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TRINITARIAN GRAMMARS:
A COMPARISON OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS
AND SOME CONTEMPORARY MODELS

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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by

Keith Wesley Goad

December 2010

APPROVAL SHEET

TRINITARIAN GRAMMARS:

A COMPARISON OF GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS

AND SOME CONTEMPORARY MODELS

Keith Wesley Goad

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To Lisa
My beautiful wife

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AGP	*Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. A Roberts and J. Donaldson (Buffalo: Christian Literature, 1885-96; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999)
ATR	*Anglican Theological Review*
AugStud	*Augustinian Studies*
CTJ	*Calvin Theological Journal*
CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrence (London: T&T Clark, 1975)
CH	*Church History*
EJT	*European Journal of Theology*
FP	*Faith and Philosophy*
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni Opera*, ed. and trans. W. Jaeger (Leiden: Brill, 2000)
GOTR	*Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
HeyJ	*Heythrop Journal*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
ITQ	*Irish Theological Quarterly*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*

JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
MT	*Modern Theology*
$NPNF^2$	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, ed. P. Schaff (New York: Christian Literature, 1887-94; reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999)
PhilC	*Philosophia Christi*
PG	*Patrologia Graeca* (Paris: J. P. Migne, 1857-66)
ProEcc	*Pro Ecclesia*
RelS	*Religious Studies*
RSR	*Religious Studies Review*
SC	Sources Chrétiennes (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1942-)
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
StudPat	*Studia Patristica* (Louvain: Peeters, 1984-)
SVTQ	*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TS	*Theological Studies*
TT	*The Thomist*
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VCS	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*

PREFACE

I first became interested in the study of theology while at Liberty University after reading Karl Barth. His work made me think about what I believed and how little changes in one doctrine can have significant consequences for other doctrines. This was the beginning of a life of labor seeking to interpret Scripture with Scripture and understand how the various *loci* of theology relate to one another. The present work represents a major step in my process of becoming a theologian. It ultimately represents a change in disposition toward theology. I used to desire to be a new, clever theologian, but now my highest value is to be faithful and clear. After studying contemporary doctrines of the Trinity and Patristic doctrines, I have concluded that there is nothing new under the sun, or at least there should not be.

I have thoroughly enjoyed studying the Fathers because they have spiritually edified and challenged me in new ways. The main aspect of their work is that doctrine has the intent of changing one's mind and affections. Their doctrinal disagreements matter because they are seeking to protect the church's salvation and spirituality. These two aspects are especially clear in their confessions of the Triune God. I have chosen to study the Trinity because it is the most important and defining doctrine for the church. How the church understands and confesses the Trinity affects the way she worships, lives, receives salvation, and pursues godliness. At the end of this step in my studies I can only say with Augustine that I have seen the depth of God's Triune nature, but I have

not seen the bottom. I can only stand in awe and worship the Triune God who has saved me.

God has greatly blessed me with help in this process. It started with my professors at Liberty University. They gave me the tools I needed to understand Scripture and evaluate doctrine according to Scripture. These skills were sharpened during my time at Southern Seminary. Stephen Wellum shaped me in many ways during my time at Southern, the most significant of which was how to understood all of Scripture as one authoritative work that provides all the components one needs for a worldview. Paul Helm, while only a visiting professor, had a large impact on me as well because his words of caution finally brought about the change that made me a faithful theologian who feared clever novelty. His friendship and willingness to read all my papers has been encouraging and helpful in my training. Michael Haykin complemented my theological studies by helping me learn how to read the Fathers well and understand their arguments in their own contexts. He has helped me see their doctrine in light of Scripture and the real spiritual significance of what they believed. These professors have walked through this process with me sharpening and correcting my thoughts along the way, and I am extremely grateful for them.

I have received encouragement from my families. My church family, Third Avenue Baptist Church, has been supportive and caring through the doctoral program. I am still humbled that they called me to be their elder. The Lord used them in his providence so that I remained faithful and active in the church doing his kingdom work. My work at the church has made me think about how the doctrines I study have real significance in the church as I have grown in my desire to help the church worship the

Triune Savior more faithfully. Bruce, Dustin, Sam, Jeff, and Riley have been dear brothers during my time at seminary and I pray will be in the future.

