quite early in their careers. John McGuckin argues that the two Fathers probably met in Cappadocian Caesarea as they studied rhetoric when they were merely fifteen or sixteen years old. However, their intimate friendship did not flourish until they were reunited in Athens.

Before Athens and after Cappadocian Caesarea, Gregory embarked on a study tour in Palestinian Caesarea and Alexandria in 347. Both places, of course, bore the marks of Origen who was also the teacher of Gregory Thaumaturgos, the regional hero of Cappadocia. Origen’s library was in Palestinian Caesarea, and Alexandria, at the time of Gregory’s visit, was still home to great theologians such as Athanasius and Didymus the Blind, both of whom actively defended the Nicene faith and also produced famous treatises on the Holy Spirit. Immersed in this academic and theological environment, the desire of the Cappadocian youth to study increased, and he sailed to Athens in 348.

While in Athens, Gregory studied philosophy and rhetoric with other young men, and he also got baptised there. However, the most important and memorable event for Gregory in the great Hellenistic city was certainly the bonding with Basil, whom he considered his soul-mate, and

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26 Throughout this thesis, I am following the chronology of Gregory’s life as presented in the detailed work of John McGuckin, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2001) unless noted otherwise. The chronological synopsis of the life of Gregory is found on pages vii-xi.

27 McGuckin, Saint Gregory, 36.


29 As Gregory does not mention that he has met either of them, he probably did not have the opportunity to see those great fathers in person.

whom he called “the great ornament of our generation.” This brilliant young man proved to be no ordinary friend, and Gregory described his relationship with Basil in his poem:

We had all things in common, and a single soul, as it were, bound together our two distinct bodies. But above all it was God, of course, and a mutual desire for higher things that drew us to each other. As a result we reached such a pitch of confidence that we revealed the depth of our hearts, becoming ever more united in our yearning. There is no such solid bond of union as thinking the same thoughts.

These lines were composed after Gregory experienced some serious disappointments and bitter conflict with his friend, then bishop of Caesarea. However, the words expressed in this poem suggest that Gregory’s fondness for Basil had never faded. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that the portrait of the two friends as possessing identical thoughts and minds is modified and idealised by Gregory, since their opinions differed significantly at least concerning the precise argument about the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Gregory was conscious of this too, as we shall see below.

Although Gregory paints his friendship with Basil as being beautiful and perfect, the image started to crack when Basil abandoned Gregory and left for a trip to study monastic life in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria with Eustathius of Sebaste in 355. Both Gregory and Basil later came to regard this association of Basil with Eustathius regrettable and embarrassing, a hindrance to Basil’s career. Basil even contributed as a theological advisor to the Synod of Ancyra summoned by Basil of Ancyra in 356; however, within ten years, the Caesarean Basil became anxious to alienate himself from the group associated with his namesake and even from his once respected mentor Eustathius, whom he came to consider as a disciple of Arius and teacher of Aetius, whose follower was Basil’s lifelong enemy Eunomius of Cyzicus.

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31 Gr.Naz. Vita. v.225 (PG 37, 1045A).
33 Therefore, once Eustathius was regarded as anti-Nicene, the memory of Basil’s association with him was consciously ignored by the Nicene party, as McGuckin describes, “The strategy adopted by both Basil and Gregory Nazianzen (and thus the circle of theologians following them, including Gregory Nyssa) was to relegate Eustathios to a damnatio memoriae.” McGuckin, Saint Gregory, 93.
34 Basil, Ep. 244.3.18f. (Courtonne iii, 77). Although the subject throughout this letter is Eustathius, Basil does not even mention his name. Defending his own relationship with Apollinarius, Basil attacks Eustathius and writes, “let him who is accusing me because of Apollinarius answer to us for Arius, his own teacher, and for Aetius, his own pupil.” Ep. 263 also contains Basil’s account of Eustathius’ life. Here, Basil claims that Eustathius “was formerly a disciple of Arius.” Ep. 263.3.3 (Courtonne iii, 123).
Basil of Ancyra, whose associates are now called “Homoiousians”, claimed that the Son was “like in substance [ὁμοίως] with the Father.” Basil of Caesarea was attracted to this position at first indicates his initial hesitation to use ‘homoousios’ even for the Son. Although he eventually came to affirm “the sound doctrine in which the Son is acknowledged to be consubstantial [ὁμοοόσιος] with the Father,” Basil never applied this hallmark of the Nicene faith to the Holy Spirit, who, according to Basil, was to be only “numbered with Them and adored with equal honor.” This reluctance to call the Spirit homoousios with the Father and the Son is understandable considering Basil’s earlier affinity with the “Homoiousian” party. That Basil could not readily accept the non-scriptural term either in his Christology or Pneumatology is evident from his initial inclination toward “Homoiousian” theology and his lasting hesitation to apply ‘homousios’ to the Spirit. This ambivalent attitude is probably rooted in his method of finding justification for teachings not obvious from the Bible, as will be discussed in the following chapters.

After Basil departed Athens, Gregory remained there for another three years until he decided to go back to Cappadocia to his father, now bishop of Nazianzus. Gregory occasionally visited Basil in a monastic community in Pontus at this time, and their friendship continued. Meanwhile, the heated church politics and theological discussions (or rather confusions) concerning the Trinitarian language also continued. In 359, a council was held in Constantinople which, under the favour of Constantius, produced a creed commonly known as the Creed of Nice, which confessed that the Son was “like [ὁμοιον]” the Father. However, Constantius died in 361 and was succeeded by Julian the Apostate. With this enthronement of a non-Christian emperor, the bishops who had been exiled under the reign of Constantius were allowed to return to their sees. This incident caused unavoidable confusions and conflicts between the returnees and their opponent bishops who had occupied their places in their absence. It was in the midst of this unstable situation that Gregory the elder ordained his son priest. However, just like the situation that surrounded him, the younger Gregory’s mind...

35 Epiphanius, Panarion, 73.9.6. in Karl Holl ed. and trans., Epiphanius, Band 3 (Leipzig: J.C.Hinrichs’ Buchhandlung, 1933), 280.
36 Basil, Ep. 90.2.22f (Courtonne i, 196). A letter to Pope Damasus, before Easter 372.
37 Ibid.
38 This creed does not contain ‘homousios’ but confesses that the Son is “like the Father according to the scriptures (ὁμοιον τῷ γεννησαντι αὐτὸν πατρὶ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς).” Athanasius, De Synods. 30 (PG 26, 747A).
was far from being settled and resolute. He was deeply grieved by his father’s “Tyranny,” and not being able to bear the pressure, he fled at once to Basil, only to be persuaded to return home and assume the position to assist his aged father. This visit to Basil, nevertheless, was not all meaningless since the two friends may have composed the *Philocalia* of Origen at this point.\(^{40}\)

In 362, only a year after Gregory’s reluctant ordination, Basil was also ordained priest in Caesarea under Bishop Eusebius.\(^{41}\) Now that Gregory and Basil, both being competent theologians, were installed in the clerical order, they were destined to engage in complex theological debates and vicious political struggles in the Church. At this important time when the two Cappadocian Fathers were beginning their public careers, the influential Synod of Alexandria was summoned by Athanasius, who had returned from exile after the death of the hostile emperor Constantius. Athanasius attempted to reconcile the Homoousian and “Homoiousian” parties in order to combat “Arianism.” Since Gregory and Basil both considered Athanasius as their spiritual hero, this synod and its intention probably had a determining impact on the direction the newly ordained priests were to follow.

At the time of the Cappadocian Fathers, the Church was greatly influenced by the political movements of the day. When the emperor Jovian died in 364, Valentinian, a Homoousian of a kind, reigned in the western part of the empire, while the East was ruled by Valens, a ferocious opponent of the Nicene theology who exiled Athanasius in 365. The situation was not favourable to the Nicene party at all, but Gregory and Basil strove to defend their faith, and Basil composed his *Against Eunomius* in 364. Eunomius, who, in the eyes of his opponents, had little regard for tradition and claimed to have discovered the very substance of God,\(^{42}\) was a chief enemy of both Basil and Gregory. However, Gregory did not compose his version of

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40 Neil McLynn strongly argues against that Gregory and Basil compiled the *Philocalia*, because the traditional view attributing the work to the two Cappadocian Fathers rely solely on Gregory’s letter 115, in which Gregory mentions the *Philocalia* but does not claim that he edited it. Neil McLynn, “What was the ‘Philocalia of Origen’?” in *Christian Politics and Religious Culture in Late Antiquity*, X (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 32. Brian Daley also points out the weakness of the traditional view. Nevertheless, he does not see much importance in the recent denial of the editorship of Gregory and Basil; since the fact remains that they possessed and used the *Philocalia*. Brian E. Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 9. It is not within the scope of this study to examine the problem, however, the present study will follow Daley in believing that Gregory and Basil had a great interest in and access to the *Philocalia*.


42 Basil, *Eun.* 1.3.1-7; 1.12.1-3 (*SC* 299, 156; 212).
Against Eunomius until 379. This swiftness of Basil compared to his friend shows that Basil was much more enthusiastic about involving himself in the ecclesial struggles. In fact, he finally managed to have himself elected Bishop of Caesarea in 371.43

While Basil was busy maneuvering himself through church politics, Gregory’s life in Nazianzus was marked by grief with the consecutive deaths of his brother and sister, as he sorrowfully exclaimed, “disaster followed disaster.”44 The most serious disaster for Gregory, though, was not the loss of his beloved family members. What wounded him most severely was the betrayal by his alter ego. Regardless of Basil’s true intention and inner feelings, Gregory clearly perceived his friend’s action as a betrayal when Basil appointed him bishop of a desolate place, a place which Gregory gloomily described:

It’s without water or vegetation, not quite civilized, a thoroughly deplorable and cramped little village. There’s dust all around the place, the din of wagons, laments, groans, tax officials, implements of torture, and public stocks. The population consists of casuals and vagrants. Such was my church of Sasima.45

Basil sent his friend to such a place only to secure his own political power, which was facing a possible threat by Valens’ decree in 372 to divide the civil boundaries of Cappadocia. Although Gregory never followed Basil’s order, he still complained later that his friend “was to prove another father to me, and a far more burdensome one. My real father, even though he tyrannized over me, I must shelter; but no such duty holds in his case, where friendship actually brought injury instead of deliverance from trouble.”46 Under the “tyranny” of his “real father” and the father-like friend, Gregory lamented the sorry state of his being but eventually decided to stay in Nazianzus to assist his father as an auxiliary bishop.

Meanwhile, Basil continued to clarify and articulate his theological stance, formally alienating himself from his teacher Eustathius in 373, because the theology of the latter had fallen into suspicion in the eyes of many Nicene bishops. In the course of this painful separation, Basil’s attempt to win Eustathius over to the Nicene party failed miserably, although he once succeeded in having Eustathius sign a statement of faith which was designed to assure the orthodoxy of the

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43 There is a debate about the date of Basil’s election. Depending on when one places Basil’s death, the election date varies from 368 to 371. I follow the traditional dating which supposes Basil’s death on 1 January 380, which makes the beginning of his nine-year career as bishop to be 371. For a precise discussion on this topic, see Vaggione, *Eunomius of Cyzicus*, 302ff.


latter. This statement of faith was meant to present the Nicene faith as clearly as possible.
However, Basil recognised that the Creed did not contain any precise argument about the Holy Spirit. As he wrote, “the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit is laid down very briefly as requiring no discussion, because at that time this question had not yet been stirred up, but the concept of it remained unchallenged in the souls of the faithful.” Basil’s awareness of the need for more detailed and well founded pneumatology is evident, since, in the same year, he wrote De Spiritu Sancto, a letter to his friend Amphilochius on the teaching of the not yet thoroughly discussed issue of the Spirit of God.

Basil composed this treatise to defend his use of a doxology which attributed the glory “to the Father, with the Son together with the Holy Spirit” instead of the traditional “to the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.” By using the preposition “with [σὸν],” it must be noted, Basil was not explicitly stating that the Spirit is homousios with the Father, since he did not use the term in regard to the Spirit anywhere in his writings. What he meant by “with” is merely that “the Holy Spirit is ranked with [σὸν το ξιν] the Father.” This avoidance of the controversial terminology probably indicates not his hesitation to offend the Macedonians as Hildebrand argues, but the actual conviction of Basil’s pneumatology.

In fact, the bishop of Caesarea does not seem to have perceived the Spirit as God in the same way as he perceived the Father and the Son as God. All he affirms is that “if you are in him [the Spirit], you will in no way separate him from God,” and that “the Holy Spirit is…far from created nature.” He does not even argue that the Spirit is to be worshipped with the Father and

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47 Basil, Ep. 125.3.4-7 (Courtonne ii, 33).
48 According to Hildebrand, this letter consists of two separate parts written in different years. 2.4-8.21 and 25.58-29.75 were composed in 373 and 9.22-24.57 in 375. St Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit, trans. Stephen Hildebrand (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2011), 22.
49 Basil, Spir. 1.3.1-11 (SC 17, 109-110).
50 Georges Florovsky argues that “the ὁμοιόστος was for St. Basil an equivalent of the ὁμοούσιος,” Georges Florovsky, Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View, The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, vol. 1 (Belmont: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987), 85. However, this view seems unlikely, considering that even though Basil insists on ὁμοούσιος of the Son, he never uses the term for the Spirit, even when he was asked by Gregory to explain himself. If he did mean ὁμοούσιος, he could have easily used that term to clear any doubts about his belief in the divinity of the Holy Spirit.
51 Basil, Spir. 10.25.18-19 (SC 17, 151).
52 Hildebrand believes that the hidden agenda of Spir. was to persuade the Macedonians of the Spirit’s divinity. Therefore, he argues that Basil consciously avoided the use of homousios in order not to offend the Macedonians. Hildebrand, On the Holy Spirit, 22-23. Studer also assumes in the same manner that Basil avoided the controversial term for “the fear of encouraging once more the suffering and misery which the debate concerning the homousios had inflicted upon the Church.” Studer, Trinity and Incarnation, 151.
53 Basil, Spir. 26.64.13-14 (SC 17, 231).
54 Basil, Spir. 18.45.30-31 (SC 17, 195).
the Son. Therefore, despite his insistence on the inseparability of the Spirit from the other two persons of the Trinity, Basil is less than successful in articulating how and in what sense the Holy Spirit is united with the Father and the Son.

This uncertainty in Basil’s pneumatology was soon detected by others, and Gregory of Nazianzus wrote him a letter in the same year 373. In an attempt to avoid a direct admonition, Gregory recounted the words of a visitor instead of stating his own opinion. According to Gregory, someone came to his church after attending the festival of the Martyr Eupsychius in Caesarea, where he heard the preaching of Basil. The guest had witnessed that Basil spoke “most beautifully and perfectly upon the Godhead of the Father and the Son, as hardly anyone else could speak.” However, he angrily added, “he slurred over the Spirit.” Although this traveler praised Gregory for upholding the Spirit’s divinity, he criticised Basil because he “hints obscurely, and as it were, merely suggests the doctrine, but does not openly speak out the truth; flooding people’s ears with more policy than piety, and hiding his duplicity by the power of his eloquence.”

Gregory tried his best not to appear offensive and told Basil that he had defended his friend and sent away the accusers. However, Gregory also demanded an explicit explanation from Basil, again in an indirect manner, by asking, “do you O divine and sacred head, instruct me how far I ought to go in setting forth the Deity of the Spirit; and what words I ought to use, and how far to use reserve; that I may be furnished against opponents.” However, this rhetorical strategy that Gregory used to disguise himself did not prevent Basil from perceiving the true intention of the letter.

The response from Basil demonstrates that he was greatly distressed and annoyed at his truest friend lending his ears to the words of slanderers. Dismayed, the Caesarean bishop claimed

55 Basil only states that “in worship the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son.” Basil, Spir. 26.64.11-12 (SC 17, 231). Interestingly, Basil quotes Origen’s claim, interpreting it to mean that the Spirit is to be worshipped: “He [Origen], I think in the sixth book of his expositions on the Gospel of John, clearly indicated that the Spirit is to be worshipped. He wrote, ‘washing with water is a symbol of the cleansing of the soul, that has been well washed of all the filth from wickedness; nonetheless, in itself it is the origin and source of all graces for him who hands himself over to the Godhead of the adorable Trinity through the power of the invocations.’” Basil, Spir. 29.73.6-9 (SC 17, 249). However, nowhere else in his writings does Basil seem to indicate explicitly in his own words that the Holy Spirit is to be worshipped.

56 Gr.Naz., Ep. 58.7.3-6 (Gallay i, 75).

57 Gr.Naz., Ep. 58.8.14-17 (Gallay i, 75).


59 Basil, Ep. 71.1.14-17 (Courtonne, i 167).
that the accusations made against him were “nonsense” and urged Gregory to “dismiss these men from your mind.” However, one cannot help but notice that Basil did not actually answer the request of his friend. Although Basil could have defended himself with a brief explanation, the letter ends with a somewhat evasive statement: “to end the slanders, I have no leisure at present to give an answer concerning them.” However, it seems that neither “at present” nor at a later time did Basil have any intention of answering the question, since he did not address the specific issue even in the second part of De Spiritu Sancto written in 375.

Thus, the incident in Nazianzus recorded in Gregory’s letter and the nature of Basil’s response contradict Gregory’s later testimony. In his funeral oration for Basil, Gregory asserted: “That he [Basil], no less than any other, acknowledged that the Spirit is God, is plain from his often having publicly preached this truth, whenever opportunity offered, and eagerly confessed it when questioned in private.” In reality, Basil did not explicitly call the Spirit God nor did he affirm that He was homousios with the Father even in his private letters. Whether or not Basil confessed these pneumatological statements orally in person is impossible to determine. However, the overenthusiasm of Gregory to defend Basil seems to raise suspicion about the former’s claim. Moreover, Gregory argues that the unsatisfactory pneumatology of Basil was caused by his pastoral concern to maintain peace within the Church; thus admitting that Basil never expressed the same belief on the Spirit as Gregory did in his Five Theological Orations.

Although the Church was full of theological disputations, including pneumatological issues, and political struggles, Gregory did not wish to actively involve himself in the ecclesial strife.

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60 Basil, Ep. 71.1.27 (Courtonne i, 167).
61 Basil, Ep. 71.2.7 (Courtonne i, 167).
62 Basil, Ep. 71.2.29-30 (Courtonne i, 168).
63 Kei Yamamura defends Basil and states, “Basil’s silence is indeed educational…it is based on the divine oikonomia of philoanthropia and discrimination.” Kei Yamamura, “Development of the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit in Patristic Philosophy: St Basil and St Gregory of Nyssa,” St Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 18.1 [1974]: 16. However, the fact Basil did not express that the Spirit is God even in the letters addressed to his close friends indicates that Basil’s silence regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit seems not so much an intended strategy as it is a natural consequence of his uncertainty about the issue. In this regard, Beeley tries to attribute Basil’s silence to Origenism, writing, “Basil’s famous “economy” on the divinity of the Spirit was therefore less a judicious exercise of caution for the sake of ecclesiastical peace than a specific, and by the 370s an especially reticent, form of Origenism.” Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 98. Also, Meredith argues that Basil’s hesitation to admit the full divinity of the Spirit is caused by “an imperfect (or barely existent), awareness of the role played by the Holy Spirit in the work of creation.” Anthony Meredith, “The Pneumatology of the Cappadocian Fathers and the Creed of Constantinople.” Irish Theological Quarterly 48 [1981]: 205. This analysis of Meredith is related to my argument about how Basil perceives the world to be consist of “Divinity” and creation, while the dichotomy for Gregory is “God” and creation.
64 Gr.Naz., Or. 43, 69.1-4 (SC 384, 278).
65 Gr.Naz., Or. 43, 68.34-46 (SC 384, 278).
Therefore, after the deaths of his father and his mother in 374, Gregory retired to a monastic convent in Seleucia from 375 to 378. However, when the anti-Nicene emperor Valens was killed in a battle in 378 and was succeeded by Theodosius, a Nicene emperor, in 379, the Church was to experience yet another radical change of direction, and Gregory was not free from its influences. Although, in the same year, the Nicene party suffered from the death of Basil, a great advocate of their cause, they seized the opportunity to act freely under the reign of the new emperor, and Meletius the bishop of Antioch called a council in his city. This council summoned Gregory to come to Constantinople where most of the population, including its bishop Demophilus, was anti-Nicene and still under the heavy influence of paganism.66

Gregory’s task was to serve a small Nicene community in the capital city. Some space was provided for him and his church on the property of his cousin Theodosia. “The church of the Anastasia” was the name Gregory gave to his newly dedicated space for worship, and Gregory immediately began his theological campaign there. He produced a fair number of orations within a year, and he also delivered his famous *Five Theological Orations* at the church of the Anastasia in 380.67 That the party of Demophilus felt threatened by Gregory’s vigorous effort to advance the Nicene cause is evident from their fierce attack on Gregory, even to the point of stoning him.68 However, Gregory did not waver, and he continued to preach his Trinitarian theology according to his conviction, willing to suffer the consequences.

