ORATION ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

from Dogmatic to Homiletic

by Gregory of Nazianzus

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Abstract:

This study clarifies how Gregory of Nazianzus combines his views on correct doctrine with rhetorical elements in a Christmas sermon from 380 AD. Gregory (born 329 in Nazianzus) was a bishop, and later archbishop of Constantinople from 379 until his death in c. 390/391. This Christmas sermon (*Oratio 38*) is both an interesting and important source that reflects the theological and cultural conflicts of Gregory's time. It is part of a three-sermon series for the Christmas and Epiphany season (*Oratio 38–40*).

I have studied *Oratio 38* from two points of view; firstly, I have studied the contents in the light of the doctrinal discussions of the time and, secondly, I have considered the rhetorical styles Gregory uses to reach all his listeners. I have utilised two well-known researchers' works for my analysis, namely the English translation and compilation of *Oratio 38* by Brian E. Daley and the commentary by John A. McGuckin.

Oratio 38, Theophania on the Birth of Christ, is characterised by its three different themes: the celebration of the Birth, the doctrine of God and the history of salvation. The doctrinal questions of his time engaged Gregory deeply, and this becomes most clearly visible in the controversy with Arius and the Arians. In *Oratio 38,* however, he is speaking to a wider audience.

Regarding the doctrine in *Oratio 38*, it can be said that Gregory emphasises the Trinity of God and the truth of Christ as being truly divine as well as truly human, or "of the same essence" as the Father. The theological conflict with Arians lies behind Gregory's exposition, and he preaches both convincingly and polemically. Bible excerpts and biblical allusions constitute the basis for his argumentation. From a rhetorical point of view, it can be noted that Gregory also uses allegory and especially typology in his interpretation of the Bible. He is a frequent user of repetition and variation and of building intensity in stages throughout his sermon. Opposing pairs, such as "from heaven – on Earth", "sin – hope" and similar, are used to strengthen his message. Gregory also utilises oxymorons, i.e. combinations of opposing expressions, to emphasise the meaning of his words.

Oratio 38 is a remarkable example of the rhetorical mastery of Gregory of Nazianzus. He was not only well educated in classical rhetoric, but also possessed the ability to use his skill to reach his audiences and to make questions about God and redemption in Christ relevant and accessible to the people.

Keywords: Gregory of Nazianzus, Constantinople, incarnation, Christmas, epiphany	
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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The focus of this thesis, as the title indicates, is Gregory Nazianzus' oration on the birth of Christ. The work is divided into four main sections, preceded by an initial chapter where the background and the methodology are explained. The context of Gregory's oration is presented in Chapter II, while Chapter III contains the main content of the oration and Chapter IV deals with questions of doctrine In the penultimate chapter (Chapter V) I offer a detailed analysis of Gregory's *Oratio 38*, demonstrating how he makes it accessible to the people. My conclusions are found at the end of the work in Chapter VI.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus, well-known as one of the three Cappadocian Fathers, lived in an age – the last three quarters of the fourth century – in which, for the very first time, it was legally and socially permitted to be a public Christian intellectual. The works of Gregory include a wide range of Greek literary forms, such as "orations", i.e. speeches, poetry, letters and apologetic writings, and deals 'almost exclusively with Christian themes'.[1]

Gregory is of particular interest as an example of the conflict between Christianity and classical culture. The roots of this conflict are found in the ancient rivalry between rhetoric and philosophy. In Gregory's writings the conflict is treated both bibliographically and systematically: bibliographically as a tension in Gregory's personal life, and systematically as two modalities of thought, which form his mind and are foundational in his writings.[2]

[1] Daley 2006, 1.
[2] Radford Ruether 1969, B.

Constantinople was the ancient city of Byzantium, originally a colony of Megara in Attica, and was renamed the "city of Constantine the Great" by the first Christian Emperor of the Roman world. It was consecrated in 330 AD. Constantine made it into his capital in an effort to establish a new strategic focus for the vast Roman State, as well as to distance himself from the politics of the previous centuries. The "Byzantines" usually referred to themselves as Romans – *Romaioi* – and when they did use the word "Byzantium" or "Byzantine" it was done to illustrate the connections which learned Byzantines drew between their own culture and that of the ancient world. The hallmarks of their culture were that it was Christian, that the language of the state and the dominant elite was Greek, and that its political ideology was founded on its identity within the Christian Roman Empire, i.e., of Constantine the Great. The elite used this cultural identity to differentiate itself both from the foreigner, the barbarian or the outsider and also, within Byzantine society, distancing itself from the semi-literate or illiterate masses of rural and townsfolk.[3]

The empire functioned through a complex political-theological system, in which the emperor was an autocratic ruler whose power was understood to have derived directly from God, and whose task was to maintain order and harmony in imitation of the heavenly realm. This motivated the stress on Orthodoxy ("correct belief", that is, the correct interpretation of the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers of the Church), so that many of the ecclesio-political conflicts within the Byzantine world, and thus between the Byzantine Church or government and the papacy, for example, were set off by conflicts which ignited over the issue of whether or not a particular imperial policy was accepted as "Orthodox" or not.[4]

From the time of Constantine's accession onwards, the history of the empire was marked by the fundamental importance of the Christian Church and the development of Christianity affected its cultural and political evolution. For Constantine, the Christian Church was a valued political ally both in his effort to stabilize the empire and in consolidating his own power. Consequently, it was essential for him that the Church remained united; discord and disagreement were politically threatening for an

[3] Haldon 2000, 9.
[4] Haldon 2000, 10.

emperor who, while not being baptized until shortly before his death, nevertheless privileged the Christian Church both with the wealth confiscated from pagan temples and gave the Church formal recognition in his political plans. Constantine was, however, almost immediately forced to deal with a major split within the Church. This split was caused by the appearance of Arianism, a heresy about the Trinity and the status of Christ. Arius (250–336 AD) was a deacon of the Church of Alexandria. He was trained in Greek philosophy and later became an ascetic. In his attempts to clarify the nature of the Trinity, Arian produced a creed which was viewed as heretical by many of his contemporaries. His philosophical background prevented him from accepting the notion that God could become man: Arius taught that Christ was not eternal and co-equal with the Father, but rather was created by Him; moreover, he taught that Christ was not God but, conversely, he was not human either, rather Christ was a kind of demi-God. Arius was excommunicated in 320 AD by the bishop of Alexandria, and he was subseqently condemned and exiled by the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD .[5] He died the following year.

The first Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church convened in Nicaea in 325 AD and gathered bishops from across the Roman Empire. It became one of the most important councils in the history of the Christian Church and was the starting point for their development of doctrinal discussions.[6] This particular council discussed matters of Christology, particularly the question of whether Christ was one being with the Father and part of the Godhead or not. The various participants had different views on this issue, which led to the forming of two separate doctrines: on the one hand, the Orthodox, Nicene view which emphasized that Christ is of the same being (*homoousios*) as the Father, and on the other hand, the Arian view which emphasized that Christ is a separate being (*homoiousios*) from an indivisible Father. This controversial question affected doctrinal development in the Eastern and Western parts of the Church for a long time.[7]

The controversy was exacerbated by the fact that Constantine himself began eventually to favor the Arian position, and after his death in 337 AD, his son and heir Constantius

[5] Haldon 2000, 20.
[6] Gebremedhin 1993, 167.
[7] Gebremedhin 1993, 175.

approved it in the eastern part of the Empire. In contrast, in the west, Constans supported the Nicene position. Many synods were subsequently held to debate the issue, up until 350 AD when Constans died and the Nicenes began to be persecuted.[8]

Constantine's nephew, Flavius Claudius Julianus (born c 331 AD) was born into the emergent, highly educated, dynasty and subsequently became Julian, the Emperor of the Roman Empire. He was an avid student of Greek philosophy and prolific writer. Despite his Christian upbringing, Julian is remembered as the "Apostate", the last Emperor who tried to counter the spread of Christianity. His practices and pagan activism stood at odds with mainstream Graeco-Roman polytheism, however, and there is a visible monist element in Julian's theological and philosophical discourse as a Neoplatonist.[9] Of interest to this work is that one of the Cappadocian Church Fathers, namely Gregory of Nazianzus studied alongside Julian in Athens.

The Church soon discovered, that under the Christian emperors it might in some respects enjoy less freedom and self-determination than it had had under pagan governments. Emperor Valentian I, the last war emperor of the west (364–375), was a Christian.[10] He was aware of how difficult and dangerous it was to govern alone, and therefore, appointed his brother, Flavius Julius Valens (364–378), to be co-emperor in the East.[11] However, Emperor Valens was killed at Adrianople on August 9, 378 AD, along with two-thirds of his army. There had been an uprising by Goths, but the Goth forces were subsequently crushed by the Spanish general, Theodosius, headquartered at nearby Thessalonica.[12]

The succession was laden with importance for the struggling parties within the Eastern Church. Theodosius was a devout Christian and a firm supporter of the Nicene confession. Pro-Nicene Christians in Antioch and Asia Minor began to actively search for a learned and eloquent leader for the Nicene community when they sensed changes were underway. They were a minority in the capital, and since the exile of bishop Evagrius around 370 AD, an episcopal position had not been filled. Demophilus was

[8] Haldon 2000, 20–21.
[9] Smith 1995, xi–xiv.
[10] Chadwick 1993, 165.
[11] Grimberg 1958, 440–442.
[12] Daley 2006, 14.

the officially recognized bishop of Constantinople at the time, and he, along with most of his clergy, were Homoean or moderately Arian in their understanding of Christ. This had been made the Empire's official doctrine by Constantius in 359 AD.[13]

Some of Gregory's contemporaries saw the matter quite differently. As soon as Theodosius I was proclaimed emperor on January 19th, 397 AD, both Peter of Alexandria and Damasus of Rome sought to prevent Gregory from becoming the new Nicene bishop of Constantinople. Contrary to modern scholars, who are hard pressed to develop suitable explanations as to why Theodosius would have picked such an "outcast," lost in the "lethargy" of his Isaurian retreat, Gregory's contemporaries in the sees of Rome and Alexandria did consider him a viable candidate and thus treated him as an adversary to their own candidates for this key position.[14]

In May 381 AD, Emperor Theodosius assembled 150 of the bishops in the Eastern Church to a council in Constantinople with the intention of confirming previous decisions as well as to continue to address issues concerning the person of Christ and questions regarding the Holy Spirit.[15] Among the participants in Constantinople were Gregory of Nazianzus (who became chairman of the council), Gregory of Nyssa (brother of Basil of Caesarea), Peter of Sebaste, Meletios of Antioch and Cyril of Jerusalem. The meeting considered the basic doctrines from the council in Nicaea, (i.e. the relationships between the Father and the Son, the person of Christ and partly the doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit). The council in Constantinople subsequently established faith in the Holy Spirit based on wordings in the Bible.[16] The wording of the Nicene-Constantinople Creed was, however, established later, at the council of Chalcedon (C).

In 451 AD, the council of Chalcedon officially honored Gregory of Nazianzus with the title "The Theologian". This was an honor of great significance. Until then, the only other person thus praised had been John the Evangelist and after Gregory, the title

[13] Daley 2006, 14.
[14] Elm 2001, 70.
[15] Gebremedhin 1993, 203; Hägglund 2003, 56.
[16] Gebremedhin 1993, 205. According to Gebremedhin, the Holy Spirit is called *Lord*, in accordance with 2 Cor 3:17. In Rom 8:2 the Spirit is associated with *life*, in 2 Cor 3:6 and John 6:63 the Spirit is called *giver of life*. In John 15:26 the verb *proceeds* is used to express that the Spirit process from the Father. In 1 Peter 1:21, the Spirit is associated with prophetic utterance.

was given to the Byzantine mystic, Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022).[17] It had been Gregory's life ambition to become a true Christian *homme des lettres*, and he had displayed his rhetorical gifts in nearly all the genres held dear by the rhetoricians of his day. Among his *vast oeuvre*, his forty-seven orations have had the greatest impact on posterity. Second only to the Scriptures, they became the most frequently cited works in later Byzantine literature, and their impact on the West, through their reception by Gregory the Great in particular, is well-documented.[18]

Gregory of Nazianzus has left his mark on theological scholarship. His contemporaries and even later readers have admired him for his fluency as "The Theologian", especially when it comes to his treatises about the Trinity. In his private life, as Gregory the man, he is often viewed as an ecclesiastical failure. He described his life as being torn between his desire to retreat from the world on one hand, on the other hand his sense of duty towards participation in the life of the church. He is described as perhaps too sensitive to be a true man of the church. As a theologian, he describes himself in his memoirs as a "stutterer".[19]

1.2 Definition of the Task

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze one specific oration by one of the most important early Church Fathers, an oration that affected the forming of doctrine in the history of the Christian Church, at the time of the first council of Constantinople.

The task, therefore, is to examine Gregory of Nazianzus' oration on the birth of Christ. In the light of the political and ecclesial background described above, it is imperative to examine how a preacher at that time could influence his audience, the common people, regarding the right doctrine. It is also necessary, therefore, to investigate the Theologian, Gregory of Nazianzus more closely.

[17] Parry & al. 1999, 111.
[18] Elm 2001, 69.
[19] Elm 2001, 69.

Christological issues were important to the Church Father Gregory, archbishop of Constantinople, especially the question of the divine and human natures of Christ, and united in the same person, the incarnated Christ. During the 4th century, the Church had started to celebrate the birthday of Christ, and insights into the celebrations of that time can aid us in reflecting on Gregory's oration on the relationship of the council to the view on Christ.

1.3 Sources and Description of Methodology

The Church father, Gregory of Nazianzus, left behind a number of orations. The first task was to select from this plethora of work in order to limit the material I wish to analyze. I chose this particular oration on the Incarnation since it was delivered close to the time of the council and had the same theme as the council had. In this particular oration, the great winter feast of Christmas, we can see the connection with the doctrinal issues discussed during the council in Nicaea, and also gain insight into how the decisions made by council affected the teachings in the Church at that time. Gregory of Nazianzus preached this oration in December 380 AD and prepared it in order to emphasize the Nicaean doctrine for the forthcoming council held in Constantinople May 381 AD.

I have chosen to use Gregory of Nazianzus' oration from Brian E. Daley's compilation entitled *Theophania sive natalia Salvatoris* (*On the Theophany or the Birthday of the Saviour*). This oration is part of a trilogy comprised of oration numbers 38, 39 and 40, with the oration in question here being number 38. It deals with the celebration of the birth and the manifestation of the incarnated Word – what Western Christians commemorate at Christmas time, the Epiphany, and the Lord's baptism.[20] The sacrament of baptism, which was also celebrated during this time of year (not only at Easter or Pentecost), was at that time known as the Holy Enlightenment, which explains the title of oration number 39: " *In sanctum Lumina, On the Holy Lights*".[21] *Oratio 39* was probably delivered at the night vigil service on 6th January 381 AD. It

[20] Daley 2006, 117.
[21] McGuckin 2001, 337, 405.

has a dogmatic discourse since it was given in Constantinople and it focused on the baptism of Jesus as "a revelation of the divine light in the world, and the full manifestation of God in history as Father, Son and Holy Spirit".[22] This series of orations culminated in an actual state ceremony of baptism; *Oratio 40*, "*In sanctum Baptisma*", is the sermon delivered on this occasion, in the prescience of the elderly Gothic chief Athanarich's baptism. Gregory subsequently resumed his teaching concerning baptism at the morning service on the same day. Water was blessed and the sacrament of baptism was administered.[23]

These three orations are remarkable examples of Christian theological and liturgical rhetoric, probably delivered at the end of 380 AD and the beginning of 381 AD in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, where Gregory, under the protection of the Emperor, had permission to preside and preach as a bishop. Gregory's oration was intended for the great winter celebration, the Birth of the Savior. According to McGuckin, it is unclear whether at that time the Birth of the Savior was celebrated on 25 December, (which ultimately became the usual date for this celebration in the west), or on 6th January, the date for the most important birth celebration in the Eastern Church.

The term *Theophania,* noted as another name for the Epiphany, was originally a celebration for the Nativity as well as the baptism of Jesus Christ. The manifestation of God has been used for both of these terms, *Theophany* and *Epiphany*: "The Epiphany is Incarnation of the Savior, the word to be baptism of Christ, His birth in the flesh." According to Browne & Swallow, the birth of the Lord was celebrated on the earlier date of the two dates (*i.e.* December 25th). [24]

In this thesis, the main focus is on the content of one oration, and therefore content analysis is employed as a central method,[25] but I will also offer an analysis of the literal and rhetorical techniques used by Gregory to reach out to his listeners. The theological discussions of the time had made the preacher known, and therefore I will also offer a

[22] Daley 2006, 127.
[23] McGuckin 2001, 337.
[24] Browne & Swallow 1955, 344.
[25] Grenholm 2006, 199–200, 213–215.

descriptive analysis of the context of the preacher and the debates of his time explaining the context of his personal life and the Church of his time. The time period and the other debates of the time also played a part in my making the selection of orations.

1.4 Previous Research

There are a great many studies on the life and teachings of Gregory of Nazianzus. Some of them are highly relevant for my analysis. Rosemary Radford Ruether published her study, *Gregory of Nazianzus. Rhetor and Philosopher* in 1969. Frederick W. Norris studies orations of Gregory in *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning, the Five Theological Orations of Gregory Nazianzus* (1991). Two other studies give an understanding of Gregory and his orations: John McGuckin, *Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, An Intellectual Biography* (2001) and Brian E. Daley S.J., *Gregory of Nazianzus* (2006). The research works of Susanna Elm are historically ground-breaking, like the study *Sons of Hellenism, Fathers of the Church: Emperor Julian, Gregory of Nazianzus, and the Vision of Rome* (2012). Tomas Hägg, and his article on Gregory's funeral orations on his brother, sister and father in the study G*regory of Nazianzus. Images and Reflections* (Börtnes & Hägg 2006) is also of note. Additionally, Andrew Hofer has analyzed Gregory's texts from an orthodox view in *Christ in the life and teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (2013).

Having now given an overview of the thesis and a cursory summary of Gregorius of Nazianzus, I now move on in the following chapter to give a more detailed description of who Gregory was and the context in which he lived and worked.

II. GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS IN 4TH CENTURY EASTERN CHRISTIANITY

2.1 Gregory of Nazianzus

In Chapter II I offer a more in-depth look at who Gregory of Nazianzus was and the context in which he lived, preached, and ministered.

Gregory of Nazianzus was born in Arianzus. He was born into the Hellenized, well-educated, upper class of Cappadocia. His family were wealthy landowners. As bishop of Nazianzus, his father, Gregory the Elder, held doctrinal positions that were quite similar to those of the so-called Cappadocian fathers, and while he was once tricked into mistakenly accepting an Arian Confession of faith, he later refuted it.[26]

The younger Gregory was sent to the usual elementary studies in Nazianzus and attended a school of grammar and rhetoric in Caesarea, absorbing the heritage of Greek literature and philosophy and deepening his intellectual identification with the Church's tradition of faith. This was a hybridization of humanism and theology albeit only in its beginning stages, and this way of thinking later became Gregory's central preoccupation in a variety of ways.[27]

By the end of 348, the brothers, Caesarius and Gregory, moved to the metropolis of Alexandria, the center of the continuing Origenist tradition of exegesis. The theology framed in the creed of Nicaea was just beginning to be taken with full seriousness as a normative expression of apostolic faith.[28] Education in advanced disciplines, philosophy and particularly rhetoric was undertaken in Palestine, certainly at Caesarea, then Alexandria and finally Athens. Those three centers brought Gregory into contact with various Hellenistic and Christian traditions. The first two cities had been the homes of accomplished Christian teachers for well over a century. Palestinian

[26] Daley 2006, 3–4.
[27] Daley 2006, 4.
[28] Daley 2006, 5.