My parents, Charles and Debbie Goad, have been a constant source of wisdom, care, and provision through the process of completing the work. My father finished his MDiv while I have been working on the PhD. He has been able to encourage me and has constantly challenged me to pursue godliness above academics. My mother has been a constant encouragement because she really thinks I can do anything and she tells me such.

First and foremost my wife, Lisa, with her constant love and support has kept me motivated and faithful through this process. She modeled godliness and perseverance to challenge me spiritually like no one else. She has kept our home peaceful and a place of rest. Her love and care have been my joy. She deserves more recognition than I could ever give her for the man I have become and for what I have been able to accomplish.

Keith W. Goad

Louisville, Kentucky

December 2010

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Trinity has always been the doctrine that most distinguishes Christianity from other religions and is the primary test for Orthodoxy. While being central to the confession of Christianity, both East and West traditions always taught that the doctrine was ineffable and mysterious. The doctrine could not be approached by reason alone, but only by faith seeking understanding. This explains why little was written on the Trinity during the time when Modernity held primary influence over the intellectual world. F. Schleiermacher placed the Trinity at the end of his systematic theology, setting pace for the doctrine to remain obsolete and irrelevant for many generations of theologians.[1] This is due in large part to Schleiermacher following the lead of Immanuel Kant. According to Kant, "The doctrine of the Trinity, taken literally, has *no practical relevance at all*, even if we think we understand it; and it is even more clearly irrelevant if we realize that it transcends all our concepts"[2] The Trinity could not be rationally solved and had little

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[1]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith,* trans. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart, Torchbook ed. with an introduction by Richard R. Niebuhr, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928; reprint, New York: Harper & Row, 1963). Claude Welch dates the decline of Trinitarian theology between 1831, the second edition of Schleiermacher's *The Christian Faith*, and 1841, F. C. Baur's *Uber die Christliche von der Dreieinigkeit und der Menschwerdung*. See Claude Welch, *In This Name: The Doctrine of the Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), vii.

See also Gerald Bray, "The Trinity: Where Do We Go from Here?," in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 19-40.

[2]Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of Faculties,* trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 65.

practical role in theology, and therefore, the doctrine was considered to be abstract and unimportant.[3]

Karl Barth and Karl Rahner have been heralded for renewing the importance of Trinitarian thought, and a new era has emerged so that the doctrine has moved to the forefront again.[4] Barth's contribution to the renewal of the Trinity was ordering the *Church Dogmatics* around the doctrine so renewing its central role among the loci. Barth based the doctrine around the simple sentence, "God speaks," so that he is the Revealer, the Revelation and Revealedness.[5] Gerald Bray recognizes this new trend in that the doctrine of the Trinity in the previous generation only had a "formal presence in systematic theology" whereas today each author has a way of looking at their topic in a Trinitarian manner.[6]

Rahner's contribution is seen in what is now called Rahner's Rule, "the economic is the immanent, and the immanent is the economic."[7] This rule placed the

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[3]Kant and Schleiermacher are simply the latest who deny the Trinity on the grounds of rationality. Their predecessors include Eunomius, Aetius, and Socinius. Bray traces Schleiermacher's thinking back to Socinius and Michael Servetus ("The Trinity," 20).

[4]Aristotle Papanikoaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006),49.

[5]Karl Barth, *Church Domatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrence, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pt. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1975), 344. See Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 83. Response to Barth's doctrine has been mixed as some promote his Trinity and others accuse him of modalism. The confusion is over his reference to the persons as "modes of being" which would be better translated as *subsistences*. See Mark Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program: Volf, Gregory of Nyssa and Barth," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 138-139.

[6]Bray, "The Trinity," 19.

[7]Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel with an introduction, index, and glossary by Catherine M. LaCugna, *Milestones in Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 16. Those influenced by Rahner include Stanley Grenz, John Franke, Ted Peters, Catherine Lacugna, Molly Marshall, and Clark Pinnock.

Trinity at the center of theology by emphasizing that God's acts of salvation are necessarily tied to his triune being instead of being an abstract, philosophical doctrine. Catherine Lacugna developed Rahner's Rule by emphasizing its practical consequences on other doctrines and on the Christian life with what is now called the Lacugna Corollary, "theology is inseparable from soteriology, and vice versa."[8] These theologies have had significant influence on bringing the doctrine of the Trinity back to the center of theology.