Unlike Basil, Gregory’s presentation of the Trinity and the consubstantiality of all three persons are clear, precise, and unmistakable. No one could have complained about Gregory for being vague when he confidently claimed, “What then? Is the Spirit God? Certainly. *Is he of the same

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66 The city of Constantinople, at the time of Gregory’s coming, was slowly being Christianised but was still largely pagan. This environment is reflected in Gregory’s comparing of Christian baptism and the initiation rites of the Greek religions, which he describes as “nonsense, dark invention of demons and fabrications of a demon-possessed mind, assisted by time and deceived by myth.” Gr.Naz., Or. 39.3.4ff (SC 358,150ff). On the gradual Christianisation of Constantinople in the late-fourth century to the fifth century, see Oliver Nicholson, “Constantinople: Christian City, Christian Landscape,” in *The Making of Christian Communities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mark F. Williams (London: Anthem Press, 2005), 27-47. According to Nicholson, there are three signs of Christianisation of Constantinople: monastic movement, occurrences of regular processions, and transferring of relics to the capital city. The earliest record of a Christian procession dates from 396, and the relics of Timothy, Andrew, and Luke were transferred to the Church of the Holy Apostles in 356–7. In the fifth century, “monks and monasteries became a powerful force in the formation of a distinctive Christian landscape in and around the city of Constantinople.” Nicholson, “Constantinople,” 31.


substance? Yes, if he is God.” 69 Because of this clear statement of Gregory, McGuckin calls him
“the least traditionalist theologian the Constantinopolitans have ever heard.” 70 Moreover, while
his friend remained ambiguous about whether or not the Spirit should be worshipped, 71 since
Gregory fully recognised the divinity of the Holy Spirit, he did not hesitate to state, “So, come
now, let us put our confidence in the Holy Spirit they dishonor but we worship
[προσκυνομένον].” 72 What needs to be discussed, then, is the reason why Gregory could
express his Trinitarian theology with such assurance while Basil could never quite reach that
point. In the following chapters, the cause of Gregory’s pneumatology, which expanded beyond
the “traditionalist” expressions, will be investigated. However, let us briefly turn to the rest of
Gregory’s life first.

When Emperor Theodosius entered the capital city, the choice laid out for the “Arian” bishop
Demophilus was either to consent to the Nicene party or to be exiled. Rather than recanting his
conviction, Demophilus decided to be exiled. Our Gregory, then, was the most likely candidate
for the empty see, and the new bishop was properly installed at the beginning of the Council of
Constantinople to the church in the Holy Apostles. 73 However, Gregory was no expert politician,
and he could not remain in the see for long. In fact, he lasted as archbishop for a little less than a
year. 74 His career as archbishop ended when he was appointed president of the council of
Constantinople after the sudden death of Meletius in 381. Being bishop of Constantinople was a
difficult enough task for Gregory, let alone leading a council full of groups with opposing ideas,
each one eager to fulfill its own agenda. Gregory was pressured to resign in the midst of
political disputations, and his pneumatology was not properly reflected in the creed which
resulted from the council. 75

70 McGuckin, Saint Gregory, 244.
72 Gr.Naz., Or. 29.1.10 (SC 250, 176). Also see Or. 31.28.2 (SC 250, 330).
73 Cyril Mango has written an intriguing study on the history of the Church of the Holy Apostles. Cyril Mango,
“Constantine’s Mausoleum and the Translation of Relics,” in Studies on Constantinople (Hampshire: Variorum,
74 Gregory was installed as bishop on November 27, 380, and he left Constantinople in June 381. McGuckin, Saint
Gregory, 327, 366.
75 Concerning the development of the creed known as Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed (C.), J.N.D. Kelly has
famously argued that the faith of Nicaea or “the faith, symbol of the 318 fathers” was not necessarily applied solely
to Nicene Creed in its pure authentic form, but it could refer to a local creed which was Nicene in its general
character. Then, the council of Constantinople at one point endorsed and used C. but it was not intended to be a
new creed. C. was not composed by the council, but was probably already in use in liturgy (baptism), and was
modified to be acceptable to all parties. C. was regarded simply as an affirmation of the Nicene Creed. J.N.D. Kelly,
After Gregory left the great city of Constantinople, disappointed but somewhat relieved, he returned home to Nazianzus and served at his father’s church. Being away from the center of the ecclesial turmoil, he could finally concentrate on what he truly wished to dedicate himself to: composition of poems, letters, and theological orations. From 381 to 387, though his health was failing rapidly, Gregory continued to produce his literary works. Then, in 390, Gregory’s earthly life ended, but his legacy was carried on by his great-nephew Nicobulos and others, who edited and published the writings of *the Theologian*, as Gregory was later known, for future generations to enjoy and treasure.

As has been shown above, Gregory’s life took place in the midst of theological upheaval. Although he seems to have had an insecure and less assertive personality than Basil as far as church-politics was concerned, he was never shy about articulating his theological conviction. In fact, in regard to pneumatology, Gregory was more explicit and confident about the divinity of the Holy Spirit than his friend. Therefore, in order to examine the foundation of Gregory’s steadfast pneumatology, the next chapter will investigate his concept of the knowledge of God.
Chapter 2
Knowledge of God

1 Θεός in Gregory, Θεός in Basil

“God,” though a common term in many religions, carries various connotations. Even within Christianity, the definition of the word and the mental picture it creates within the believers have gone through some shifts in emphasis or have changed drastically at times. For example, the grandfather-like, all-loving, all-forgiving, all-embracing, and very personal image of “God” many people tend to have today is distinct from how Gregory and Basil perceived “God” in the fourth century. While the Fathers would not have denied God’s loving and forgiving character, “God” for them was first and foremost the “Creator” of the world.

Gregory calls God “the creative and sustaining cause of all,”76 and Basil also notes that He is “the maker of all creation, the ever perfect.”77 This concept of “God” as the creator of all things is doubtlessly biblical, and the Church, even today, believes in this idea in one way or another; that is to say, the role of a “Creator” can be understood differently depending on individuals’ interpretations of the biblical account of creation in light of their scientific or philosophical assumptions. For Gregory and Basil, who were influenced by the Greek philosophy of their day, the idea of “God” as “Creator” meant that He was “the first cause.”

Therefore, not only does Gregory use the phrase “the primary cause [τῆς πρώτης αἰτίας]”78 for God, but he also states that “nothing is prior to God to be his mover [κεκινηκός],”79 applying a clearly Aristotelian concept to his theology.

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76 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.6.1f (SC 250, 110).
77 Basil, Spir. 8.20.16 (SC 17, 142). Also see Ep. 235.1.14f (Courtonne iii, 44), where Basil writes to Amphilochius “God is the Creator of all the world.”
78 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.13.25 (SC 250, 128) There has been much discussion on Gregory’s understanding of the term αἰτία. Norris notes that “On the one hand he [Gregory] can assert that the Father has no cause while the Son and the Spirit have a cause. On the other hand he can equate ‘the primal cause’ not with the Father, but with ‘the Godhead.’” Norris, Faith gives fullness, 45. Also, Meijering acknowledges the same problem and judges that Gregory’s use of the term is arbitrary because Gregory, according to Meijering, has unsuccessfully tried to combine Athanasian doctrine and the Neo-Platonic philosophy. E.P. Meijering, God Being History (Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company, 1975), 111ff, esp. n.43. However, T.A. Noble defends Gregory and argues that the seeming arbitrariness is an intended paradox. Noble establishes his point by stating that Gregory’s αἰτίας and ἀρχή refer to the Father, while ἡ πρῶτη αἰτία is reserved for the Godhead as One. T.A. Noble, “Paradox in Gregory Nazianzen’s Doctrine of the Trinity,” in Studia Patristica 27, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1993), 94-99. Yet still, in the same year, John P. Egan argued that, in Or. 31.14, “τῆν πρώτην αἰτίαν” refers to the Father. John P. Egan, “Primal Cause and Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen’s Oration 31.14,” in Studia Patristica 27, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1993), 21-28. Egan also responds to Noble’s argument and asserts that Gregory sometimes uses even αἰτίας and αἰτία synonymously. J.P.
Both Gregory and Basil, then, agree that “God” is the primary cause of this world. However, while Gregory enunciates that “When I say ‘God,’ [Θεόν] I mean Father and Son and Holy Spirit,” thus implying the primary cause to be God the Trinity, Basil seems to limit the concept to the Father. For instance, in explaining the meaning of hypostasis to his brother, Basil denotes that “the supreme God [Θεός] alone has a certain special mark of His person by which He is known, namely, that He is the Father and subsists from no other principle [αὐτίας].” It is true that Gregory, too, acknowledges the order within the Trinity when he writes, “from the source [ἀπ’ ἀρχής], the Unity changes into Duality until it stops at Trinity. By this, we mean the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a serene, non-temporal, incorporeal way, the Father is parent [γεννητωρ] of the ‘offspring’ and originator [προβόλεως] of the ‘emanation.’”

However, in the case of Gregory, even though the Father is sometimes called the cause [ἀρχή] of the Godhead, “the primary cause” [τῆς πρωτης αὐτίας] refers to the Trinity as a whole. 

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Egan, “αὐτίας/‘Author’, αὐτίας/‘Cause’ and ἀρχή/‘Origin’: Synonyms in Selected Text of Gregory Nazianzen,” in Studia Patristica 32, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1997), 102-107. McGuckin’s comment seems to confuse the argument even more, when he writes, “From antiquity, Latin commentators failed to sustain Gregory’s explicit distinction between ἀρχή and αὐτίας which he so regularly applied.” McGuckin does not expound on this point, thus the difference between those two vocabularies is uncertain. J.A. McGuckin, “‘Perceiving Light from Light in Light’ (Oration 31.3) The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian,” The Greek Theological Review 39 [1994]: 11-12. Contrarily, Beeley appears to treat them equally. Christopher A. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus, 204. Nevertheless, even considering Egan’s argument in 1997, Noble’s conclusion about ἡ πρώτη αὐτία seems to remain partially true, since in three places in the Theological Orations where Gregory uses “the first cause,” he seems to refer to the Trinity rather than the Father: Or. 28.13.25; 28.31.20; 31.14.10 (SC 250, 128; 172; 302). However, while Gregory uses τῆς πρωτῆς αὐτίας and τὴν πρώτην αὐτίαν in 28.13.25 and 31.14.10 respectively, 28.31.20 reads πρῶτον αὐτίων; thus, Gregory seems to use αὐτίας and αὐτία interchangeably in combination with πρῶτος. Therefore, what is important for Gregory appears to be not the distinction between αὐτίας and αὐτία, but the presence of the adjective πρῶτος. When Gregory refers to “the primary cause,” then, whether αὐτίας or αὐτία, it seems to refer to God the Trinity rather than the Father. Moreover, that Gregory’s “primary cause” refers to “God” can be supported by two other passages. Or. 30.2.16 (SC 250, 228) reads, “no one can talk of the ‘cause of God [αὐτίαν Θεοῦ],’ and 31.33.2-4 (SC 250, 340), says, “nothing is prior to God [Θεοῦ] to be his mover—he is cause [αὐτία] of all and owns no prior cause [αὐτίαν],” both cases clearly implying that “God” is the “primary cause.” A more recent study of Richard Cross also supports my case. He has argued that the intent of Gregory’s causal language is not to emphasise the priority of the Father, but to highlight the indivisibility of the three persons. Richard Cross, “Divine Monarchy in Gregory of Nazianzus,” Journal of Early Christian Studies, 14.1 [2006]: 166. 

79 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.33.2f. (SC 250, 340).
80 Gr.Naz., Or. 38.8.14f (SC 358, 118).
81 Basil, Ep. 38.4.35-37 (Courtonne i, 85).
82 Gr.Naz., Or. 29.2.15 (SC 250, 180). I have substituted the first two sentences of Norris’s translation with my own. Norris, NPNF, and Gallay understand “ἀπ’ ἀρχής” as “eternally,” “from all eternity,” “depuis le commencement” respectively. However, “ἀπ’ ἀρχής” here can also be translated as “from the source,” referring to the Father, considering the context of the argument which discusses the order within the Trinity. This translation can be supported by Beeley, who translates “ἀπ’ ἀρχής” in Oration 25.16.17 (SC 284, 196) as “subject to [another] source.” Beeley, Gregory, 202.
83 See n. 78.
In contrast, Basil seems to claim that “the supreme God” without cause is the Father, emphasising the distinctiveness of the Father more than Gregory. In addition, the extent of pre-eminence Basil gives to the Father as the cause leads him to state that the Spirit “has His existence dependent on the Father as a principle [τὴς δὲ τοῦ Πατρὸς αἰτίας ἔξημένον ἐχει τὸ εἶναι].”\(^{84}\) Since Basil has drawn a sharp distinction among the persons of the Trinity, he immediately turns to defend its unity and writes,

> but, regarding the attribute of infinity and incomprehensibility, and that of being uncreated [ὀκτίστως] and of being circumscribed within no space, and in all other such attributes, there is no difference in the life-producing nature [φώσει]—I mean in the case of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit— but there is observed a certain constant and uninterrupted sharing in them.\(^{85}\)

It is significant that Basil regards “infinity,” “incomprehensibility,” “being uncreated,” and “being circumscribed within no space” merely as attributes of the nature of the three persons instead of understanding them as what it means to be “God.”

This idea may be part of the reason why Basil could not call the Spirit “God,” despite his repeated insistence that He cannot not be called creature.\(^{86}\) The contrast between Gregory and Basil is very interesting here, since the former thinks that “If he [the Spirit] is a substance [οὐσία], not the attribute of a substance, he must be taken either as a creature [κτίσμα] or as God [θεός],”\(^{87}\) while the dichotomy in the latter’s mind is not between creatures and God but between “divinity and creation [θεότητος τε καὶ κτίσεως].”\(^{88}\)

This important difference between Gregory and his friend partly explains why Gregory could articulate that the Spirit was God when Basil hesitated to do so. For the former, not being creature automatically meant that the Spirit was God, but for the latter, uncreated-ness only guaranteed that the Spirit was divine. In fact, Basil did not have trouble identifying the Spirit as sharing the divine nature with the Father; as he writes, “Now, the nature [φώσις] of the Father

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\(^{84}\) Basil, Ep. 38.4.25f (Courtonne i, 85).
\(^{85}\) Basil, Ep. 38.4.45-50 (Courtonne i, 85).
\(^{86}\) Basil, Spir. 9.22.14-17; 18.45.26-32 (SC 17, 145; 194f); Ep. 113.24-32; 114.33ff; 125.3.33ff; 140.2.30ff; 226.4.20 (Courtonne ii, 17, 19, 34, 62; iii, 28).
\(^{87}\) Gr.Naz., Or. 31.6. 13f (SC 250, 286).
\(^{88}\) Basil, Eun. 3.2.18 (SC 305, 152). See also Ep. 159.2.28f (Courtonne ii, 87), where Basil states, “the fact that a creature is distinct from the Divinity [θεότητος] needs no further explanation to those who are even a little familiar with the Scriptures.”
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is the same, and there is one Godhead [θεότητα].”

However, the term “God” remains reserved for the Father and for the Son who is homoousios with the Father.

Thus, while Gregory perceives the world to consist of “God” and creation, the division of the two realities for Basil stands between “Divinity” and creation. To determine the exact meaning of Basil’s “Divinity” is beyond the scope of this study; however, Basil’s idea helps highlight the uniqueness of Gregory’s theology. For Basil, because he draws the line between “Divinity” and creation, where precisely the boundary between “God” and contingent reality lies is unclear. Therefore, while the Holy Spirit is recognised as divine and uncreated, He is not called “God.” Moreover, Basil’s discussions about holiness reveal that even the divide between the Spirit, who is divine, and invisible spiritual beings, who are nonetheless created, is somewhat blurry.

When Basil contemplates the source of holiness for the Spirit and spiritual beings, he writes, “the Spirit…has a natural sanctity not received through grace but joined essentially to Him, whence also He has gained in a special manner the name of ‘Holy.’” Here, although the Spirit is said to possess holiness by nature, the emphasis is on how the Spirit gains holiness from His inseparable association with the Father and the Son, who themselves are Holy by nature. This explanation of Basil suggests a slightly different nuance from Gregory’s view, which recognises a more active and crucial role of the Spirit in the holiness of “God,” as we shall see below. In addition, Basil’s inclination to emphasise the hierarchical order within the Trinity is evident because he considers the Father as the cause or the origin of holiness, in which the Holy Spirit

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89 Basil, Ep. 210.4.28f (Courtonne ii, 194). Also see Spir. 13.30.29 (SC 17, 161), where Basil claims that “The Spirit, however, is ranked with God…on account of the communion of nature [σύνον με τον Θεόν].”

90 Basil upholds the Nicene faith and writes to Pope Damasus, “let that blessed dogma of the Fathers be spoken fearlessly among us, that dogma which confounds the hateful heresy of Arius and builds up the churches on the sound doctrine in which the Son is acknowledged to be consubstantial [ομοούσιος] with the Father, and the Holy Spirit is numbered with Them and adored with equal honor.” Ep. 90.2.19-24 (Courtonne i, 196). Basil is convinced that “the Son is in the Father, and the Father, in the Son. They have unity in the fact that the latter is whatever the former is and the former is whatever the latter is;” therefore, the Son can be called “God the Son.” Spir. 18.45.10ff (SC 17, 194).

91 Although “contingent” is an Aristotelian terminology, so Basil and Gregory, heavily influenced by the Platonic thought, would not have used it, the contrast between “uncaused reality” and “caused reality” is present in their thoughts, and the term can properly represent their idea about the created order, which depends on God’s ultimate reality.

92 Basil, Ep. 159.2.25ff (Courtonne ii, 87).
participates by nature. Basil writes, “the goodness and holiness by nature and the royal dignity reach from the Father, through the Only-begotten, to the Spirit.”

Moreover, when Basil discusses holiness of the spiritual beings, he writes, “it is through the Spirit that they receive their holiness.” Basil repeats this point in De Spiritu Sancto that spiritual beings are made holy by the Spirit. This argument seems to obscure the distinctions among God, Divinity, spiritual beings, and visible creations, because Basil appears to place the Spirit somewhere between the Holy God and holy spiritual beings. This obscurity is amplified even more when he writes, “the heavenly powers are not holy by nature; if it were so, they would not differ from the Holy Spirit.” In sum, then, for Basil, the Holy Spirit, who is uncreated and divine but not “God,” receives His holiness from His connection to God the Father and God the Son, while imparting His holiness to the spiritual beings, who are created but would have been the same as the Spirit had they possessed holiness by nature; obviously, this is very confusing. One would wonder whether the Spirit is closer to God or to spiritual beings, and if spiritual beings are closer to the divinity or to visible creation.

In contrast to this ambiguous idea of Basil, Gregory’s division between God and creation is lucid and clear-cut. Unlike Basil who describes the Spirit’s holiness in terms of His association with God the Father and the Son, Gregory recognises and stresses a more definite place of the Spirit in relation to God’s holiness. He writes, “what is deity if it is incomplete? Something is missing if it does not have Holiness, and how could it have Holiness without having the Holy Spirit? Either God’s holiness is independent of the Holy Spirit (and in that case I should like to be told what it is supposed to be) or if it is identical with the Holy Spirit, how, I ask, could it fail to be from the beginning…?” Therefore, though Basil and Gregory both realise that the Spirit possesses holiness by nature and not by grace as the created order does, Gregory seems to emphasise more than Basil the unity of holiness and the crucial place the Spirit holds within that unity.

Moreover, Gregory describes the relationship between “God” and spiritual beings with the imagery of light. He does not perceive the Holy Spirit as somehow crossing the border between

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93 Basil, Spir. 18.47.19ff (SC 17, 198).
94 Basil, Ep. 159.2.24 (Courtonne ii, 87).
95 Basil, Spir. 16.38.40f (SC 17, 177).
96 Beeley also detects this ambiguity of the Spirit’s position in Basil. See Beeley, “The Holy Spirit,” 95f.
97 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.4.5-9 (SC 250, 282).
the Divinity and spiritual beings, since he draws the boundary between “God” and Creation. For Gregory, “God” is clearly distinct from everything else, i.e. His creation, as he writes, “The highest light is God [Θεός], unapproachable and ineffable, neither grasped by the mind nor expressed in language. It illumines every reason-endowed nature…A second light is the angel, a kind of emanation or participation in the first light, toward which it inclines and by whose help it possesses illumination.” In this passage, even though Gregory sees angels as superior to human beings, angels are so only by their closeness to God who is the ultimate light; only God illumines, everything else is illumined by Him. Therefore, Gregory’s “God,” not only the Father or the Son but the Trinity as a whole, is completely separate from creation, and there is no reality other than God and creation; thus he writes, “not even the inventors of fabulous goat-stags could envisage a half-way being here, or anything that belonged to, or was composed out of, both sides.”

In sum, while both Gregory and Basil acknowledge two realms of reality, Gregory seems to have possessed a clearer understanding of where the crucial division lies between the two, perceiving God in this stark contrast between God and creation. However, Basil appears to have a more complex, if not confusing, vision of reality. “Divinity” and creation are the two realities in Basil’s mind, and this idea hinders him to articulate where the crucial boundary lies among the “visible creation,” “spiritual beings,” “Divinity,” and “God.” Therefore, the Holy Spirit is divine yet not specifically called God, while this term is reserved for the Father and the Son. In light of these concepts of God, we now turn to discuss what the knowledge of God means for Gregory and Basil.

2 Knowledge of God

Both Gregory and Basil realise that there are two kinds of knowledge of God: the knowledge of God’s existence and the knowledge of His being. Just as Gregory writes, “Conviction, you

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98 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.1-14 (SC 358, 204-206).
99 Gregory calls the human “a third light.” Or. 40.5.14 (SC 358, 206).
100 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.6.15ff (SC 250, 286).
101 Edgars Narkevics argues that “a general distinction between knowledge of “what something is” and belief “that it is”…is not a distinction between two types of knowledge, but between a certain type of knowledge and a certain type of belief.” Edgars Narkevics, “Outlining the Conception of God in Gregory’s Theological Orations,” in Gregory of Nazianzus—Images and Reflections, eds. Jostein Børtnes and Thomas Hägg (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2006), 92. However, neither Gregory nor Basil seems to distinguish “knowledge” and “belief” in such a way.
see, of a thing’s existence is quite different from knowledge of what it may be,” so also does Basil argue in his polemic against Eunomius, “Generally speaking, how much arrogance and pride would it take for someone to think he has discovered the very substance of God above all?...Let’s ask him from which source he claims to have comprehended it. So, then, from a common notion? But this tells us that God exists, not what God is.” Both Fathers consider this first kind of the knowledge of God both possible and evident. Therefore, Gregory confidently claims, “That God, the creative and sustaining cause of all, exists, sight and instinctive law inform us—sight, which lights upon things seen as nobly fixed in their courses, borne along in, so to say, motionless movement; instinctive law, which infers their author through the things seen in their orderliness.”