Caesarea was the workplace of Origen and Eusebius, and probably still house at least parts of the rather extensive library used by the three of them. There the echoes of Origen would have strengthened the Caesarean influence Gregory received. When Gregory studied in the city, the conflict between Athanasius and Arius was, undoubtedly, part of the conversation in Christian circles, even though he may well have been a student during one of the periods when Athanasius was in exile.[29]

Gregory of Nazianzus is known as the oldest of the three Cappadocian Fathers, along with Basil of Caesarea and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa.[30] They grew up in an environment in which Christianity no longer was a forbidden faith. Towards the end of 348, Gregory of Nazianzus moved to Athens. He was soon joined by his fellow Cappadocian, Basil of Caesarea.[31] They may very well have known each other from their earlier studies. For Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, the cultural richness of Athens seems to have encouraged a deeper study into the Christian narratives surrounding Creation and Salvation. They were seeking a new kind of synthesis of faith and philosophy that would consistently reflect their upbringing.[32]

At that time in Athens, a Neoplatonic, religious, mystical, and sacramental reading of the Platonic understanding of reality was taught by Priscus, a disciple of Iamblichus. He probably influenced the young Cappadocians as well as their fellow student, the future emperor Julian, a nephew of Constantine. He had not yet formally abandoned the Christian monotheism, but he found Neoplatonism to be more intellectually profound and respectful of the religious underpinnings of Greek literature and civic life than the Christian faith he had been baptized into.[33]

Basil and other friends, Meletios and Eusebios of Samosata, encouraged Gregory to accept an Episcopal position from Constantinople.[34] As the new bishop (AD 379–81) of Constantinople, the Gregorian doctrine of causality became fundamentally important to him, as set out in his Constantinopolitan orations, including the subject

[29] Norris 1991, 3–5.
[30] Börtnes & Hägg 2006, 9.
[31] Daley 2006, 5–6.
[32] Daley 2006, 7.
[33] Daley 2006, 6–7.
[34] McGuckin 2001, 240.

of this thesis, *Oratio 38*. His Christian faith expressed itself in a variety of forms, notably in his numerous poems and his correspondence. His series of orations, especially his five *Theological Orations* (27–31), which argue his theological position against contemporary heresies, were influential throughout later periods.[35] The Arians were in the majority in the city, so the beginning was not easy for him.[36]

In 380, Gregory engaged in disagreements with hostile crowds and Neo-Arians in Constantinople. He had a conflict with Maximus the Cynic. He was installed in the Basilica of the Apostles as the recognized Archbishop of Constantinople on November 27th. Immediately prior to this, Theodosius had entered the capital on November 24th having published *Cunton Populos* from Thessaloniki in February, and thus adopting catholic Christianity as the "*Regio Romanorum*". The exile of the Arian Bishop of Constantinople took place on the eve of Gregory's installation as archbishop on November 26th.[37]

In short, not only Gregory the theologian, but also Gregory the church politician was a man whom his contemporaries took seriously. If the same premise is applied to his writings, it becomes evident that they in fact represent a systematic attempt at developing a new model of ecclesiastical authority, the bishop. Such an authority was appropriate for new times, namely the Christian Roman Empire dominated by Constantinople, a new and rapidly expanding focus of power that attracted ambitious people intent on forging a new elite. Gregory of Nazianzus, the church politician and theologian, his "life" and the manner in which he conceptualized and presented it in his writings, were an integral part of the formation of this new model of authority. In turn, the emerging "model bishop of the Theodosian Age" can be seen as emblematic for a paradigm-shift.

The "triumph" of Christianity post Constantine was in actual fact the adaptation of Christian Scriptures, particularly the Bible, to the guiding principles of the Greco-Roman ruling elite. Christianity succeeded institutionally, because once it was made legitimate, it became the property of the ruling elite of the later Roman Empire, who

[35] Parry & al. 1999, 111.
[36] McGuckin 2001, 240.
[37] McGuckin 2001, reference page "x", *Chronological synopsis of the Vita Gregorii*.

appropriated the Scriptures on the basis of their individual social status, intellectual interests and training (which included a variety of methodologies and epistemological approaches), their *mores*, customs, and manners of self-presentation, epitomized by family-status and level of education or *paideia*.[38] Gregory of Nazianzus himself lived, modelled and taught the avoidance of luxury, in order to live a humble Christian life.

Basil was nearly fifty years old when he died. Gregory outlived him by barely a decade, dying in c. 390 AD. These extra years saw him navigate difficult times, including his presidency over the 381 Council at Constantinople. Gregory, however, also produced some of his most important work during these years, including the *Theological Orations*. These orations constitute his most considerable theological output.[39]

Gregory of Nazianzus would more accurately be described as an orator than as a preacher, because of his rhetorical studies. His ministry to congregations in Cappadocia and Constantinople almost certainly required him to interpret scriptural texts, develop liturgical celebrations as well as give frequent homilies. The wit, writing style and deep learning of Gregory's orations also corresponded with the expectations of the wealthy and cultivated elite.[40]

2.2 Constantinople as a Context for Oration

The political ideology of the East Roman world incorporated ancient traditions from several eras including the Hellenistic, Roman, Oriental and early Christian periods. According to Haldon, the official theological system reflected the evolution of a formal, sophisticated set of beliefs in which different elements had contextually different effects, and in which the syncretistic cultural backdrop to its development meant that a variety of pre-Christian traditions could play an important role.[41] In other words, while the official political theology of the Roman world at the time of Gregory was reflected by the Church, Christianity also represented a regional and individual

[38] Elm 2001, 70–71.
[39] Bouteneff 2008, 140.
[40] Daley 2006, 62–63
[41] Haldon 2000, 131.

system of moral values. Moreover, many of the day-to-day pagan beliefs and practices, which had hitherto formed part of the cultural universe of rural populations for centuries, remained, but these were given a new Christian context and at times received a new Christian interpretational and explanatory gloss. Both the Church and its monastic structures had to operate in this synchronistic setting,[42] and thus understanding the ways in which the Byzantines responded to or reacted to the situations with which they were confronted (at the level of both imperial politics and personal belief) is of great importance.

The classical city, the *polis* or *civitas*, occupied a central role in the social and economic structures of Mediterranean society during the Roman period as well as in the administrative machinery of the empire, the market-exchange cities, centers of regional agricultural activity, smaller scale commodity production or the location of long-distance commerce, i.e., in the ports. Crucially, all cities were also originally given the status of self-governing districts with their own lands and were responsible to the government for the return of taxes. Thus, the social and economic structure of the empire moved away from the local relationships and conditions which had originally given rise to and maintained these urban structures, and the cities became the first key institutions of the classical world to feel the effects of these changes.[43]

The form which these changes took are complex, but mirror the effects of growing conflicts between state, cities and private landowners to extract surpluses from the producing population, and the failure of the cities to weather the contradictions between their municipal independence on the one hand, and on the other the demands of the state and the vested interests of the wealthier civic landowners. In addition, from the fourth century the Church competed with the city for the consumption of resources. And however much their citizens might donate, individually or collectively, this could hardly have compensated for the losses.[44]

Byzantine society was clearly stratified, and its culture was deeply hierarchical. A vast array of writings claimed this hierarchy, a society in which each group had its own

[42] Haldon 2000, 131.
[43] Haldon 2000, 95.
[44] Haldon 2000, 95–96.

particular role, as being both God-given and naturally just. The metaphor of the body in which the peasantry, the productive population, was seen as the legs and trunk supporting and nurturing the arms (the military) and the head, represented by the emperors themselves, was sometimes used to explain the hierarchy. Emperor Constantine I was the first to employ senators in the administrative machinery of the state in great numbers. In the middle of the fourth century there were approximately three hundred senators belonging to the senate of Constantinople; by the end of the century there were as many as two thousand. All the senators were classed *clarissimus*, a hereditary title; but a re-grading of the classes in the later fourth century introduced two new levels – *illustris* and below this, *spectabilis*. Only the first title was hereditary.[45]

A fundamental feature of the East Roman Church was the close political-ideological relationship it held with the secular power, embodied by the emperor. In the fourth century the development of an imperial Christian ideological system rooted in both Romano-Hellenistic political concepts and Christian theology established an unbreakable association, which later set limits to and also legitimized the actions of emperor and patriarch. It was understood as a relationship of mutual dependence, but the secular ruler was expected both to defend correct beliefs and to protect the interests of the Church – especially that of the priests – which catered for the spiritual needs of the Christian flock. From the time of Constantine I, emperors were involved in both church politics and theological matters. As God represented the ultimate source of law, the emperor was understood as being chosen by God as the ultimate source of earthly law; a formulation which left room for great dissention later.[46]

Heresy and heterodoxy were two key issues that the Church and the emperors had to confront consistently. The geographical and cultural variety of the Byzantine world meant that in many regions traditional, pre- or non-Christian practices could linger on unobserved for centuries, albeit in isolated and relatively limited groups. Similarly, heterodox beliefs that had the potential to evolve into major challenges to the imperial authority could evolve unremarked. These heresies were addressed, and the causes

[45] Haldon 2000, 113–114.
[46] Haldon 2000, 132.

ascertained by both the local and ecumenical councils. These included, for example, a lack of clerical discipline or supervision in far-flung regions; poor education or even ignorance in some of the minor clergy and the ordinary folk, or immigration which brought groups with different views or different understanding of the basic elements of Christianity into the fold. Thus, the Church was constantly active in keeping the Christian faith on track, but occasionally, it had to confront a major heretical movement in which, almost without exception, the state would be closely involved. It was, after all, the emperor's responsibility to defend and expand Orthodoxy.[47]

The bishops symbolize the growing importance of the Church that occurred both on the spiritual and the institutional levels within the empire at this time. Charitable foundations were important as well; they were a major focus for the Church's mission to the poor, but they had to be supported and were usually funded by the rents from large estates. Orphanages, hospitals and almshouses were built and maintained; sometimes this was on the initiative of a private individual, who e.g. endowed their lands, and sometimes they were established by the Church itself. The emperors also established various charitable houses, and this underlines the ideological importance of the Church within the state. Vast amounts of land were given to the Church over the centuries, (sometimes in large bequests from wealthy individuals, but just as often in the form of tiny parcels of land willed to the Church by the less well-off) but what was crucial was that Church land could not be reclaimed – once devoted to God, always devoted to God – which led to the accumulation of the wealth of the Church only growing.[48]

Natural disasters such as plagues, earthquakes, comets, and even wars and other such phenomena were considered to be part of the relationship between the human and the divine and were dealt with accordingly. Disasters or political calamities were frequently taken as warnings that the Chosen People – i.e. the Christian Romans – had strayed from the path of righteousness and needed to be brought back. This often led to a reason for the disaster, or to a scapegoat being identified. Such logic formed the foundation for many important imperial initiatives, even if there were also longer-term

[47] Haldon 2000, 135.
[48] Haldon 2000, 136–137.

social and economic factors at work. The stress on Orthodoxy ("correct belief", that is, correct interpretation of the Scriptures and the writings of the Fathers of the Church) stemmed from this kind of thinking, so much so that many of the ecclesio-political conflicts within the Byzantine world, and thus between the Byzantine Church or government and the papacy, for example, initially begun over the issue of whether or not a particular imperial policy was accepted as "Orthodox" and which then often ignited a bigger conflict.[49]

There were several (at least two) forms or versions of the language in use at this time: ordinary spoken Greek, and the so-called "Atticizing" or "classicizing" Greek of the cultural and educated elite, the Greek of whom, it was felt, should be as pure and as close to the classical Greek of the fifth-century AD Athens as possible. This second form of the language was maintained in order to establish a degree of social and cultural differentiation, i.e., different strata or classes within society. Since this type of Greek was a "dead" language, artificially cultivated for political purposes, writers and speakers with different educational backgrounds and training tended to produce different versions of this type of Greek and thus confused the issue even more. The gap between the "Atticizing" Greek of learned people and the various spoken forms used across the empire was such that on occasion, we encounter Greek speakers unfamiliar with the educated language, having to have it explained or translated for them.

Anatolia was a region of considerable cultural diversity. Most of the non-Greek indigenous languages (Isaurian, Galatian, Cappadocian, Lycian, for example) had died out by the late sixth or seventh century, although certain languages may have survived for longer in pockets of the more isolated regions.[50] When Gregory of Nazianzus began his work as a bishop during the late fourth century, his Cappadocian Greek must have sounded amusing to his listeners.

[49] Haldon 2000, 10.
[50] Haldon 2000, 65.

In this chapter I have presented the context in which Gregory lived and preached and highlighted some of the key issues faced in Christian Byzantine in the 4th Century AD. We now move on to examine Gregory's oration on the Birth of Christ (from 380 AD).

III ONE ORATION ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

In this chapter, I will present the sermon on the birth of Christ, *Oratio 38,* probably held by Gregory in December 380 AD. In the published version the oration is structured into eighteen sections. There are three main parts: the celebration of the Feast, the doctrine of God and the history of salvation. I will engage with each of these themes using comments made by the two most eminent scholars occupied with Gregory's texts, Brian E. Daley and John A. McGuckin.

3.1 Celebration of the Feast

Oratio 38 begins with a reflection on the character of Christian feasts, creating contrast with the pagan tradition of religious celebration. According to Daley, Gregory's oration 38, *In Theophania sive natalia Salvatoris* (*On the Theophany or the Birthday of the Savior)*, is "an astonishingly broad and fresh exposition", in Christian terms, of the Mystery of God's redeeming presence in time.[51]

The Christmas-Epiphany Cycle is Gregory's next topic. In this section, he offers a reflection on the Creation story, the Fall and Redemption leading to its culmination in the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus.[52] According to McGuckin, the theological content of this particular sermon reiterates most of what Gregory said in all of his speeches in the city from up until 380, but the oration on the birth of Christ was given to a much larger audience of ordinary people, who until this point were used to hearing a different approach to Christological exegesis altogether. In order that they would understand the message, it was necessary for Gregory to design this oration in a much more accessible way.[53]

In the first section, Gregory invites his large congregation to joyfully celebrate the birth of Christ (Psalm 95:1). There is a balance between trembling and rejoicing: the

[51] Daley 2006, 117.
[52] Daley 2006, 117.
[53] McGuckin 2001, 339.

heavenly one lives on earth! He reminds the congregation to worship the one who "is from the beginning" and to glorify the one who is "the end".

> Christ is born-give praise! Christ comes from heaven-rise up to meet him! Christ is on the earth – be lifted up…Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad, because of the heavenly one who now lives on earth![54]

In the second section, Gregory encourages them further:

> Let "the people who sit in the darkness" of ignorance see "the great light" of divine knowledge. (Is 9:2 …Christ is in command – let us not resist him!" All nations, clap your hands, "for" a child has been born for us, and a son given to us, whose rule is upon his shoulder" – for he is lifted up, along with his cross – "and his name is "Angel of great counsel" – the counsel of the Father.)[55]

The theme of the great light reminds his listeners about the brightness of the Light. The source of joy is that Christ is born, He is born for all human kind, including the congregation and their preacher. A Daley puts it: "The word ἐπίγνωσις, in the New Testament and early Christian writers, suggests not merely knowledge, but the recognition of the truth of things that unites the mind to them – in this case, to God".[56]

Gregory also demonstrates how the celebration could be misused. In the fifth and sixth sections, according to McGuckin, Gregory expands on the need to celebrate the birth of Christ joyfully but not too elaborately and expensively ("with luxurious banquets exceeding good taste and moderation"), because of the danger of falling into the trap of holding feasts in the "Hellenic manner," and moreover forgetting all about the poor who would be scandalized by this excess. The enjoyment of luxury while others are in want is "like holding dung precious."[57] According to Daley, in the same section where Gregory reflects on the differences between Christian and Hellenist feasting, he plays with the various meanings of the Greek word λόγος *logos*:

[54] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 117.
[55] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 118.
[56] Daley 2006, 224.
[57] McGuckin 2001, 338.

> As for us, who worship the Word, if we must live luxuriously, let us luxuriate in the word… For our discourse is about God, and therefore divine.[58]

The word "Word" in its ordinary as well as in its Christian sense is unpacked; "speech" as faculty and as an activity; "reason", "order" or structure. Because the Christians worship the Word who has become flesh, according to Gregory, the most proper celebration is to behave reasonably and to order their behavior. They should "luxuriate" in Christian discourse such as that offered by Gregory.[59]

> Let the Jews take offence, let the Greeks scoff, let the heretics wear out their tongues with chatter![60]

Gregory often characterizes the Arians in Constantinople as "heretics" *par excellence,* and accuses them of playing clever word games, encouraging ordinary Christians to speak about divine mysteries they do not understand with their behavior.[61]

3.2 The Doctrine of God and Divine Being

In the main third section of Gregory's oration, he says:

> For God was appeared to human beings by being born: he is unique always, existing always from the One who always is, above all cause and language – for there was no word prior to the Word.[62]

Gregory's point is that we cannot in words give a rational explanation for the origin of the Son from the Father. Rationality and language originate with God and cannot therefore be used to give an account of God's being. According to Gregory, if we were able to do so, it would imply that the power of explanation would logically and metaphysically have existed prior to God himself.[63]

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[58] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 119.
[59] Daley 2006, 225.
[60] Gregory's oration in Daley 2006, 118.
[61] Daley 2006, 225.
[62] Gregory's *Oratio 38* Daley 2006, 118.
[63] Daley 2006, 225.

The meaning of the birth of Christ forms the next topic:

> Today is the feast of God's Appearing, or of the Nativity: both names are used, both titles given to the one reality. For God has appeared to human beings by being born: he is unique always, existing always from the One who always is, above all cause and language – for there was no word prior to the Word; but he became the other (i.e., born) later for our sake… The name of the feast, then is "Theophany" because he has appeared, but "Nativity" because he has been born.[64]

The doctrine of the Incarnation is not the doctrine of God as such, but rather part of the doctrine of God's Economy of Salvation for humankind. If his people desire to set the Christmas feast in its proper context, Gregory argues that it must be seen as part of the outreach of God to the world. The fundamental energy of "Epiphany" is the key issue in this festival of the Theophany. For Gregory, the first movement of the Epiphany is the creation of the first order of being: the angelic powers.[65]

All creation needed Godly input. God came to human being as a humble servant for them and it is he who gives the "salvation of sinners". Gregory's concern is that the people were so used to Arian exegesis from the pulpit and thus wants to clarify for the people that the events of Christ's birth do not mean that the Word of God is inferior to the Eternal Father. According to McGuckin, the distinction between Theology proper and the Economy of salvation needs to be observed. He states that the deity is completely simple in its own nature.[66] This means it can only be completely comprehensible, as Eunomius taught, or completely incomprehensible. Gregory argues that the latter is actually the case. In terms of God's proper nature, it is known only to Himself, not even the seraphim can glimpse at what it is, since it remains behind the will of the Holy of Holies. Arian exegesis, however, had generally taken the events of Christ's life (such as his birth and suffering) to be explicit evidence that Christ was far from "simple" in his ontology.[67] Christ was not divine in the same sense as the Eternal and Changeless God. Gregory wants to use the episode of the birth of Christ in the present feast to demonstrate the flaw in this exegetical process.

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[64] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 118.
[65] McGuckin 2001, 338.
[66] McGuckin 2001, 338.
[67] McGuckin 2001, 338.

In the fourth section, Gregory reminds his listeners:

> This is our feast, this is what we celebrate today: God's coming to the human race, so that we might make our way to him, or to return to him (to put it more precisely), so that we might put off the old humanity and put on the new, and that as we have died in Adam so we might live in Christ, being born with Christ and crucified with him and buried with him and raised with him.[68]

This is supported by Gal. 2:19; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12 and Eph. 2:6. This familiar list of Pauline expressions referring to the Christian's share in Christ's death and resurrection is supplemented by Gregory who adds the detail that we must be "born" with him.