Back to Tradition

This renewed emphasis of the Trinity is certainly good news for the church and the academy, but the new theologies must overcome the large temporal and intellectual differences that stand between them and the pre-Schleiermachian confessions. The contemporary desire to return to the ancient formulas and creeds introduces new problems. Frederick W. Norris recognizes the importance of the classical confessions: "it is quite unlikely that the classical formulas, three persons in one nature and two natures in one person, can ever be fully discarded."[9] He also recognizes the great difference that stands between these formulas: "because the classical formula must be read in context, there may be ways in which their wording should be adapted to our own contemporary settings." [10] Lewis Ayres also recognizes the dilemma that "modern Trinitarian theology invokes some of the formulae produced within the fourth century but simultaneously

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[8]Catherine LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 211.

[9]Frederick W. Norris, "Wonder, Worship and Writ: Patristic Christology," *ExAud* 7 (1991): 59.

[10]Ibid., 60.

argues that the theological methods that produced those formulae are untenable in modernity."[11] A number of epistemologies and ontologies have influenced the church today so that theology is understood and practiced in a way that no longer relates to premodern theology. The language, mood, and objectives of theology drastically changed during this time so that any attempt of retrieving the classical confession of the Trinity will have a number of complications.

The first major shift can be seen in the nature of theology. Kevin Vanhoozer observes one of the major changes is that modernity changed the question everyone asked. The move is summed up by the phrase "method over matter."[12] Instead of asking what an authoritative source communicated on any given topic, contemporary scholars question the authority of the source. Epistemology is thus hightlighted rather than metaphysics so that how one comes to know is more important that what one knows.[13] The scientific theory was the new paradigm, "traditional religious beliefs remain important, but are felt to need justification, and are modified wherever science seems to make this imperative."[14] Modernity is marked by changes in what sources are perceived as more authoritative, "the diminishing authority of the church, and the increasing authority of science."[15] Bavinck recognizes these changes in how systematic theologies were being written. Prolegomena used to start out discussing the nature of theology, but

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[11]See Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program," 141.

[12]Kevin VanHoozer, *First Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 17.

[13]Papanikolaou, *Being with God,* 9. He argues Lossky and Zizioulas are two contemporary Orthodox theologians that have changed the shift back to a mystical knowledge of God's personal being.

[14]Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), xv.

[15]Ibid., 491.

now due to the influence of rationalism, theology usually begins with natural theology and proofs for revelation and Scripture.[16] These changes can be summed up in the mantra of theology going from "I believe in order that I might understand" to "I believe what I can understand"[17]

One of the outcomes from the modifications in epistemology is contemporary theology (20th century-present) began valuing the ability to explain the mystery so that the church can understand where as the premodern church valued the ability to protect the mystery so that the church can worship.[18] Norris points out that the early church valued something different than those after Kant, namely the prioritization of safeguarding the mystery rather than explaining it. This modern shift is in contrast to the Patristic doctrine of God as seen in Behr's contrasting Gregory of Nazianzus as a theologian who protects mystery in contrast to one who describes him with syllogisms, "Gregory has eloquently laid open the scope of theological vision that approaches its subject with awe and

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[16]Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, ed. and trans. William Hendrickson (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2003), 208. This shift is also seen in the change of focus and emphasis in theology from revelation and objective confession to subjective and practical. K. Scott Oliphant, *Reasons for Faith* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing), 71-73. Schleiermacher/Ritschl introduced a theology that was anti-metaphysics. George Lindbeck categorizes this kind of theology as "experiential-expressivist." See George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 34.

[17]Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 16-17. The patristic era is represented by Augustine as the highmark of classical/premodern theology. The order of reality had God at the apex, next angels, then humans. God had a lofty position and became intimately involved. The Enlightenment brought about a change in the order of being so that man is now at the center so that theology. Grenz observes that "this era brought an elevated status to humans and an elevated estimate of human capabilities" (ibid., 19). Kant is universally acknowledged as the fountainhead of "the elevation of the powers of human reason and the emphasis on sense experience" (ibid.).

[18]This is seen in Bavinck's response to modernity. Bavinck begins his doctrine of God with the declaration, "mystery is the lifeblood of dogmatics." See Bavinck, *God and Creation*, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2 of *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 29. He also states, "This mystery cannot be comprehended; it can only be gratefully acknowledged" (ibid., 49), and "Trinity is mystery par

reverence rather than imprisoning it in definitions and logical syllogisms, reducing God to an intellectual idol."[19] The Fathers invested in the study of God knowing that they would never comprehend him.