In this quotation, Gregory is not merely asserting that people can know that a certain divine being exists, as even pagans would not question the existence of god; instead, he is arguing that the existence of “God” in his sense can be known through the observation of natural order. This is because Gregory assumes that human reason derives from God and that the mind is the “copy [εἰκόνα]” which longs after the “pattern [ἀρχήν ζωής],” which is God himself. Therefore, Gregory presupposes that “every thinking being longs for God, the first cause.” However, this longing and search for God do not always lead humans to know God, since many diverge and worship visible objects when the search becomes too tiresome. Nevertheless, as long as the desire for God is guided by reason, Gregory is confident that one would discover Him from the observation of nature; therefore, after demonstrating his conviction in his own words, Gregory concludes, “Thus, God-derived reason, bound up, connected, with the whole of nature, man’s most ancient law, has led us up from things of sight to God.”

If God’s existence can be inferred from observation and reason, as Gregory claims, one need not be a Christian to have this knowledge of God. In fact, Basil would admit that even non-believers can have a knowledge that God exists. Therefore, he writes that “even if anyone says that

102 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.5.17-18 (SC 250, 110).
103 Basil, Eun. 1.12.1-9 (SC 299, 212).
104 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.6.1-3 (SC 250, 110).
105 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.17.6-7 (SC 250, 134). Gregory can be accused of relying too much on Platonism and Stoicism, but Norris defends the Theologian and writes, “Christians, educated in the philosophical milieu of late antiquity and engulfed in Scripture as Gregory was, needed little imagination to find parallels between philosophy and Scripture.” Norris, Faith gives fullness, 120f.
108 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.16.23ff (SC 250, 134).
knowledge begins before faith, we do not disagree...God is the Creator of all the world, but we are a part of the world, then God is also our Creator. Faith follows this knowledge.”

Intelligence alone, then, is enough to gain the knowledge of God’s existence, but, at the same time, such knowledge alone is not valuable unless it is followed by Christian faith and the worship of one true God.

What truly matters for Gregory and Basil, therefore, is knowledge beyond just that God is. This knowledge is necessary for human salvation, which Gregory in particular understands in close relation to the concept of divinisation. However, to those who may wish to gain that knowledge, Gregory’s words are less than encouraging, as he writes, “To know God is hard, to describe him impossible, as a pagan philosopher taught—subtly suggesting, I think, by the word ‘difficult’ his own apprehension, yet avoiding our test of it by claiming it was impossible to describe. No—to tell of God is not possible, so my argument runs, but to know him is even less possible.” The thought expressed in this passage has led some scholars to consider Gregory’s theology as apophatic. Likewise, Basil seems to take the same approach when he accuses his opponent Eunomius of claiming to have known the substance of God: “While the promised blessings stored up for us are beyond all human knowledge, and the peace of God surpasses all

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109 Basil, Ep. 235.1.9-16 (Courtonne iii, 44).
110 Graham A. Keith accuses Basil of claiming that “all that is needed for salvation is belief in his [God’s] reality,” thus establishing “a remote view of God.” Graham A. Keith, “Our Knowledge of God: The Relevance of the Debate between Eunomius and the Cappadocians,” Tyndale Bulletin 41.1 [1990]: 88. Keith’s judgment is misleading and seems to depend too much on a modern Protestant concept of faith, salvation, and the knowledge of God. While it is true that Basil, and Gregory for that matter, believed that a perfect knowledge of what God is impossible for humans, equating this idea to the content of faith and supposing that Basil thinks a belief in God’s existence is enough for salvation is anachronistic; Keith seems to be forgetting that the ancient father did not operate on the Protestant principle of “faith alone.” Moreover, the passage in Ep. 235 (n.109) clearly shows that Basil distinguished between mere knowledge of God’s existence and faith, which is based on that knowledge. In addition, Keith’s comment on Basil’s appeal to the traditional concept of God’s incomprehensibility also proves an unfair analysis of a 20th century scholar when he writes, “It is a pity that this ready-made answer precluded further investigation into what scripture means by the knowledge of God.” (Ibid.) Here again, Keith fails to recognise that Basil did not hold to the Protestant slogan, “Scripture alone.” Basil’s appeal to tradition is not a thoughtless strategy to refute Eunomius. Rather, his method is grounded in his understanding of the knowledge of God, as we shall see below.
111 On the concept of divinisation and the knowledge of God, see p.32 and the following.
112 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.4.1-6 (SC 250, 106ff). Despite this seemingly apophatic statement, Beeley argues that Gregory’s central theological interests lie in how “we can and do know God.” Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus, 101.
intelligence, he [Eunomius] does not admit that the very substance of God is beyond all intelligence and beyond all human knowledge.”

These seemingly apophatic approaches of the two Fathers probably stem from a common platonic presupposition of the day: “like is known by like.” Since both Gregory and Basil perceived a gulf between God/Divinity and Creation, as has been shown above, God/Divinity was wholly different from the created order to which all humanity belongs; thus, the human mind possesses no power to comprehend Him who is completely unlike created nature. Therefore, even angels, who are spiritual but still creations, are said to have an incomplete knowledge of God. After all, God/Divinity can be understood only by God/Divinity; therefore Basil assumes that “It is to be expected that the very substance of God is incomprehensible to everyone except the Only-Begotten and the Holy Spirit.” However, he continues, making a statement that seems to overcome the common presupposition: “But we are led up from the activities of God and gain knowledge of the maker through what he has made, and so come in this way to an understanding of his goodness and wisdom. For what can be known about God is that which God has manifested [Rom 1.19] to all human beings.”

The knowledge Basil expresses here is clearly more than a mere acknowledgment of God’s existence. There is hope for a greater knowledge; therefore, Basil enthusiastically exclaims, “because the truth is hard to grasp, we must search for it in every way.” In agreement with this conviction of Basil, Gregory also teaches that “comprehension of the object of knowledge should be effected both by negation of what the thing is not and also by positive assertion of what it is.” According to these words, then, it seems inappropriate to classify Gregory and Basil as merely apophatic theologians.

3 The Possibility of Knowledge of God

Gregory and Basil both denied and affirmed the possibility of knowledge of God, as has been shown above. This contradictory attitude need to be understood in more detail, so as not to judge the Fathers as being simply apophatic or to dismiss their arguments because of their

115 On the common idea of “like is known by like” in the ancient world, see Christopher Stead, Philosophy in Christian Antiquity (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24; 141.
116 Gr.Naz., Or. 29.8.26f (SC 250, 192).
118 Basil, Spir. 1.2.16f. (SC 17, 108).
119 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.9.20f (SC 250, 118).
inconsistencies. When Gregory and Basil seem pessimistic about obtaining a knowledge of God, they appear to have two things in mind. First, what they consider impossible for humans to grasp is not the general character of God but the knowledge of God in its fullness. There will always be part of God which is a mystery to human beings; therefore Gregory states, for example, “God’s begetting ought to have tribute of our reverent silence. The important point is for you to learn that he has been begotten. As to the way it happens, we shall not concede that even angels, much less you, know that.” In the complete sense, then, knowledge is impossible; however, that does not discard every possibility of knowing God’s being.

Second, Gregory and Basil’s objection to Eunomius is not only against the enemy’s alleged claim to have known the substance of God but also against his confidence in his ability to attain that knowledge by reason. Although the two Fathers admit that the knowledge of God’s existence is possible by sense perception and reason, they do not believe that one can proceed further by human intelligence alone. In this regard, Gregory famously claims that “Faith rather than reason shall lead us, if that is, you have learned the feebleness of reason to deal with matters quite close at hand, and have acquired enough knowledge of reason to recognize things which surpass reason. If so, it follows that you will not be a wholly earthbound thinker, ignorant of your very ignorance.” Therefore, what Gregory and Basil deny is the full knowledge of God in this world and also the possibility of attaining that knowledge by logical inferences alone.

These two restrictions aside, the Cappadocian Fathers can discuss partial knowledge of God. However, to justify this possibility, Gregory and Basil each emphasise different aspects of that knowledge. For Basil, the knowledge of God is possible because it is contained in the Church and expressed in her teaching; as he writes, “Likeness to God, however, cannot be had without knowledge [γνώσεως], and knowledge comes from teaching.” Therefore, there are things people would not know unless they are taught by the Church, and that is why Basil claims, “the apostles and fathers ordained from the first the matters of the Church and guarded the solemnity

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120 Gr.Naz., Or. 29.8.25ff (SC 250, 192).
121 Eunomius is said to have claimed the following: “God does not know anything more about his own essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather, whatever we ourselves know about it is exactly what he knows, and, conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without change in us.” Fragment ii, A Fragment transmitted by Socrates Scholasticus in Richard Paul Vaggione ed. and trans. Eunomius The Extant Works (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 179. However, according to Vaggione, while the Nicenes accused Eunomius for claiming that he possessed an exact and complete knowledge of God, what Eunomius really meant was that his knowledge of God was exact, i.e. “not discursive.” Vaggione, Eunomius of Cyzicus, 257.
122 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.28.41-44 (SC 250, 164).
123 This discussion is closely connected to the topic of revelation which will be treated in Chapter 3.
124 Basil, Spir. 1.2.11f (SC 17, 107).
of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is made known for a public and casual hearing is no mystery at all."\textsuperscript{125} Basil seems to believe that the Church possesses the most comprehensive knowledge of God so far as it is attainable in this world.\textsuperscript{126}

In contrast to Basil’s argument that the Church owns a complete set of knowledge, so to speak, Gregory’s emphasis lies elsewhere. For Gregory, the knowledge of God is possible because there are different levels of knowledge, as expressed in the following passage:

No one has yet discovered or ever shall discover what God is in his nature and essence…The discovery will take place, so my reason tells me, when this God-like, divine being, I mean our mind and reason, mingles with its kin, when the copy returns to the pattern it now longs after. This seems to me to be the meaning of the great dictum that we shall, in time to come, ‘know even as we are known.’ But for the present what reaches us is a scant emanation, as it were a small beam from a great light—which means that anyone who has ‘known’ God or whose ‘knowledge’ of him has been attested in the Bible, had a manifestly more brilliant knowledge than others not equally illuminated. This superiority was reckoned knowledge in the full sense, not because it really was so, but by the contrast of relative strength.\textsuperscript{127}

According to these words, there are different levels of knowledge due to the dispensation of time and the degree of individual maturity. Thus, Gregory believes that “of God himself the knowledge we shall have in this life will be little, though soon after it will perhaps be more perfect.”\textsuperscript{128} Although a complete knowledge is not available in this age, or in this life, a partial knowledge is still attainable to a certain degree. Therefore, although the ideas of the two Fathers are not mutually exclusive, Basil places a strong emphasis on tradition and the role of the Church in the transmission of the knowledge of God, while Gregory stresses the ontological and eschatological aspect of that knowledge.

Equally important for Gregory is the fact that there are people who are more advanced in the knowledge of God than others, implying that there are various degrees of achieving that knowledge. Therefore, Gregory thinks that “Our noblest theologian is not one who has discovered the whole—our earthly shackles do not permit us the whole—but one whose mental image is by comparison fuller, who has gathered in his mind a richer picture, outline, or

\textsuperscript{125} Basil, \textit{Spir.} 27.66.47-50 (SC 17, 236).
\textsuperscript{126} Basil believes the Church “to know what can be known of God” but he also claims that “it is impossible to know anything which is beyond our comprehension.” \textit{Ep.} 235.2.13ff (Courtonne iii, 45). Therefore, Basil believes that there is something of God that can be known to humans, but the rest remains a mystery.
\textsuperscript{128} Gr.Naz., \textit{Or.} 27.10.22 (SC 250, 98).
whatever we call it, of the truth.” Al129 So, by calling Paul “no mere layman in knowledge [ό μη 130 Gregory presupposes that there are those who have attained a higher

level of knowledge and those who have not yet reached that point.

In fact, this emphasis on the variation in degree of knowledge according to the time and the

person is a theme which permeates the writings of Gregory, as can be seen in the well-known

quotation below:

Discussion of theology is not for everyone, I tell you, not for everyone- it is no such

inexpensive or effortless pursuit. Nor I would add, is it for every occasion, or every

audience; neither are all its aspects open to inquiry. It must be reserved for certain

occasions, for certain audiences, and certain limits must be observed. It is not for all men.

But only for those who have been tested and have found a sound footing in study, and,

more importantly, have undergone, or at the very least are undergoing, purification of the

body and soul. For one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it

is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.131

The view of knowledge here emphasises that knowledge is gradual rather than all-or-nothing

and focuses on the appropriateness of the recipient. This view is often depicted in the imagery of

light. As has been noted above, Gregory perceives God as “the highest light,”132 which illumines

His creation by the light of His knowledge.133 The degree of illumination one receives, i.e. the

level of obtaining the knowledge of God, depends on one’s closeness to or distance from the

source of light.

For Gregory, therefore, the imagery of light serves to vividly illustrate the ascending levels of

knowledge, which finally lead up to a complete knowledge of God. And the reception of such

knowledge is closely related to the concept of divinisation. As Gregory writes, “Let us receive

divinity [θεότητα], let us receive the first and most undiluted Light.”134 Therefore, Gregory’s

use of the imagery of light also conveys the idea of divinisation, which is closely associated

with the knowledge of God.135

129 Gr.Naz., Or. 30.17.13-16 (SC 250, 262).
130 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.20.8 (SC 250, 140).
131 Gr.Naz., Or. 27.3.1-9 (SC 250, 76).
132 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.1 (SC 358, 204).
133 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.10.19; 40.37.12 (SC 358, 168; 284). “let us light in ourselves the light of knowledge;” “let us

illumine ourselves with the light of knowledge.”
134 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.37.21f (SC 358, 284).
135 Vaggione points out the inconsistency of Gregory in stating, on the one hand, that it is impossible for a created

being to grasp the infinite God, but on the other hand, that the reality of God can be known according to the ability

of the knower. Vaggione, Eunomius of Cyzicus, 171. Gregory seems to attempt overcoming this problem of the
Gregory’s tendency to understand the achievement of the knowledge of God as a gradual process seems even more evident compared to Basil’s attitude. Basil perceives the acquisition of knowledge as a receiving of something that is handed down rather than as a gradual approach to ultimate knowledge. Basil, like his friend, associates the imagery of light with knowledge of God. However, in his case, this imagery does not convey a connotation of the gradual nature of light but is more closely related to the tradition of the Church; as he writes, “Am I to be turned aside by their arguments of plausibility and to surrender the tradition [παράδοσιν] that leads me to the light and that has graced me with the knowledge of God…?” Also, in Basil, the concept of divinisation does not seem to play a significant role in his epistemology even though it is central to Gregory’s theology. In fact, it is this concept of divinisation which allows a possibility of knowledge of God in Gregory’s system of thought. In the following section, then, we shall turn to Gregory’s concept of divinisation and its relation to the knowledge of God.

4 Knowledge of God and Salvation

In Gregory, the knowledge of God and salvation are inseparably joined together in the concept of divinisation, also called theosis. Therefore, an understanding of this concept is crucial to an unfolding of Gregory’s pneumatology and his theory of the divine revelation; since he, along with Basil, presents baptism, which of course bears soteriological importance, as a means to

unbridgeable gap between the infinite and the created order by his concept of divinisation. This process begins from Christ’s saving act which is effectuated in the believer by baptism. Since this concept of theosis is closely connected with an attainment of the knowledge of God, Gregory’s claim for the possibility to know the infinite God is grounded in his soteriological idea that Christ, the incarnate God who crossed the gap between the infinite and the created order, enables human beings to know God who is otherwise unknowable. On Basil’s concept of the knowledge and tradition, see Chapter 3. Basil does not deny that Christians grow spiritually and become more mature, thus attaining deeper knowledge of God. Similarly, Gregory does not reject tradition as a valid means to receive the knowledge of God. Consequently, the opinions of these two fathers are not mutually exclusive. However, much of what I discuss in the present work is their differences in emphases, which lead them to conclusions concerning the Holy Spirit that are not exactly the same.

Basil, Spir. 10.26.20ff (SC 17, 152). See also Spir. 15.35.54-58 (SC 17, 170ff), where Basil writes, “In three immersions and in the same number of invocations, the great mystery of baptism is accomplished, in order that the type of death may be fully formed and the baptized be enlightened [φωτισθήσονται] in their souls by the handing on [παράδοσιν] of the knowledge of God.”


Winslow, after a careful investigation of Gregory’s works, states that “There is no part of Gregory’s writings, whether theological, Christological or soteriological, whether contemplative, pastoral or ascetical, in which this constant concern for theosis is not a major motif.” Winslow, The Dynamics, 178.
ascertain the knowledge of the Spirit’s divinity. Therefore, we shall now discuss Gregory’s concept of the knowledge of God in relation to salvation in the context of divinisatio

In order to demonstrate the close connection between Gregory’s soteriology and epistemology, we shall first investigate his concept of human fall and salvation.

As has been noted above, Gregory uses numerous images of light in his works, and this imagery plays an important role in defining the fall and salvation of humans. To understand Gregory’s view on those two soteriological elements, we shall look to the recurring theme of Adam in Oration 39. Firstly, Gregory mentions the Adam before the fall, as he invites his listeners at the beginning of his sermon by saying, “It is the time of rebirth; let us be born from above. It is the time of refashioning; let us receive again the first Adam. Let us not remain what we are but become what we once were.” Secondly, however, Gregory also speaks of another Adam when he discusses Christ’s baptism which took place in order to “bury all the old Adam.” Certainly, this Adam is the Adam after the fall who “closed [heavens] for himself and for those after him.”

What makes this fallen Adam different from the prelapsarian Adam is that he no longer possesses the perfect light within him. This light, Gregory believes, was given to human beings in the beginning, as he states, “my Christ the true light…strengthens the light we received from him from the beginning, which we darkened and blotted out through sin.” Therefore, Gregory considers the result of sin to be the loss of the light initially given to humanity.

This image of light is not a vague, abstract, or mysterious rhetoric. For Gregory, the image has a specific referent, i.e., God. As has been noted above, Gregory explains that “The highest light is God;” therefore, to lose the light means to ruin the image of God, in which humans were originally created. Thus Gregory describes baptism as “a restoration of the image wounded by evil.” This distortion of the image implies not only human separation from God but also human unintelligibility of God, who is “unapproachable and ineffable, neither grasped by the

140 Anthony Meredith’s explanation that Gregory’s “soteriological concern expresses itself in terms of enlightenment. God can only be a true light to those who are pure of heart, and this means that the preliminaries to full salvation are moral purity leading to vision,” seems to neglect an important aspect of the Gregory’s doctrine of salvation in close connection to the concept of divinisation. Meredith, The Cappadocians, 43.
141 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.2.7ff (SC 358, 152).
142 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.15.3 (SC 358, 182).
143 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.16.3f (SC 358, 184).
144 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.1.7-12 (SC 358, 150).
145 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.1 (SC 358, 204).
146 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.7.12f (SC 358, 210).
mind nor expressed in language.” 147 However, those “who are more deiform [θεοειδέστεροι] and approach more closely to God” 148 are given the name “light” because of their power to reason. 149 Therefore, the image of light is closely connected to the image of God in human beings, and it is also related to people’s ability to know God. The fall of Adam, then, is the damaging of God’s image, which indicates separation from God, and which prevents humanity from knowing Him.

In addition, another noteworthy feature of Gregory’s view of the human fall is that he perceives it in spatial terms. As indicated above, he calls God “the highest Light,” 150 and the angel, “a kind of emanation or participation in the first light, toward which it inclines and by whose help it possesses illumination.” 151 These spatial languages seem to indicate the relationship between humans and God, and Gregory persistently employs such terms. For example, as seen above, Gregory speaks of those “who are more deiform [θεοειδέστεροι] and approach more closely [πλησιώζοντες] to God,” 152 and he also encourages his congregation to “come close [προσομιλητέον] to the pure.” 153 Therefore, Gregory also uses a spatial expression when describing the state of fallen humanity as “pitiably separated [χωρίζομενον] from God.” 154

In light of the above definition of the fall, we will proceed to examine what “salvation” means for Gregory. Since the fall indicates the loss of the image of God, salvation naturally would be the restoration of that image. In this process of recovery, Gregory acknowledges that God Himself takes the initiative. As he says, “to neglect this creature, who by the envy of the devil and the bitter taste of sin is pitiably separated from God his Creator, is not God’s way.” 155 And

147 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.1f (SC 358, 204).
148 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.16f (SC 358, 206).
149 On Gregory’s use of the light imagery referring to human rationality, see John Egan, “The Knowledge and Vision of God according to Gregory Nazianzen” [PhD diss., Institut Catholique de Paris Faculté de Théologie, 1971], 168.
150 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.1 (SC 358, 204).
151 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.10ff (SC 358, 204).
152 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.5.16f (SC 358, 206).
154 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.13.6f (SC 358, 176). Although it is possible to interpret spatial terminologies as purely relational, as in “close friends” or “distant relatives,” Gregory seems to capture the concept of human relationship to God in a vivid spatial imagery more concrete than just a logical description. Therefore, to be “separated from God” somehow means to be literally “separated” in a definite sense in Gregory’s “mental image.” See Or. 30.17.1-16; 31.14.9-13; 31.33.7-20 (SC 250, 260ff; 302ff; 340ff) for Gregory’s mentioning of mental image.
to recover the image, Gregory teaches, God recreates “as he created what did not exist, so he
remolded what did exist, through a molding more divine than the first and more exalted.”