In the seventh section of the oration, Gregory begins an extended reflection on the qualities of the Divine being. He draws from principles of Greek philosophy familiar to his listeners (especially from the Platonic and Stoic tradition) but adds many Biblical allusions (sections 7–10) to support his argument.[69]

> God always was and is and will be – or better, God always **is**… For he contains the whole of being in himself…the Divine might draw us to itself – for what is completely beyond our grasp is also beyond hope, beyond attainment – but that insofar as it is incomprehensible, it might stir up our wonder, and through wonder might be yearned for all the more, and through our yearning might purify us, and in purifying us might make us like God… the only thing completely comprehensible about it is its boundlessness… Let us, then investigate what it means to be of a simple nature.[70]

He goes on to admit, near the end of section 10, that this may strike his hearers as a needless digression in a homily on the birth of Christ. He offers it, however, as for him it forms the necessary theological and rhetorical background for his later emphasis on the "strangeness" of the Christian message that God has humbled himself to share fully in our human condition, in order to save us from sin and death. It seems to me that Gregory was determined that his listeners would understand that the saving reality of Christ is accomplished today.

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[68] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 118.
[69] Daley 2006, 226.
[70] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 120.

3.3 The History of Salvation

The oration includes the story of Creation and its fall, the punishment of man, God's mercy in the life of Christ and His kingdom in Heaven. Focusing on Christ and salvation, he begins by identifying the creation of all things *ex nihilo*, creation governed by the providence of God. That first creation, writes Gregory, "will receive a change to a better state," a glimpse at his claim in *Oratio 38*, namely the first-created state is "not one of perfection but is rather a work in progress".[71] He further goes on to speak of the non-existence of evil as such – a staple of Greek philosophical and Christian thought. This teaching points out that evil is "our work, and the evil one's", the result of "our heedlessness."[72] In the middle of the eighth section Gregory explains:

> The boundlessness can be considered in two ways: with regard to beginning and with regard to end… So much for our present philosophical reflections on God. For this is not the time for such things, since our present task is to speak not about God in himself but about what God has done for us![73]

Literally: "Our present subject is not speech about God (θεολογία *teologia*) but his saving plan (οἰκονομία *oikonomia*)." It is important to note that Gregory immediately goes on to speak about the Trinity. For him, it is appropriate to talk about God as Father, Son and Holy spirit in a discussion about God's saving action in created history. *Teologia*, on the other hand, is a more abstract, philosophical consideration of the nature of the Divine in itself.[74]

Peter C. Bouteneff, a scholar who has studied ancient Christian readings of the biblical creation narratives and also uses *Oratio 38*, has observed that Gregory discusses the meeting of immaterial and rational nature with the material in terms of God's exhaling into the material body. According to him, Gregory describes this breath as the rational soul, which is God's image. Although a dualism can be seen behind Gregory's anthropology, he accounts consistently for the thorough intermingling of body and soul and uses mixture language (μίξις *mixis,* κρᾶσις *krasis*), a terminology inherited

[71] Bouteneff 2008, 144.
[72] Bouteneff 2008, 144.
[73] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 120.
[74] Daley 2006, 226.

from the Stoics.[75] This same Stoic terminology "mixture" is used by Daley, in the thirteenth section.[76]

Gregory's interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3, here in the twelfth section, is characteristically enigmatic and allusive but, according to Daley, suggests a reading of the story of the Fall in terms of a Promethean desire for self-directed knowledge, unwillingness on the part of humanity to accept God's revelation of the fullness of truth on God's timetable. Seen in the context of the interpretation that follows, the "seeds" mentioned in the oration seem to be the seeds of eternal ideas, "seeds-structures of intelligibility" (σπερματικοὶ λόγοι *spermatikoi logoi*), implanted by the Creator in the material universe.[77]

> This creature God planted in Paradise – whatever this Paradise was! – and honoured him with self-determination, so that the Good might belong to him by choice, no less than it belonged to the one who provided the seeds.[78]

According to Gregory, people cannot blame Adam, because sin is existential: "it is *ours*."[79] He goes on to discuss Christ and closes with an exhortation to do good works "on the foundation of this dogma."[80] Like God, the good works are spiritual lights, and stable in their ontology.

Gregory's view is that after the angelic orders comes the second creation, which is humankind, (composed of material and spiritual elements, a compound of earthly and heavenly creation, someway between angels and beasts "set by the Word as a majestic smallness on the earth.", as McGuckin puts it[81]. The human being is described as a new kind of angel worshipping God in a tensile balance between spiritual aspiration and material limitation. This unstable ontology, however, caused humankind to fall away from the original pure obedience of God. Eventually the wickedness in human

[75] Bouteneff 2008, 148.
[76] Daley 2006, 227.
[77] Daley 2006, 227. (Psalm 148:5, LXX.)
[78] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 122.
[79] Bouteneff 2008, 144.
[80] Bouteneff 2008, 144.
[81] McGuckin 2001, 338.

affairs was such that it called out to the Word of God to affect the ontological rescue of the human race.[82]

A central feature of Gregory's understanding of salvation in Christ, that it is above all the gift of life, is found in the thirteenth section. This gift is a new, immortal life, a share in God's own life. Gregory argues that God the Son communicates this life to humanity first of all by sharing fully in every aspect of our natural being.

> He came to his own proper image and bore flesh for the sake of flesh and mingled with a rational soul for my soul's sake, wholly cleansing like by like. In every respect save that of sin, he became human: conceived from the Virgin, who had first been purified in soul and flesh by the Spirit (for it was right both that childbirth be honoured, and that virginity be honoured still more highly); coming forth as God, along with what he had taken on; one from two opposites, flesh and Spirit – the one of which shared divinity, the other of which was divinized. O new mixture! O unexpected blending![83]

Daley uses the terminology of the "mixture" (μίξις *mixis,* κρᾶσις *krasis*). This way of thinking was later regarded as dangerous by the defenders of a two-nature Christology in the debates of the fifth century. Gregory, writing in the fourth century, frequently uses it to express the unity of God and a human being in the incarnate Word. Gregory insists as Origen did, that it is the rational soul of Jesus that creates a point of contact between the transcendent, uncircumscribed Word of God and his "coarse" material body. He argues that for each of us, it is the soul that is capable of receiving the Holy Spirit and mingling with God. The soul that communicates to the body the divine life that will finally reach its material perfection in the resurrection.[84]

> […] he took on a share in my flesh, so that he might both save the image and make the flesh immortal. He establishes a second communication, far more amazing than the first: just as then he gave us a share in what was better, so now he takes on a share of what is worse. This is more godlike than the first gift – this, to those who have any sense, is loftier still![85]

[82] McGuckin 2001, 338.
[83] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 123.
[84] Daley 2006, 227.
[85] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 124.

Gregory alludes to the first communication (κοινωνία *koinonia*) as the kinship between the human creature and God. It is is established by our being made in his image and likeness. This communication of knowledge and love, of life and immortality, and this kinship and likeness were all lost because of sin. Gregory reminds us, however, that God established an even more wonderful communication when he made our complete human nature his own, so he could restore and perfect the original likeness.[86]

In the fifteenth section, Gregory says:

> The Word now undergoes the same treatment: by some he is honoured as God, and blended in; by others he is dishonoured as flesh, and broken off![87]

Of note are the terms "blended in" with, or "broken off" from God. Gregory addresses the implications for Trinitarian doctrine of how one interprets the various words and actions of Jesus: If one simply emphasizes the Word's divinity, one is tempted to deny any real and permanent distinction between Father and Son (and, implicitly, the Holy Spirit), whereas if one simply considers Christ's humanity and finitude, one is led to separate the Son from the divine essence. Further, in the same section, he states:

> With whom is he more angry? Or better, whom is he likely to forgive? Those who join him (to Father and Spirit) in a perverse way or those who divide him? After all, the first group ought by right to divine him, as well, and the second group to join him – the first in number, the second in divinity.[88]

Numbering the three Persons in God does not imply that they are divided in their substance. This is a standard feature of Gregory's Trinitarian theology. He does this rather as a way of recognising that a distinction must be observed within this divine substance.[89]

The sixteenth section begins:

[86] Daley 2006, 228. (Luke 12:42.)
[87] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 125.
[88] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 125.
[89] Daley 2006, 229.

> A little later, then, you will also see Jesus cleansed in the Jordan with the same bath that cleanses me.[90]

Gregory offers a vivid summary narrative of the events of Jesus' later life, including further details of the "economy" or planned work of salvation that began at the Incarnation and which is celebrated at this feast. He presents these events as things his hearers will "see" and "experience" for themselves. This presumably happens in the celebrations of the liturgical year as well as in their reading of Scripture. [91]

> And giving life to the dead – as he must also do to you, who are dead in your heretical opinions.[92]

Gregory gives the impression that his Arian opponents are among his audience. According to Daley, this may be a device for adding the vividness of actual confrontation to his discourse.[93]

According to McGuckin it is imperative, for Gregory, however, that the movement of God's compassion must be consistently referred into the context of his economic salvation. He argues that it does "not reveal theological beliefs *per se"*. The long list of limitations, and involvements in relativized history, which Arians had taken as evidence for their denial of the *Homoousion*, do not prove that the Word of God is not a simple divine being, beyond all time and limit. Gregory points out that the Biblical evidence demonstrates that God is a divine being, who has a divine expansive philanthropy and so assumes an active economy in time and space for the re-creation of his own handiwork. McGuckin argues that Gregory applies a vivid allegorical exegesis: namely, that in coming in the incarnation for this economy, Christ is like the widow of the parable who "lit the candle of the flesh and swept out the whole household in search of the precious coin (of the lost image)". All the references to Christ being sent, or being subordinate, must thus be taken "in reference to the human nature adopted by the Word of God".[94]

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[90] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 125.
[91] Daley 2006, 229.
[92] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 125.
[93] Daley 2006, 229.
[94] McGuckin 2001, 339.

In the final section, the eighteenth, Gregory says:

> Then teach in the Temple, drive out those who make a business of God! Be stoned, if this is what you must suffer – you will give the slip to those who cast stone at you, I am sure and will escape through the midst of them as God did; for the Word cannot be touched by stones![95]

Gregory ends the oration with a passage that demonstrates his usual approach to scriptural exegesis: his hearers must read the biblical stories as if they too were primary actors in the drama (according to him they are!). They must immerse themselves in the revealed truths and live their life out from them: "flee into Egypt with Christ, even taste the gall of his vinegar". Finally, they are told to go so far as to die with God and be raised with him.[96]

From this overview of Gregory's oration on the birth of Christ, Gregory emerges as a very good teacher indeed. In all his communications he demonstrated skill in shaping his message and tailoring it to the many different audiences he had. Moreover, he is communicating his message with vivid imagery and demonstrated a great gift for graphically memorable synopsis.[97]

In this chapter both the content of Gregory's oration on the birth of Christ, and some of the reasons for the inclusion of topics have been presented. In the following chapter the oration is presented from the view of its being a doctrine for the people.

[95] Gregory's *Oratio 38* in Daley 2006, 126.
[96] McGuckin 2001, 339.
[97] McGuckin 2001, 339.

IV DOCTRINE FOR THE PEOPLE

It is notable that the correct doctrine is important for Gregory's orations. In this chapter, I will identify Gregory's theological opponents, present those teachings by Arius which Gregory finds problematic, and demonstrate in what ways Gregory answers them. With this approach, I want to offer an understanding of the theological emphasis and the reasons behind Gregory's preaching.

As will be shown below, Gregory, Arius and the Pneumatomachians differed in their understanding of the Incarnation. In order to tease out the differences in the different factions' understanding of the Incarnation, three key terms, beget, create and generate, need to be defined. The three terms cannot be understood as synonyms as there is a slight difference in understanding or nuance in the way different Christian factions used them.

Beget (begat) is the term Gregory preferred because it is most biblical. It means "that the Son must have been either in existence or out of existence". In Arian context the term *generate* is used as if "there was when he was not", and Arius also thought that Christ was not eternal and co-equal with the Father, but rather was *created* by Him.[98]

4.1 Conviction of the Theological Opponents

The two major groups which Gregory saw as his heretical Christian opponents were the later Arians and the Pneumatomachians. Recent scholarly efforts to depict the early Arians have led both to different views of their major tenets and to increased discussion of their importance. In terms of background, the more traditional view that Arius was concerned with the monotheistic stance of Christian theology formed the basis for later developments, particularly since Arius, unlike Aetius[99] and Eunomius, supported the

[98] McGuckin 2001, 290–293.
[99] Berardino 1992, 13. Aetius of Antioch was a Syrian versed in theology and the liberal arts. Between AD 355 and 365, he took radical Arianism (*anomoeism*) to its furthest point. He was ordained deacon by the Eusebian bishop Leontius of Antioch. In the events of 358–60 he was several times under accusation and was condemned at the council of Constantinople in 360 because of the expense of both radical Arians and *homoeousians*. He was recalled from exile by Julian (AD 362). He continued to

invisibility and incomprehensibility of God. The newer interpretation that Arius dealt primarily with salvation history, however, is also crucial in the late fourth-century discussions. Soteriology was a point of strong disagreement between the Eunomians[100] and the Cappadocians.[101]

The Arians were divided into three factions: those who argued the Father and Son are *unlike*; those who believed that Father and Son are alike, but not consubstantial; and those who thought that Father and Son were of *almost* one substance. This final group eventually accepted the Nicene position. The historical timeline is such that Constantius died in 361 AD, in 362 AD the Council of Alexandria restored Orthodoxy, and almost twenty years later the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople reaffirmed Nicaea in 381 AD.[102] It was at this time that Gregory's oration on the birth of Christ was delivered to the people in Constantinople.[103]

Doubtless theological arguments were not easily accessible to the general public in the technical form found in Aetius' *Syntagmation*, but e.g. Eunomius expressed basic positions in a much less technical manner than his teacher, Aetius, and was therefore more accessible.[104]

If the arguments Gregory gives indeed represent yet another stage of popularization, then a different level of engagement in the debate can be argued for. Certainly, this held true within those sections of society where enlightened discussion of pressing issues was more common. Evidently, there was a sufficiently high level of discussion which could be simplified to make an appeal to popular audiences to engage with it. It was possible to state the fundamental propositions and their Biblical basis in a less

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teach anomoean doctrines and organized a separate church, of which he was consecrated bishop, in opposition to the moderate Arians Eudoxius and Euzoius of Antioch. Aetius wrote 300 doctrinal theses and transcribes one, the Syntagmation on God generated and Ungenerated. He died about AD 365.

[100] Berardino 1992, 297. Eunomius of Cyzicus, native of Cappadocia, of humble birth. He was a secretary and disciple of Aetius of Antioch. Eunomius was the greatest exponent of radical Arianism. He was ordained deacon about AD 357 and bishop of Cyzicus in AD 360. He wrote much but little survives. His *Apologia*, written in AD 361, is a complete, organic exposition of radical Arian doctrine. Eunomius died ca AD 394.

[101] Norris 1991, 53.

[102] Haldon 2000, 20–21.

[103] Daley 2006, 117.

[104] See f.ex. McGuckin 2001, 280.

rigorous fashion, and they could be presented persuasively, perhaps in easily remembered patterns.

Arius had produced poetry that allowed his positions to be grasped by the masses. His *Thalia* was probably a "dogmatic verse-composition" in a popular form rather than the classical poetic form. From studies of the Arian community in this later period, there is evidence that they developed liturgies that did have common appeal.[105] Moreover, almost twenty years after Gregory's departure from Constantinople, the persecuted Arians were still engaged in impressive liturgical processions at night, ones which involved antiphonal singing and special liturgical vessels.

Gregory's intent was to make what he preached accessible to the people. He strained not to make his orations too long or complicated. At times, however, it is clear that he knew he had stretched the limits and perhaps even broken them.[106]

4.2 Polemic against the Incorrect Doctrine

In this section, I will present those teachings by Arius, that Gregory finds problematical, and demonstrate how Gregory answers, in order to offer insight into Gregory's preaching.

Gregory decided to attack and discredit the extreme Arian party, the Neo-Arian school of Aetios and Eunomios, whose faction had already been penalized at the capital.[107] He did this by identifying the key issues in their theology and dismantling them.

The **first** problem addressed in Gregory's argument against the Arian heresy is the question of the eternity of the Son. From the beginning the Arians had used the mantra: "There was when he was not", to argue that the Son's generation, i.e. coming or being birthed, from the Father meant that he was secondary to God, both in terms of

[105] Norris 1991, 57.
[106] Norris 1991, 58.
[107] McGuckin 2001, 241.

sequence, (because whatever came from one thing had to have followed it), and in terms of status (because if he "came after" the Son cannot have eternally existed which is the divine prerogative.[108]

Gregory follows – more or less – the argument of Athanasios in his *Contra Arianos* to argue that the Son and Spirit come into being when the Father does, that is timelessly. He subsequently takes up a more precise argument of the later fourth century. The Eunomian objection was that if the Nicenes said that the Son was coeternal with the Father, they were ascribing the Son with the unique character of being Ingenerate. Gregory refutes this arguing that Ingeneracy and coeternity are separate conceptions. The Nicenes position, and thus that of Gregory, is that the Son is *from* the Father, certainly, but not *after* him.

For Gregory, the Father is the Cause but as he causes the Son outside of time, then priority cannot be involved in the process since priority is a time-bound notion. Order is not the same as sequence. Gregory argues that priority is also the characteristic of the person, not the nature as such, and so cannot be used as an argument one way or the other to make statements about how Generation logically demonstrates a non-divine status.[109]

The **second** Arian thesis addressed by Gregory was that if the Son is begotten by the Father, it must mean he is subject to change. Gregory answers that this can only be seen as a logical necessity if we define the process of generation in bodily terms, which he already shown to be illogical and inappropriate. For the Arians, the Son was produced from God as the first born of the creation. They did not insist that the Son was a creature, but rather wanted to highlight the difference between the Supreme deity and the divine agents of salvation i.e. the Son and the Angels. They honored the Son of God highly as a divine being, but understood, generally, that his divine status was achieved through a moral assimilation to his Maker. It was a "moral" sense of the Godhead that the Arian Church ascribed to the Word in its worship.[110] Gregory seizes on this and presses their insight to its limit. Again, he is following Athanasios' *Contra*

[108] McGuckin 2001, 290.
[109] McGuckin 2001, 290–291.
[110] McGuckin 2001, 291.

Arians. To deny the sense of deity would be the same as repudiating or refuting that the Son was God. This was something no-one in the Arian community would have been willing to claim. For Gregory the deity of Christ was a non-negotiable, all or nothing, truth and thus he refutes the Arian ideology about generation completely.[111]

The third point raised against the Nicenes by the Arians was that the Generation of the Son is a concept that automatically introduces the sense of a beginning to his existence. Gregory refutes this, stating that one ought to confess that he was begotten "from the beginning". As he often does, Gregory uses the concept of Beginning (ἀρχή *arche*) here alluding to John 1:1, and therefore means that the Word, or the Son, begins his existence in the beginning that has no beginning, and thus his generatedness is an eternal Sonship.[112] He claims that the Arian argument has no force, he argues, when the Son is considered as both spiritually incorporeal and ontologically eternal.