The most popular change in the specific grammar of the Trinity that distinguishes the contemporary doctrine from the Patristic is emphasizing the relational model of the Trinity.[20] Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen states, "the move to relationality is also in keeping with the dynamic understanding of reality and the human being as well as human community in late modernity."[21] Even though there is a great divide between the contemporary theologian and the traditional creeds, those seeking a renewed emphasis intentionally connect themselves to the historical creeds of the church. Much of the recent engagement with the traditions and early church theology appears to be more intent on serving contemporary theological convictions rather than to discover what the Fathers themselves had to say.[22]

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excellence" (ibid., 296). Bavinck also notes, "but when this truth of the incomprehensibility of God had been almost forgotten by theology, philosophy rose up to remind us of it" (ibid., 41).

[19]John Behr, *The Nicene Faith, pt. 1: True God of True God,* Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 2 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 341.

[20]See John Franke, "God is Love: The Social Trinity and the Mission of God," in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 105, and Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 27ff. Daniel Bell argues that there is a new social mindset, "the post industrial society . . . is also a 'communal' society in which the social unit is the community that the individual, and one has to achieve a 'social decision' as against, simply, the sum total of individual decisions, which, when aggregated, end up as mithmares, on the mode of individual automobile and collective traffic congestion." See Daniel Bell, "The Coming of the Post-Industrial Soceity," in *The Post-Modern Reader*, ed. Charles Jenks (New York: St. Martins' Press, 1991), 264).

[21]Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen, *The Trinity: Global Perspectives* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 113, 387.

[22]See Husbands, "The Trinity Is Not Our Social Program," 137.

New Eastern Emphasis

The new models typically contrast the Eastern tradition with the Western. Some contrast the traditions according to different uses of philosophy or different emphases in their doctrines. The latter is the most prominent as it has become the "textbook" description to say that the East begins with three and the West with one. A number of scholars have argued that this difference is inaccurate, but theologians continue to promote it. Their purpose in contrasting the two traditions is to claim the East as their historical precedent.

One of the most popular models claiming to be Eastern is the primary-secondary substance model. Proponents of this model include Scott Horrell[23] and Cornelius Plantinga Jr.[24] This contemporary model proposes that each person is an individual of a generic essence and uses the distinction between genus and species or primary and secondary substance to distinguish between the three and the one. Their primary historical precedent is Gregory of Nyssa, but they claim that the Cappadocians all had the same model for the Trinity.

Another prominent change is to emphasize the persons of the Trinity. This shift in grammar claims to be Eastern because they start with the three in order to

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[23]J. Scott Horrell, "The Eternal Son of God in the Social Trinity," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaud Issler (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 44-79; Idem, "Toward A Biblical Model of the Social Trinity: Avoiding Equivocation of Nature and Order," *JETS* 47 (2004): 399-421.

[24]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and The Social Analogy of the Trinity" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982); Idem, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of The Trinity," *TThom* 50 (1986): 325-52; Idem, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of The Trinity," *Calvin Theological Journal* 23 (1988): 37-52; Idem, "Social Trinity and Tritheism" in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 21-45.

establish three real distinct persons. The main confusion in this new emphasis is that the term person is redefined and concepts that had traditionally been reserved for the essence (will, authority, desire) are not shifted to the persons.

The change in the confession of person entails a change in the confession of the one essence and the unity of the Trinity. There are two main modifications. First, the one is typically only protected with one or two confessions in contemporary theology. Patristic confessions safeguarded the unity and the one essence with a number of grammars so that the ineffable Godhead was protected from polytheism, Arianism, and modalism. It was a safer, more robust confession of the one, whereas contemporary theology is more concerned with a robust confession of the three. Second, the meaning of one and monotheism are changed so that three real persons according to the new definition are confessed. This means that the confession of monotheism is limited to three that are alike, all possessing the same kind of essence, instead of a confession of the one essence.