This recreation is done through the incarnation of the Son, who bridges the gap between the
infinite God and the created order. Therefore, thirdly, Gregory talks of Christ the “new
Adam.” Christ is also called “God-human,” because He, “the Son of God accepts both to
take on human nature and to be called such… that the ungraspable might be grasped,
associating with us through the mediation of flesh, as if through a covering, since his pure
divinity cannot be borne by a nature subject to generation and corruption.” This passage
indicates that the purpose of the coming of the New Adam, “the true light,” was to enable
humanity to regain the Imago Dei, whereby they might know God through the work of the Word
who is “fearful…and graspable,” who was “made flesh for our sake.” Since like is known by
like, God can only be known by His kin. What Christ, the Son of God, accomplished, then, was
to restore the light and imprint the image of God again on fallen humanity so that they might
become god-like once more and might know their Creator. Therefore, Gregory states, “He is as
much human for your sake as you may become god [σὺ γίνης Ἐσώ] because of him.”

This recovery of the image of God and the return to the first Adam, however, do not
automatically guarantee the full knowledge of God, because, even when Adam and Eve were
first created in the image of God, they did not possess a complete knowledge of God. Rather, the
Creator intended his creations to freely choose and grow in the knowledge of Him, by
approaching Him and becoming more like Him. Therefore, for Gregory, salvation can be
described as “the restoration of the process of theosis that God established in creation and
intends to perfect in the age to come.” Once humans return to this starting point of their
growth towards God, Gregory teaches, there is a hope of discovering Him in His nature, “when

\[156\] Gr.Naz., Or. 40.7.9f (SC 358, 210).
\[157\] For a more detailed discussion on the Son’s role in theosis and the revelation of God’s knowledge, see chapter 3.
\[159\] Gr.Naz., Or. 40.33.15 (SC 358, 274).
\[161\] Gr.Naz., Or. 39.1.8 (SC 358, 150).
\[162\] Gr.Naz., Or. 40.38.22f (SC 358, 286).
\[163\] Gr.Naz., Or. 40.45.29f (SC 358, 306).
\[164\] Gr.Naz., Or. 38.12.1-30 (SC 358, 126-130).
\[165\] Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus, 119. Scholars generally agree on this interpretation of Gregory’s teaching on theosis. Winslow, The Dynamics, 127, 134, 177; Russell, The Doctrine, 221.
this God-like, divine thing, I mean our mind and reason, mingles with its kin, when the copy
returns to the pattern it now longs after.”  

In sum, the fall of humanity, for Gregory, resulted in the loss of the perfect light, which
represents the image of God, the highest Light. Deprived of the Imago Dei within them, people
were no longer able to know God, who can only be known by His like; therefore, theosis, the
original intention of God for humans, was interrupted and made impossible. The salvation of
Christ, then, is a divine initiation to bring fallen humanity back to the initial stage of creation,
enabling people once again to draw closer to the Light and be illumined by the knowledge of
God.

This process starts in the life of believers on earth, but its completion will take place in
eschatological time. When the believers are baptised and have put on Christ, they are
transferred, in a way, from a stage of complete separation from God into the garden where they
may start the process of knowing Him all over again. As long as one remains at the old stage,
the knowledge of God is impossible; however, Christ, who has crossed the boundary between
the infinite God and the created order, enables the baptised to jump over the otherwise
unbridgeable gulf of the infinite sea. Thus, what was metaphysically impossible was
overcome by the love of the Creator and made possible relationally.

This perception of the knowledge of God as intimacy with God rather than impersonal
information about God is foundational to Gregory, since he emphasises that the term “God”
itself is “relational, not an absolute term.” Gregory believes that “God cannot be named;“ however, we can call the ultimate being “God” because He has revealed Himself as “God.” The
only reason we can know God is that He wills a relationship as “God of all.” Thus, according
to Gregory, God’s desire to bring humanity into fellowship with Him alone makes knowledge of
God possible, and this is accomplished through the process of theosis.

166 Gr.Naz., Or. 28.17.4-7 (SC 250, 134).
167 Whether Gregory has the end time or the life after death in mind is unclear.
168 Gregory teaches his catechumens that, in the time of temptation by the devil, they should say, “I am also myself
an image of God. I have not yet fallen like you, from the glory on high through seeking elevation. I have put on
Christ, I have been transformed into Christ by baptism.” Or. 40.10.31-34 (SC 358, 218).
169 Concerning the metaphor of the sea, see Vaggione, Eunomius of Cyzicus, 171.
170 On God’s intention for humanity to know Him, see the discussion on the revelation of God in Chapter 3.
171 Gr.Naz., Or. 30.18.10f (SC 250, 264).
172 Gr.Naz., Or. 30.17.1 (SC 250, 260).
Therefore, Gregory’s imagery of light, his idea of the image of God, and his whole concept of theosis, in their relationship to the knowledge of God, all seem to be consistent with his claim that obtaining a knowledge of God is a gradual, progressive, and dynamic process. Moreover, Gregory’s concern for the appropriateness of the time and the recipient of the knowledge of God also is expressed in his interpretation of the fall of Adam and Eve. According to this Cappadocian Father, the tree of knowledge was “neither planted from the beginning in an evil way nor forbidden through envy…but would be good if possessed at the right time.” The only reason why God prohibited the eating of the fruit was that the couple simply was not mature enough to undertake the “contemplation [θεορία].” Hence, Gregory’s soteriology, including his interpretation of the purpose of the creation and the fall of Adam and Eve, and his epistemology are closely connected to each other, and perhaps should not even be separated according to modern categorisation.

Conclusion

The knowledge of God, for both Gregory and Basil, contains an inherent difficulty since both Fathers define God primarily as the Creator who cannot be known by creatures unlike Himself. Indeed, both deny the possibility of a complete knowledge of God in this life and insist that one cannot reach the substance of God by logical inferences. However, neither of them should be thought of as merely apophatic theologians. To resolve this problem of knowledge, Basil, on the one hand, takes an ecclesiological approach, claiming that knowledge is given to the Church, by whose teaching people can know God. On the other hand, Gregory applies an eschatological and more dynamic theory of theosis, assuming that there are different degrees of knowledge of God.

For Gregory, the knowledge of God is not static information about God but has almost an immediate bearing on one’s relationship with Him, both ontologically and spatially. It is a
continual process; to know God is to approach Him; to approach Him is to be illumined by the highest Light; to be illumined is to be like Him; and to be like Him is to know Him. Because of this dynamic nature of knowledge, Gregory’s epistemology is concerned with the appropriateness of the time and the condition or place of the human being; unless the time is ripe and the person mature, the knowledge is not imparted to him or her. Moreover, the crucial point for Gregory is that one cannot even start this process of knowing God unless the person is deified through baptism to return to the initial stage of theosis by the saving work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the concept of theosis can also explain the seemingly contradictory attitude of Gregory which affirms that the knowledge of God is both impossible and possible.

In light of this investigation into how Gregory understands the knowledge of God, we will next discuss how he perceives the means by which people acquire that knowledge, namely, the revelation of God.
Chapter 3
The Revelation of God

1 The Divine Initiative

As has been discussed in Chapter two, both Gregory and Basil affirm the possibility of knowing God, even though “God” is a totally transcendent and unreachable reality. At the same time, we have noted that these Fathers deny the possibility of a complete knowledge by logical inferences alone. Nonetheless, Gregory and his friend claim that people can attain a certain knowledge of God beyond a mere acknowledgement of His existence. Although both Fathers share some overlapping concepts concerning how humans can know God, there certainly is a keen difference in emphases. While Basil regards the Church and her passing on of tradition as the key to attaining knowledge of God, Gregory pays much more attention to the concept that the knowledge is gradual and develops a lively and dynamic theory of theosis.

These two pathways to knowing God are rooted in two different understandings of revelation of God. Since the finite nature of humans does not allow them to know the infinite being of God, the Creator must take the initiative to reveal Himself to His creation. As Basil writes, “what can be known about God is that which God has manifested [Rom 1.19] to all human beings.”

Gregory, too, believes in the divine initiative; however, what is particular to him is that he stresses the personal and relational character of God’s revelatory act. For Gregory, God’s revelation involves His love for humanity and the strong will to be known by them, since “to neglect this creature, who by the envy of the devil and the bitter taste of sin is pitiously separated from God his Creator, is not God’s way.” God, whose desire is to have fellowship with His creation, did not wish the knowledge of Him to remain hidden from people. That is why “the divine draws [us] toward itself, for what is completely ungraspable is unhoped for and unsought.”

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178 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.13.5ff (SC 358, 176).
179 Gr.Naz., Or. 38.7.15f (SC 358, 116).
Therefore, to overcome the harsh reality of the human fall, which prevents people from knowing their Creator, God offers a new way for humans to approach Him through the incarnation of the Son. Gregory emphasises that this salvific act of God took place because of His love for humanity and His will for people to know Him. Thus, the unbridgeable gap between the infinite and finite was mended by the only mediator, the Word, who is “both fearful because of his nature to those who are not worthy and graspable because of his love for humankind to those who are thus prepared.”

Since Gregory understands human salvation in terms of a recovery of the image of God, which is closely related to knowledge of God, the work of the Saviour naturally involves an enabling of people to obtain this knowledge. Therefore, Gregory speaks of God’s initiative, which is rooted in deep love, to make knowledge of God available to humans through the Son: “the Son of God accepts both to become Son of a human being and to be called such…for he loves humankind, that the ungraspable might be grasped…For this reason unmingled realities are mingled.” The knowledge is made possible precisely because of this mingling of the two infinitely separate realities, the realities Gregory perceives as God and His creation.

Therefore, although Gregory may seem to be inconsistent about whether or not knowledge of God is possible, this seeming contradiction is unavoidable since the incarnation of the Son, which manifested the unknowable, can find no satisfactory logical explanation. Thus, what makes knowledge of God attainable is ultimately the initiative taken by God, who loves humanity and desires a close relationship with His creatures. In addition to this initiative in the form of the Son’s incarnation, Gregory also talks of the Spirit as an agency of God’s revelation. In this way, Gregory’s theory of God’s initiative in His revelatory act is characterised by the relationship between God and humans, grounded firmly in his Trinitarian theology.

Basil, too, acknowledges that knowledge of God depends on His initiative, and, in Basil’s thought, the incarnation of the Son also plays a crucial role in the revealing act of God. The work of the Holy Spirit to make God known to people is important for Basil as well. However, Basil seems to expound on the theory of revelation, not so much in terms of direct, personal, and empirical relationship with God, as in a manner focusing on the reception of a knowledge,

180 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.10.1ff (SC 358, 168).
which can resemble, perhaps, Moses’ receiving of the Law on the stone tablets.\textsuperscript{182} For example, Basil writes to the Neo-Caesareans the following: “by the grace of Him who has called us by His Holy calling to a knowledge of Him we are aware of having received in our hearts no teaching averse to the sound doctrine.”\textsuperscript{183} Here, the divine initiative is not viewed primarily in the context of a continual relationship but more as a concrete event in the past.

Both Gregory and Basil attempt to resolve the problem of the incomprehensibility of God by relying on God’s initiative to reveal Himself. In light of the discussion in Chapter two about how the two Fathers understand knowledge of God, it is only natural that, on the one hand, Gregory understands the divine initiative of revelation in a relational way, while, on the other hand, Basil views it in a more static manner. These ideas are consistent with how the two Fathers perceived the nature of the knowledge of God. The differences between these two Fathers are significant indeed; however, it holds true for both of them that knowledge of God is only possible by God’s revelation. Therefore, we now turn to investigate how Gregory and Basil understand the concept of revelation.

\section*{2 Basil and the Tradition of the Church}

In his well-known but rather controversial argument, Basil appeals to the unwritten and secret tradition of the Church to affirm the divinity of the Holy Spirit. This approach of the Caesarean bishop is often regarded as “one of the weakest spots of his theology”\textsuperscript{184} or even as “unfortunate and unnecessary.”\textsuperscript{185} What may strike modern readers as unacceptable and misleading is Basil’s presupposition that the apostles themselves appointed many of the customs in the Church, including Basil’s doxology which ascribed glory “to the Father, with the Son together with the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{186} R.P.C. Hanson finds Basil’s claim historically unsustainable, thus blaming the ancient Father for forcibly justifying his case by inventing “an historical fiction.”\textsuperscript{187} However, it seems unfair to judge Basil as an innovator or a cunning liar, as if he is arguing for the sake of winning the argument or obsessively trying to defend the authority of the Church and of himself.

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Basil’s reliance on the apostolic tradition, however unhistorical it may seem to modern scholars, should be understood in a wider context of his understanding of knowledge and revelation of God. We have already discussed in the previous chapter how this Cappadocian Father views knowledge of God as something to be received as a onetime gift from God. This idea is consistent with his perception of revelation of God, which considers God’s revealing act, not as a gradual growth in intimacy, but as God’s “handing down” of a certain knowledge. Therefore, as we turn to examine Basil’s concept of God’s revelation, let us consider two aspects of his thought: first, his inclination to highly value traditions in general, and second, how Church traditions in particular hold unparalleled authority because of its origin.

In writing De Spiritu Sancto, Basil’s aim is to defend his use of a doxology, which, to some people, sounded awkward or even unorthodox, because it did not follow the traditional form. In order to prove the validity and orthodoxy of his doxology, Basil emphasises that it is traditional and that he has not invented a new doxology; the point Basil eagerly stresses is that he is not “an innovator and a coiner of new words.” In fact, the Caesarean bishop seems to assume credulously that anything old is trustworthy. Being antique is a crucial criterion for Basil to discern the credibility of certain claims, because, for him, “ancient dogmas are somehow venerable, as if they can arouse respect by a sort of grey antiquity.” Therefore, he diligently seeks to find his supporters among the “ancient” Fathers and writes, “For myself, I looked into whether any of the ancient and blessed men used these words that are now opposed, and discovered that many are trustworthy both because of their antiquity and because of their exactness in knowledge (not like those now).”

This enormous trust in antiquity and age-old customs can be counted as one of the crucial differences between Gregory and Basil. While Gregory too valued tradition, as most ancient people did, his attitude toward tradition does not compare with Basil’s unwavering reliance on tradition; the latter not only cherished church tradition in doctrinal matters but also on other occasions regarded some customs as unquestionably authoritative. For example, an interesting comparison between Basil and Gregory can be found in their writings when they both discuss the problem of how the church should deal with an adulterous wife.

188 Basil, Spir. 29.75.1f (SC 17, 253).
189 This may be a general tendency of ancient people, but in contrast to Gregory’s response to tradition, as shown below, the greatness of Basil’s confidence in tradition can be highlighted.
190 Basil, Spir. 29.71.21ff (SC 17, 246).
191 Basil, Spir. 29.71.32-36 (SC 17, 246f).
The custom of the day, under the influence of Roman law, allowed a husband to divorce an adulterous wife, but a wife was not permitted to divorce an adulterous husband. Responding to this unjust treatment of women, Gregory boldly states, “I do not accept this legislation; I do not approve this custom [συνήθειαν].”

Surprisingly for an ancient man, Gregory asserts the equality of man and woman in this matter and insists that an adulterous husband must face the consequence of his misconduct just as an adulterous wife would. Drawing from the fifth commandment, “thou shall honour thy father and mother,” Gregory concludes that God cares for both sexes equally, while also punishing them equally for their sins. Therefore, Gregory condemns the common practice as unbiblical and un-Christian despite its general acceptance by society throughout the ages.

Gregory’s opinion sounds reasonable even today. However, Basil, who expresses his unequivocal trust in tradition and customs, offers a completely opposite view on this very matter. In two letters commonly called the First and Second Canonical Letters, Basil expounds on the problem of adultery and how to deal with individuals who committed such an act. Although Basil admits that “[t]he declaration of the Lord concerning the prohibition to depart from marriage except for the reason of fornication, consistent with the sense, applies equally to men or to women,” he immediately adds, “[b]ut, such is not the custom [συνήθεια].”

Basil, just like Gregory, clearly acknowledges a discrepancy between biblical teaching and the common practice of the day.

However, far from condemning this unbiblical tradition, Basil affirms that “custom [συνήθεια] orders adulterous men and those who are fornicators to be kept by their wives.” Moreover, he does not allow a woman to leave her husband in any circumstance, as he writes, “If it was when beaten she did not endure the blows, she should have been patient rather than have been separated from her husband, or, if she could not endure a loss of money, neither is that a reasonable excuse. And, if it was because he lived in fornication, we do not observe this custom [συνήθεια] in the Church.”

To summarise, then, according to Basil, a wife is literally “stuck” with her husband until death, though he be a violent abuser, the worst squanderer, or an

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192 Gr.Naz., Or. 37.6.8f (SC 318, 284).
193 A detailed analysis of Gregory’s scriptural interpretation in Or. 37 can be found in McGuckin, “Patterns of Biblical Exegesis,” 40-44.
194 Basil, Ep. 188.9.1-4 (Courtonne ii, 128). I have substituted the original translation “practice” with “custom” for the sake of uniformity and clarity.
195 Basil, Ep. 188.9.10-ff (Courtonne ii, 128).
196 Basil, Ep. 188.9.15-20 (Courtonne ii, 128). Again, I have substituted “practice” with “custom.”
unfaithful adulterer. Meanwhile, a husband can, or is even encouraged to, divorce an adulterous wife since “[h]e that keepeth an adulteress is foolish and wicked.”

This stance of Basil and his unfair treatment of women could be considered merely as a manifestation of ancient sexism. However, it is more likely that Basil’s opinion emerges from his trust in traditional customs rather than from his discriminatory view of women. Basil recognises that some biblical regulations on marriage treat men and women equally, and he also realises that the unjust treatment of women is unreasonable. Nevertheless, he still instructs Amphilochius, writing, “Therefore, the wife will receive her husband when he returns from fornication, but the husband will send away from his home a defiled wife,” while admitting “the reasoning for this is not easy.” However, his final word amounts to, “but custom [συνήθεια] has so ruled.” Therefore, for Basil, tradition and custom have unrivalled authority, which can sometimes undermine even logic or certain aspects of biblical teachings.

Thus, Basil’s attitude towards the problems of adultery and divorce demonstrates his high regard for tradition. This tendency may stem from Basil’s awareness of his responsibility as bishop to manage lawsuits and conflicts within churches and also from his pastoral and practical tactics to maintain order within congregations. After all, what is right is not always feasible. Basil, being a sensible churchman, might have discerned that keeping the age-old custom was the best solution to the current issues in spite of the unreasonableness of that tradition. In this regard, we may deduce, in turn, that Gregory’s readiness to negate the validity of the customary practice in marital issues reflects, at least partly, his truthfulness as a teacher at the cost of his adroitness as a governor. As we have discussed in chapter one, these two Fathers possessed

197 Basil, Ep. 199.21.7f (Courtonne ii, 157).
198 Basil, Ep. 199.21.12f (Courtonne ii, 158).
199 The difference in mindset between Basil and Gregory can also be observed in their treatment of the paternal authority in issues in regard to marriage. As a political ruler concerned deeply about the wellbeing of the Christian community, Basil emphasises the authority of the father of a bride to decide whether or not she should marry certain man. Even when a man abducts a woman, he has to bring her to her father and let the father judge what is best for his family. Basil, Ep. 199. 22.1-18 (Courtonne, 158). Basil seems unconcerned about the opinion of the woman. His emphasis is the order of the community. Basil’s intent is to set a standard decision, as he also sets disciplinary requirements for him who marries a woman by force, against the will of the bride’s father. Contrarily, Gregory does not seem to regard that his job is to standardise ethical regulations. Therefore, he responds to conflicts in his congregation in a more personal way. Therefore, Gregory writes to a father, who tries to impose divorce on his daughter, an act a father could rightly execute, in order to persuade him to respect and kindly accept the plea of his daughter to let her stay with her husband. Gr.Naz., Ep. 144.1-18 (Gallay, 106). While Basil’s aim is to produce a standardised regulation, Gregory deals with the problem in his congregation more on a case-by-case basis. A detailed discussion about Basil’s canon and his concern for social stability can be found in Raymond Van Dam, Becoming Christian---The Conversion of Roman Cappadocia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 67f.
contrasting dispositions which led them to respond to their vocations as church leaders differently. While Basil enthusiastically engaged himself in church politics, hoping to create order within the Church, Gregory perceived his role primarily as that of a teacher who refutes opposing theologies and advances the Nicene cause.  

We can conclude, then, that Basil’s strategy to appeal to tradition when defending the form of his doxology and the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not accidental, but is rooted in his personality and strong inclination to emphasise tradition. He probably believed firmly and sincerely that his practice and belief were grounded in tradition and that the appeal to tradition effectively guaranteed the orthodoxy and authenticity of his claim. Regardless of how one might judge the assumption of this ancient Father, it is important to keep in mind that the bishop of Caesarea is inclined to trust and value age-old customs and tradition in general situations; and this conviction is exceptionally steadfast even when compared to that of his contemporaries, such as his close friend Gregory.