The **fourth** Arian syllogism was that the Son could have been generated unwillingly, or willingly. In their view the Son could not have been generated unwillingly for who or what could have compelled God? It must, therefore, have been done intentionally. Their conclusion thus was that the Son comes forth from the Father's will, not from the Father's essence, and so the image of Sonship cannot be used in the way the Nicenes have applied it, i.e., carrying the connotation that "the substantive identity of parent and child in the kinship of the Homoousion".[113]

Gregory first uses a rhetorical point to answer the charge questioning the "paternity" of his antagonists. He wonders whether their fathers were free or compulsive when they decided to beget them. He argues that no one forced them, and nature cannot be said to demand procreation, as the example of celibates can prove. Moreover, his argument goes, their parents freely chose to beget them. This does not mean, however, that they are "sons of the will" of their fathers. A child is the child of the person, the

[111] McGuckin 2001, 291.
[112]According to McGuckin, in Gregory's *Oratio 29* he criticizes Plato for describing the divine generation as "an overflowing bowl". Gregory wants to insist that the Father's generation of the Son is (1) entirely free, and (2) does not proceed from a natural basis (the *ousia* or divine essence) but from his personal relation. "His fatherhood" which thus refers the generative process to one of the *hypostases* of the deity not the *ousia*. By this means ingeneracy or generation is not constitutive of the divine Being (*Ousia*) but refers to the manners in which the divine persons (*hypostases*) personally express the selfsame Godhead.
[113] McGuckin 2001, 291.

parent, who begets them. In the same way the Son is not to be designated as a child of the will of God, but a child of the divine Father, considered as a person. Even God's creation which proceeds from his will is not sensibly understood as a "child of God's will". In terms of this latter analogy Gregory's argument starts to slip a little, according to McGuckin, because his opponents' precise point was that the terms child and product were interchangeable, and that both the Son and the Created order shared the common factor of being different forms of "products" of the will of God, and as such morally (volitionally), not substantively, related to the divine being. Gregory reiterates the point that no one can really explain the processes of human generation let alone divine generation. His opponent ought to honor the Father's generation of the Son by the silent awe that should accompany mystical rites. Even the angels cannot understand the manner of the divine generation and thus for Gregory, the mystery is known only to the Father and the Son, and "beyond that the cloud of Theophany covers it from view".[114]

The **fifth** Arian proposition follows: the concept of begetting a son demands that the Son must have been either in existence or out of existence. Their argument goes along the lines that if it is true that the Son comes into being, then "there was a time when he was not"; and, conversely, if he does not come into being, it is illogical ever to describe him as generated at all.

Gregory refutes this succinctly. He calls it a logical drive, something that only applies if the concept of generation is not also defined as timeless. If it is a timeless generation, as argued earlier, the issue of priority does not apply. The neatness of the syllogism used by the Arians caught his eye, however, and thus he responds in a similar way stating that common sense knows that it cannot be right and wrong simultaneously. In other words, the Arian syllogisms are like that too, amusingly clever, but theologically specious.[115]

[114] McGuckin 2001, 292.
[115] McGuckin 2001, 292–293.

The **sixth** proposition was particularly held by Eunomios.[116] For the Arians, the notions of Unbegotten and Begotten were by no means the same. The Son and the Father, therefore, cannot be the same thing.

Gregory agrees that this follows, but only if one first defines Godhead as supremely characterized by the concept of ingeneracy. According to him, if being God meant being ingenerate, it would follow that the Son, as generated from the Father, would not be divine.

The logical flaw, however, lies in the definition of deity on the basis of ingeneracy. If the Arians had argued that Uncreated and Created cannot be the same thing Gregory would have agreed with them, but for him the Generator and the Generated are not mutually exclusive in the way the former concepts are. These are terms that refer to relationships, and he argues that the relation between the Father and Son implies a sameness of essence passed on through the generative relationship. Intelligence and Lack of Intelligence can both be of the same thing – a human being. What Gregory means here, is that the terms Ungenerated and Generated, as relational, are to be referred to the *hypostases* not the divine *ousia*. According to Gregory, the negative term, the Unbegotten, cannot, as the Arians wish to make it, define the divine nature, since it only tells the hearer what God is not. It does not and cannot approach what God is. This alone makes it serve as a definition of God's nature *qua tale*.

Gregory refutes this key Eunomian argument by turning it on its head. In other words, far from signifying an inferior status on the Son's generation from God it posits the very reason why the Son is divine and glorious. Even in his generatedness (Gregory prefers the term *begottenness*) the Son partakes of the Father's ingeneracy, since he is the Son of such a Father (*Oratio 29*).[117]

The **seventh** Arian argument was that if the Nicene premise that the Son's generation is an eternal one is taken seriously, then it follows that the generation is still taking place. It must, according to them, be in the continuous present. If that is the case it

[116] According to McGuckin (2001, 293), "the Eunomian position was actually that the Son was unlike the Father in essence, or, "of a different essence".
[117] McGuckin 2001, 293.

cannot have been "perfected" by its closure. If the generation of the Son is eternal, therefore, it must be imperfect and thus cannot be divine.

Gregory answers this by denying the logical force of the analogy. He offers the example of the creation of the angelical beings, or human souls, as two cases where things are given a beginning from God, but which will not have an end. Both existences are immortal. He argues that life forms, therefore, cannot be circumscribed in every case by the limits of beginning and end, and to posit this in terms of the divine generation of the Son is to make the Son's birth paralleled with the lower of all life forms. This is a form of materialism he consistently charges the Arians with.

Gregory ends this section by suggesting, once again, that the Arians only call the Son divine by a loose use of words, and their real intention is, he suggests, to deny the divinity of Christ by stripping the Son of his deity by their ideas. He is acutely aware that the Arians positively objected to being "caricatured" like this, but forcefully insists, nonetheless, that this is the real force of all their theology. Moreover, he argues that protesting against this diagnosis is more evidence of illogical thinking on their part. They are, in his eyes, *Theo-machians*: fighters against the Godhead.[118]

The **eighth** point in the Arian objections is raised in one of the densest parts of the *Theological Orations.* It has been criticized by Meijering, unjustly according to McGuckin, as an instance of where Gregory's logic is inconsistent. Meijering thinks Gregory sometimes ascribes divine being to the Father's causality, but sometimes considers it as a generic class of all three persons. Gregory sees the divine being as "the Father's own being, which he personally communicates to the hypostates of the Son and Spirit." Therefore, it seems he does not regard it as a generic class. When he considers the issue of a generic class here, he takes an argument from the created order to make a secondary point. He does not attribute this doctrine to the Trinity.[119] Gregory's Greek is very compact, but the argument about models of causation can be summarized as follows: The Nicenes teach that the proper meaning of the Biblical text,

[118] McGuckin 2001, 294.
[119] McGuckin 2001, 294.

"the Father is greater than the Son", connotes the manner in which the Father is the Cause (αἴτιος *aitios*) of the Son.[120]

For the Arians, the admission of causality by the proponents of the Nicene thinking is a clear indication that the one (of the Godhead) is greater "in nature" than the other. This, Gregory says, is mistaken logic, which originated in the extrapolation by the Arians from the individual to the generic. They have done this by amending the concept of greater by adding (illegitimately) "in nature" to the notion "greater by causality".[121]

Gregory's point here is simply to use a generic argument to illustrate the logical mistake the Arians committed in their exegesis of the Johannine text (Jn 14:28). He argues that the word "greater" in the biblical phrase cannot be presumed to be an absolute reference point and is not a specific indicator of the manner in which the Father is greater than the Son. In the end Gregory admits that the scripture simply does not explain the manner in which the Father is greater than the Son. In other words, the question of what the Father being greater than the Son means, remains unanswered.[122]

4.3 Rhetoric

Gregory of Nazianzus is considered the most important figure in the synthesis of Greek rhetoric and Christianity and is often regarded as the greatest Greek orator since Demosthenes: Kennedy, for example, states, "his speeches become the preeminent model of Christian eloquence throughout the Byzantine period".[123] In form and style, Gregory's orations resemble the speeches of the sophists, but surpassed them in the power of thought and intensity of conviction. As a Christian orator, Gregory had an important new message for the world. He had something to say that the sophists in their nostalgia for the fading Hellenic tradition could not match.[124]

[120] McGuckin 2001, 294.
[121] McGuckin 2001, 295.
[122] McGuckin 2001, 294–296.
[123] Kennedy 1984, 261.
[124] Kennedy 1984, 261–262.

The Church Fathers were forced to use Greek terms to describe the various techniques and literary forms found in the Bible. They had not only studied classical rhetoric themselves but had taught it before their conversion.[125] According to Johannes Quasten, the Cappadocian Fathers, Basil the Great, his brother Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus, had distinguished between Basil "the man of action", Gregory of Nazianzus "the master of oratory" and Gregory of Nyssa "the thinker". This distinction is particularly appropriate in the present context, since the orations and poetry of the Theologian characterizes Gregory as a "philosophical rhetorical", who grasped fundamental truths about both the content and method of Christian theology. He was not, however, the powerful metaphysician whom one discovers in reading the attacks of Nyssa and Marius Victorinus on later Arians.[126] The three orations, 37, 38 and 39 are, however, remarkable examples of Christian theological and liturgical rhetoric.[127]

It is obvious that Gregory uses the *allegorical* approach in this oration, *Oratio 38, Theophania on the Birth of Christ*. Allegory was used by Church Father Origenes, and Gregory would, of course, have been familiar with this. The Cappadocian Fathers Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa had earlier co-edited a volume of Origenes' *Filokalia*. In his oration, Gregory uses both the literal approach of the Bible as well as allegorical techniques. Because of his more frequent use of the allegorical approach in the earlier parts of his ministry, it has been suggested by several scholars, that this may reflect a conversion from the Alexandrian method to that espoused by the Antiochian school.[128]

According to Simonetti, allegory comes from the words "*alla proneomen*", meaning "to say other things". It is the poetic and rhetorical procedure of saying one thing and meaning another. By extension, we also use allegory to mean the hermeneutical procedure of attributing to a text an allegorical meaning not originally intended by the author. The Jews made sparing use of allegory in interpreting the Old Testament, e.g. The Bride and Groom of Songs of Songs become symbols of Israel and Yahweh.[129] The Greeks, on the other hand, especially under the influence of stoicism, willingly

[125] Kennedy 1984, 11.
[126] Börtnes & Hägg 2006, 9.
[127] Browne & Swallow 1955, 344.
[128] McGuckin 2001, 43.
[129] Simonetti 1992, 25.

interpreted the Homeric myths and legends as symbols of the supernatural forces affecting the passions of soul. This hermeneutical criterion was widely used in Judaeo-Hellenistic books, especially by Philo of Alexandria, who interpreted the Old Testament in a way that made it compatible with the philosophical and moral needs of his Greek readers. A similar procedure was used by Paul to interpret events and characters in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, i.e., the books of the Law, as prefigurations or symbolic anticipations of Christ and the Church. In general, Paul prefigured the term *typos* (Rom. 5:14, 1 Cor. 10:6 etc.). This type of Old Testament interpretation enjoyed great success and set the usual standard by which from the 2nd century on Christians read and interpreted these specific books. Allegory found its place amongst the exegetes, especially of the school of Alexandria. Allegory as typology dominated post-apostolic Christian readings of Scripture. This typology established a resonance between events, images, or characters. Allegory and rhetoric were the common methods employed to grab the audience's attention from the beginning to the end. Gregory was a master of all these forms.[130]

Teresa M. Kelly argues that "there is always an irreducible difference between allegorical representation and its referent, whether that referent is a Platonic idea or a prelapsarian world to which Christian allegorists harken back". She also states that Neo-Platonic argumentation that allegorizes and uses emblems helps readers imagine the ideal visual form or idea of their "other speech".[131] It seems clear that allegorical methods formed part of the rhetorical skills employed by Gregory in his orations, which is clearly visible in *Oratio 38*.[132]

According to Kennedy "The identification of rhetoric with style – called *letteraturizzazione* – is a common phenomenon in the history of the study of rhetoric but represents a limitation and to some extent a distortion of the discipline of rhetoric as understood and taught in antiquity and by some of the most creative theorists of subsequent periods. Rhetoric is that quality in discourse by which a speaker or writer seeks to accomplish his purposes."[133]

[130] Whitman 1991, 162–165. Whitman 2003, 9–10.
[131] Kelly 1999, 6.
[132] McGuckin 2001, 339.
[133] Kennedy 1984, 3.

At the time of Gregory (and indeed until the late Middle Ages and the Reformation), the Bible was more often heard when read aloud to a group than read privately. This was due to a low level of adult literacy outside of the educated elite classes. Additionally until the printing press was invented all copies of the scriptures were hand-written, and so there were very few privately owned copies of the Bible. The Bible retained an oral and linear quality to a greater extent than any modern text [134] and thus Gregory's rhetorical skill and style of presenting the message was important in getting the Biblical message to his listeners.

The rhetorical arts are oratory and poetry.[135] According to Gunderson, one of the formative perceptions in large part generated by images offered up by early Christian literature itself is that "missionary preaching and community teaching grounded the burgeoning first and second century Christian movement. A significant part of this picture comes from reading the Acts of the Apostles in conjunction with the letters of the New Testament." He further argues that our later perceptions of the genres of homily and sermon shape the manner how we read and group these earlier orations and sermons. Since a technical term for *"sermon"* does not appear in Greek before the third century AD, however, it is difficult to reconstruct the pre-history of the sermon in early Christianity. Nonetheless, as other scholars have argued, the "unique blending of oral and literary textualities in the development of early Christian preaching" employed by Gregory and others make fully assessing the complex nature of early Christian discourse very tricky indeed.[136]

Rosemary Radford Ruether also weighs in on the conflict between Christianity and classical culture that can be seen in Gregory of Nazianzus' writings. It had its roots in the ancient rivalry between rhetoric and philosophy. The clash between rhetoric and philosophy was, however, transformed from that of the earlier sophists by the fourth-century Fathers. The vehicle by which Hellenic culture became the universal medium of a far-flung empire was, according to her, rhetoric. In a Hellenistic society, rhetoric was used to gain power. Gregorius as an especially skilled speaker, well-educated and

[134] Kennedy 1984, 5.
[135] Gunderson 2009, 1.
[136] Penner & Vander Stichele 2009, 245–246.

talented, was able to combine all the sophistic and theological terminology into a mixture of effective oration.[137]

The literal and the spiritual meaning of Scripture, the flesh and the Spirit, the Old Law verses, the New Law and texts about this world and the next all lent themselves to the use of paradox as a way of describing life. Gregory describes the ascetic life in a similar fashion. The conflicts between the flesh and the spirit also provided a fertile source for the literary technique of the Christian orator, as well as the doctrines of incarnation and salvation.[138] The mysteries of Godhead, his immanence and transcendence, also lent themselves to paradoxical modes of expression.

According to Andrew Hofer, Gregory of Nazianzus stands at an intellectual crossroads. This period between the councils (Nicaea AD 325 and Constantinople AD 381) was perhaps the most formative for Christian doctrine, after the writing of the New Testament. It was a time of fierce dogmatic disputes among the Christians themselves, including Emperors, about the most important matters of the faith. Gregory not only witnessed this decisive turning point in Christian history, but with his intellectual gifts, he also contributed decisively to the way that Christians in successive generations would think about the divine mysteries.[139]

Gregory speaks of the *mixeias* and *kraseis* (i.e., the mixing and blending) of elements in the world, but it is unclear whether the two terms express two sides of the same coin or carry different meanings. For Gregory, a mixture of language appears in various ways in addition to describing his human constitution and the incarnation. God, who mixes the world, is, for Gregory, utterly pure and unmixed. On the other hand, the whole world can be thought of as a mixture in one sense – as he knows for example, that one does not see a colorless body or disembodied color.[140]

Hofer says that Gregory loves to emphasize the contrasts in mixtures. Gregory mentions the Apostle Paul's loving kindness (φιλανθρωπία *philanthropia*), strictness

[137] Radford Ruether 1969, 1.
[138] Radford Ruether 1969, 84–85.
[139] Hofer 2013, 1, 89.
[140] Hofer 2013, 106–107.

(αὐστηρόν *austeron*), and the mixture (μῖξῖς *mixis*) and blending (κρᾶσις *krasis*) of both as an example for his model for ministry. This paradox and the use of two contrasts suggests how Gregory blends many overarching oppositions and seeming contradictions in his life: Greek classical literature which is rife with paganism verses the Christian faith, philosophy verses rhetoric, or contemplation and action. Gregory's mix of opposites points to the Greek mind's ability to hold both polarities simultaneously, as well as alluding to the Christian faith holding paradoxical mysteries sacred. According to Hofer, the soul and the body are not equal in Gregory's anthropology – and this logically leads to the thought about how much more unequal the divinity and the humanity are in his Christology. Gregory's view of the creation of the human mixture appears in several places in his utterances, but perhaps none more famously than in *Oratio 38.*[141]

In his oration on the Birth of Christ, Gregory gives "a catechetical review of the whole of Christian faith from the perspective of who God is and what God created. God (who is like an endless, boundless ocean of being) wanted to pour out his goodness, so that there might be beings to receive the benefits of contemplating his goodness. He first fashioned immaterial, intelligent spirits. Afterwards he created a visible and material world. Gregory believes that the spiritual creation is kindred (οἰκεῖον *oikeion)* to God, but that the physical creation is entirely foreign (ξένον παντάπασιν *xenon pantapasin*) to divinity".[142] (*Oratio 38:10*.)

In this chapter I have shown that Gregory was well acquainted with methods of rhetoric. In the next chapter (Chapter V) I will analyze *Oratio 38* and uncover Gregorius' use of rhetoric and literal techniques.

[141] Hofer 2013, 106–107.
[142] Hofer 2013, 107.

V *ORATIO 38* PREACHED FOR ALL LISTENERS

5.1 Detailed Analysis of the 18 Sections of Oratio 38

In order to demonstrate how Gregory made his *Oration on the Birth of Christ* more accessible and understandable to his wide audience and kept their interest, I now offer a brief analysis of the literary techniques and rhetoric used by Gregory in *Oratio 38.* This analysis has been drawn from the English version of *Oratio 38*, translated from the original Greek as found in *Gregory of Nazianzus*[143] compiled by Brian E. Daley. I also make use of Daley's extensive commentary in the same volume to understand his use of language and literary techniques in the context in which he used them. Daley's translation is both elegant and accurate, but also quite precise and thus, although working from a translation rather than the original Greek, I have found it suitable for use in this thesis.

As previously stated, Gregory's *Oratio 38* on the Birth of Christ is divided into eighteen sections. I follow Daley's segmentation of the oration; offering an analysis of each section highlighting the different techniques employed by Gregory to educate and persuade his listeners. In what follows, each segment of analysis is preceded by Brian E. Daley's translation of the oration into English.

Section 1

> *Christ is born – give praise! Christ comes from heaven – rise up to meet him! Christ is on the earth – be lifted up! "Sing to the Lord, all the earth!"* [Psalm 95:1 (LXX)] *Or, to speak of two places together, "Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad*", [Psalm 95:11(LXX)], *because of the heavenly one who now lives on earth! Christ is in the flesh – rejoice with trembling and joy: with trembling, because of sin; with joy, because of hope!* [1 John.1:1; Isaiah 9.2; Isaiah 60.1; Luke 2:1–15] *Christ is born of a Virgin – women, preserve your*

[143] Daley 2006, 60–61.

virginity, that you may become mothers of Christ! Who does not glorify the one who is"? [Apoc. 1:17; 2:8]

Oratio 38 clearly starts with the doctrinal issue of the Incarnation. Gregory begins *Oratio 38* with an introduction (*prooimion, exordium*) proclaiming that Christ is born. As can be seen in the English translation, he uses rhetorical methods, such as the parallelism of opposite pairs for emphasis: from heaven – on earth; trembling – joy, sin – hope.