Thesis

The purpose of the dissertation is to describe Gregory of Nazianzus' doctrine of the knowledge of God and his doctrine of the Trinity for the purpose of critically evaluating the contemporary models that seek to find their historical precedent in the Cappadocians. The contemporary models are wrong to claim Gregory as their historical precedent and fail to meet the most basic standards of Orthodoxy as presented by Gregory. One of the main problems in the contemporary treatment of Gregory is that his doctrine is oversimplified so that one aspect or grammar is emphasized and the others are ignored. The first two chapters will demonstrate Gregory's doctrines of the knowledge of

God and the Trinity in order to demonstrate how his numerous confessions all relate to and modify one another. The next chapter, chapter four, will compare Augustine's *de Trinitate* to Gregory's grammars to provide a concrete comparison between the two traditions to demonstrate that the typical paradigm that contrasts the East and West is oversimplified and wrong. The contemporary models will then be analyzed in light of Gregory's grammars and model in order to demonstrate that they have introduced concepts and grammars that are contrary to that of Gregory. The final argument is that the contemporary models fail to provide the necessary grammars and confessions that safeguard the doctrine of the Trinity and promote worship when compared to Gregory.

Why Gregory of Nazianzus?

Most comparisons of the East and West have combined the Cappadocians.[25] This is a modern, convenient convention. McGuckin notes that Gregory is usually treated alongside the other Cappadocians and warns against the contemporary overstatement that their theology was united and the same. [26] There is much evidence to show that the Cappadocians did not agree always fully with one another.[27] The strongest evidence is found in the creed of Constantinople where Nazianzen's articulation of the Spirit's deity (with the confession of *homoousios*) was rejected in favor of Basil's.[28] Gregory appears

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[25]Tarmo Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T & T Clark), 2007; Franz Dünzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity in the Early Church*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

[26]John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), xxi.

[27]Dünzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 103-8.

[28]See McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 301, and Idem, "'Perceiving Light from Light in Light' (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 20.

to correct Nyssen's understanding of unity and causal relation (as will be demonstrated in chapter 3).

Gregory of Nazianzus has been largely considered to be the least significant among the Cappadocians in much of contemporary theology. Prestige calls Gregory a mere "dignified popularizer" of Basil's theology and believes his theology should not be exalted among the Cappadocians.[29] Hanson states that Gregory of Nazianzus displays "no great originality" but says his special role is placed because "his articulation of the Trinitarian doctrine is clearer, rather more forceful and expressive than that of his friend, as becomes a great stylist, but that is all."[30] He argues that Gregory of Nazianzus stands out as the other two Cappadocians' "seem tame beside him."[31] This is also seen by the fact that few contemporary theologians have little interaction with his works.

Gregory has been chosen as the Eastern representative because by calling him "The Theologian," the Eastern Church has elevated him above the other Cappadocians and his theology was primarily focused upon the Trinity. Gregory of Nyssa and Basil both wrote on the Trinity as it was the most important doctrine of the day and the most under attack. Gregory of Nazianzus should be seen as the theologian who best completed the work of Athanasius because he provided a grammar that solidified the deity of the Spirit, and therefore the fullest confession of the Trinity. Gregory of Nyssa's theology

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[29]George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), 234. See also McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, xxiii.

[30]Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 714. This fact has sometimes been made a kind of reproach to Gregory of Nazaianzus, as if Basil and his brother of Nyssa were the real theologians of the trio while Gregory was a mere propagandist or even a great Communicator, but not a distinguished theologian in his own right" (ibid., 706).

[31]Ibid., 12.

was more focused upon anthropology than the doctrine of the Trinity. Michel Barnes argues that viewing Nyssen as the dominant Cappadocian is a new phenomena, as his Trinitarian writings have been highly regarded only recently.[32]

Gregory of Nazianzus received the honor of being considered one of the three hierarchs of the church and given the title "The Theologian," a title he only shares with John the Evangelist.[33] As the priest of Anastasia he had a primary role leading up to the Council of Constantinople. While his specific grammar for the Trinity was not accepted at the Council of Constantinople, his Trinitarian theology eventually became the hallmark of the East.

He received the title "The Theologian" for his contribution to the church's confession of the Trinity, Christology, and spirituality. He provided the grammar for Orthodox confessions of the Trinity and Christology that correlated with one another and provided the basis for spirituality. Beeley observes that

> Since the Council of Chalcedon in 451 Gregory has been honored with the title "The Theologian" for his definitive teaching on the Trinity in the late-fourth century. His influence was then strongly felt in the Christological developments that continued through the eighth century, and his stature in Greek Christian tradition is comparable only to that of Augustine in the West, although his influence is felt there as well.[34]

Daley states, "the reason for this title is clearly Gregory's urgent championing of a Trinitarian conception of God and his insistent care to articulate a theological

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[32]Michel Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *AugStud* 26, no. 2 (1995): 51-79.