In addition to this general inclination, the tradition of the Church, in the eyes of Basil, holds even greater authority because of its origin and how various customs had been handed down from the apostles to the saints in the Church. In fact, Basil elevates the tradition of the Church to the same level as the Bible, as he writes,

> Of the dogmas [δόγματα] and proclamations [κηρύγματα] that are guarded in the Church, we hold some from the teaching of the Scriptures, and other we have received in mystery as the teachings of the tradition [παραδόσεις] of the apostles. Both hold the same power with respect to true religion. No one would deny these points, at least no one who has even a little experience of ecclesiastical institutions. For if we attempt to reject non-scriptural customs [τὰ ἀγγέλα] as insignificant, we would, unaware, lose the very vital parts of the Gospel, and even more, we would establish the proclamation merely in name.
Basil believes that the tradition of the Church is not just complimentary to Christian faith but is essential for the life of the Church.

Such a confidence and trust in the tradition seems to stem from Basil’s concept of God’s revelation. In other words, for Basil, tradition and customs are valuable not merely because they are time-honored and widespread, but because they have a divine origin. Hanson observes this concept of Basil while examining this Father’s letters: “In fact Basil has a remarkably strong consciousness, evidenced in several places in his letters, of the traditional nature of the Christian faith, that he has been, as a Christian, entrusted with a divine deposit preserved intact by those who went before him.” This “divine deposit,” Basil believes, can be traced back to the Christ incarnate and the Holy Spirit.

Consistent with this thought, an interesting passing down of the divine deposit can be observed in his use of the word “hand down [παραδίδωμι].” Particularly in his argument to defend the Spirit’s divinity, Basil’s appeal to the tradition of the Church, namely the rite of baptism, is firmly grounded in the conviction that the baptismal formula was “handed down” by Christ; as Basil confidently states, “Our baptism accords with exactly what the Lord handed down [παράδοσιν].” Somewhat unexpectedly, however, in Basil, this conviction does not derive directly from Matthew 28:19, the Great Commission of Jesus, as we shall see in the next chapter. For Basil, Scripture and tradition have authorities independent of each other.

What makes Scripture or the Church tradition authoritative is their participation in God’s act of handing down His knowledge; therefore, the Bible, too, is said to “hand down” some theological knowledge: “the Scripture has handed down [παρέδωκεν] to us the ministering spirits as creatures.” Moreover, scriptural passages can sometimes be viewed as the Spirit’s handing down of knowledge, for Basil states as he criticises Eunomius, “through this one blasphemy he rejects all the terms handed down [παραδοθείσας] by the Holy Spirit for the glorification of the Only-Begotten, even though the gospel teaches that the Father, God, has set his seal upon him [Jn 6.27], and the Apostle that He is the image of the invisible God [Col 1.15].”

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203 Hanson, “Basil’s Doctrine,” 247.
204 Basil, Eun. 3.5.33f (SC 305, 164); Ep. 125.3.42 (Courtonne ii, 34); Spir. 18.44.2; 10.24.7 (SC 17, 191; 149)
205 Translators are not consistent in translating παραδίδωμι. They use “hand down” and “hand over” interchangeably, but I have adjusted the translation to “hand down” throughout for the sake of clarity.
206 Basil, Eun. 1.18.1-6 (SC 299, 234).
Therefore, when Basil uses the word “hand down [παραδίδωμι]” in relation to doctrinal matters in the Church, he seems to assume a close connection between this act and the revelation of God. In other words, the tradition [παράδοσις] of the Church, according to Basil, holds an essential part in God’s revelatory act. The knowledge of God is “handed down” from Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are divine, through the Bible and tradition of the Church. Therefore, Basil’s appeal to unwritten tradition in order to argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit can be seen, actually, as a reliance on the revelation of God.

According to this understanding of God’s revelation, Basil tries to explain why it is so difficult to prove certain doctrinal positions and why those points are not in the Bible. Basil believes that once the Church receives what is divinely “handed down,” she will keep the deposit just as it is—unchanged and unblemished. Thus, he often refers to “apostolic tradition,” implying that the tradition has not changed since the time of the apostles. Traditional practices and teachings supposedly have existed at all times, as Basil attacks Eunomius, writing, “if we were persuaded by you, we would have to judge the tradition that has prevailed in every time past due to so many saints as of less worth than your impious fabrication.”

Basil’s conviction is unwavering indeed. However, one would wonder why, then, the divinity of the Holy Spirit, or the Son’s consubstantiality with the Father for that matter, is not recorded anywhere in the Bible. To this unavoidable question, Basil gives two answers. First, some teachings of the Church were deliberately concealed with fear and reverence:

the apostles and fathers ordained from the first the matters of the Church and guarded the solemnity of the mysteries and silence, for what is made known for a public and casual hearing is no mystery at all. This is the reason for non-scriptural tradition, that knowledge of dogmas not be neglected or despised by the many because of familiarity.

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207 Basil, Eun. 1.1.3f (SC 299, 140); Spir. 10.25.12; 27.66.3; 29.71.7f (SC 17, 150; 233; 245).
208 Hildebrand argues that, for Basil, “‘Apostolic’ means consistent with the teaching of the apostles preserved in the Fathers.” Hildebrand, The Trinitarian Theology, 148. However, Basil’s understanding of the “apostolic tradition,” at least in part, seems more direct. He seems to believe that the customs of the Church in his time were not just somehow related to or continued from the teachings of the apostles but ordained directly by the apostles. Thus, Basil believes that the liturgical movements, Eucharistic words, and precise gestures for the baptismal rite and other “matters of the Church” were all “ordained from the first” by “the apostles and fathers.” See n.125.
209 Basil, Eun. 1.3.20-23 (SC 299, 158).
210 Basil, Spir. 27.66.47-53 (SC 17, 236).
This intended silence concerning particular teachings of the Church was commonly practiced in fourth century churches and is often called *disciplina arcani*, the rule of secrecy.\(^{211}\) This rule was closely connected to the institution of the catechumenate, making sure that an unbaptised person would not hear some important doctrines of the Church, including the baptismal formula and Eucharistic prayers.\(^{212}\) Therefore, according to Basil’s logic, the doctrines he holds to have been divinely handed down and have always existed in the Church, but the Church possesses a freedom and responsibility to hide them when appropriate. The secret could be disclosed only after one’s baptism, that is, when a person, as a member of the Church, receives the knowledge of God. As Basil states, “In three immersions and in the same number of invocations, the great mystery of baptism is accomplished, in order that the type of death may be fully formed and the baptized be enlightened in their souls by the handing on \[\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\delta\sigma\epsilon\] of the knowledge of God.”\(^{213}\)

Second, Basil gives another answer to explain why some teachings he claims as orthodox cannot be easily verified either by Scripture or by some concrete evidence from the past. According to the Caesarean bishop, some teachings were so obvious to everyone that the ancient Fathers did not bother to articulate them. This conviction is clearly demonstrated in Basil’s view of the Nicene Creed of 325:

Whereas, then, the other doctrines are here fully and accurately defined, some for the correction of what has already been perverted, others for a protection against what may be expected to arise, nevertheless, the doctrine concerning the holy Spirit is laid down very briefly as requiring no discussion, because at that time this question had not yet been stirred up, but the concept of it remained unchallenged in the souls of the faithful.\(^{214}\)

Basil acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is treated insufficiently in the Creed; however, he insists that the “concept of it” was there, and that the only reason why the divinity of the Spirit is not fully addressed is because it was simply presupposed by the older generation. Basil persistently claims that the knowledge of God, lacking nothing God intends to communicate to humans, was deposited with the Church and that the role of the Church was to continue handing it down without any alterations.

\(^{211}\) De Mendieta, *The ‘Unwritten’ and ‘Secret,’* 45f.


\(^{213}\) Basil, *Spir.* 15.35.54-58 (SC 17, 170-171).

\(^{214}\) Basil, *Ep.* 125.3.1-7 (Courtonne ii, 33).
In the mind of Basil, then, what the Church openly confesses and teaches discloses little of what and how much she really knows in secret. Knowledge is imparted and made manifest to people according to their needs and appropriateness, but what was once divinely handed down to the Church, in this case, a doxology which implies the divinity of the Holy Spirit, remains unchanged. Basil, somewhat stubbornly, clings to this position, although the historical evidence to support his claim is, perhaps, thin. However, his friend has a very different idea about the same problem.

Like Basil, Gregory, too, noticed that pneumatology was scarcely discussed in the Nicene Creed. Nonetheless, Gregory seems to have no intention of defending the perfection of the Creed in and of itself. As shocking and outrageous as it may have sounded to Basil, Gregory actually admitted that the Creed of 325 was not perfect and that more work was needed to complete it. 215 This is not to say that Gregory underestimated the value of the Nicene Creed. On the contrary, he was eager to defend the Nicene Faith and spent most of his life and effort engaging in that task. However, what it meant for Gregory to uphold the Nicene Faith was significantly different from what it was for Basil. As Gregory states,

We cannot esteem, and never have esteemed anything more highly than the creed of the holy fathers assembled at Nicæa for the condemnation of the Arian heresy. That faith we belong to, and with God’s help, shall belong to, with the addition to the article on the Holy Spirit of what they left out, because the point was not mooted then: because recognizing, as we do, the Holy Spirit too as God, we must acknowledge Father, Son and Holy Spirit as of one Godhead.216

Unlike Basil, Gregory appears to have felt comfortable with the idea of making additions to the existent Creed. Because of this seemingly radical statement, Lionel Wickham proposes that Gregory may be referring to the creed set forth by the Council of Constantinople in 381, since he thinks that “Gregory was too much a Nicene ‘fundamentalist’ to countenance any addition to

215 Cf. Theodore of Mopsuestia. Theodore shows a different attitude towards the Creed. He believes that the Nicene Creed of 325 expresses a sufficient pneumatology when interpreted correctly: “They who taught clearly concerning the Son of God to the effect that we ought to believe in Him as consubstantial with God, would not have added in their profession of faith a word concerning the Holy Spirit had they not known that He also was of the same Divine nature of God the Father. The mere mention of the name" Holy Spirit" was sufficient to demonstrate His nature as taught to us by the Divine Book, which indeed would not have called Him by this exclusive name if He was not of Divine nature.” Commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Nicene creed, trans. A. Mingana, Woodbrooke studies, v. 5 (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1932), 97. According to Theodore, the Nicene Creed (325) adequately professes the Spirit’s divinity and His consubstantiality with the Father. This fundamentalist attitude of Theodore concerning the Nicene Creed (325) stands in contrast to Gregory’s more flexible way of perceiving the authority and function of the Creed.

216 Gr.Naz., Ep. 102.1.5-2.6 (SC 208, 70).
the text of the creed of Nicaea (325).” However, this idea of “completing” what was said before is consistent with Gregory’s understanding of the revelation of God, as he famously argued for progressive revelation. Therefore, let us now turn to investigate how Gregory understands God’s revelation.

3 Gregory and a Living Relationship with God

Consistent with his perception of knowledge of God as gradual and relational, Gregory develops a theory of God’s revelatory act in terms of relationship, grounded firmly in his Trinitarian theology. Therefore, Gregory does not hold the authority of Church traditions as highly and absolute as his friend does. For instance, Basil, in order to defend the form of his doxology, lists as supporting evidence his predecessors in the faith: Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, Dionysius of Rome, Dionysius of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Gregory Thaumaturgos, and of course, Origen. However, Gregory, when faced by a similar problem, does not actually refer to any of his forerunners in the Church. Even though he is aware that some may question, “who worships the Spirit?...Is there any ancient or modern example?” Gregory responds to this challenge by quoting passages only from the New Testament and not at all from the Fathers before him. Nothing even close to Basil’s admiration for tradition and age-old customs seems to appear in Gregory’s writings, as the latter rarely mentions tradition in his arguments.

This attitude, however, does not mean that Gregory disrespected the tradition of the Church; instead, what he does not care to claim, as his friend does, is that “the apostles and fathers ordained from the first the matters of the Church,” and that these have “prevailed in every time past” precisely the same in the Gregory’s time. As we have noted in the previous chapter, Gregory, in connection with his theory of theosis, understands knowledge of God to be relational in nature. When the relationship between God and humans grows closer, people acquire more knowledge proportionate to their intimacy with God. Therefore, the extent of the knowledge revealed to humanity increases over time, and this change happens individually as well as corporately. That is why Gregory can assume that he knows more about God than his

218 Basil, Spir. 29.72.1f, 30; 29.73.1 (SC 17, 247ff).
219 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.12.1f (SC 250, 297).
220 Basil, Spir. 27.66.47f (SC 17, 236).
221 Basil, Eun. 1.3.21 (SC 299, 158).
predecessors, and why he does not have to search eagerly for his supporters among the saints in the past.

On a personal level, the gradual revelation of God can be understood in the context of divinisation. We have noted in the previous chapter that *theosis*, for Gregory, means the recovery of the *Imago Dei*, being illumined by Christ the true Light through the rite of baptism. This illumination, of course, is related closely to the concept of the knowledge of God. We shall discuss Gregory’s view of illumination in more detail; however, we will first consider another important aspect of *theosis*: purification.

Purification, Gregory believes, is a necessary component of knowing God, since he is convinced that “[f]or one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.” However, what exactly he means by “purification” is open to various interpretations. For example, Meredith understands Gregory to be saying that “God can only be a true light to those who are pure of heart, and this means that the preliminaries to full salvation are moral purity leading to vision.” In this case, purification is considered as an individual’s moral achievement. However, McGuckin presents a slightly different view and claims that Gregory is referring to a “mental purification.”

While both scholars’ opinions seem equally possible, it might be unnecessary to determine what part of the human being Gregory has in mind when he talks about purification. Rather than pointing out a specific aspect of a person, Gregory seems to regard the whole being of an individual as needing purification: “Be entirely purified [καθαρσία] and be pure.” Thus, according to Gregory, to know and draw close to the Holy God, fallen humanity must undergo purification, not just morally, mentally, physically, nor even just spiritually but entirely.

This holistic view of purification seems to appear clearly in the following passage:

> For where there is fear there is keeping of commandments; and where there is keeping of commandments there is purification of the flesh, that cloud covering the soul and not allowing one to see purely the divine ray; and where there is purification [καθαρσία] there is illumination [ἐλαμπάμυτι].

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222 Gr.Naz., Or. 27.3.7ff (SC 250, 76).
223 Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 43.
224 McGuckin, *Saint Gregory*, 342. McGuckin argues that *Oration* 39 follows the traditional structure of the episcopal prebaptismal catechesis and considers 39.9-10 as exorcism for the mental purification of the hearers.
225 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.20.7 (SC 358, 194).
Here, a mental aspect is represented as “fear,” a moral aspect as “keeping of commandments,” and a physical aspect as “of the flesh.” Therefore, although the ultimate obstacle to perceiving God is the material nature of human beings, it is not only the body that needs purification; one part of a person cannot be purified without other parts operating correspondingly. Thus, purification, according to Gregory, involves the entire being of a person.

However, an odd thing here is that, despite Gregory’s emphasis on the divine initiative of revelation, he seems to regard purification as a human effort. In fact, if we recall Meredith’s comment, Gregory can be thought of as claiming that “the preliminaries to full salvation are moral purity leading to vision.” If purification as human endeavor were prerequisite to “full salvation” (“salvation,” for Gregory, is closely related to a recovery of Imago Dei and a growth in the knowledge of God, as we have seen in the previous chapter), then that knowledge would be dependent upon human effort rather than God’s initiative to reveal Himself.

Nonetheless, before judging this Cappadocian Father for his seeming contradiction, we shall consider whether Gregory really regards purification as “preliminary” to salvation and, thus, to knowledge of God. When Gregory preaches to his catechumens at the Church of the Anastasia, he exhorts them saying, “let us each first purify ourselves.” Following these words, Gregory gives various illustrations of biblical characters, and, among them, the most pertinent story to the present topic is that of Paul. Interestingly, Gregory describes the state of the apostle before his repentance and conversion as “before being purified of persecuting.” The meaning of this phrase cannot be determined by the immediate context alone. However, Gregory’s argument against the Novatianists can shed some light upon what this church Father means by purification.

Novatianists were a group of those who rejected receiving a person back into the church’s communion even after he/she repented, once the individual had committed some serious post-baptismal sins. Contending against this merciless attitude, Gregory calls the Novatianists the

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227 Meredith, *The Cappadocians*, 43.
230 “Purification” in Gregory has been interpreted in different ways. For example, Beeley defines it as a moral and spiritual growth towards God. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 70. Eagan claims that the principle idea of purification is the likeness to God. Eagan, *The Knowledge*, 59. Although expressed differently, these descriptions belong to the same concept that Gregory’s primary concern in regard to purification is a person’s orientation towards or away from God as the first step to the process of theosis.
231 Harrison, *Festal Orations*, 95.
“new Pharisee[s] pure in name but not in intention,” and questions them, “You do not accept repentance?” In the same context, Gregory also contrasts purity to “pride.” And again, he exclaims against the unforgiving sectarians, “Show me your purity and I will accept your audacity.”

In all of these cases, considering the context, “purity” seems to indicate repentance and humility before God. In other words, purification is associated with the act of turning oneself to God. Gregory even states explicitly in one place: “God…Who is all-pure and all-luminous, Who demands of us, [a]s His only sacrifice, purification—that is, a contrite heart and the sacrifice of praise.” Therefore, rather than a moral or mental purity in some abstract sense, purification, for Gregory, seems to imply one’s direction towards and distance from God; as Gregory urges his listeners, “let us each first purify ourselves, then come close to the pure, who is God Himself.” Therefore, for Gregory, purification takes the concrete form of one’s repentance and turning towards God in order to approach Him.

This definition of purification is consistent with Gregory’s description of Paul’s state before conversion as “before being purified of persecuting.” Moreover, the relational concept in regards to purification is evident as well in Gregory’s somewhat mysterious statement: “one wonders at the ungraspable, and one desires more intensely the object of wonder, and being desired it purifies, and purifying it makes deiform, and with those who have become such he converses as with those close to him.” Hence, in Gregory’s mind, purification carries a relational connotation rather than a sense that an individual independently cleanses oneself apart from his/her relationship with God. According to this understanding of purification, then, it is hard to consider purification as a “prerequisite” to salvation. Rather, purification is part of one’s growth towards God, an initial movement towards theosis.

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232 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.18.6f (SC 358, 190).
233 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.18.8f (SC 358, 190).
234 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.18.15f (SC 358, 190).
235 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.18.20f (SC 358, 190).
236 We have discussed Gregory’s spatial imagery of human relationship to God in Chapter 2. See p. 33.
237 Gr.Naz., Or. 16.2.4-7 (PG 35, 956C).
238 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.9.1f (SC 358, 164).
239 McGuckin rightly associates Gregory’s purification within the context of salvation with a soul’s ascent to God. McGuckin, “Perceiving Light,” 13
240 Gr.Naz., Or. 39.9.10 (SC 358, 166).
241 Gr.Naz., Or. 38.7.16-19 (SC 358, 116).
Once this highly relational character of Gregory’s language is properly recognised, then the
problem of divine initiative and human effort need not be interpreted as contradictory. No
loving relationship can be had without two parties willingly and actively approaching each
other.\footnote{McGuckin stresses this point, referring to Gregory’s language of God’s ‘descent’ and human ‘ascent.’ J.A. McGuckin, “The Vision of God in St. Gregory Nazianzen,” in \textit{Studia Patristica} 32, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters Publishers, 1997), 147. Also see Winslow, \textit{The Dynamics}, 195. In those movements, both authors emphasise, God’s initiative is crucial for Gregory.} In fact, it is precisely Gregory’s point that God allows humans to freely choose their
orientation, either toward or away from God. Gregory even argues that “it is a mark of God’s
reasonableness that the issue should be ours. God thought it wrong to do men good against their
will but right to benefit those with a mind to it.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., Or. 31.25.14f (SC 250, 324).} Therefore, because Gregory understands
knowledge of God in a very relational sense, it follows that he also perceives God’s revelation
that way. As a result, even though God takes an initiative in revealing Himself, human beings, in
Gregory’s opinion, still play an active role in God’s revelatory act.

Having treated one of the elements in Gregory’s \textit{theosis}, we now turn to a discussion of another component: illumination. For Gregory, the word “illumination \[φωτισμός\]” conveys at least two meanings. First, it refers specifically to the rite of baptism.\footnote{Baptism is called illumination alongside other names such as “gift, grace…anointing, robe of incorruption, bath of rebirth, seal, everything honorable.” Gr.Naz., Or. 40.4.7ff (SC 358, 202).} Gregory teaches that baptism is
illumination, because it “is radiance of souls, transformation of life, engagements of the
conscience toward God…Illumination \[τὸ φωτισμὸς\] is a vehicle leading toward God, departure
with Christ.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., Or. 40.3.4-11 (SC 358, 200ff).} The language here clearly indicates that Gregory understands baptism in the context of the process of \textit{theosis}.

According to Gregory, it seems, even when one purifies oneself and humbly fixes the mind
towards God, the person cannot start the process of \textit{theosis} by one’s own power, since the
human mind is contaminated by sin and the fall. Therefore, to begin the process, one needs a
“departure with Christ” by putting on Christ, the New Adam. As we have discussed in the
previous chapter, this Christ, the perfect Light, recovers the image of God within people so that
they may start their growth toward God again. This salvific act of Christ is effectuated by the
concrete event of baptism.\footnote{Gregory mentions five kinds of baptism: baptism of Moses, John’s baptism, Jesus’ baptism in the Spirit, baptism through martyrdom, and baptism of tears. Gr.Naz., Or. 39.17.1-26 (SC 358, 186ff). However, I shall focus on his understanding of the baptism in the Spirit, which is the practice of the Church.}
The second meaning of illumination in Gregory seems very different from the first, but ultimately they are inseparable, since the second meaning is founded on the first. In contrast to calling the tangible act of baptism an illumination, Gregory refers to a more abstract concept as illumination when he says in his *Festal Orations*, “receive the discourse about such a great matter…since this also is an illumination [φωτισμός], to know the power of the mystery.”