Section 2

Once again darkness is put to flight, once again light comes into being, once again Egypt is punished by darkness, once again Israel is illumined by the pillar of fire. [Ex 13:21] *Let "the people who sit in the darkness" of ignorance see "the great light" of divine knowledge. "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* [II Cor.5:17] *The letter gives way, the Spirit gains ground* [II Cor 3:6]*, the shadows disappear, the truth takes their place. Melchisedech finds his fulfilment: the one without mother comes into being without father – motherless first, fatherless next!* [Psalm 110:4] *The law of nature are shattered; the world above is fully realized. Christ is in command – let us not resist him! "All nations, clap your hands",* [Psalm 46:1 (LXX)] *for "a child has been born for us, and a son given to us, whose rule is upon his shoulder" – for he is lifted up, along with his cross – "and his name is "Angel of great counsel* [Is. 9:5 (LXX); Is. 9:6 (Hebrew)][144]*" – the counsel of the Father. Let John cry out, "Prepare the way of the Lord!"* [Matt.3:3] *I shall cry out the meaning of this day: the fleshless one is made flesh, the Word becomes material, the invisible is seen, the intangible is touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes Son of Man – "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, the same also for all ages!* [Hebr.13:8] *Let the Jews take offence, let the Greek scoff,* [See I Cor 1:23] *let the heretics wear out their tongues with chatter! They will believe*

[144] Daley 2006, 225.

one day, when they see him ascending into heaven – or if not then, at least when he comes from heaven again, enthroned as judge!

Section 2 is focused on the Theology of Christ. Throughout *Oratio 38,* Gregory uses literary and stylistic techniques, such as oxymorons, to reinforce his meaning and improve its delivery for his listeners. In this section, he makes use of three rhetorical techniques: repetition, variation, and increase. In most cases, he uses examples of more than one rhetorical approach. In other words, in this section Gregory may use an image to repeat an earlier thought in a varying form, and at the same time gives it an increased intensity through the effect of the concrete turn on the listener's mind. The sentence "the fleshless one is made flesh, the Word becomes material, the invisible is seen, the intangible is touched, the timeless has a beginning, the Son of God becomes Son of Man" is a good example of Gregory's use of literary techniques. He is expressing his thought in a repetitive and diverse way, with increased weight and as a figure of speech, an oxymoron with contradictory words: fleshless–flesh, word–material, invisible–seen etc.[145]

In section 2, Gregory also uses parallelism as a method to explain how to move from darkness into the light that comes into being. He offers a list of comparisons from the Biblical narratives – including Egypt as darkness and Israel as light; old things have passed away; all things have become new, and The Spirit gains ground and the shadows disappear when truth takes their place. Melchizedek also finds his fulfilment (Psalm 110). This technique makes what Gregory states here easier for the listener to understand and process.

Section 3

But more of this later. Today is the feast of God's Appearing [Eph.4:6]*, or of the Nativity: both names are used, both titles given to the one reality. For God has appeared to human beings by being born: he is unique always, existing always from the One who always is, above all cause and language – for there*

[145] For more about the techniques used, see f.ex. Hellspong 2011, 143–144.

was no word prior to the Word [146]; but he became the other (i.e., born) later for our sake, so that the one who gave being might also give well-being – or rather, so that when we had fallen away from well-being through wickedness, he might lead us back to himself again by becoming flesh. The name of the feast, then, is "Theophany" because he has appeared but "Nativity" because he has been born.

In section 3 Gregory's importance as a defender and formulator of Trinitarian orthodoxy comes to the fore. Along with subsequent orations, *Oratio 39* and *Oratio 40*, the oration on the Theophany under scrutiny forms a trilogy celebrating the birth and manifestation of the incarnate Word. Of note is that some manuscripts give the title of *Oratio 38* as "for the birthday of the Lord" or "for the birthday of Christ; " The more common title is "for the Theophany", which simply means "the manifestation of God".[147] Here Gregory is defending the Christological doctrine against the Arians, explaining the titles of the feast. Gregory of Nazianzus is the embodiment of "both the challenge and the allure of coming to recognize faith, culture, and distinctive human traits, all visible in the literary production of a single person", as Daley expresses it.[148] According to Hofer he is "a giant in the developing tradition of Christian reflection on the "mixing" of the human and the divine; a man full of human learning, frailty, and passion and enlivened by an unshakeable faith in the nearness of God".[149]

Section 4

This is our feast, this is what we celebrate today: God's coming to the human race, so that we might make our way to him, or return to him (to put it more precisely), so that we might put off the old humanity and put on the new [See Eph. 4:22–24], *and that as we have died in Adam so we might live in Christ* [See I Cor,15:22], *being born with Christ and crucified with him and buried*

[146] Daley 2006, 225.
[147] Daley 2006, 117.
[148] Daley 2006, 2–3.
[149] Hofer 2013, 5.

with him and raised with him.[150] For I must experience the lovely reversal: as pain came out of happiness, so happiness must return from pain. "Where sin has abounded, grace has abounded all the more, [Rom.5:20] *"and if the taste of fruit brought judgment upon us, how much more have Christ's sufferings brought us righteousness let us celebrate, then: not like a public festival, but in a divine way; not like the world, but above the world; not celebrating what is ours, but what belongs to the One who is ours – to our Lord; not celebrating weakness, but healing; not celebrating this creation, but our re-creation.*

In section 4 of *Oratio 38* Gregory invites his large congregation to celebrate the birth of Christ joyfully. He warns them against doing this elaborately and expensively, with luxurious banquets which exceed good taste. Moreover, he calls for moderation, so that they will not fall into the trap of holding feasts in the "Hellenic manner". The latter way, according to Gregory, results in forgetting all about the poor who themselves are left scandalized by excess.[151] In this section Gregory uses the rhetorical techniques of repetition and antitheses. As already mentioned, this same method was used in section two.

Rhetorically, in this section, Gregory makes use of disposition, re-arranging the word order, to give variation and increase, and as can be seen in the quotation which follows, there is also an indication of the use of litotes (emphasis by negation). "Let us celebrate, then: not like a public festival, but in a divine way; not like the world, but above the world." He again also makes use of parallelism and the juxtaposition of opposites e.g. The old has gone and the new has come, we have died in Adam (Gen. 1.3) so we might live in Christ.

Of note is that Gregory discusses the Hexaemeron (the works of God) narrative only very rarely. He loved Basil's Hexaemeron homilies, and perhaps he thought they said enough on the subject.[152] In *Oratio 38*, however, Gregory does draw from Genesis 1–

[150] Daley 2006, 225. See Gal..2:19; Rom. 6:4; Col 2:12; Eph. 2:6. Gregory adds the fact that we also must be "born" with Him to Paul's list referring to the Christian's share in Christ's death and resurrection.
[151] McGuckin 2001, 338.
[152] In Gregory we have one of the few Early Fathers to devote serious reflection to question of gender, informed by Genesis 1–3. Further discussion of this topic falls outside the scope of this work but would be worthy of further study.

3, focusing on Christ and salvation. He begins by alluding to the creation of all things *ex nihilo*, a creation governed by the providence of God. In the work under scrutiny he argues that the first created state was not one of perfection, but rather a work in progress, although in an earlier sermon Gregory stated that the First Creation "will …". He further speaks of the non-existence of evil as such – a staple of Greek philosophical and Christian thought. This teaching emphasizes that evil is "our work, and the evil one's" and is the result of "our heedlessness." According to Gregory, we cannot blame Adam: the sin is existential, it is ours. Finally, he zooms in on Christ alone, and closes the section with an exhortation to do good works "on the foundation of this dogma.[153]

Section 5

And how will this happen? Let us not garland our porticoes, or form dance troupes, or adorn the alleys; let us not feast the eye, or charm the ear with music, or pamper our nostrils, or titillate our taste-buds, or delight our touch – all means of access to wickedness, entry-ways to sin; let us not make ourselves effete by soft and flowing clothes, whose greatest beauty is their uselessness, nor by glittering gems or the glow of gold, nor with the deceiving colours of cosmetics, which give the lie to natural beauty and are devised to deface God's image, nor by "drunkenness and revels," which, I am certain, are linked to "debauchery and licentiousness" [Rom.13:13] *– for bad teachers dispense bad knowledge, or better; bad seeds lead to bad crops! Let us not build high, leafy canopies as a shelter for the luxury of the belly![154] Let us not revere the bouquet of wine, nor chef's sleight-of-hand, nor the costliness of perfume! Let not earth and sea bestow on us their treasures of dung – for that is my term of honor for luxury! Let us not make efforts to outdo each other in moral weakness. For moral weakness is what I call all excess, all consumption that goes beyond need – especially when others, formed of the same clay, are hungry and in need![155]*

[153] Bouteneff 2007, 144.
[154] Daley 2006, 225. Gregory may be alluding to the Jewish celebration of the feast of Tabernacles. It is traditional to build canopies of leaves to shelter outdoor festivities.
[155] Daley 2006, 225. Gregory uses themes and images familiar from the practice of moral rhetoric that satirized the self-indulgence of his wealthy contemporaries. For similar passages, see Or. 36: 14–17; Or. 36:12.

A key rhetorical approach used by Gregory in section 5 is antitheses. An example of this is his use of the phrase "let us not feast the eye" made stronger by his use of repetition of the words "let us not" several times in quick succession. Gregory's shocking comparison of the enjoyment of luxury while others remain in want to excrement is taken even further in his use of an extended simile "like holding dung precious" and he does this to make his point even stronger. He teaches his people that if they wish to set the Christmas feast in its proper context, they must see it as part of the outreach of God to the world. It is his fundamental energy of "epiphany" that is at stake in this festival of the Theophany when he states[156] (again using repetition) "Let us not make efforts to outdo each other in moral weakness. For moral weakness is what I call all excess, all consumption that goes beyond need – especially when others, formed of the same clay, are hungry and in need".[157]

Section 6

> *But let us leave all this to the Greeks, to Greek feasts and celebrations: for they call beings "gods" who delight in the aroma of cooking meat, and consequently pay honor to Divinity with the belly; they come to be wicked themselves by being the sculptors and priests and initiates of wicked demons. As for us, who worship the Word, if we must live luxuriously, let us luxuriate in the word[158], and in the law and the narratives of God – all of them, but especially the story behind this present feast – that our luxury may be appropriate, and not alien to the one who has called us together.*
>
> *Would you like me, as your host today, to set words about these things before you, my honoured guests, as abundantly and ambitiously as I can?* [II Cor. 8:9][159] *If I do, you will come to know how a stranger can nourish local natives,*

[156] McGuckin 2001, 238.
[157] McGuckin 2001, 228.
[158] Daley 2006, 225.
[159] Daley 2006, 225 "As he often does, Gregory presents himself here both as a skilled artisan of speech, preparing an intellectual and religious feast for his hearers and as a social outsider in the sophisticated and wealthy capital. Even this oration on the birth of Christ is at the same time, a carefully crafted presentation of the preacher's own persona. Inspired by Gregory, later preachers borrowed this metaphor of oratory as a banquet set by the preacher before his congregation on a great feast of faith; see, for example, Leontius Presbyter, Sermon 14".

how a rustic can feed city folk, one ignorant of luxury those who are used to it, one poor and homeless those who glitter with abundance! That is where I shall begin; purify, I beg you, your mind and hearing and thinking, all of you who will enjoy luxuries such as these! For our discourse is about God, and therefore divine, and its purpose is that you may go on from here to share in true luxuries that will never come to an end. It will be at once both as full as possible and as concise as possible, so that it may not disappoint you by lacing substance, nor be distasteful through sheer excess.

Gregory starts section 6 by using the same method as he employed in section 5, antitheses, but here Gregory does not use the negation. Instead, he posits his argument in positive terms: "Let us leave all this to the Greeks" which is subsequently reiterated as "If we must live luxuriously, let us luxuriate in the word". Gregory here plays with the various meanings of the Greek word λόγος *logos*, "word", in its ordinary as well as in its Christian sense; "speech" as a faculty and as an activity; "reason;" or structure. Because they worship the Word who has become flesh, Christians celebrate most properly by behaving reasonably, by ordering their behavior, and by "luxuriating" in Christian discourse such as Gregory's.[160]

Section 7

God always was and is and will be – or better, God always is.[161] *For "was" and "will be" are divisions of the time we experience, of a nature that flows away; but he is always, and gives himself this name when he identifies himself to Moses on the Mountain.* [Ex. 13:14] *For he contains the whole of being in himself, without beginning or end, like an endless, boundless ocean of reality; he extends beyond all our notions of time and nature, and is sketchily grasped by the mind alone, but only very dimly and in a limited way; he is known not directly but indirectly,*[162] *as one image is derived from another to form a single representation of the truth: fleeing before it is grasped, escaping before it is*

[160] Daley 2006, 225.
[161] Daley 2006. 226.
[162] Daley 2006, 226. Literally: "not from what belongs to him, but from what surrounds him".

fully known, shining on our guiding reason – provided we have been purified – as a swift, fleeting flash of lightning shines in our eyes. And he does, this, it seems to me, so that, insofar as it can be comprehended, the Divine might draw us to itself – for what is completely beyond our grasp is also beyond hope, beyond attainment – but that insofar as it is incomprehensible, it might stir up our wonder, and through wonder might be yearned for all the more, and through our yearning might purify us, and in purifying us might make us like God; and when we have become this, that he might then associate with us intimately as friends – my words here are rash and daring! – uniting himself with us, making himself known to us, as God to gods, perhaps to the same extent that he already knows those who are known by him. [I Cor.13:12][163]

The Divine, then, is boundless and difficult to contemplate; the only thing completely comprehensible about it is its boundlessness – even though some think that the fact of its simple nature makes it either completely incomprehensible or perfectly comprehensible! Let us, then, investigate what it means to be of a simple nature. Simplicity, after all, is not itself its nature, just as being composite is not the whole nature of composite beings.

In section 7 Gregory illuminates who God is. "God always was and is and will be – or better, God always *is*." Here Gregory uses the rhetorical methods of narrative and allusion. He tells the story on one level but alludes to a deeper meaning underneath it.

Here Gregory uses typology to make the allusion, and according to Radford Ruether, the ascent of Moses to Mount Sinai (Exod. 33:23), used here by Gregory, is typically seen as the ascent of the mind to God in contemplation. She argues that this doesn't only happen in the Old Testament, but that also the stories of the New Testament can be taken as figurative dramas of the inner life of the soul.[164]

[163] Daley 2006, 226."… then (at the time of our fulfilment) I shall know, even as I am known." Gregory speaks here of the final goal of the life of faith as a divinization of the human person. He speaks of it with "express diffidence as a hope that risk being thought rash and absurd by trained philosophical minds." Or. 14:23; Or. 23:11.
[164] Radford Ruether 1969, 104.

It is important to distinguish this kind of typological thinking from allegory proper. Allegory moves from the concrete to the abstract, from the historical to the timeless and eternal, whereas typology remains on the historical level, using past experiences as types of present experiences, even though it commonly moves from the ”bodily” or what Gregory himself calls the σωματικός *sómatikos* level to the inner level (πνευματικός *pneumatikos*). Thus, according to Radford Ruether, typology has a kind of dynamic quality, as each present experience gathers up into its self-understanding the experiences of the past. Allegory has a static quality, as an event in the past is transformed into a symbol of a timeless or eternal truth.[165]

According to Bouteneff, Gregory was deeply invested in Origen's way of interpreting scripture to yield an orthodox Christian theology and spirituality.[166] Gregory was inspired to tell his hearers about the coming of Christ into the world, an advent that constituted the world being made anew. To understand the re-creation properly, one needs first to understand the creation especially of the human person. So, Gregory sets out to discuss God's being, which is beyond time and boundless.[167] In this section his literary technique is to use a language describing God in a way that actually goes beyond description, and Gregory seems to draw his audience into the wonder.

In the main section of his oration, Gregory then proceeds to speak about the meaning of the birth of Christ. His concern is to clarify for the people who have been so used to Arianizing exegesis from the pulpit that the events of Christ's birth do not mean that the Word of God is inferior to Eternal Father. He finishes the section by stating: "The divine then is boundless and difficult to contemplate. Let us then investigate what it means to be of a simple nature." Gregory continues to examine this antithesis in the following section as his introduction to the main topic – i.e., Christ made man.

[165] Radford Ruether 1969, 105.
[166] Bouteneff 2007, 140.
[167] Bouteneff 2007, 147.

Section 8

The boundless can be considered in two ways: with regard to beginning and with regard to end; for what is beyond these, and not contained within them, is boundless. So when the mind turns its gaze to the abyss above us, and finds no place to stand and settle down in its imaginings about God, it calls that boundless, inescapable realm "without beginning;" but when it turns its gaze below, to what comes after, it calls it "immortal" and "indestructible;" and when it brings the whole image together, it calls it "eternal." For eternity is neither time nor a part of time – it cannot be measured, after all – but what time is for us, measured by the movement of the sun, eternity is for eternal things: spread out coextensively with their being, like a kind of temporal movement and interval.[168]

So much for our present philosophical reflections on God. For this is not the time for such things, since our present task is to speak not about God in himself but about what God has done for us![169] *And when I say the word "God," I mean Father and Son and Holy Spirit: we do not speak of the divinity as being spread out beyond them, lest we introduce a whole crowd of gods, nor as held within limits short of them, lest we be accused of being stingy with divinity – speaking like Jews by emphasizing the divine monarchy, or speaking like Greeks by emphasizing the divine abundance! The weakness of both positions is the same, even if it is found in opposite extremes. So, the Holy of Holies, concealed by the seraphim and proclaimed "holy" in their triple cry,* [Is. 6:2–3] *converges in a single Lordship and a single Godhead – all this has been set out philosophically by one of our predecessors in a beautiful and lofty way.*[170]

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[168] Daley 2006, 226.

[169] Daley 2006, 226. Literally: "Our present subject is not speech about God *(theologia*) but his saving plan *(oikonomia)*. It is important to notice that having said this, Gregory immediately goes on to speak about the Trinity; for him, talking about God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is proper to a discussion of God's saving action in created history, whereas theologia a more abstract, philosophical consideration of the nature of the Divine in itself."

[170] Daley 2006, 226. Typically for ancient rhetoric, Gregory doesn't tell us exactly who this predecessor is. A marginal note in one of the manuscripts containing this oration (Coislin 51) identifies him as St. Athanasius, perhaps on the basis of the Pseudo-Athanasian work *On the incarnation and against the Arians*. It could also refer to Basil of Caesarea, *Contra Eunomium* 3.3.

Section 8 is made up of two distinct parts (and could perhaps have been dealt with separately though I have followed Davey's structure here) with the division clearly marked by Gregory's statement "So much for our present philosophical reflections on God".

In the first part, Gregory focuses on the boundless, eternal aspect of God. "The boundless can be considered in two ways: with regard to beginning and with regard to end; for what is beyond these, and not contained within them, is boundless." Gregory's rhetorical terms here are found in the comparison beginning – end.

Gregory then abruptly changes track. No longer does he eulogize God for who he is but sharpens his focus on "*our present task [which is] is to speak ... about what God has done for us!"* It is at this point that the focus shifts to Trinitarian theology (hitherto not addressed in *Oratio 38*): "And when I say the word "God" I mean Father and Son and Holy Spirit." Gregory here offers his philosophical reflections on God. For him, taken on its own, the nature of the deity is completely simple. This means it is either completely comprehensive (as Eunomios the Arian taught) or completely incomprehensible. It is of course the latter that according to Gregory is the case. He argues that God's proper nature it is known only to Himself, and not even the Seraphim can glimpse what it is, since it remains behind the veil of the Holy of Holies.[171]

How then does Gregory introduce the Trinitarian theology to his listeners and gain their interest? One way is the polemical argumentation with Jews and Greeks as antitheses to the correct doctrine.