[33]Frederick W. Norris calls him "one of the three hierarchs of the faith, along with basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom" ("Wonder, Worship, and Writ," 63).

[34]Christopher Beeley, "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus," *HTR* 100 (2007): 199.

terminology—indeed a theological grammar—for speaking of God in a way consistent with Scripture and the Church's tradition of faith."[35] Christopher Beeley declares,

> Gregory of Nazianzus stands out among Christian theologians of every generation for the clarity, the power, and the spiritual depth of his teaching on the Trinity. More than any theologian before him, he understands the Trinity to be the content, the structure, and standard of the Christian faith.[36]

The way God had revealed himself as the Father through the Son in the Spirit correlates with how man must approach God, in the Spirit, through the Son. He ordered his devotion to God according to how God had revealed himself as the Triune God. He states, "for Gregory the doctrine of the Trinity is not only the essential expression of the Christian life; in an important sense it is that life."[37]

McGuckin observes that the Athanasian and Cappadocian thesis is "theology, by its very nature, had to be doxological"[38] and "for Gregory, theology and particularly Trinitarian theology) is wholly confessional, that is, doxological, in character and soteriological in its import."[39] Gregory's practice as a theologian and exegete must also be connected to his spirituality before considering his doctrine of the Trinity. It was not simply Eunomius' reason that kept him from interpreting Scripture and seeing the deity of the Son and Spirit. Gregory repeatedly argues that it is Eunomius' vice that keeps him

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[35]Brian Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, The Early Church Fathers (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41.

[36]Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 187.

[37]Ibid., 187.

[38]McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 10.

[39]Ibid., 18.

from seeing what the literal text of Scripture contains.[40] A proper vision of God must be accomplished through the appropriate means. Addressing bishops Gregory challenges them, "We claim authority over them, we are counted among those who draw near to God, but I fear that we may not draw near in the right way—that, like a straw before a fire, we may not be able to endure the flame."[41] The great danger in approaching God and drawing others is that if one is not properly purified, he will be consumed by the vision of God.

While the following centuries recognized Gregory's greatness and established his doctrine as that of the church, his contemporaries also recognized his ability. Jerome, the great exegete of the church, heard Nazianzen preach in Constantinople during his stay in 379-380. Jerome called him, "my teacher, and one from whom I learnt as he expounded Scripture."[42] Rufinus described Gregory as "a man incomparable in all things…who offered to the church the most radiant light of the knowledge of Christ."[43] While in Constantinople he delivered his "Theological Orations" that eventually shaped the Eastern doctrine of the Trinity and defined the practice of theology itself. These orations were extremely influential in the Eastern church as many wrote commentaries on

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[40]Or. 29.18 (250.214-16; PG 36.97-100), ET: Wickham, 85-86.

[41]Or. 26:1 (284.206; PG 35.1227), ET: Vinson, 107.106.

[42]*De Ver Illustibus* 113, cited in Hanson, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 700.

[43]See John A. McGuckin, "The Vision of God in St. Gregory of Nazianzen," in *Athanasius and his Opponents, Cappadocian Fathers and Other Greek Writers after Nicea*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, *StudP*, vol. 32 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 145. Rufinus reports that "both [Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil] on leaving the university were in demand for the profession of rhetor. And Basil spent his time splendidly fulfilling this task, but Gregory his in more splendidly spurning it," *Ecclesiastical History* 11.9 and 8.11-12, cited in Hanson, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 700.

the orations.[44]His reputation as a leading theologian in the East is also evidenced by his orations being the most copied of all Byzantine manuscripts after the Scriptures.[45] Behr makes the observation that he was the most quoted father within the Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition.[46]

Interestingly, Gregory's position among the great theologians was never questioned until the modern age. This shows that what contemporary theologians value greatly differs from what the premodern church valued in theology. This difference has been described above as valuing the ability to explain a mystery rather than the clarity that protects it. When searching for clarity on the Trinity Augustine and Gregory are the two best theologians each respective tradition has as its representative. Norris comments, "it was Gregory of Nazianzus who offered the clearest, most economical, and perhaps the most paradoxical parameters for articulating the Mystery and who most insistently emphasized the centrality of this Trinitarian confession for the whole of Christian life."[47] McGuckin declares, "He was first and foremost a theologian of the inner life of the Trinity."[48] Norris comments that his orations are all liturgical, "He breathes in worship

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[44]John of Damascus and Maximus the Confessor were very influenced by them. See Behr, *The Nicene Faith, pt. 1*, 331. Behr conducts a commentary on the orations himself and Norris has provided the defining commentary on his work. There is some question if these orations are ordered properly and if they should be seen as the most important works of Gregory.