Here, Gregory seems to claim that illumination is an acquisition of certain knowledge. What this knowledge specifically refers to can be readily understood in the context of the theological and political situation of the day. Considering that, when he delivered his *Festal Orations*, Gregory was newly installed bishop at a formerly anti-Nicene Church, his eagerness to “illumine” his congregation with the right doctrine, particularly the Trinitarian theology of the Nicene party, is apparent in his language.

When Gregory exhorts his congregation and says, “let us illumine [φωτίσωμεν] ourselves with the light of knowledge,” his concern is that they “may learn also what is the true light and what is the false, and may not fall unawares into evil perceived as good.” Needless to say, “the true light” refers to Gregory’s own theology, while “the false” clearly means the theology of the “Arians,” probably pointing specifically to the teaching of the former bishop of Constantinople, Demophilus. Therefore, Gregory is claiming that the acceptance of the right doctrine, as he teaches it, is the illumination. In fact, the new bishop is very conscious of his rival’s theology as he presents his own; therefore he strongly urges his congregation, “you must be baptised with this faith. If anyone has written in you in a way other than my discourse demands, come and have the writing changed.”

Confident and forceful is the preaching of the Nicene Father. However, one might wonder what the foundation might be for his unwavering attitude. Since Gregory has articulated that it is impossible to know the being of God, how can he be so sure about his own doctrine on that very topic? The answer to this seems to lie in Gregory’s understanding of “illumination” itself. We have already observed that, for Gregory, illumination means baptism and the acceptance of the

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247 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.1.10-13 (SC 358, 198).
248 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.37.12 (SC 358, 284).
249 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.37.14-17 (SC 358, 284).
250 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.44.3ff (SC 358, 300).
right doctrine. However, it must be noted that Gregory regarded these two as much more than a mere ritual or a solely cognitive activity.\footnote{In this regard, Beeley and Eagan provide helpful insight into Gregory’s understanding of illumination. Beeley points out that, for Gregory, illumination is a God-given salvific knowledge of Himself, and this knowledge is closely identified with the being of God. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 105-108. Egan also highlights the ontological aspect of illumination and defines Gregory’s illumination as “participation.” Egan, *The Knowledge*, 134.}

For Gregory, baptism is illumination both by Christ and the Spirit, and a beginning of divinisation. Therefore, baptism, for this Father, has not only symbolical significance but also an ontological effect; thus, the believers are encouraged to claim confidently, “I have put on Christ, I have been transformed into Christ by baptism.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 40.10.33f (*SC* 358, 218).} This radical but biblical\footnote{Gal.2.20; 3.27.} concept is understood in the context of *theosis*. As Gregory states, “Let us become like Christ, since Christ also became like us; let us become gods because of him, since he also because of us became human.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 1.5.1f (*SC* 247, 78).} This union with Christ grants the baptised an access to knowledge of the Father’s being, since “[t]he Son is the concise and simple revelation of the Father’s nature.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 30.20.11f (*SC* 250, 268).} Therefore, knowing Christ in a relational, experiential, and ontological way also enables the baptised to know the right doctrine of God.

In the same way, the Holy Spirit also brings people back to the starting point of divinisation through the baptismal rite. As Gregory states, “Were the Spirit not to be worshipped, how could he deify [θεόν] me through baptism?”\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 31.28.9f (*SC* 250, 332).} And the Spirit, also, grants the right doctrine to those whom He divinises, as Gregory talks of “the genuine illumination I had received from him [the Spirit].” And the precise content of this illumination is Gregory’s Nicene conviction; therefore he states, “To the best of my powers I will persuade all men to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power.”\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 31.33.16-19 (*SC* 250, 342).}

Thus, Gregory’s confidence in the validity of his doctrine stems from his experience as a baptised person and also as a baptiser. By the concrete event of baptism, Gregory claims to have received revelation of God through the presence and work of the Son and the Spirit. In fact, this Father believes that he is even inspired by the Spirit when he argues for the divinity of the Holy Spirit:

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\footnote{Gr.Naz., *Or*. 40.10.33f (*SC* 358, 218).}
As for what concerns the Spirit, may the Spirit assist me and give me speech...And he will assist entirely as a master, but not as a slave, not awaiting a command, as some suppose. For he blows where he wills, and upon whom, and whenever and however much he wishes. Thus are we inspired both to think and to speak about the Spirit.\textsuperscript{258}

This self-affirmed inspiration and experience of the divine can hardly be accepted as a justification for the theological claim in academic circles today, which values “objective” and “scientific” judgment. However, considering the central emphasis on relationship with God in Gregory’s theology, personal experience of God naturally becomes an indispensable part in constructing one’s theology. Just as “knowing a person” always involves “knowing about the person,” but the reverse is not necessarily true, so does “knowing God,” for Gregory, lead to “knowing about God,” while the reverse is not always the case.

Therefore, while personal experience is neither verifiable nor deniable, thus is possible to be considered an illegitimate argument, it holds a significant authority in Gregory’s epistemology. It must also be noted that Gregory’s appeal to experience is not individualistic or eccentric. His experience is grounded in liturgy, which is a collective experience of the Church. According to Gregory, humans cannot know anything about the being of God unless they know God; and they can only know God by divine revelation through the presence and work of the Son and the Spirit, which are effectuated by baptism.

Notwithstanding, Gregory’s confidence in his theology is not based on his personal experience alone. Although this Father believes that inspiration and revelation of doctrine about God come through the baptismal rite, he does not consider all baptised people as competent expositors of Christian doctrine. Quite to the contrary, Gregory asserts that the “[d]iscussion of theology is not for everyone.”\textsuperscript{259} Moreover, Gregory is firmly convinced that theological endeavour is “only for those who have been tested and have found a sound footing in study, and, more importantly, have undergone, or at the very least are undergoing, purification of body and soul.”\textsuperscript{260}

This seemingly elitist attitude\textsuperscript{261} is a natural consequence of his theory of \textit{theosis}, in which he understands one’s closeness to God as being proportionate to the level of the knowledge of God.

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\textsuperscript{258} Gr.Naz., \textit{Or}. 41.5.25-31 (SC 358, 326).
\textsuperscript{259} Gr.Naz., \textit{Or}. 27.3.1 (SC 250, 76).
\textsuperscript{260} Gr.Naz., \textit{Or}. 27.3.5ff (SC 250, 76).
\textsuperscript{261} Both Beeley and McGuckin believe that Gregory’s aristocratic background also contributed to his elitist mindset. Beeley, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus}, 74. McGuckin, \textit{Gregory of Nazianzus}, 28, 72, 87-99, 149, 172, 205, 335f.
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that the person has attained. As has been discussed above, Gregory clearly believes that some people are more advanced in knowledge of God than others.\textsuperscript{262} Therefore, not only is Gregory qualified as a baptised person, but he claims also to have an advantage as a mature Christian. Moreover, although he does not emphasise this, Gregory’s role as bishop, which he understands primarily as being that of a teacher of the right doctrine, probably has contributed to his confidence and the strong sense of calling.\textsuperscript{263} Therefore, he confidently assures his congregation, “You keep the prize, that is the unity in the three, but leave to me the battle…Mine will be the war, yours the reward of victory.”\textsuperscript{264} As a student of philosophy and the Bible, Gregory feels fully equipped to construct and teach doctrine in the midst of heated theological controversy.

We have discussed at length how Gregory’s theory of gradual revelation manifests itself as the theory of \textit{theosis} on a personal level. This was to demonstrate how, for Gregory, the extent of the knowledge of God revealed to humanity increases over time, and how this change can happen individually as well as corporately. Because of this concept of gradual revelation, Gregory relies much less on the Church tradition than Basil. Also, we have observed how the theory of \textit{theosis}, which is highly relational and experiential in nature, assures Gregory that his is the right doctrine of God. However, there is another aspect of Gregory’s theology that guarantees his knowledge of God, namely, the gradual revelation of God experienced corporately—the theory of progressive revelation.

This Father believes that he is not only qualified personally to argue for the divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also competent to discuss such a matter because he is living in a dispensation appropriate to making a bold pneumatological claim. Concerning this concept of dispensation, Gregory observes, by glancing at the entire scheme of the biblical narrative from the Old to the New Testament, how God has led the people of Israel gradually to true worship. First, God guided them away from idolatry, then they gave up sacrifices, and finally, they were instructed to let go of the practice of circumcision. In this way, Gregory believes that “[u]nder the first

\textsuperscript{262} See p. 31.
\textsuperscript{263} Gregory does not seem to regard an ecclesial position as something that automatically guarantees one’s theological competence. This is understandable since, in his days, there were sees occupied by “Arian” bishops, whom Gregory considered theologically unsound and rather amateurish. What is important for Gregory is that bishops, before they assume their positions, be sufficiently equipped “by training oneself in the discipline of philosophy for a long time, and so detaching the noble and luminous elements of the soul, little by little, from what is base and mingled with darkness, or else by obtaining God’s mercy—or by a combination of the two.” Without this philosophical training which leads one away from material world to gaze upon the spiritual realm, Gregory does “not think it is safe either to accept a position of spiritual leadership or to devote oneself to theology.” Gr.Naz., \textit{Or.} 20.1.22f (\textit{SC} 270, 58).
\textsuperscript{264} Gr.Naz., \textit{Or.} 40.43.12-14 (\textit{SC} 358, 298).
covenant that concession was sacrifice, and they became Jews instead of Gentile; under the second, circumcision—and they became Christians instead of Jews, brought round gradually, bit by bit, to the Gospel.”

Here, Gregory argues that God’s establishing His relationship with His chosen people is accomplished by their “departure from time-honored, customary ways.” This concept is almost exactly opposite to that of Basil, who strongly believes in the authority of age-old customs in general. However, Gregory’s emphasis is on the living relationship between God and humanity, and relationships naturally experience changes. Similarly then, Gregory argues, the doctrine of God is revealed gradually and undergoes changes. Hence, Gregory “produces a highly original theory of doctrinal development:”

the old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father, a less definite one of the Son. The new [covenant] made the Son manifest and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit’s Godhead. At the present time the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before. It was dangerous for the Son to be preached openly when the Godhead of the Father was still unacknowledged. It was dangerous, too, for the Holy Spirit to be made (and here I use a rather rash expression) an extra burden, when the Son had not been received. It could mean men jeopardizing what did lie within their powers, as happens to those encumbered with a diet too strong for them or who gaze at sunlight with eyes as yet too feeble for it.

The language of Gregory here is reminiscent of his argument about how dangerous it is for an unqualified person to discuss theology. Thus, we can observe how his theory of progressive revelation is parallel to his idea of theosis and is consistent with his understanding of knowledge of God as having a gradual nature.

Conclusion

Unlike Basil who appeals to the “secret tradition” of the Church to justify his pneumatology, Gregory attempts to explain the silence of Scripture concerning the Spirit’s divinity by introducing a theory of progressive revelation. Basil, who believes that the doctrine guarded by

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265 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.25.22-28 (SC 250, 324).
266 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.25.20f (SC 250, 324).
267 A question remains as to how Gregory’s belief in God’s immutability and infinity can be compatible with his idea of changing relationship between God and people. However, Gregory seems to remain faithful to the biblical account and tries to explain what he can from human experiences from a human perspective.
268 Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, 261.
269 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.26.4-14 (SC 250, 326).
270 “For one who is not pure to lay hold of pure things is dangerous, just as it is for weak eyes to look at the sun’s brightness.” Gr.Naz., Or. 27.3.7ff (SC 250, 76).
the Church basically remain the same throughout the ages, considers that the Trinitarian theology and the pneumatology as he teaches them must have existed, having completely the same expressions, from the time of the apostles. By this approach, however, the Caesarean bishop himself probably could not be entirely confident about his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Although Basil tried to find a supportive voice from the saints of old, in the end, he could not find quite exactly what he sought after all. Therefore, his unresolved mind seems to have urged him to add some statements at the very end of *De Spiritu Sancto*, as if to admit the inadequacy of his argument:

My words have come to this point, and, if they are enough for you, this will be the end of our discussion of these matters. If, however, it seems inadequate, there is no malice in endeavoring to seek further and add to your knowledge by uncontentious questioning. For the Lord will finish what was left, either through us or through others, according to the knowledge furnished to those who are worthy of him by the Spirit.²⁷¹

It seems, then, the work that Basil leaves for others to finish is taken up by his friend Gregory. In contrast to Basil’s somewhat unsatisfactory appeal to Church tradition to prove the Spirit’s divinity, Gregory is able to account for the seemingly new doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Unlike Basil, Gregory admits that the Spirit was not recognised as God by people in the past. However, this fact does not trouble him. Despite the lack of evidence from the past, Gregory can confidently state his Trinitarian theology on the basis of three principles.

First, Gregory appeals to his experience of Christ and the Spirit as God in the baptismal rite. For Gregory, not only the baptismal formula but also his experience of divinisation is a proof for the divinity of Christ and the Spirit. Also, through this experience, Gregory claims to gain knowledge of God through illumination by the two persons.

Second, the same concept of *theosis* assures Gregory that he is teaching the right doctrine. This Father believes that God’s act of revelation, though it is initiated by God, always involves the active participation of humans because of its relational character. Accordingly, therefore, some people are thought to be more advanced in knowledge of God than others. Since Gregory, as bishop, perceives himself as a mature Christian, competent both in the Bible and philosophy, he can be sure that he sees the truth of God more clearly than others.

Third, Gregory believes that, not only is he a qualified theologian as an individual, but he is also living at the proper dispensation to articulate the Spirit’s divinity: he is an appropriate person at an appropriate time. Therefore Gregory teaches,

The Savior had certain truths which he said could not at that time be borne by the disciples…These truths…were therefore concealed. He also said that we should be taught ‘all things’ by the Holy Spirit, when he made his dwelling in us. One of these truths I take to be the Godhead of the Spirit, which becomes clear at a later stage, when the knowledge was timely and capable of being taken in.272

However, such emphasis on personal experience may seem to obscure the significance of the revelation: the incarnation of the Son. While Gregory believes that the earthly work of Jesus and His cross have recovered the process of theosis for humanity, and that theosis can be achieved only through the work of the Son and the Holy Spirit, the relevance of the incarnation to the believer’s actual knowledge of God is uncertain. Is the event of the Son’s coming as a man itself a distinct kind of revelation? What is the meaning of Jesus’ ministry on earth in relation to epistemology? In this regard, Basil can better explain the importance of the actual event of the incarnation, since he claims to have received his knowledge of God from the Church, who handed down to him what had been handed down to her from Jesus and his eyewitnesses.

Therefore, the approach of Gregory that we have studied in this chapter contains some inherent weaknesses. The fact that Gregory mentions Church tradition neither as a valid means of revelation nor as a strong support for the Spirit’s divinity may seem to indicate that this Father diminishes the importance and particularity of the revelation by the incarnation. In addition, Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation may appear to count the special event of Christ as just another phase in the history of God’s revealing act. Moreover, Gregory’s emphasis on the spiritual experience of individual Christians could be interpreted as devaluing the necessity for the incarnation as an actual historical event in relation to epistemology.

Granted that these are all possible problems in Gregory’s theology and epistemology, another aspect of God’s revelation, which may shed some light on his understanding of the incarnation, remains yet to be discussed. This aspect of revelation is, of course, the Bible, the written Word of God. Although Gregory does not appeal to Church tradition to ensure his connection to the ultimate revelation, i.e. the incarnation, he seems to have perceived that connection in the Bible.

272 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.27.8-15 (SC 250, 330).
Therefore, keeping in mind the highly relational and dynamic character of Gregory’s understanding of God’s revelation, we shall investigate, focusing on his *Oration 31* and Basil’s *De Spiritu Sancto*, how Gregory, in contrast to Basil, understands the place of the Bible, as well as how he reads and interprets Scripture in connection to his doctrine of the Holy Spirit. By examining Gregory’s treatment of the Bible in the light of his concepts of knowledge and revelation of God, we shall see how his unyielding pneumatology emerged from his faithfulness to the Word of God.
Chapter 4  
Scripture and the Triune God

1 The Silence of Scripture

For both Gregory and Basil the obstacle to establishing their Trinitarian theologies seems to be the silence of Scripture regarding the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in the Bible can we find verses explicitly stating that the Holy Spirit is God, let alone that He is homoousios with the Father. Gregory is well aware that he needs to explain “the reason for…[the] concealment.”\(^{273}\) When his opponents ask him, “Where is the scriptural authority for worshipping or praying to him, from where did you get the idea?”\(^{274}\) Gregory must give a convincing answer. Likewise, Basil struggles to account for the “silence” of Scripture and Church tradition concerning the Spirit’s identity.\(^{275}\) In response to these challenges, these two Fathers propose different solutions: Gregory, his theory of \textit{theosis} and progressive revelation, and Basil, an appeal to the secret tradition of the Church.

These creative proposals emerge, in the words of Jaroslav Pelikan, from “a recognition that a different method of biblical proof was necessary in the doctrine of the Spirit from that employed in the doctrine of the Son.”\(^{276}\) To determine what this “different method” was for Gregory and Basil, scholars have examined these two Fathers’ writings, hoping to discover some crucial exegetical principles. Researchers of Gregory, such as Brian Daley, argue that Gregory employs the “biblically grounded rule of faith” as a hermeneutical principle.\(^{277}\) Similarly, Edgars Narkevics states that the “hermeneutical assumption that sustains a certain reading of scripture…was his [Gregory’s] understanding of the Nicene Creed.”\(^{278}\)

\(^{275}\) Basil, \textit{Spir.} 27.66.28f (SC 17, 234).
\(^{278}\) Narkevics, “\textit{Skiagraphia},” 105.
In the same way, scholars of Basil also seek to find Basil’s interpretive key. For instance, Pelikan argues that the crucial passage for Basil in demonstrating the Spirit’s divinity is Matthew 28:19, which determines the standard of teaching and directs the reading of the entire Bible. However, Stephen Hildebrand insists that the passage of central importance for Basil is 1 Corinthians 12:3. In either case, these scholars believe that Basil interprets various passages of Scripture according to a key idea, and also that he assembles numerous verses together to express that concept. For both Gregory and Basil, then, there is a general consensus among the scholars that these Fathers’ aim in biblical interpretation is not to approach the text with the mind *a tabula rasa*, groping for an “objective” meaning by inductive study of the Bible, but to study biblical texts with a set of assumptions.

In fact, the opposing categories in the minds of these ancient Fathers are not “objective vs. subjective” but “literal vs. spiritual.” For both Gregory and Basil, a spiritual reading of Scripture is superior to a literal one. Therefore, Gregory criticises his opponents, writing, “their love for the letter is a cloak for irreligion.” According to him, the proper interpretation comes from seeing “inside the written text to its inner meaning.” Basil also asserts, concerning the interpretation of the Bible, “he who attends merely to the meaning of the letter and wastes time with its legal observances covers his own heart with the Jewish interpretation of the letter, that is to say, with a veil.” It is important to note, however, that Gregory and Basil’s “spiritual” reading is not necessarily an “allegorical” reading of the Bible, as neither of them engages in such a method of scriptural interpretation in their treatises on the Holy Spirit. The “spiritual meaning,” at least in the context of *Oration 31* and *De Spiritu Sancto*, seems to refer simply to the interpretation of biblical passages in conformity with the Trinitarian theology of Gregory or Basil.

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280 Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 187. The author recognises the significance of Matthew 28:19 for Basil, since the father uses the verse 7 times in his treatise. However, Hildebrand believes that the passage in 1 Corinthians better expresses Basil’s central idea about the Holy Spirit.
281 Gr.Naz., *Or*. 31.3.5f (SC 250, 278).
284 According to Demoen, “The Cappadocians did not form an exegetical school. The hermeneutic stances of Basil and his brother Gregory of Nyssa diverge quite a lot: the former stands rather in the line of Antiochenes, because of his suspicions of the ἀλληγορία, the latter practices it without reticence and is hence placed within the Alexandrian tradition. Gregory of Nazianzen is usually situated somewhere in between.” Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical*, 245. Charles Kannengiesser also comments that Gregory of Nazianzus belongs neither to Alexandrian nor Antiochene exegetical tradition, as “neither systematic allegorism of the Alexandrians nor the rationalism of Antiochene interpreters” is found in Gregory. Charles Kannengiesser ed., *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, vol 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 749.
The Trinitarian theology of Gregory and that of Basil, however, as we have seen, demonstrate certain differences that cannot be overlooked. The cause of those differences, though, does not seem to lie mainly in their methods of interpretation, since both of them warn against an exegetical approach that is excessively rigid and literal, and both encourage “spiritual” reading. Moreover, the actual procedures of this “spiritual” interpretation coincide in many ways as well. For example, both list various names of the Spirit in the Bible (e.g. “Spirit of God” [Mt. 12:28], “Spirit of Truth” [Jn. 15:26]). In both, numerous biblical verses are gathered in order to demonstrate the Spirit’s goodness and omnipresence. The mentions of the Spirit’s role in the life of Christ as well as the Spirit’s work in the Church to appoint different offices are also obvious parallels in the writings of Gregory and Basil. In a word, many of the proof texts and the points being made are the same in both Fathers. At the same time, neither offers an extensive discussion on a particular verse.