Section 9

And since it was not enough for Goodness to be set in motion simply by contemplating itself, but the Good needed to be poured out, to undertake a journey, that there might be more beings to receive its benefits – for this, after all, is the height of Goodness! – it first thought of the angelic, heavenly powers; and that thought was an action,

[171] McGuckin 2001, 338.

brought to fulfilment in the Word and made perfect in the Spirit. So, a second set of splendours came into being, ministers to the primordial splendour; we must understand them either as intelligent spirits, or as some kind of immaterial, bodiless fire, or as of some other nature, as close as possible to the beings we have mentioned[172]*. I am tempted to say that they are immovable towards what is evil, and only possess movement towards the good, since they surround God, and are the first glimmerings to shine forth from God; for beings in this world belong to a second phase of that shining.*[173] *But what persuades me to suspect and to say that they are not immovable, but only difficult to move, is the one who was called "Morning Star" because of his brilliance but became and is called "Darkness" because of his proud rebellion – as well as those powers who turned away under his influence, crafters of evil in their flight from the good, patrons of evil in us.*

In section 9 of *Oratio 38* Gregory first uses the term and image of 'goodness' as a personification of the Trinity and then uses the metaphor of a journey "*Goodness [needed] to be set in motion … [and] be poured out, to undertake a journey"* in order to unpack still further what God has done for us, as set out in the previous section.

Gregory then applies an allusion from Isaiah 14:12: "How you have fallen from heaven, o morning star, son of the dawn, you have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!" The term 'Son of the morning' had another expression, Lucifer. Satan was once an angel called Lucifer, who in love with his own beauty, fell into pride and self-centeredness (Revelation 2:27–28), a theme which is picked up in both the Petrine and Lucan teachings "Just as I have received authority from my Father, I will also give him the Morningstar." (2. Peter 1:19, Luke 16:22.)

Here Gregory uses the literary technique of allusion to tentatively present the nature of the angelic world as morally "movable" or "immovable" but subsequently gives his

[172] Daley 2006, 227. Gregory seems refer to the "first creation," pure intelligences, which closely resemble Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, albeit in a limited way.
[173] Daley 2006, 227. "In speaking of the highest order of creation, which he identifies as bodiless intelligences, Gregory is sensitive to the philosophical difficulty of accounting for their fall from God, as he tends to see the root of sin in the disordered effect of bodily existence on the mind. However, he is persuaded by Scripture to identify the origins of the fall from grace whit such spirits and to see in them the force leading human creatures to fall as well. For similar difficulties in explaining the Biblical idea of fallen angels, see Origen*, On First Principles* 1.4; 2.9."

unhesitating understanding of the sequence. This occurs by carrying the metaphor of the journey still further and describing the transition i.e., the movement from intelligible to sensible and finally to human.

God creates material things, and here Gregory makes it plain that the material world is good and beautiful, particularly as an ordered whole. It is true, he admits, that the angelic realm, being intellectual, is more closely related to God than the material, for as Bouteneff states, the uncircumscribable God is foreign to materiality.[174]

Section 10

> *In this way, then, and for these reasons, the intelligible world came into being before God – at least, as I reflect on these things, weighing such great matters by my tiny reason. And when the first creatures were, in his judgment, in a good state, he conceived of a second world, material and visible; this is the structure compounded of heaven and earth and all that lies between them – praiseworthy, surely, for the natural excellence of each of its parts, but still more praiseworthy for the proportion and harmony of all of them together, each pat standing in good relation to every other, and all of them to the whole, in order to bring a single, ordered universe to completion. In doing this, he not only revealed his own nature to himself, but showed he is capable of bringing into existence something wholly other. For intellectual natures, graspable by the mind alone, are clearly related to the godhead; but whatever is subject to sense is utterly alien, and things that are completely without soul or movement lie still further removed.*
>
> *"How does all this concern us?" some impatient person may ask, over-eager, perhaps, to get on with the celebration. "Spur your horse around the turn! Tell us something deep about the festival, about the reason why we are seated before you today!" I will do this, certainly, even if I have begun on a somewhat more lofty plane; my desire and the shape of my discourse forced me to do so!*

[174] Bouteneff 2007, 147.

In the first part of section 10 Gregory goes on with the story of God's shaping of the world.

He then goes on using the literary technique of questioning, in this case the rhetorical question "How does all this concern us?", to get to the crux of the matter. He states that an impatient, possibly over-eager individual may well want to get on with the celebration, crying out "Spur your horse around the turn! Tell us something deep about the festival, about the reason why we are seated before you today!" Gregory promises to do so – and that will follow in the subsequent sections.

Section 11

> *Mind, then and sensation, thus distinct from each other, had remained within their own boundaries and bore in themselves the greatness of the Word who had fashioned them, silently praising the majesty of his work and heralding it everywhere.* [Psalm 18:4–5 (LXX)][175] *There was not yet a mingling of both realms, nor any mixture of these opposites – that mark of a still greater wisdom and generosity concerning created natures – nor was the full richness of his goodness yet evident. But when the creative Word willed to reveal this, and to form a single living being from both spheres – from both invisible, I mean, and visible nature – he crafted the human being. From matter, which already existed, he took the body, putting within it the breath that comes from himself, which Scripture understands to mean the intellectual soul, which is God's image. So he set upon the earth a kind of second world, great in its littleness: another kind of angel, a worshipper of mixed origins, a spectator of the visible creation and an initiate into the intelligible, king of the things on earth yet ruled from above, earthly and heavenly, subject to time yet deathless, visible and knowable, standing halfway between greatness and lowliness. He is at the same time spirit and flesh: spirit because of grace, flesh because of pride – the one, that he might always remain in being and glorify his benefactor; the other,*

[175] Daley 2006, 227. This phrase seems to allude to Psalm 18:4.5 (LXX). "There is no speech, nor are there words; their voices are not heard; yet their sound goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

that he might suffer, and in his suffering come to his senses, and be corrected from his ambitions of grandeur. He is a living being: cared for in this world, transferred to another, and, as the final stage of the mystery, made divine by his inclination towards God.[176] *For that, I believe, is where the modest splendour of truth, in this life, is leading us: to see and experience the brilliance of God, a glory befitting the one who has bound us together, will dissolve us, and will again bind us together in a still more lofty way.*

In section 11 Gregory discusses the dual nature of man or humankind, standing partly in the visible, partly in the invisible creation.[177] Gregory uses comparison technique: invisible – visible, earthly – heavenly, flesh – spirit to make his point. This comparison is further built upon as seen in the following extract: "He is at the same time spirit and flesh: spirit because of grace, flesh because of pride – the one, that he might always remain in being and glorify his benefactor; the other, that he might suffer, and in his suffering come to his senses, and be corrected from his ambitions of grandeur."

Section 12

This creature God placed in Paradise – whatever this Paradise was! – and honoured him with self-determination, so that the Good might belong to him by choice, no less than it belonged to the one who provided the seeds.[178] *He was the cultivator of immoral plants – divine thoughts, perhaps, both of a simpler and a more perfect kind; he was naked in his own simplicity, his life free from artifice, and needed no covering or defence. This is the way the original man was meant to be. And God gave him a law, as matter for his self-determination. Now the law was command concerning which plants he was allowed to partake of, and which one he not to touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; it was not originally planted with evil intent, nor prohibited out of ill-will – let not God's enemies exercise their tongues on this point or imitate*

[176] Daley 2006, 227. Summarizes Origen's explanation of the theological meaning and purpose of human fleshly embodiment etc.
[177] Radford Ruether 1969, 58.
[178] Daley 2006, 227. Seeds of eternal ideas, "seed-structures of intelligibility".

the serpent! – but was a good thing, if partaken at the right time. For the plant was contemplation, by my interpretation – something which may only safely be attempted by those who have tionreached perfection in an orderly way. So, it was not beneficial for those still in a state of immaturity, greedy in appetite, just as mature food does not profit those who are still infants, still in need of milk. [I Cor. 3:1–2; 1 Peter 2:2; Hebr. 5:12] *And when, by the envy of the Devil and by his bullying of the Woman – something she suffered because she was weaker, and something she passed on because she was more persuasive; alas for my weakness! for my ancestor's weakness is my own – he forget the command that had been given him, and was overcome by that bitter food. Then he was banished, all at once, because of his wickedness, from the tree of life and the Paradise and God; he was dressed in tunics of skin – coarse, mortal and rebellious flesh, perhaps. So, this was the first thing he came to know: his own shame; and he hid himself from God. But even here he drew a profit of a kind: death and an interruption to sin; so wickedness did not become immortal, and the penalty became a sign of love for humanity. That, I believe, is the way God punishes!*

The beginning of section 12 continues with the rhetorical allusion about the paradise narratives from Genesis, chapters 2 and 3. "This creature God placed in Paradise – whatever this Paradise was!" As for the Garden of Eden, Bouteneff wonders what path the human person attains to that final mystery.[179] Gregory's interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3 is characteristically enigmatic and allusive here but suggests a reading of the story of the fall in terms of a Promethean desire for self-directed knowledge. In other words, according to Daley, humanity is unwilling to accept God's revelation of the fullness of truth on God's timetable.[180] Gregory argues that God honored man and thus humankind with self-determination, so that the Good might belong to him by choice, no less than it belonged to the one who provided the seeds i.e. God himself. Here Gregory extends the agricultural or gardening metaphor, something which the listeners were almost certainly familiar with – and describes God as "the cultivator of immoral plants-divine thoughts, perhaps, both of a simpler and a more perfect kind". With

[179] Bouteneff 2007, 148.
[180] Daley 2006, 227.

insight from Genesis, Gregory then makes a connection between the state of Adam in the garden reminding his listener that he was naked in his own simplicity, his life free from artifice, and needed no covering or defense. For Gregory, this is how the original man was meant to be. Moreover, "God gave him a law, as matter for his self-determination". Rhetorically Gregory uses the method of repetition here, harking back to what he said earlier, in section four, when he spoke about temptation and salvation.

"Now the law was command concerning with plants he was allowed to partake of, and which one he not to touch. This latter was the tree of knowledge; it was not originally planted with evil intent, nor prohibited out of ill-will-let not God's enemies exercise their tongues on this point or imitate the serpent!" Rhetorically, Gregory uses the techniques of allusion and antitheses, connecting the narrative from Genesis 2–3 concerning the tree of knowledge and the prohibition to partake of it, but then arguing that "if partaken at the right time" it was a good thing. The technique of repetition of an idea planted earlier in the oration then follows, with Gregory making use of the Pauline teaching on milk versus solid food for infants and the more mature in Christ, in order to argue, that "the plant was contemplation, by my interpretation – something which may only safely be attempted by those who have reached perfection in an orderly way". Gregory gently reminded his listeners, by using repetition, that there are those who are infants in need of milk. (I Cor.3:1–2.)

Another rhetorical technique used in this section is allusion, packaged as an almost verbatim quotation from found from 1. Peter 2:1–2: "And this is the word that was preached to you. Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, grave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation." Here we can see that Gregory made use of both the repetition of key ideas from section 4 of the oration in question, coupled with narrative methods from the section 4 following the Hexaemeron narrative of Genesis 1:3.[181]

According to Daley, Gregory paraphrases a Pauline teaching and describes some of his listeners as needing to be "nourished with the milk of simple, elementary teaching

[181] Bouteneff 2007, 142–148.

– those who are like newborn infants in their state of mind, one might say, and cannot bear adult intellectual food." The argument goes that it follows that if one were to offer them more than they can bear, there is a risk they would be oppressed and weighed down by it, and their intelligence would be insufficient to assimilate what is offered. Gregory likens this line of thinking to what happens with our material body, and states that their minds would lose even its original power.[182] Gregory clearly invokes the apostle Paul here arguing that others need "the wisdom that is uttered among the perfect, a higher and more solid form of nourishment, because their perception has been sufficiently trained to distinguish truth from falsehood". If they were to be offered the food of the weak, milk and vegetables, they would rightly take it badly, because they would not be provided with the strength in Christ that they needed.[183]

Gregory takes care of his congregation and wants them to understand the importance of correct doctrine, therefore the main rhetorical techniques used in section twelve are allusion and repetition as also found in section four (above).

Section 13

> *Humanity was disciplined in many ways, in former ages, in return for many sins, which the root of wickedness caused to spring up in many different situations and times: disciplined by exhortation, by law, by prophets, by blessings, by threats; by calamities, by floods, by conflagrations; by wars, by victories, by defeats; by signs from heaven, signs from mid-air, from the earth, from the sea; by unexpected moves from men, cities, tribes – the aim of all which was a drive out wickedness. In the end, stronger medicine was needed, for maladies which had grown more severe: internecine murders, adulteries, perjuries, homosexual lust, and first and last of all evils, idolatry, which transfers worship from the creator to creatures. Since all these things required a greater help, they received one that was greater! This was the Word of God himself, who is before the ages, invisible, beyond comprehension, bodiless;*

[182] Daley 2006, 53.
[183] Daley 2006, 54.

cause from cause, light from light, the spring of life and immortality, the impress of the original beauty, the unquestionable seal, the unchangeable image, the Father's definition and Word. He came to his own proper image and bore flesh for the sake of flesh, and mingled with a rational soul for my soul's sake, wholly cleansing like by like.[184] *In every respect save that of sin, he became human: conceived from the Virgin, who had first been purified in soul and flesh by the Spirit (for it was right both that childbirth be honoured, and that virginity be honoured still more highly); coming forth as God, along with what he had taken on; one from two opposites, flesh and Spirit – the one of which shared divinity, the other of which was divinized. O new mixture! O unexpected blending!*[185] *He who is has come to be, the uncreated one is created, the limitless one is contained, through the mediation of a rational soul standing between divinity and the coarseness of flesh. He who is rich is a beggar* [II Cor. 8–9] *– for he goes begging in my flesh, that I might become rich with his godhead! He who is full has emptied himself* [Phil 2:7] *– for he emptied himself of his own glory for a while, that I might have a share of his fullness. [Eph. 3:19; Col. 2:9] How rich is his goodness? What is this Mystery all around me? I had a share in the image, and I did not preserve it; he took on a share in my flesh, so that he might both save the image and make the flesh immortal. He establishes a second communication note,*[186] *far more amazing than the first: just as then he gave us a share in what was better, so now he takes on a share of what is worse. This is more godlike than the first gift – this, to those who have any sense, is loftier still!*

In section 13 a central feature of Gregory's understanding of salvation in Christ is that it is above all the gift of life, an immortal life. Moreover, it is a share in God's own life – and *He wants to communicate the truth that God the Son communicates this life*

[184] Daley 2006, 227. Salvation in Christ is above all a gift of life and the Son communicates this life by fully sharing in humanity.
[185] Daley 2006, 227. Gregory uses this terminology frequently to express the integral unity of God and a human being in the incarnate Word.
[186] Daley 2006, 228. "The "first communication" to which Gregory alludes is clearly the kinship between the human creature and God established by our being made in his image and likeness: a communication of the knowledge and love, of life and immortality; after this kinship and likeness were lost by sin. God has established a still more wonderful communication by making our complete human nature his own, in order to resore and perfect the original likeness."

to humanity first of all by sharing fully in every aspect of our natural being.[187] In the long opening sentence at the start of section 13, Gregory makes use of the antitheses technique: "by wars, by victories, by signs from heaven, from mid-air, from the earth, from the sea". He furthermore presents a long list of conditions, all that can be helped in the life with Christ.

In this section Gregory first makes use of opposing rhetorical pairs: flesh and Spirit; the uncreated and the created. Gregory alludes to the doctrinal issues addressed during the council in Nicaea and leading to the profession of faith of the Nicene Creed. A key doctrinal issue was the extension of its confession of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father to include the Holy Spirit as well.[188] "He who is full has emptied himself – for he emptied himself of his own glory for a while, that I might have a share of his fullness". (Phil. 2:6–8, Rom. 8:32.)

The Nicene Creed was composed in part and adopted at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. More than fifty years later, at the time of writing this, (Christmas 380 AD/ Epiphany 381 AD) Gregory's oration seems to echo the contemporary doctrinal discussions when saying: "cause from cause, light from light". Repetition of the central doctrines are repeated to remind the audience of their faith and state the correct doctrine refusing the Arian ones.

Although the terminology of "mixture" (μίξις *mixis,* κρᾶσις *krasis*) mentioned in the previous chapter on section 12 was already well known from Stoic physics, it was later regarded as dangerous by the defenders of a two-nature Christology in the debates of the fifth century. Gregory frequently uses the dual nature of Christ to express the integral unity of God and a human being in the incarnate Word.[189]

This is seen in how Gregory describes Christ: "He who is has come to be, the uncreated one is created, the limitless one is contained, through the mediation of a rational soul standing between divinity and the coarseness of flesh." He takes the explanation further to include himself – and by association those he is addressing – in stating "He

[187] McGuckin 2001, 338.
[188] Daley 2006, 22.
[189] Daley 2006, 227.

who is rich is a beggar –for he goes begging in my flesh, that I might become rich with his godhead!"

As can be seen, the doctrines of incarnation and salvation also provide Gregory with many opportunities for using oxymorons and metonymy. The idea of the unlimited eternal Godhead becoming man, becoming an individual bound by space and time, was perhaps one of the most extraordinary paradoxes to the Greek mind. Gregory continually plays upon this paradox: Radford Ruether supports this in saying that the paradox of God becoming man becomes more complex when extended to include the idea that "God becomes man to make man like God".[190]

The method of allusion was applied by Gregory also in section 13. "How rich is his goodness? What is this Mystery all around me? I had a share in the image, and I did not preserve it, he took on a share in my flesh, so that he might both save the image and make the first immortal. He establishes a second communication, far more amazing than the first: just as then he gave us a share in what was better, so now he takes on share of what is worse. This is more godlike than the first gift – this, to those who have any sense, is loftier still!"[191]

Section 14

> *What do the opportunists have to say to us about this – those malicious calculators of the divinity, talking down what should be held in honor, in the dark about the light, ignorant when it comes to wisdom, people for whom "Christ died for nothing"* [Gal.2:21], *creatures without gratitude, shaped by the Evil One? Do you charge against God his own benefaction? Is he any the less, because he humbled himself for your sake? Because, as the Good Shepherd* [John 10:7–10; John 10:11]*, he came after the wandering sheep, laid down his life for the flock, on the mountains and the hills, on which you offered sacrifice* [Hos. 4:13 (LXX)] *and found the one who had wandered; and when*

[190] Radford Ruether 1969, 84.
[191] Daley 2006, 123.

he found him, took him on those shoulders on which he also bore the wood; and lifting him up, he raised him to life on high; and raising him there, counted him along with those who had never gone astray?[192] *Because he lit a lamp – his own flesh – and "swept the house," cleansing the world of sin, and searched for the coin, that royal image caked with the mud of passion, and called together all the powers friendly to him when he found the coin, and let them share his joy, because they had also been privy to his plan of restoration?* [Luke 15:8–10][193] *Because the light which floods all things followed on the lamp that went before him,* [John 1:4–9; 5:35][194] *and the Word followed the voice* [John 1:1, 23]*, and the Bridegroom his attendant* [John 3:18–29]*, who "prepared for the Lord a people of his own"* [Luke 1:17] *and cleansed them by water to be ready for the Spirit?* [John 1:31–33] *Are these the things you charge against God? And do you suppose he is inferior, simply because he girded himself with a towel and washed the feet of the disciples, and showed that the best road to exaltation is humiliation?* [Luke 14:11; 18:14]. *Because he humbled himself through a soul bowed down to the earth, that he might also raise with himself what had been under the weight of sin? Why, then, do you not also accuse him of this: that he ate with tax collectors, in the houses of tax collectors, and made tax collectors his disciples, that he himself might profit in the process? What profit? The salvation of sinners! Unless someone will also criticize a physician for bowing over illness and putting up with bad odors, that he might give health to the sick; or criticize someone for learning, out of kindness, over a pit, in order to rescue the beast who has fallen into it, as the Law commands.* [See Deut. 22:4; Matt. 12:11]

For Gregory, in the opening of section 14, the movement of Gods compassion, must be consistently referred to the context of his economic salvation. In other words, Gregory's "people for whom "Christ died for nothing" are rebuked. This section does not, however, reveal theological truths *per se,* but rather is an example of the rhetorical

[192] Daley 2006, 228. The image of the shepherd in search of the wandering sheep (Luke15:4–6; John 10:11–17) is used as the framework for a narrative of Jesus' work of salvation. Gregory suggests that the end that the goal of the saved is to join the angels who had never fallen.
[193] Daley 2006, 228. Here Gregory offers a similar interpretation of the parable of the woman searching for a lost coin.
[194] Daley 2006, 228. The lamp here is John the Baptist.

device of what is known as apophatic theology or negative theology.[195] In other words, the long list of limitations, and involvements in relativized history, which Arian exegetes have taken as evidence for their denial of *Homoousion*, do not prove that the Word of God is not a simple divine being, beyond all time and limit. On the contrary, as McGuckin argues, the Biblical evidence proves that the Triune God is a divine being who has a "divinely expansive philanthropy and so assumes an active economy in time and space for the re-creation of his own handwork".[196]

Gregory uses the Biblical narratives and weaves them together to make his point clear to his listeners: using pastoral imagery of the Good shepherd who "came after the wandering sheep", he carries on the same metaphor and inserts the soteriological theology "laid down his life for the flock". He uses description, not only to describe the pastor scene "on the mountains and the hills on which you offered sacrifice and found the one who had wandered". Gregory then links this directly to the central tenet of the Death and Resurrection "he found him, took him on those shoulders on which he also bore the wood; and lifting him up, he raised him to life on high; and raising him there, counted him along with those who had never gone astray?"