Therefore, Gregory and Basil seem to take similar paths in terms of their choices and interpretations of the scriptural passages. Yet, one makes a pneumatological claim bolder and, perhaps, more convincing than the other. Where does this difference come from? The answer probably lies in their treatment not of “what the Bible says about the Spirit” but of “what the Bible does not say about the Spirit.” Both Fathers acknowledge the need to explain the silence of Scripture on the divinity of the Holy Spirit, since accusations are raised against Gregory that he is introducing a “strange, unscriptural ‘God’” and also against Basil that his doxology is “unscriptural.” It is precisely at this point where the two Fathers each take a unique route, thus, arriving at differing conclusions. Hence, in the following sections, we shall examine how Gregory and Basil respond to the problem of the silence of Scripture. Before that, however, we must first discuss what “the silence of Scripture” entails in the context of the fourth century.

2 Scripture for Gregory and Basil

In order to consider what “the silence of Scripture” meant for Gregory and Basil, we shall investigate what “Scripture” was for these Fathers. As Christians born after an age of severe

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285 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.14; 16 (SC 250, 334); Basil, Spir. 9.22.8f (SC 17, 145).
286 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.20 (SC 250, 334); Basil, Spir. 24.56.1 (SC 17, 217).
287 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.42ff (SC 250, 336); Basil, Spir. 23.54.7-14 (SC 17, 213).
288 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.5-8 (SC 250, 332); Basil, Spir. 16.39.9-28 (SC 17, 180f).
289 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.4ff (SC 250, 334f); Basil, Spir. 16.37.22-29 (SC 17, 174).
290 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.1.6 (SC 250, 276).
291 Basil, Spir. 29.71.2 (SC 17, 245).
persecution, Gregory and Basil probably enjoyed easier access to the Holy Book, since Christianity had received imperial favour. The empire’s powerful arms served no longer to confiscate but to supply Bibles to the Church. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, Constantine had ordered fifty copies of the Bible to be distributed to newly erected churches. In fact, the first Christian emperor’s plan was to construct new churches and furnish each of them with the Scriptures.

This ambitious program of Constantine reveals that, around his time, the possession of the Bible was not a commonplace for the churches—it took an imperial authority and budget to prepare the Bibles. However, even in this situation, churches were not without access to the Holy Book. Since one of the central parts of their worship was the liturgical reading of the Bible, even small communities probably possessed some fragments of the scriptures and some collections of other Christian writings. Moreover, among the literate and the wealthy, books were readily available through personal distribution, borrowing, and copying. Also, a common practice in the ancient church was *lectio continua*, in which the “text of a book or of a series of books was read through consecutively, being taken up each Sunday where it had concluded on the previous Sunday.” This practice gave the congregation and clergy the opportunity to listen to a variety of biblical passages and other Christian writings during the service.

Therefore, any Christian, literate or illiterate, had plenty of occasions to be immersed into the words of Scripture in the context of worship services and the teaching of the Church. However, Gregory and Basil probably had even greater opportunity to possess or to have a direct contact with many of the scriptural books. For one thing, they were both of aristocratic families. Considering the presence of other theologians and churchmen in their families, they likely possessed private libraries. For another, both Fathers traveled, as young men, along the Mediterranean Sea to Palestinian Caesarea and Alexandria, both of which were known for their

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292 Eusebius, *De Vita Constantini*, 4.36. The letter to Eusebius from Constantine reads: “It appeared proper to indicate to your Intelligence that you should order fifty volumes with ornamental leather bindings, easily legible and convenient for portable use, to be copied by skilled calligraphists well trained in the art, copies that is of the Divine Scriptures, the provision and use of which you well know to be necessary for reading in church.” ET: Averil Cameron and Stuart G. Hall trans., *Eusebius-Life of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 166f.
294 Ibid., 151.
295 Ibid., 231. According to Gamble, books were not obtained through commercial trade but distributed as gifts.
296 Ibid., 217.
297 Ibid., 176. Gamble argues, “Almost every Christian teacher and writer must have accumulated a working library, usually comprising a good selection of pagan literature along with Christian texts.”
great libraries. The Caesarean library, in particular, “was well stocked with biblical manuscripts, …from the beginning it sponsored a tradition of careful textual scholarship, and … it was highly respected as a repository of reliable texts.” When young Gregory visited Caesarea, he probably studied at the library, possibly receiving some copies of manuscripts or copying them for himself.

In those days, libraries were responsible, not only for collecting and preserving books, but also for producing and distributing copies of them. Thus, for example, Pamphilus, the bishop of Caesarea a generation before Gregory’s time, was said to have “readily provided Bibles not only to read but to keep, and not only for men but for any women whom he saw addicted to reading. Hence he would prepare a large number of volumes, so that, when any demand was made upon him, he might be in a position to gratify those who applied to him.”

Therefore, we can assume that Gregory, having toured the city of Caesarea, read and possibly obtained various parts of the Bible. Basil, too, probably had a chance to visit the monastic library in Egypt, during his trip with Eustathius to study monasticism there. In a word, these two Fathers, with their privileged family backgrounds and education, seem to have had quite a liberal access to the scriptural writings.

In a privileged environment such as this, the familiarity with a wide range of scriptural and other Christian writings might have led Gregory to compose his poem listing the authoritative and canonical books. When observing the flourishing Christian literary culture, Gregory, as a person of authority, perceived the need for certain restrictions or a guide as to which books should be read in the service and for Christian instruction. Since an example had already been set by his admired hero Athanasius in his Festal Epistle 39 (367), which listed the canonical books as fixed and unchangeable, Gregory basically followed and enforced the canon presented by that great Alexandrian bishop.

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298 Ibid., 155-160.
299 Ibid., 158.
301 About monastic libraries, see Gamble, Books and Readers, 170-174.
303 Gregory’s canonical list is the same as that of Athanasius, except that the former’s list lacks reference to the book of Revelation. Usually, scholars assume that Gregory disagrees with Athanasius, as in Bruce M. Metzger, The Canon of the New Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 212. However, Frank Thielman argues that Gregory
In sum, for Gregory and Basil, Scripture was not one volume that was comprised of sixty six books. However, these Fathers probably had access to most, if not all, of the scriptural books, and were at least familiar with most of the content of the Bible. The means of obtaining the knowledge of those scriptural materials were the scripture reading at church, biblical quotations in the sermons and Christian writings, as well as actual books received from other Christians or possibly from the Christian libraries.

It is important to note that all of these cases, by which Gregory and Basil came in contact with biblical materials, provide a set context and purpose for the scriptural writings. Biblical passages or books would not be found sitting idly and meaninglessly in a neutral environment, as we see in ordinary bookstores or on the internet today. For instance, when quoted in sermons or Christian writings, biblical passages were always delivered with the intention to persuade, teach, and instruct according to a certain interpretation. When distributed personally, the books probably were often accompanied by words of recommendation, which inevitably involved an interpretation of the writing. Above all, when read during the Christian worship, the biblical passages were placed in the context of the liturgy, the life of the Church, which demonstrated her faith and value system.

Therefore, the body of Scripture did not exist on its own but was literally intertwined with the life of Christian communities and their interpretations. For this reason, what is sometimes called with disdain, “the presuppositions with which [the Fathers] approached the Biblical text,” was, for the Fathers, not an undesirable obstacle to reading Scripture, but a necessary, and even inherent, part of the Holy Book. To read manuscripts without spaces and punctuation, one could not possibly approach the Bible without any “presuppositions.” In this regard, Basil’s appeal

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304 According to Christopher de Hamel, “‘The Bible’, as an indivisible portable volume of fixed texts in a standard order and enclosed between two covers, is a relatively modern concept, more or less unimaginable before the thirteenth century.” Christopher de Hamel, *Bibles-An Illustrated History from Papyrus to Print* (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011), 3. Hamel’s book contains quality pictures of ancient manuscripts and later Bibles, effectively demonstrating the development of the Bible as a book.

305 Gamble summarises well: “Liturgical reading was the concrete setting from which texts acquired theological authority, and in which that authority took effect.” Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 216.

306 Hanson, *The Search*, 849.

307 Ancient manuscripts were all without spaces and punctuations. About what was involved in reading texts in the ancient time, see Hildebrand, *The Trinitarian Theology*, 103-107. According to Hildebrand, the first task in reading ancient manuscripts was to establish texts, deciding where the breaks of the words and sentences were.
to Church tradition was probably more effective and powerful than one might expect today, since tradition and the biblical texts were virtually inseparable in his day.\footnote{308}

Considering this context surrounding Gregory and Basil, we can now perceive the crux of their theological task. Their opponents complained, against Basil, that “to give glory with the Holy Spirit is unattested and non-scriptural [ἀμέρτουρον καὶ ἄγραφον],”\footnote{309} and they asked Gregory, “who worshipped the Spirit?...Is there any ancient or modern example?...Where is the scriptural authority for worshipping or praying to him, from where did you get the idea?”\footnote{310} They demanded from Gregory and Basil proofs from the scriptures. However, when they did so, they were not objecting to those Cappadocian Fathers merely because of the apparent lack of explicit biblical evidence for giving glory to or worshipping and praying to the Spirit.

The crucial problem for those who resisted Gregory and Basil’s pneumatologies seems to be that, in addition to the lack of any exact proof-text, they could not discern, from their Christian experience, the context in which they might understand the scriptures as implying the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In other words, they had not heard the words of Scripture being proclaimed in the context of supporting the divinity of the Holy Spirit. That is probably why those people complained about Basil’s doxology being not only “non-scriptural” but also “unattested.” And in the case of Gregory, he was asked to provide not only “the scriptural authority,” but also “any ancient or modern example.”

Therefore, the challenge for Gregory and Basil was not just to present some convincing argument from the scriptures. Providing an interpretation of the reality that surrounded the humanity was equally, if not more, important, because, according to that particular understanding, the life of the Church would function as a context in which a proper scriptural interpretation could be established and maintained. In this process, the vital task was to interpret the silence of Scripture. In a way, this silence of Scripture concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit was a silence of the Church concerning that matter. And the silence of the Church meant

\footnote{308} Basil clearly perceives the need for understanding Christian value system before approaching the scriptural texts. Therefore, he even encourages young men to study pagan writings and learn what is consonant with biblical teachings, so that those students may be mature enough to interpret the Bible correctly. In a way, Basil is urging them to cultivate certain “presuppositions” before interpreting Scripture. Basil, “Address to young men on the right use of Greek literature” in Essays on the Study and Use of Poetry by Plutarch and Basil the Great, ed. Frederick Morgan Padelford (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1902), 101-120.

\footnote{309} Basil, Spir. 27.71.1f (SC 17, 245).

\footnote{310} Gr.Naz., Or. 31.12.1ff (SC 250, 296).
that it was difficult to perceive the consistency between Gregory and Basil’s pneumatologies and the life of the Church.

Therefore, ultimately, what was necessary for those Fathers was to narrate the ecclesial history, testimony, and practice in a fresh way, in order to present the Church as a context in which the scriptures could be interpreted to support the divinity of the Spirit. Their mission was to persuade people that their doctrines of the Holy Spirit fit nicely with the life of the Church, despite her alleged silence. Thus, we shall now discuss Basil’s explanation for the silence of Scripture and the Church in relation to his exegesis.

3 Basil and the Divine Spirit of God

The most crucial difference between Basil and Gregory seems to be that the former attributes a positive force to the secret tradition, while the latter uses his theory of progressive revelation only to explain the silence of Scripture. As has been discussed in Chapter three, Basil regards the Bible and the tradition of the Church as being equally authoritative, because they are both means by which God hands down the knowledge of Himself. However, we must be careful not to judge this ancient Father according to the dichotomy of tradition and Scripture in the post-Reformation sense.

The mindset of the ancient Father differs significantly from those of modern scholars. Therefore, Basil is not espousing the concept of Sola Scriptura, as Hanson, for instant, does, condemning tradition for “its incurable inferiority to Scripture.” At the same time, however, Basil is not an advocate of the necessity of tradition in biblical interpretation either; therefore, it is misleading to portray Basil, as Hildebrand does, as arguing that “the Scriptures do not interpret themselves,” as if to criticise the Protestant hermeneutical principle. For the Caesarean bishop, the relationship between Scripture and the Church tradition is not characterised by one side’s dependence on the other. Basil’s focus is not that tradition needs to be verified by the Scriptures, nor that the Scriptures need to be interpreted by Church tradition. For Basil, both are equally authoritative, not because of each other, but because of the common source of their authority—God. Therefore, in a way, the Bible and tradition are both legitimate vehicles of God’s

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311 Hanson, Tradition, 186.
312 Hildebrand, The Trinitarian Theology, 148.
revelation independent of one another. Nevertheless, they are still complementary, since, as we have seen above, they rarely exist apart from each other in the fourth century.

This is why Basil insists that his doxology and the particular use of prepositions in it are “consonant with Scripture,”313 while, at the same time, claiming, “if most of our mysteries are authorized without Scripture, we will receive this one along with the many others. Standing fast in non-scriptural tradition is, I think, apostolic.”314 According to Basil, then, because of their shared origin and common purpose, the Bible and Church tradition are intrinsically consistent with each other; however, it is not always necessary that one should be authenticated by the other, since each draws its authority directly from God’s revelatory act.

This equal treatment of Scripture and tradition is manifest in Basil’s use of the baptismal formula. While the invocation of the three persons in baptism is clearly scriptural, Basil does not seem to regard the traditional baptismal formula as being based on Matthew 28:19. In other words, for Basil, the Church baptises people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, because Jesus commanded his disciples to do so—both the Gospel account and Church tradition faithfully hand down that divine revelation.

Therefore, Basil seems to make no direct connection between the scriptural witness and the practice of baptism. For instance, in Spir. 10.20, Basil clearly acknowledges that the Trinitarian formula is scriptural when he argues, “if [the Spirit] is joined there [in the baptismal formula] to the Father and to the Son…let [our opponents] not blame us if we follow the Scriptures.”315 However, in Spir. 27.67, when asking, “by what Scriptures do we hold the very confession of faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?” he does not cite the Matthean passage but answers that that faith is “from the tradition of baptism.”316 Thus, Basil seems to be asking here a rhetorical question, implying that it is not from Scripture that the Church confesses her faith in the Triune God.

Considering the context of the latter passage, it is understandable why Basil does not mention the scripture: he is trying to prove the authority of “the non-scriptural mysteries of the

313 Basil, Spir. 27.65.15 (SC 17, 232).
314 Basil, Spir. 29.71.5f (SC 17, 245).
315 Basil, Spir. 10.24.18-21 (SC 17, 150).
316 Basil, Spir. 27.67.4f (SC 17, 238).
Church” in doctrinal matters. However, it is still interesting how Basil identifies the source of the baptismal formula, not as the Bible, but as Church tradition, even though he knows that the formula also appears in Scripture. Here, therefore, Basil appears to regard the authority of tradition as being independent of Scripture.

This emphasis on the baptismal formula as “traditional” rather than “scriptural” is critical for Basil, since the tactic in his pneumatological argument is to appeal to the secret tradition of the Church. As a scriptural witness, the baptismal formula cannot not be of much value; because, the passage is interpreted differently by non-Nicene parties as indicating the differences between the three persons. However, as a tradition, the same formula functions as a powerful reinforcement of the authority of non-scriptural tradition. Basil considers this strategy to be effective because he acknowledges that Scripture is silent about the claim he wishes to make about the Holy Spirit.

“The silence of Scripture” for Basil, however, does not mean that the Bible declares nothing about the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Basil doubtlessly believes that his theology is in accord with Scripture; however, the divinity of the Spirit is attested in the Scriptures only obscurely. Therefore, Basil thinks that, in order to perceive the truth about the Spirit in the Bible, one needs to pass “through the obscurity of the letter.” This “obscurity,” according to Basil, “is a form of silence used in Scripture, which makes the meaning of dogmas difficult to see for the benefit of the readers.”

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317 Basil, Spir. 27.67.1f (SC 17, 238).
318 Eusebius of Caesarea quotes Matthew 28:19 to emphasise the distinctions between the persons, “believing each of these to be and to exist, the Father truly Father, the Son truly Son, and the Holy Ghost truly Holy Ghost, as also our Lord, sending forth His disciples for the preaching, said ‘God teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Epistola Eusebii, 3. ET: Philip Schaff and Henry Wace eds. Athanasius, NPNF, 2nd series, vol.4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 74. The second creed of the Antiochene synod (341) also states, “the Father who is really Father and the Son who is really Son and the Holy Spirit who is really Holy Spirit, because the particular hypostasis and order and glory of each of those are named, so that they are three in hypostasis but one in agreement.” Hanson, The Search, 286. Therefore, the Great Commission alone cannot sufficiently prove the Nicene Trinitarian theology. Basil probably is aware of this kind of argument, since he states under the discussion of the Great Commission, “if, as they say, this being ranked together is not indicative of some communion or union, let them say what the proper way to think about this is.” Spir. 10.24.11-14 (SC 17, 149f).This is probably why Gregory does not argue from this passage in order to prove the divinity of the Holy Spirit in Or.31. According to Anatolios, even Athanasius does not make “the Nicene homoousios a direct and inevitable consequence of uttering the baptismal formula.” Khaled Anatolios, Retrieving Nicaea (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 132. On the discussion of the non-Nicene use of the baptismal formula, see Rowan Williams, “Baptism and Arian Controversy,” in Arianism After Arius, eds. Michel R. Barns and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 159-177.
319 Basil, Spir. 21.52.49f (SC 17, 209).
320 Basil, Spir. 27.66.55ff (SC 17, 236).
By distinguishing “dogmas [δόγματα]”, the teachings kept in silence, from “proclamations [κηρύγματα]”, the public teachings, Basil attempts to attribute a positive significance to the scriptural silence on the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Allegedly, certain truths have been hidden, so “that knowledge of dogmas not be neglected or despised by the many because of familiarity.” Notice, though, how Basil, in an attempt to defend the divinity of the Holy Spirit, admits, in effect, that his pneumatology is not a clear teaching of the Bible. Therefore, although Basil’s intention probably is not to place Church tradition over Scripture, by arguing that the Bible’s testimony on the Holy Spirit is obscure, the Caesarean bishop ends up relying heavily on the tradition, and a secret one at that.

With this approach, Basil cannot employ untraditional expressions, such as homoousios or “God,” to the Spirit; because, after all, he cannot find such expressions used by any of his predecessors. Since Basil considers God’s revelation to be something that happened in the past, if he cannot discover the explicit knowledge of the Spirit’s consubstantiality revealed and witnessed by Scripture or Church tradition, he cannot make a bolder claim than that which has been handed down to him. Therefore, as we have seen, the most Basil can state, according to what he gathers from the prepositions used for the Spirit, is that the Spirit is ranked with the Father and the Son and that He should be glorified with them.

In addition, Basil’s attempt to explain the silence of Scripture as intentional and secret risks diminishing the credibility of his pneumatology as scriptural. Moreover, to attribute an authority to “silence” is a tactic not firm enough to push Basil, who by nature does not feel terribly comfortable with novel theological terminologies, to venture into radically untraditional pneumatological expressions. After all, silence itself cannot be the part of the ecclesial life which serves as a convincing context in which the scriptures can be properly interpreted.

Whether or not Basil is conscious of this, in his argument, the consistency between the Bible and the life of the Church is presented as a consistency between the obscurity of the Bible and the secret of the Church. While this may be a true and legitimate description of reality, convincing enough for a pastoral guidance, it does not seem to be persuasive enough before his opponents. Thus at the end, the Spirit, according to Basil, is merely “divine,” while Gregory

321 Basil, Spir. 27.66.53ff (SC 17, 236).
322 Basil, Spir. 27.66.52ff (SC 17, 236).
makes a clear statement that He is God. We shall now turn to Gregory to investigate how he deals with the silence of Scripture and the Church in his pneumatological argument.

4 Gregory and God the Holy Spirit

Unlike Basil, who draws a positive affirmation from the alleged obscurity of Scripture and the secret tradition of the Church, Gregory argues that, despite the accusation of being unscriptural, his teaching is clearly scriptural, and he explains the silence of the Church by his theory of progressive revelation. Gregory differs from his friend in that he is not trying to make a positive affirmation based on silence. Therefore, Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation should not be understood as his ultimate defense of his pneumatology; rather, it is merely an interpretation of history to account for the silence concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, we shall discuss first how Gregory demonstrates his pneumatology from the Bible. As has been mentioned above, Gregory is opposed to a hermeneutical method that is too literal. He acknowledges the need to see “inside the written text to its inner meaning.”

Gregory argues that those, in the past, who held to the right doctrine of the Spirit “were found fit to perceive the hidden loveliness; they were illuminated by the light of knowledge.” However, although the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not apparent to those who are preoccupied by the letter, Gregory does not regard the teaching of Scripture as being obscure.

According to Gregory, the Bible clearly teaches that the Spirit is God, if only the reader would learn the characteristics of the scriptural language. In order to illustrate his point, Gregory describes how “[s]ome things mentioned in the Bible are not factual; some factual things are not mentioned; some nonfactual things receive no mention there; some things are both factual and mentioned.” For nonfactual things mentioned in the Bible, Gregory lists several anthropomorphic expressions in the Old Testament. Among the factual things that are not mentioned in the Bible are theological terms such as “Ingenerate” or “Immortal.” There are, obviously, nonfactual things (e.g. “‘deity is evil,’ ‘a sphere has four corners,’”) that Scripture

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323 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.21.6f (SC 250, 316).
324 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.21.7f (SC 250, 316).
325 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.22.1ff (SC 250, 316).
326 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.22.4-23 (SC 250, 316f).
327 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.23.1f (SC 250, 318).
328 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.23.16ff (SC 250, 320).
does not mention. However, many factual things, such as “‘God,’ ‘man,’ ‘angel,’ ‘judgment,’”329 are also found in the Bible.