Gregory's preferred rhetorical method here was of course the allusion to Jesus as the Good Shepherd. (John 10:7–10, John 10:11) A shepherd, ποιμήν *poimen,* is the one who tends, leads, guides, cherishes, feeds, and protects a flock. The image extends beyond the natural shepherd and his sheep who offered protection of the sheep in the fold and is understood to include a wider meaning with the Shepherd protecting his flock (of people) against the usurpers, the false prophets of OT times and the false messiahs of more recent times – in the context of Gregory's listeners, the Arian heretics.

The picture offered by Gregory is one of security and safety in Christ as the shepherd. Gregory uses the Gospel image of the shepherd in search of the wandering sheep (Luke 15:4–6, John 10:11–17) as the framework for a summary narrative of Jesus work of

[195] Grabau 2016, 69–83.
[196] McGuckin 2001, 339.

salvation. His final point is that the goal of the journey of the saved is to join the angels who had never fallen.[197]

The good shepherd, in the ecclesial context, is "the orthodox shepherd who does not allow the strange to climb into the fold like a robber and a traitor". The listeners have to beware of other voices than those, which carries the sound image of God.[198]

Gregory continues with the method of allusion with the parable of the Lost Coin from Luke 15:8–10. He builds up a series of images taken from everyday households with which his listeners could identify. "He lit a lamp" and "swept the house", "cleansing" and "searching" for the coin, and finally "called together all the powers friendly to him" to celebrate his find. Gregory offers a soteriological interpretation of Jesus' parable of the woman searching for the lost coin in Luke 15:8–10.[199] This was a biblical narrative, familiar to his listeners, which Gregory presented in a new way using great rhetorical expertise so that they would understand and receive the salvific message. Gregory then follows his rhetorical technique with allusions from Matthew 9:15, John 3:29, Isaiah 61:10 and Song of Songs 3:11 (about the bridegroom).

Allusion to Biblical narratives remains an important technique for Gregory to reach his listeners. He asks the questions "Are these the things you charge against God? And do you suppose he is inferior, simply because he girded himself with a towel and washed the feet of the disciples, and showed that the best road to exaltation is humiliation?" (John 13:5) to gain their attention. The world Jesus lived in on Earth, and subsequently, it was usually a servant who performed the menial task of washing the guest's feet when they entered the house. Since no servant was present, however, and no one else assumed the role, Jesus used the occasion to teach his followers a lesson in servanthood, humility, and selfless service. Gregory continues to press his listeners, repeating the use of rhetorical questions to which he expected no answer, but which pushed those who heard him towards examining themselves and thus engaging with the topic: "Why, then do you not also accuse him of this: that he ate with tax collectors, in the house of tax collectors, and made tax collectors his disciples, that he

[197] Daley 2006, 228.
[198] Radford Ruether 1969, 97.
[199] Daley 2006, 228.

himself might profit in the process?" Gregory does however move from the line of rhetorical questioning to offering answers "What profit? The salvation of sinners!" The allusions were taken by Gregory from Matthew 9:9–11 and Mark 2:14–17.

Section 15

> *He was sent, but as a human being – for he was twofold, since he grew tired and hungry and thirsty, and was distressed, and shed tears, by the law of the body. And if he also did these things, as God, what can that mean? Think of the good pleasure of the Father as a mission, and that (the Son) refers all that is his back to him, both because he reveres him as his timeless source and in order not to seem to be God's competitor. For it is said in Scripture both that he "was handed over"* [Rom.4:2–5; 1 Cor. 11:2–3] and that he "handed himself over,"[200] *and that he "was raised by the Father"* [Acts. 17:31.
> Rom. 4:24] *and "was taken up," but also that he himself "rose[201]"and "ascended" once again[202] – the former a proof of (the Father's) good pleasure, the latter of (his own) power. But you speak of the things that suggest he is less, while you pass over the things that exalt him; you take account of the fact that he suffered, but neglect to add that he did it willingly. The Word now undergoes the same treatment: by some he is honoured as God, and blended in; by others he is dishonoured as flesh, and broken off![203] With whom is he more angry? Or better, whom is he likely to forgive? Those who join him (to Father and Spirit) in a perverse way, or those who divide him? After all, the first group ought by right to divide him, as well, and the second group to join him – the first in number, the second in divinity[204]. Do you take offence at the flesh? The Jews*

[200] Daley 2006, 228. Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2, 25. Gregory deals here with the complicated issue of the relationship of the divine and human wills in Christ and the question whether his obedience to the Father implies (as Arians argued) that the Son therefore is less than fully God.
[201] Daley 2006, 228. Mark.16:9.
[202] Daley 2006, 228. Acts. 1:9; John 20.17. Gregory contrasts the use of passive and active voices in New Testament references to resurrection and ascension. These things happened to him as a human but he also did these things by his own divine power as the Son of God.
[203] Daley.2006, 229. Gregory speaks about the implications for Trinitarian doctrine on how the actins and words of Jesus are interpreted. Emphasizing divinity may deny the distinction between Father and Son, emphasizing humanity may separate the Son from his divine essence.
[204] Daley 2006, 229. For Gregory, numbering the persons does not imply a division in substance but an abiding distinction that must be observed.

> *do as well. Will you also write him off as "a Samaritan"?* [John 4:4–26, 39] – *and I will leave what follows unsaid! Do you refuse to believe in his divinity? Not even the demons did that! You, who are more faithless than the demons, more lacking in judgment than the Jews! The latter considered the title "Son" an expression of equal honour, while the former recognized the God who expelled* [Mark. 1:34] *them – for they came to believe on the basis of what they suffered. But you will neither accept his equality with God nor confess the divinity. It would be better for you to be circumcised and possessed by a demon (if I may say something that is a bit ridiculous) than to be uncircumcised and in good health, but still wicked and godless!*

Christology is the subject of section 15. According to McGuckin, all the references to Christ being sent or being subordinate used by Gregory must be taken as referring to the human nature adopted by the Word of God.[205] In the following section, Gregory uses the biblical term 'hand over' to express the act of moving power or responsibility from one to another. In this case Christ willingly accepted his role. That the term is repeated by Gregory emphasizes the importance of this act as "proof of the Father's good pleasure, the latter of his own power".

Gregory's theological vision of the Trinity and the role and place of the person of Christ follows next. "He was raised by the Father and was taken up", means that the Father's idea continued. Gregory's choice of the expressions 'honored as God' versus 'dishonored as flesh' is another example of opposing rhetorical pairs and is here linked with another contrasting pair, i.e. 'blended in' and 'broken off', a metaphor which Gregory then expands to make his point clear. The implications for Trinitarian doctrine of how one interprets the various words and actions of Jesus are clear here: According to Daley, Gregory's message is by simply emphasizing the Word's divinity, (to the exclusion of his humanity) one is tempted to deny any real and permanent distinction between Father and Son and, implicitly, the Holy Spirit. Conversely, consideration of Christ's humanity and finitude alone leads one to separate the Son from the divine essence.[206] This was a matter of great importance at the time Gregory addressed the

[205] McGuckin 2001, 339.
[206] Daley 2006, 229.

congregation and a key issue in the differences between those who took the Arian position and those who did not.

In this same section, Gregory's questions "With whom is he more angry? Or better, whom is he likely to forgive?" stem from opposite pairs, i.e. anger and forgiveness. Gregory clearly makes constant use of the common figures of thought, particularly of rhetorical questions and exclamations. Exaggeration was characteristic of sophistic style, and Gregory uses these techniques so frequently that it is possible to label his addresses as both hyperbolic and exclamatory.

The questioning used can also be seen as a kind of *paraleipsis* in which the orator exclaims to himself, "How can I possibly describe such and such a wonderful (or terrible) thing", and then actually proceeds to go on to describe it in minute detail using a series of questions. In Radford Reuther's analysis, the question could also be used "as a kind of apostrophe, where the orator addressed a series of questions to an imaginary interlocutor".[207] In other words, by answering the question "Which faction is he more likely to forgive?" with another question "Those who join him (to Father and Spirit) in a perverse way, or those who divide him?", Gregory involves those who are listening. Gregory again uses the method of opposite pairs, asking whether God is more likely to forgive those who join him or those who divide him.

Gregory further explained his questions employing the same method when fleshing out details pertaining to the first group and the second. "After all, the first group ought by right to divide him as well, and the second group to join him – the first in number, the second in divinity." In Gregory's Trinitarian theology, the numbering of the persons in God does not imply a division in their substance, but only that an abiding distinction must be observed within the divine substance.[208]

In the final segment of section 15, arguing for Christ's humanity as well as deity, Gregory uses allusion from John 4:4–6, 39. "And I will leave what follows unsaid! Do you refuse to believe in his divinity? Not even the demons did that! You, who are more

[207] Radford Ruether 1989, 72.
[208] Daley 2006, 229.

faithless than the demons, more lacking in judgment than the Jews!" Gregory finds fault in his opponents, who do not accept that Christ was twofold. He finds them firstly to be more lacking in judgement than the Jews, and secondly more faithless than the demons.[209]

Section 16

> *A little later, then, you will also see Jesus cleansed in the Jordan with the same bath that cleanses me*[210] [Mark 1:9] *– or rather, making the water holy by his cleansing, for the one who "takes away the sin of the world"* [John 1:29] *had no need of purification; and (you will see) the heavens rent open, and Jesus witnessed to by his kindred Spirit; (you will see him) tempted, and conquering his tempter, and served by angels; (you will see him) "healing every disease and every weakness"* [Matt. 4:23] *and giving life to the dead – as he must also do to you, who are dead in your heretical opinions– and driving out demons, some by himself and others through his disciples; (you will see him) feeding thousands with a few loaves, and walking on the sea, and betrayed and crucified – and crucifying, with himself, my sin: offered as a lamb, offering as a priest, buried as a human being and raised as God, and then ascending and coming again with the glory that is his. How many festivals there are, for each of the mysteries of Christ! Yet there is one conclusion to all of them: my perfection, my re-shaping, my return to the first Adam.*

Throughout his preaching, Gregory uses vivid sensory imagery to communicate Christian participation in the mysteries of Christ. Here in section 16, he states "A little later then, you will also see Jesus cleansed in the Jordan with the same bath that cleanses me."[211] (Mark 1:9.) According to Hofer, Gregory will go on to correct his statement, as Christ's baptism is less of a cleaning of Christ himself, and more of a way of making the water of baptism holy. For Gregory, Christ's baptism is *my*

[209] Hofer 2013, 164.
[210] Daley 2006, 229. In his vivid summary of the narrative of the events of Jesus , Gregory presents these events as things his hearers will "see" and "experience" for themselves: presumably he meant this happens in the ensuing celebrations of the liturgical year, as well as in reading of Scripture.
[211] Hofer 2013, 165.

cleansing because the baptism of Christ in the Jordan institutes the purification of baptism for all people, including Gregory and his people.

By using the technique of including himself (and by association his listeners) in the story, a form of personification, Gregory is able to convince his listeners that this teaching is relevant to their lives. His use of repetition of the phrase "you will see him" is important in this respect.

Gregory's vivid summary narrative of the events of Jesus's later life, which extend to the planned work of salvation that began at Christ's incarnation, and which are celebrated at this feast of the birth of Christ are presented, according to Daley, "as things his hearers will "see" and "experience" for themselves"[212]. This will presumably happen in the ensuing celebrations of the liturgical year as well as in their further reading of Scripture.

Allusion and narrative are the main rhetorical methods employed by Gregory in section 16. According to Daley, Gregory likes to give the impression that there are Arians in the audience, as a device for adding the vividness of actual confrontation into the discourse,[213] and it is clear from his form of narrative address, including himself and his listeners in the story, that this carries weight.

Gregory culminates this section with a long list of Christological feats: raising the dead, exorcising demons, feeding thousands, walking on water, as well as Christ being betrayed, crucified, and subsequently buried. He lists the Resurrection, the Ascension, and Christ's return in glory. His listeners would, of course, have been familiar with all these aspects of Jesus' life on Earth and beyond, but by listing them here and offering this conclusion: "How many festivals there are, for each of the mysteries of Christ! Yet there is one conclusion to all of them: my perfection, my reshaping, my return to the First Adam". Gregory is narrating the Christological events and reminding the audience of their doctrine of faith with a repetition of what is stated in section four and twelve.

[212] Daley 2006, 229.
[213] Daley 2006, 229.

Section 17

> *Right now, however, accept his conception, and leap with joy – if not in the womb, like John* [Luke 1:41] *then at least as David did when the ark came to rest*. [II Sam. 6:14] *Revere the census, by which you were enrolled as a citizen of heaven; be in awe of that birth by which you were realised from the bonds of your birth; honor little Bethlehem, which has pointed you on the way to Paradise; venerate the manger, at which you, an animal without reason, were nourished by the Word.*[214] *Like an ox, recognize your owner – so Isaiah exhorts you* [Is. 1:3] *– and like as ass, know the manger of the Lord himself: whether you are one of the clean beasts, subject to the Law, who chew on the cud of the word and are fit for sacrifice, or whether you are still unclean and unsuited to be food or victim, from the Gentile race. Run with the star; bring gifts, with the Magi, of gold and frankincense and myrrh – gifts for your king, for your God, the one who became a corpse for your sake! Give glory with the shepherds, sing praise with the angels, dance with the company of archangels! Let there be a common festival for the powers of heaven and earth! For I believe that they, too, are rejoicing and holding festival along with us today, if it is true that they are friends of both humanity and God, like those David portrays as "ascending on high"* [Ps. 23:7, 9 (LXX)][215] *with Christ after his passion, going out to meet him and urging each other to "lift high the gates."*

Gregory begins section 17 by exhorting his people to leap with joy at Christ Jesus' conception, which nicely connects with the narratives concerning the unborn John the Baptist who leapt in Elizabeth's womb at the sound of Mary who brought in her own womb the presence of Jesus (Luke 1:44). It also refers to David (2 Sam 6:14), who leapt when the ark was brought back to city of David.[216] Gregory uses the method of allusion in this section as well and carries the image of dancing in the womb and

[214] Daley 2006, 229. Gregory plays with the image of a manger meant to feed animals as the place where the Word becomes flesh. "The Greek word *logos*, of course, means both the faculty of reason and the word or speech that communicates reason's content. Here *alogoi*, brute and irrational beasts, such as humans became after the fall, are restored to their original ability to know God by the presence of God's incarnate Word that as a living human being."
[215] Daley 2006, 229. Gregory is alluding to a Psalm that seems to have been used in the liturgy of the feast of the Ascension of the Lord:" Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted, O ancient doors! That the King of Glory may come in…"
[216] Hofer 2013, 165.

dancing before the ark of the covenant into his exhorting of his listeners to "dance with the company of archangels".

Gregory preaches that Christians are to "know the manger of the Lord himself", painting here the nativity scene on the feast of the birth of Christ.

Interestingly, Gregory was not at all averse to echoing a resonant phrase or image from earlier works. Here Gregory commands his listeners to "run with the star". According to Daley, Gregory repeats this phrase and the following sentence, albeit in the past tense, in *Oratio 39:14*, which was subsequently delivered in the festival liturgy immediately after *Oratio 38*, the oration on the Birth of Christ.[217]

Gregory paints a picture of the Nativity scene, bringing the gifts of the Magi, the gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:1–2, 2:10–11) into view "for your king, for your God, for the one who became a corpse for your sake!" Continuing to use allusion in this section he not only describes the shepherds, angels, and archangels, but encourages his listeners to join in their worship. "Give glory with the shepherds, sing praise with the angels, dance with the company of archangels!"

At the end of this section, Gregory calls for "a common festival for the powers of heaven and earth!" on the grounds that their joy and feasting joins that of Gregory and his listeners. Alluding to the Psalms, he states that if they are all friends with Christ after his passion and thus embrace both his humanity and deity, they do this in a similar way to those David portrays as "ascending on high", those who "lift high the gates". (Psalm 23:7, 9) According to Daley, Gregory here alludes to the liturgy of the feast of the Ascension of the Lord where the psalm of David "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up O ancient doors! That the King of glory may come in…" was used.[218]

[218] Daley 2006, 229.
[218] Daley 2006, 229.

Section 18

> *You should hate just one thing about the birth of Christ: Herod's murder of children. Or rather, reverence even this as a sacrifice of Christ's own contemporaries, offered in place of the new Victim. If he flees into Egypt, accompany him eagerly on his flight; it is a fine thing to flee with Christ when he is persecuted! Walk uncomplainingly through all the ages and miracles of Christ, as Christ's disciple. But purified, be circumcised, remove the veil with which you were born! Then teach in the Temple, drive out those who make a business of God! Be stoned, if this is what you must suffer, you will give the slip to those who cast stones at you, I am sure, and will escape through the midst of them as God did; for the Word cannot be touched by stones! If you are brought before Herod, remain, for the most part, silent; he will respect your silence more than the long speeches of all the others. If you are scourged, then seek out the other sufferings, too: taste the gall, because of that earlier taste;*[219] *drink the vinegar, seek out the spitting, accept the blows, the slaps on your face; be crowned with thorns – the harsh side of a godly life; put on the scarlet cloak, receive the reed, be reverenced by those who make a game of truth! And in the end, be crucified with him, die with him, be buried eagerly with him, so that you may also rise with him and be glorified with him and reign with I., seeing God, so far as that is attainable, and being seen by him: the one who is worshipped and glorified in a Trinity, who we pray might be revealed to us even now, as far as that is attainable in the bonds of flesh, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power for the ages of ages. Amen."*

The final section of *Oratio 38* concludes the narrative of the Nativity. It starts with King Herod's murder of the infants, which Gregory (Matthew 2:16–18; Jer. 31:15) implores them: "You should hate just one thing about the birth of Christ: Herod's murder of children". Again, Gregory uses the narrative of the Nativity to invite his listeners to journey with Christ: "If he flees into Egypt (Matt. 2:13–16; Hosea 11; Is. 11:1) accompany him early on his flight; it is a fine thing to flee with Christ, when he is persecuted!"

[219] Daley 2006, I.e. the"taste" of the tree of knowledge, discussed above in section 12.