According to these categories, Gregory stresses that there are things that are true but not explicitly expressed in the words of the scriptures. Therefore, those attending too closely to the words of the Bible are questioned, “why are you so dreadfully servile to the letter… following the syllables while you let the realities go?”330 What is really important for constructing doctrines is not the exact wordings of the Bible, but the realities and “meanings [τὰ νοόμενα] rather than words [τὰ λεγόμενα]”331 of the scriptures.332

Gregory makes an interesting comparison between extracting of the meaning from the words and inferring “ten” or “fourteen” from the words “twice five” or “twice seven.”333 Just as “ten” is the clear meaning and also an expression of the words “twice five,” Gregory argues, “if I hit upon something meant, though not mentioned, or not stated in clear terms, by Scripture…I should give expression to the meaning.”334 Therefore, according to Gregory, the silence of Scripture about the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not actually a silence—if only one could properly sum up the testimony of the scriptures regarding the Spirit, one would come to the conclusion that He is God.

It is important to note the structure of Gregory’s argument here. After discussing, in Or. 31.24, how some factual things are not mentioned in the Bible, and how one should not neglect the meaning because of the lack of exact words, Gregory does not proceed straight to the scriptural proofs. Only at Or. 31.29 does he come back to continue the argument to give “a swarm of proof-texts [μαρτυρίων], from which the Godhead of the Holy Spirit can be proved thoroughly scriptural at least to those not utterly dense or utterly alien to the Spirit.”335 Before then, from Or.
31.25 to 28, Gregory expounds on his theory of progressive revelation and concentrates his effort on explaining “what one can say on the premise that it is not in the Bible [ὄγραφον].”

The structure of this argument clearly shows two things. First, Gregory introduces the theory of progressive revelation only to provide a reasonable explanation for the silence of Scripture. Second, Gregory believes that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is wholly scriptural and he is ready to demonstrate his conviction by multiple of biblical testimonies. Therefore, Gregory lists the scriptural account of the Spirit’s activities and the titles given to Him. All one needs now is to summarise this evidence and acknowledge that “[a]ll that God actively performs, He [the Spirit] performs,” and that “the titles are so many and so striking.” From these biblical witnesses, the only conclusion Gregory can draw is that people must “worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as the single Godhead and power.” This truth, for Gregory, is as evident as “twice five” being “ten.”

This method of interpretation, seeking to grasp the “meaning” of Scripture from a wide range of scriptural testimonies, explains why Gregory is not hesitant to use terms, such as homoousios and even theosis and to develop the concepts expressed by those vocabularies. Since, as Winslow points out, for Gregory, “the validity of a specific doctrinal term was based on its faithfulness to biblical ideas not to biblical words,” the absence of exact words does not bother Gregory much. This skill to apprehend the macro-picture of the meaning of the Bible is one of Gregory’s strengths, as Norris commends Gregory’s “ability to make rather consistent sense of large blocks of texts that deal with the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

In fact, Gregory is capable not only of perceiving the broad sense of the scriptures but also of presenting his interpretation of the Bible consistently with the wider context of the Church’s history and practices. In Gregory’s system, Scripture’s proclamation and also its silence fit smoothly into the reality of this world. For instance, his teaching of the Spirit’s divinity and his doctrine of theosis create a cohesive system, involving the matters of scriptural interpretation, liturgy, personal spirituality, and the Trinitarian doctrine—theosis is described as being possible

336 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.1 (SC 250, 332).
337 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.33 (SC 250, 334).
338 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.30.9f (SC 250, 336).
339 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.33.17ff (SC 250, 342).
340 Winslow, The Dynamics, 182.
341 Norris, “Gregory Nazianzen,” 159.
only by the believer’s putting on of Christ which happens at baptism, the beginning of a Christian life enlightened by the Spirit to understand Scripture fully.

Likewise, the theory of progressive revelation functions as a method to interpret the history, so that every element in the life of the Church might come together. In the previous chapter, we have concluded that Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation is consistent with his doctrine of *theosis* and his understanding of the knowledge of God. At this point, we shall investigate how this theory of revelation is related to Scripture and the life of the Church.

The theory of progressive revelation, when considered on its own, may sound as if Gregory is proposing an ever continuing possibility of revelation, even after the scriptural canon has been closed. However, as Beeley points out, “Gregory is not making a statement of progressive doctrinal development through the history of the Church, as in the nineteenth-century views of Schleiermacher or Newman.”342 Beeley’s comment seems accurate, as opposed to Hanson’s judgment regarding Gregory as developing a “theory of progressive revelation extending beyond Scripture.”343 Nevertheless, Beeley interprets Gregory’s argument as an extension of Origen’s “eschatological spirituality in terms of the history of the covenants,”344 and such an assessment requires some consideration.

Indeed, Beeley understands Gregory to be a “faithful disciple of Origen.”345 Other scholars, such as Demoen and Trigg, also perceive a close affinity between Gregory’s theory and Origen’s thoughts.346 However, while Beeley states that Origen considered the Old Testament to represent “the pattern and shadow of the Gospel,”347 Gregory does not seem to regard the Old Testament as merely a shadow of the New. Therefore, in order to properly understand Gregory’s theory, we must consider the context of his argument rather than trying to trace the origin of his ideas by looking at the surface of his statements.

The context of Gregory’s discussion of gradual revelation is the need to explain the silence of Scripture concerning the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Although Gregory believes that his

347 Ibid.
pneumatology is clearly scriptural, he realises that the Bible does not explicitly state that the Spirit is God or even divine. Therefore, this Father appeals to “God’s reasonableness” in revealing Himself by “piecemeal additions,” according to people’s ability to receive God’s revelation. The Old Testament, then, is not just a shadow of revelation but is, though incomplete, revelation itself. Thus, Gregory states, “[t]he written law is a light that is typological and proportionate to those receiving it.” “Light,” as we have seen in the previous chapter, has a connotation of the knowledge and revelation of God; therefore, Gregory does not consider the types in the Old Testament as shadows but as a stage of revelation appropriate for a specific time in history.

This idea is very different from that of Origen, who does not regard many of the Old Testament accounts as historical. If Gregory were a faithful disciple of Origen, as Beeley claims, then he would also have little regard for the historicity of the biblical content and see the relationship of the Old and the New primarily on the level of the texts themselves; in fact, Demoen argues that “the historicity is of no consideration for Gregory.” However, Gregory seems to believe even the biblical account of the creation and fall of Adam as historical. Moreover, Gregory’s explanation of the progressive revelation is firmly grounded in the concept of God’s dealing with humanity in history. Historical progress, not spiritual hierarchy, is what functions as the basis of his argument. Thus, the idea that Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation is parallel to Origen’s understanding of the Old and New Testaments seems to rely excessively on the assumptions of scholars that Gregory is heavily influenced by Origen.

As a matter of fact, among some scholars, there seems to be a tendency to overemphasise the impact of the great Alexandrian scholar on Gregory. However, it is not necessary that certain aspects of Gregory’s theology be traced back to Origen, since Gregory diverges from Origen on significant points, as has been shown above, but has a lot in common with Athanasius, who is

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348 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.25.14f (SC 250, 324).
350 Gr.Naz., Or. 40.6.5f (SC 358, 206).
351 E.g. Origen, De Princ. 4.1.15.
352 Demoen, Pagan and Biblical, 284.
not usually regarded as an Origenist. For example, although Beeley argues that Gregory follows Origen’s teaching that “one can interpret the Scriptures only by the inspiration and sanctification of the Holy Spirit, which also inspired their composition,” this idea is also found in Athanasius. Moreover, although Gregory’s doctrine of theosis, with its connection to spiritual exegesis, is sometimes considered to represent the influence of Origen, the concept of theosis plays an important role in Athanasius’ theology as well.

In addition, although Origen was a great exegete and commentator on the Bible, no commentary is known to have been written by Gregory: just as there is no (authentic) commentary on the Bible by Athanasius. It is somewhat remarkable, how, under the shadow of Origen, the influence of Athanasius, who is also a defender of the Spirit’s divinity, is often neglected, despite the admiration for him expressed in Gregory’s panegyric (Or. 21).

Too strong an emphasis on Origen’s impact on Gregory can be misleading, especially in understanding Gregory’s view on the Bible. When one attributes Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation to Origen, one tends to conclude that Scripture is of secondary importance to this church Father. Hence, Trigg believes that by introducing the innovative theory, Gregory is turning “to Origen’s view that the Bible is just the starting point for a divine

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355 Athanasius’ interpretation is said to have “hardly any trace…of Origen’s cosmo-psychological framework.” Kannengiesser, Handbook, 710. Ernest also states that Athanasius “rejects the Platonic distinction between the realm of sense perception and the realm of knowledge, which was the basis of Origen’s allegorical exegesis.” James Ernest, The Bible in Athanasius of Alexandria (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2004), 14.

356 Athanasius writes, “You too, practicing these things and reciting the Psalms intelligently in this way, are able to comprehend the meaning in each, being guided by the Spirit.” Athanasius, Epistula ad Marcellinum de interpretation Psalmorum, 33. ET: Gregg, Robert C. trans. Athanasius: The life of Antony and the Letter to Marcellinus. New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 129.

357 Beeley sees the influence of Origen in Gregory’s spiritual exegesis. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus, 166.


359 Demoen explains that the reason why there is no commentary written by Gregory is because “exegesis is relatively unimportant for Gregory in itself.” Demoen, Pagan and Biblical, 286.

360 The Commentary on the Psalms attributed to Athanasius is usually considered spurious. While the Homily on Matthew 11:27 may be authentic, it possesses characteristics not of a commentary but of a polemical and apologetic writing. Ernest, The Bible, 6f, 9.

361 See Chapter 1 n. 30.

362 Noble, who emphasises the influence of Athanasius on Gregory, is an exception. However, Noble’s understanding of Athanasius is wholly dependent on T.F. Torrance. Noble, “Gregory Nazianzen,” 115. Torrance argues that, in Athanasius, “the language of Scripture points away from itself to independent realities.” T.F. Torrance, Divine meaning: studies in patristic hermeneutics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 235. This analysis of Torrance is criticised by Ernest for portraying the ancient father as “more Barthian than Athanasian.” Ernest, The Bible, 17. Beeley strongly denies the possibility of Athanasius having a direct influence on Gregory. Beeley, Gregory of Nazianzus, 277-284. However, Hanson emphasises the importance of the indirect influences of Athanasius on the Cappadocian Fathers. Hanson, The Search, 679.
revelation that all the books in the world could not contain.” Likewise, Beeley considers Gregory to be saying “Scripture does not contain everything God intends to reveal.”

However, at least two observations can be made of Gregory that suggest otherwise. First, in discussing progressive revelation, Gregory does not argue that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is not attested in the Bible. On the contrary, Gregory writes in his poem:

…if someone seeks to understand the heavenly Spirit’s divinity
Through the pages of divinely-inspired Law,
He shall see many ways, close-packed, collected into one,
If he has yearned, and gathered something of the
Holy Ghost with his heart, and if his piercing mind has perceived.

Here, Gregory clearly states that the divinity of the Spirit is in Scripture. Nonetheless, whether or not one can perceive the true teaching of the Bible is another problem, as he continues to state,

But if he seeks a plain assertion of his beloved divinity,
Let him know this, he seeks unsensibly. For it wouldn’t have been right,
When Christ’s own hadn’t yet appeared to most of humankind,
To lay on feeble hearts a weight of doubt.

Therefore, Gregory admits that the deity of the Spirit is not plainly asserted in the Bible; however, it is already there in the Holy Book and is perceivable to those who have been illumined by the Spirit. Thus, Gregory is not seeking to find evidence for the Spirit’s divinity outside the Bible somewhere in a spiritual realm.

This concept that the Spirit’s divinity is evident from the scriptures to those who have been illumined by the Spirit leads us to second observation. Gregory’s theory of progressive revelation might sound as if he assumes three stages of history: the eras of the Old and New Testaments, and the present. If this is the case, the things revealed in the present age would be outside of, and additional to, the Bible. Were Gregory to be arguing that the deity of the Holy Spirit is revealed only in the present age which is after the age of the New Testament, then he would be risking a possibility of limitless new revelations; revelation would not have been

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363 Trigg, “Knowing God,” 102.
367 Demoen understands Gregory to have three stages in mind: “the progressive revelation is not concluded with the New Testament. Thus, the Trinity is revealed not in two, but in three phases, the third of which is placed in the period following that of the New Testament.” Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical*, 254.
restricted to the time of the Old Testament or Jesus’ earthly ministry and the apostolic age. Then, the idea of the New Testament era as a privileged time of revelation would be depreciated, and the concept of the incarnation as God’s special act of revelation would be nearly lost.

However, a close reading of Gregory’s words reveals that this Father has two, not three, stages of history in mind: the Old Testament time and the age inaugurated by Jesus Christ. What leads some to perceive three stages in Gregory’s thought may be the following sentences: “the old covenant made clear proclamation of the Father...The new covenant made the Son manifest....At the present time, the Spirit resides amongst us, giving us a clearer manifestation of himself than before.” At first glance, there appears to be three stages corresponding to the three persons of the Trinity. However, considering that the Spirit’s dwelling among Christians begins at Pentecost, which is recorded in the Bible, “the present time” apparently starts within the New Testament period.

Moreover, Gregory observes the gradual revelation of the Spirit happening already within the New Testament: “at the outset of the gospel when [the Spirit] performs miracles, after the Passion when he is breathed into the disciples, after the Ascension when he appears in fiery tongues.” Gregory also interprets the words of Jesus as gradually revealing the Spirit:

“I will ask the Father,” he [Jesus] says, ‘and he will send you another Comforter, the Spirit of Truth’—intending that the Spirit should not appear to be rival God and spokesman of another power. Later he says: ‘He will send him in my name’—leaving out ‘I will ask’ but retaining ‘He will send.’ Later on he says: ‘I shall send’—indicating the Son’s own rank; and later: ‘He will come’—indicating the Spirit’s power.

Therefore, rather than perceiving the age of the Spirit as being outside the Bible, Gregory seems to believe that he himself lives in the time of the Spirit, which is a continuation of the apostolic time witnessed in Scripture. Therefore, even in Gregory’s time, nothing more than what is

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368 Gr.Naz., Or. 31.26.4-7 (SC 250, 326).
369 Therefore, Noble seems right in stating that “Gregory thought of himself as living in the period that began with Pentecost, the apostolic age. He is not saying therefore that the full revelation of the Spirit’s deity came after the New Testament Scriptures were completed, but that the Spirit’s deity was revealed when he came at Pentecost to dwell with the disciples.” Noble, “Gregory Nazianzen,” 119.
372 This claim can be strengthened by curious tendencies in Gregory. At least in the Five Theological Orations, Gregory never refers to the New Testament as Ἰστορία. This word seems to be reserved for the Old Testament or the Bible in general [e.g. Or. 27.1.1f (SC 250, 70); Or. 28.24.24f (SC 250, 152); Or. 29.5.18 (SC 250, 186); Or. 30.2.7 (SC 250, 228); Or. 31.20.10 (SC 250, 314)]. Also, he seems to use the formula κατὰ τὸ γεγραμμένον (which is used in the New Testament to refer to the Old, e.g. 2 Corinthians 4:13) only to refer to the Old Testament [Or. 28.19.31 (SC 250,140); Or. 28.28.18 (SC 250, 164)]. While Gregory clearly believes that the New Testament also
promised and is already revealed in the New Testament will be added. In this way, Gregory avoids the claim of continuing revelation without a limit, and he also preserves the particularity of the revelation in the time of Jesus and the apostles.

Therefore, it is misleading to assume, as Trigg and Beeley do, that Gregory moves away from the Bible in order to defend his pneumatology. On the contrary, the concept of the progressive revelation itself emerges from Gregory’s interpretation of the biblical accounts, and he firmly believes that his doctrine of the Holy Spirit is clearly presented in Scripture—if only one had eyes to see it. This condition for perceiving the Spirit’s deity in the Bible, then, can be explained by Gregory with his theory of theosis.

With this understanding of history and revelation, Gregory can explain the alleged silence of the Bible on the deity of the Holy Spirit. If one understood the world according to Gregory’s theory, one could account not only for the late recognition of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, but also for the more or less recent acknowledgment of the Son’s consubstantiality with the Father. In summary, Gregory provides a holistic explanation, in which the biblical accounts, experience of the believers, and the history and practices of the Church all fit nicely together. Thus, by claiming that his pneumatology is a clear teaching of the Bible, and also by providing a context in which the scriptures can be interpreted properly, Gregory can confidently make a strong claim that the Spirit is God and that He is consubstantial with the Father.

**Conclusion**

Both Gregory and Basil strove to account for the silence of Scripture and the Church about the divinity of the Holy Spirit. In order to contend against the accusation that they were being unscriptural and untraditional, Basil, on the one hand, focuses on the obscurity of Scripture and the secret tradition of the Church, while Gregory, on the other hand, teaches that the divinity of the Holy Spirit is clearly in the Bible and explains the lack of explicit reference to it by his theory of progressive revelation.

Gregory seems to be more successful than Basil in laying out for his listeners a suitable context, in which the Bible can be properly interpreted to support the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Gregory is divinely inspired (as he includes them in the canon with the Old Testament), these tendencies may indicate that Gregory does not view the New Testament as a past history that exists only in writings. Rather, the age of the New Testament, in Gregory’s mind, continues, and he regards himself as living in that reality.
appears also to be more persuasive because he attends more closely than Basil, not to the letter, but to the idea and history of the Bible. However, Gregory’s weakness may be that he does not explain the history of the Church between his time and that of the New Testament. His account of the age of the Spirit jumps from Pentecost to contemporary time, and almost neglects several centuries of Church history. Also, modern readers might find it difficult to accept Gregory’s approach, which simply assumes what needs to be proven, i.e. the deity of the Spirit. Gregory fails to, or does not perceive the necessity to, explain the source of his conviction. In this regard, Basil, perhaps, can better explain the origin of his teaching as well as why the Church was silent about the divinity of the Holy Spirit, according to his concept of the secret tradition.
CONCLUSION

The friendship between Gregory and Basil brings to one’s mind a proverb from the Old Testament: “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Despite the tendency among scholars to overlook the importance of Gregory’s theology as a mere reproduction of his friend’s thoughts, the present work has demonstrated how these two Fathers possessed considerable differences. Gregory doubtless admired Basil and probably was influenced by him in many ways. However, in the same manner, Basil also, probably, was helped and nourished by his friend. Therefore, Gregory and Basil can rightly be grouped as “Cappadocians” not so much because they followed exactly the same theological or interpretive methods, as because their differences complemented each other to pursue the common goal of establishing and defending what, partly through their efforts, became accepted as “Nicene” theology.

Particularly concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, Gregory and Basil differed significantly, as the former insisted that the Spirit was homoousios with the Father and that He was God, while the latter argued merely that the Spirit was divine. I have intended to argue that Gregory’s presentation of his pneumatology is not to be understood as just a repetition of Basil’s argument with more clarity. Instead, as the present work has illustrated, the difference between these two Fathers seems to be rooted in how they treated Scripture in light of their concepts of knowledge and revelation of God.

Gregory was, perhaps, more successful in constructing a coherent and convincing system of theology, in which his pneumatology could find a suitable place. However, the popularity of Basil’s treatise even to this day indicates that his argument, too, has captured the hearts of many. Moreover, although Gregory did not directly appeal to the Church tradition, his exegesis at places would have been unsustainable unless there was an assumption that the faith of the Church directed the reading of the Bible.

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374 E.g. Gregory argues that expressions such as the “finger of God” or “fire” in reference to the Spirit prove that He is consubstantial with the Father. Gr.Naz., Or. 31.29.25f (SC 250, 334). This exegesis could be considered far-fetched if one’s aim is an inductive study of those passages without presuppositions. However, Gregory’s intention is to find a scriptural support for the doctrine of the Spirit’s consubstantiality. Probably, Gregory has become convinced of this doctrine, not solely because of his reading of the Bible, but his participation in and learning from the Church tradition (including the Nicene Creed) guided him to come to that conclusion.
was indispensable in interpreting Scripture and constructing theology. Concerning this aspect, then, Basil can be said to have helped prepare the soil on which Gregory planted seeds and harvested the fruit of a developed Trinitarian theology.

After all, if the ultimate task of Gregory and Basil was indeed to present the context for a proper biblical interpretation, then, that goal could not have been achieved by the effort of one person alone. To present the context meant to construct theology as well as building up the Church. The fine balance between the search for new expressions of faith and the cherishing of tradition could hardly be maintained within one person. In this regard, as members of the body of Christ, Gregory and Basil toiled together to build up the Church with her right doctrines and proper interpretation of the Word.

This achievement of the Cappadocian Fathers challenges us today: is there enough cooperation among theologians, biblical scholars, and pastors to maintain and strengthen the Church in this ever changing world, in order to defend and proclaim Christianity’s essential doctrine, the doctrine of the Triune God? Gregory and Basil teach us that Christian faith cannot rely solely on a specific aspect of the Church, whether Scripture or tradition; but needs to flow from her life as a whole. The center of that life shall be, as we see in these Fathers, a worship of God, with the underlining theme of doxology:

   Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
   
   As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
Primary Sources for Gregory of Nazianzus

1) Editions:

*Orations* 1-65

*Orations* 1-3

*Orations* 4-5

*Orations* 6-12

*Orations* 20-23

*Orations* 24-26

*Orations* 27-31

*Orations* 32-37

*Orations* 38-41

*Orations* 42-43
Letters


Poems

2) Translations:


**Primary Sources for Basil of Caesarea**

1) Editions:


2) Translations:


**Other Ancient Sources:**

Athanasius


Didymus the Blind


Epiphanius


Eunomius

Eusebius


Jerome


Theodore of Mopsuestia


**Secondary Sources:**

1) Studies of Gregory


2) Studies of Basil of Caesarea


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