Further, Gregory uses both the Old and the New Testaments texts in his allusion and comparison technique, contrasting Egypt and light. Daley says that Gregory may be hinting at his own struggles with political and ecclesiastical opponents in Constantinople, when he talks about giving the slip to those who cast stones. Daley argues, that in this specific passage it may be possible to see traces of a redaction made by Gregorius in the 380's. [220]

Gregory ends this section and thus the whole oration with a passage that encapsulates much about his habitual approach to scriptural exegesis.[221] He is almost certainly aware of how many of his hearers could read the Biblical stories themselves, and that for some, listening to the orations and other sermons was perhaps the main way to receive the truth. He insists, however, that they must immerse themselves in the revealed truths and live out from them: "flee into Egypt with Christ, even taste the gall of his vinegar … and go so far as die with God and be raised with him"[222]. According to McGuckin, Gregory argues that such true exegesis of the text is a correlation of the life of the believer and the ongoing work of the divine economy of salvation in the present age. "We shall contemplate the great God, and be looked at by him, the Lord who is worshipped and glorified in Trinity."[223] Gregory's final words offer a summary of who it is he and his listeners follow, and why:

> *And in the end, be crucified with him, die with him, be buried eagerly with him, that you may also rise with him and be glorified with him and reign with him, seeing God, so far as that is attainable, and being seen by him: the one who is worshipped and glorified in a Trinity, who we pray might be revealed to us even now, as far as that is attainable in the bonds of flesh, in Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom be glory and power for the ages of ages. Amen.*

Chapter VI has offered a summary of the key points in Gregory's *Oratio 38* on the Birth of Christ, and an analysis of the literary and rhetorical techniques Gregory used

[220] Daley 2006, 230.
[221] McGuckin 2001, 339.
[222] Daley 2006, 126.
[223] McGuckin 2001, 339.

in his attempt to preach the Good News and refute the heresies (particularly Arianism) circulating at this time.

VI CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter (Chapter VI) I offer a brief summary of the work together with my conclusions.

This study has provided useful insights into the issues relating to the Doctrine of God and the rhetorical elements used in by St Gregory of Nazianzus, in his 4th century Easter Christology homily. Gregory is well known as one of three Cappadocian Fathers, *Oratio 38 Theophania on the Birth of Christ* and is of particular interest as an example of the conflict between Christianity and classical culture. The root of this conflict is found in the ancient rivalry between rhetoric and philosophy.

Who was Gregory of Nazianzus, and what was the conflict in which he lived, preached, and ministered? As stated in Chapter II, he was born (AD 329) in Nazianzus into the Hellenized, well educated upper class family of Cappadocia. His father, Gregory the Elder, was a bishop. He attended the school of grammar and rhetoric in Caesarea, where he absorbed the heritage of Greek literature and philosophy and deepened his intellectual identification with the Church's tradition of faith.

By the end of AD 348, Gregory, together with his brother Caesarius, moved to the metropolis of Alexandria, the center of the continuing Origenist tradition of exegesis. The theology as framed in the Creed of Nicaea was just beginning to be taken seriously as a normative expression of apostolic faith. Gregory's further education in advanced disciplines including philosophy and particularly rhetoric, was undertaken first in Caesarea, then in Alexandria and finally in Athens. These three centers brought Gregory into contact with various Hellenistic and Christian traditions.

Even though Gregory may well have been a student during one of the periods when Athanasius was in exile, at the time of his studies in Caesarea, the conflict between Athanasius and Arius was undoubtedly part of the conversation within Christian circles. Towards the end of AD 348, Gregory of Nazianzus moved to Athens. He was soon joined by his fellow Cappadocian, Basil of Caesarea, and his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa. For Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus, the cultural richness of Athens

seems to have encouraged a deeper study into the Christian narratives surrounding Creation and Salvation.

Basil and his other friends, Meletios and Eusebios of Samosata, encouraged Gregory to accept an Episcopal position from Constantinople. As the new bishop (AD 379–81) of Constantinople, the doctrine of causality became fundamentally important to him, as set out in his Constantinopolitan orations (which include the subject of this thesis, *Oration 38)*. His Christian faith expressed itself in a variety of forms, notably in his numerous poems and his correspondence. His series of orations, especially his five theological *Orations (27–31*), which argue his theological position against contemporary heresies, were influential throughout later periods. The Arians were in the majority in Constantinople, so the beginning of his ministry there was not easy. In AD 380, Gregory engaged in disagreements with hostile crowds and Neo-Arians in Constantinople. The exile of the Arian Bishop of Constantinople took place on the Eve of Gregory's installation as archbishop on November 26th 380.

The "triumph" of Christianity post Constantine was, in fact, the adaptation of Christian Scriptures, particularly the Bible, into the guiding principles of the Greco-Roman ruling elite. Gregory of Nazianzus himself lived, modelled and taught the avoidance of luxury, in order to live a humble Christian life. Not only Gregory the theologian, but also Gregory the Church politician, was a man whom his contemporaries took seriously.

Constantinople was the geographical context for *Oratio 38.* From the time of Constantine I, emperors were involved in both church politics and theological matters. As God represented the ultimate source of law, the emperor was understood as being chosen by God as the ultimate source of earthy law; a formulation which left room for great dissension later. Heresy and heterodoxy were two key issues that the Church and the emperors had to confront consistently. Natural disasters such as plagues, earthquakes, comets, and even wars and other such phenomena were seen as a part of the relationship between the human and the divine and were dealt with accordingly. Disasters or political calamities were frequently taken as warnings that the Chosen People – i.e., the Christian Romans – had strayed from the path of righteousness and needed to be brought back.

Oratio 38 on the Birth of Christ, was probably given by Gregory in December 380 AD. In the published version, the oration is structured into eighteen sections. There are three main parts: the celebration of the Feast, the doctrine of God and the history of Salvation. The Christmas-Epiphany Cycle is Gregory's next topic. In this section, he offers a reflection on the Creation story, Fall and Redemption leading to its culmination in the Incarnation of the Word in Jesus. The content of Oratio 38 is sketched out in this work in Chapter III.

According to McGuckin, the theological content of this particular oration differs from most of what Gregory said in all of his speeches in the city up until AD 380, but the oration on the birth of Christ was given to a much larger audience of ordinary people, who until this point had been used to hearing a different approach to Christological exegesis altogether. Gregory preached on the need to celebrate the birth of Christ joyfully but not too elaborately and expensively. Gregory even reflected on the differences between Christian and Hellenist feasting.

The Doctrine of God and Divine being was central to Gregory's theology. In the main third section of the oration, the doctrine of the incarnation was presented not a doctrine of God as such, but rather as a part of the doctrine of God's Economy of Salvation for humankind. If his people desired to set the Christmas feast in its proper context, Gregory argued that it must be seen as part of outreach of God to the world. The fundamental energy of the "Epiphany" is the key issue in this festival on the Theophany. All creation required Godly input. God became human as a humble servant for the sake of humankind and it is he who gives the "salvation of sinners". Arian exegesis, however, had generally taken the events of Christ's life such as his birth and suffering to be explicit evidence that Christ was far from "simple" in his ontology. Christ was not divine in the same sense as the Eternal and Changeless God. Gregory wanted to use the episode of the birth of Christ in the present feast to demonstrate the flaw in this exegetical process. In the fourth section, the familiar list of Pauline expressions, referring to Christians sharing in Christ's death and resurrection, was supplemented by adding the detail that we must be "born" with Him.

The two groups that Gregory saw as his main adversaries were the Arians and the Pneumatomachians. The Arians were divided into three main factions: those who

argued that the Father and Son were *unlike*; those who believed that Father and Son were alike, but not consubstantial; and those who thought that Father and Son were of *almost* one substance. This last group eventually came to accept the Nicene position. Arius had become widely known and his ideas propagated through his poem, *Thalia*, which allowed the Arian position to be grasped by the wide masses. Gregory strived to make his preaching simple enough to be easily accessible, not too complex or long, to make his point more understandable, although he did not always succeed in his efforts. One of Gregory's favored styles of preaching was pretending he had his theological opponents, the Arians, in his audience. In this way he was able to tackle directly the problems with Arian theology.

Oratio 38 is a remarkable example of Gregory's rhetorical skills. (See Chapter IV and V.) He was – and still is – praised for his orations, which demonstrate an unusual talent and understanding of the classical rhetorical teachings accumulated during his education. He used both literal approaches and allegorical techniques to clarify his message to the listeners.

The Bible was more often heard read aloud to a group and preached upon than read privately in the early Christian era. Oratory techniques were vital both in enabling the listeners to understand the message given and in making sure that it was remembered. The blending of oral and literary textualities also served a similar purpose. Gregory's writings and orations had their roots in the ancient rivalry between rhetoric and philosophy, and he was able to combine all the sophistic and theological terminology into a mixture of effective oration. He also thrived in pretending the representatives of his theological adversaries, the Arians, were in his audience at the time of the oration to give more weight to the teaching. His main concern was to clarify for the people who have been exposed to Arian exegesis from the pulpit that the events of Christ's birth do not mean that the Word of God is inferior to Eternal Father.

The Bible is the constant foundation of Gregory's preaching. The literal and the spiritual meaning of Scripture, the flesh and the Spirit, the Old Law verses, the New Law, and texts about this world and the next all lent themselves to the use of paradox as a way of describing life. The conflicts between the flesh and the spirit also provided a fertile source for orations, as well as the doctrines of incarnation and salvation. The

mysteries of Godhead, his immanence and transcendence, also lent themselves to paradoxical modes of expression.

Gregory uses the rhetorical methods of narrative and allusion throughout his oration. The term *allegory* refers to a poetic and rhetorical procedure of saying one thing and meaning another but can also be used to signify the hermeneutical procedure of attributing an allegorical meaning not originally intended by the author into a text. Allegory as typology dominated post-apostolic Christian readings of Scripture and was used to establish a resonance between events, images, or characters. Allegory and rhetoric were employed to grab the audience's attention from the beginning to the end, and Gregory is seen as a master of all these forms. He tells the story on one level but continually alludes to a deeper meaning underneath it. He uses typology to make the allusion, like for example when the ascent of Moses to Mount Sinai is seen as the ascent of the mind to God in contemplation. Also the stories of the New Testament can be taken as figurative dramas of the inner life of the soul.

It is important to distinguish this kind of typological thinking from allegory proper. Allegory moves from the concrete to the abstract, from the historical to the timeless and eternal, whereas typology remains on the historical level, using past experiences as types of present experiences, even though it commonly moves from the "bodily" or what Gregory himself calls the *sómatikos* level to the inner level (*pneumatikos*). Typology has a dynamic quality, as each experience gathers up into its self-understanding the experiences of the past. Allegory has a static quality, as an event in the past is transformed into a symbol of a timeless or eternal truth.

Gregory clearly made constant use of common figures of thought, particularly of rhetorical questions and exclamations. Exaggeration was characteristic of the sophistic style, and Gregory used these techniques so frequently that it is possible to label his addresses as both hyperbolic and exclamatory. He uses opposite pairs, such as from heaven – on earth; trembling – joy; sin – hope; to give added emphasis to his teaching. Literary and stylistic techniques, such as the use of oxymorons, reinforced his meaning and improved its delivery for his listeners. He also made frequent use of three rhetorical techniques: repetition, variation, and increase. In most sections of *Oratio 38*, he used more than one rhetorical approach.

Gregory expressed his thoughts in repetitive and diverse ways, with an increasingly increased weight and used oxymorons, as a figure of speech, with side by side contradictory words. He juxtaposed opposites, e.g. "The old has gone and the new has come" and employed antitheses to emphasise his point. An example of this, is the phrase "Let us not feast the eye" which he made even stronger by the repetition of the words "let us not" several times in succession. At times he also turned these phrases on their head, positing repeating arguments in positive terms: "Let us luxuriate in the word", again use with similar repetition techniques.

Gregory also used the metaphor of a journey "*Goodness [needed] to be set in motion ... [and] be poured out, to undertake a journey",* to unpack still further what God has done for us. His oration is escalated, when by using the literary technique of questioning, in this case the rhetorical question, "How does all this concern us?", Gregory pushed to get to the crux of the matter.

The doctrines of the Incarnation and Salvation provided Gregory with opportunities for using oxymorons and metonymy. The idea of the unlimited eternal Godhead becoming man, becoming an individual bound by space and time, was an extraordinary paradox. Gregory continually played upon this paradox, and the paradox of God becoming man became even more complex when extended to include the idea that "God becomes man to make man like God".

Allusion to biblical narratives was an important technique used by Gregory to reach his listeners. He used the narratives together with Gospel images, weaving them together to make his point clear to his listeners. The narratives were familiar to his listeners, but he presented them in a new way using great rhetorical expertise so that they would understand properly and receive the clear salvific message. Gregory pressed his listeners to understand and apply the message, repeating the use of rhetorical questions to which he expected no answer. This technique pushed those who heard him towards examining themselves and thus engaging with the topic more fully. The questioning used can also be seen as a kind of *paraleipsis* in which the orator exclaimed to himself, "How can I possibly describe such and such a wonderful (or terrible) thing?", after which he actually proceeded to go on to describe it in minute detail by means of a series of questions.

Throughout his preaching, Gregory used vivid sensory imagery to communicate Christian participation in the mysteries of Christ. He narrated the Christological events and reminds his audience of their doctrine of faith with a repetition of what he has already stated earlier in his oration. Gregory used the narrative of the Nativity to invite his listeners to journey with Christ, and he concluded the whole oration with a passage that encapsulated his habitual approach to scriptural exegesis. He was almost certainly aware of how many of his hearers could read the biblical stories for themselves. The reality was, that for some of his hearers, listening to the orations and other sermons was perhaps the main way for them to receive the truth. He insisted, however, that they had to immerse themselves in the revealed truths and live their lives out from them. A true exegesis of the text for Gregory, was, thus, a correlation between the life of the believer and the ongoing work of the divine economy of salvation in the present age: "*And in the end, be crucified with him, die with him, be buried eagerly with him, that you may also rise with him and be glorified with him and reign with him."*

SAMMANFATTNING: EN PREDIKAN OM KRISTI FÖDELSE – FRÅN DOGMATIK TILL HOMILETIK – AV GREGORIUS AV NAZIANS

I den här studien har jag undersökt hur kyrkofadern Gregorius av Nazians förenar sin syn på rätt lära med retoriska element i en julpredikan från år 380 e. Kr. Gregorius (f. 329 i Nazians) är, tillsammans med Basilius den store och Gregorius av Nyssa, känd som en av de tre kappadokiska fäderna, och han var först biskop, senare ärkebiskop i Konstantinopel från år 379 till sin död ca 390/391. Denna hans julpredikan, känd som *Oratio 38*, är en både intresssant och viktig källa som speglar samtidens teologiska och kulturella konflikter. Den utgör en del av en serie på tre predikningar vid tiden för jul och epifania*, Oratio 38–40.*

Jag har undersökt *Oratio 38* först innehållsligt i ljuset av samtidens lärodiskussioner, sedan med blick på hur Gregorius använder retoriska stilmedel för att nå en vidare publik. I analysen använder jag mig framför allt av två namnkunniga forskares verk: Brian E. Daleys engelskspråkiga översättning och sammanställning samt kommentarer av John A. McGuckin.

Gregorius studerade under den tid då teologin som utformades vid kyrkomötet i Nicaea år 325 blev normerande för kyrkans tro. Konflikten med Arius präglade de teologiska diskussionerna. Konstantinopel var den geografiska kontexten för *Oratio 38.* Från tiden för Konstantin I:s regering var härskarna involverade i både kyrkopolitik och teologiska diskussioner. Frågan om rätt lära var ständigt i fokus. Olyckor och katastrofer tolkades som varningar och det utvalda folket måste föras tillbaka på rätt väg.

Oratio 38, Theophania on the Birth of Christ, som jag beskriver och analyserar innehållsligt i kapitel III, kan karaktäriseras utifrån tre delar: firandet av födelsen, läran om Gud och frälsningshistorien. Lärofrågor i samtiden engagerade Gregorius. Särskilt tydligt blir det i kontroversen med Arius och arianerna. Striden med arianerna utgör en tydlig fond för utläggningen i *Oratio 38* och Gregorius uttrycker den nicaenska positionen såväl i övertygande syfte som polemiskt. I den här predikan talar han dock till en vidare åhörarskara. Men arianerna får också figurera som tänkta lyssnare. När

det gäller läroinnhållet i *Oratio 38* kan sägas att Gregorius framhåller tanken på Guds treenighet och att Jesus Kristus är sann Gud likaväl som sann människa, eller ”av samma väsen” (*homoousios*) som Fadern. Tonvikten ligger inte så mycket på läran om Gud ”i sig” som på den frälsningshistoriska betydelsen av Guds uppenbarelse i Kristus. Guds handlande ska ses som ram för firandet av födelsen. I det ljuset uppmanar Gregorius sina lyssnare att fira födelsen med glädje, men inte genom utsvävningar, utan med värdighet och i ödmjukhet.

Den rätta läran är således viktig när Gregorius predikar. I kapitel IV identifierar jag Gregorius teologiska motståndare, redogör för hans tolkning av den rätta läran och visar hur Gregorius i polemisk framställning bemöter Arius lärotolkning. Frågor kring Kristi inkarnation var centrala vid samtidens ekumeniska koncilier och *Oratio 38* har tillkommit i nära anslutning till konciliet i Konstantinopel år 381. Det för inkarnationen eller Kristi födelse centrala innehållet ur dogmatisk synvinkel fördjupar jag för att ge ramar för förståelsen av den julpredikan jag studerar. Kapitlet avslutas med en kort beskrivning av samtidens retorik. Flera forskare ger uttryck för att Gregorius som få kan förena teologisk tolkning och vältalighet. Och just denna *Oratio 38* anses vara ett ypperligt exempel på detta.

I kapitel V har jag kombinerat analysen av det teologiska innehållet med Gregorius användning av retoriska stilmedel. Jag citerar (i engelskspråkig översättning) och analyserar de 18 sektioner som *Oratio 38* är indelad i. Det grundläggande draget är att bibeltexter och bibelallusioner är basen för hans argumentation. Det här var särskilt viktigt i en tid när Bibeln inte var tillgänglig för allmänheten, utan man åhörde textutläggningar. Retoriska stilmedel användes för att öka förståelsen och hålla bibelkännedomen levande.

Ur retorisk synvinkel noteras att Gregorius i någon mån gör bruk av allegori och särskilt typologi i texttolkningen. Men han använder sig också av allmänna tankefigurer, av frågor och utrop för att engagera lyssnarna. *Oratio 38* inleds med ett utrop: ”Kristus är född – tacka [honom]!” Han tillämpar flitigt tekniker som upprepning och variation, samt en stegrad intensitet i framställningen. På frågan hur man ska fira Kristi födelse ger Gregorius en lång rad antiteser såsom ”låt oss inte ha en fest för ögat” som stegras genom repetition av orden ”låt oss inte” (sektion 5).

Denna passus följs av ett antal positivt bestämda ”låt oss” (sektion 6). Motsatspar såsom från himlen–på jorden, synd–hopp osv. får förstärka hans budskap (ex. sektion 1). Sammanställning av motstridiga ord och begrepp, sk. *oxymoron*, ska likaså stärka betydelsen av det sagda: ”den som inte är av kött blir kött, Ordet blir materia, det osynliga kan ses, det onåbara blir berört, det tidlösa har en början, Guds son blir människans son” (ex. sektion 2).

Oratio 38 är ett remarkabelt exempel på Gregorius retoriska skicklighet. Han var inte bara skolad i klassisk retorik utan hade en förmåga att utnyttja den för att nå sina åhörare och göra frågor om Gud och frälsningen i Kristus relevanta och tillgängliga bland folket. Med ord ur *Oratio 38*: ”vår uppgift nu är att tala om … vad Gud har gjort för oss!” (section 8). I kapitel VI sammanfattar och drar jag slutsatser av min undersökning.

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