[45]Behr, *The Nicene Faith, pt. I*, 332.

[46]Frederick W. Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning: The Five Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzen*, with a translation by Lionel Wickham and Frederick Williams, Supplements to *VC*, vol. 13 (New York: E. J. Brill, 1991), 5.

[47]Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus,* 42.

[48]Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, xx.

and breathes out theology."[49] For Norris, "Gregory's attractiveness is in his complexity and liveliness. He insisted that being a philosopher was not for everyone and that faith would be nothing if it were founded on wisdom, eloquence, and logical demonstration alone."[50]

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 will present Gregory's doctrine of the knowledge of God. A number of elements of his doctrine will be considered including the nature of doctrine (both apophatic and kataphatic), the limitations of human language and analogies, and the role of spirituality in the doctrine of knowledge. The main focus will be on how he understood the relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity and how he protected the Creator-creature distinction in his methodology and doctrine.

Chapter 3 will present Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. His grammar for the Trinity protects both the mystery and proper distinctions so that a full, orthodox Trinity is confessed and worshipped in the church. He protects the mystery by safeguarding the ineffable nature of God's immanent nature. He protects the necessary confession of the Triune God with careful grammars for the one and the three. He protects the three by emphasizing their particulars actions, names, and relationships with one another. He protects the unity with their inseparable operations, the *Monarchia* of the Father, and the single, simple essence. His grammar will be shown to be complex, but necessarily so as

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[49]Frederick W. Norris, "Gregory the Theologian," *ProEcc* 4 (1993): 474.

[50]Frederick W. Norris, "Of Thorns and Roses: The Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen," *CH* 53 (1984): 464.

each grammar helps safeguard various aspects of the Trinity in order to protect the church from the heresies of Arianism and Sabellianism.

Chapter 4 will provide a concrete example concerning how the Trinitarian traditions of the East and West relate to one another. After reviewing the primary ways the two traditions have been contrasted in contemporary theology, Augustine's *De Trinitate* will be compared with the primary methodology and doctrine of Gregory. It will be demonstrate that the two theologians only differ in emphasis as both confess and safeguard the doctrine of the Trinity with similar grammars.

Chapters 5 through 7 will compare Gregory's doctrine with contemporary models. First, Karl Rahner and his famous rule, "the economic is the immanent and the immanent is the economic," will be analyzed in light of the Gregory doctrine. Second, Plantinga's primary-secondary substance model will be analyzed. Third, the contemporary Evangelical debate over the eternal subordination and eternal equivalency will be analyzed. It will be demonstrated that all the contemporary models that claim to be following the Eastern tradition fail to meet the most basic standards of orthodoxy as presented by Gregory of Nazianzus.

Translations

The texts from Gregory are from a number of different translations. The Theological Orations and Epistles 101 and 102 are translated by Williams and Wickham.[51] Ors. 6, 10, 11, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 32, and 44 are translated by Martha

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[51]Gregory of Nazianzus, *On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, ed. and trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham, Popular Patristics Series (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002).

Vinson.[52] Ors. 8, 14, 38, 39, 42 are translated by Brian Daley.[53] There are alterations in these translations that are noted in the footnotes. I have inserted *hypostasis*, *idiotes*, *prosopon*, *ousia*, *phusin*, and *Monarchia* in the translations above because of the difficulty over how these terms can be translated. I have translated the passages that do not have an English translation citation in the footnote. The English translation is marked with "ET." The symbols PG represent Patrologiae Graeca and PL Patrologiae Latina. The first volume listed that has no symbol for Gregory refers to the *Sources Chrétiennes*.

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[52]Gregory of Nazianzus, *St Gregory of Nazianzus: Select Orations*, trans. Martha Vinson, The Fathers of the Church, vol. 107 (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003).

[53]Daley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*.

CHAPTER 2

GREGORY THE GRAMMATICAL THEOLOGIAN

When responding to Eunomius' doctrine of God, Gregory feared that the great mysteries of the faith would become social accomplishments and religion would be reduced to solving conundrums.[1] According to Gregory, his adversaries were explaining God rationally with syllogisms and without reverence. His response to those seeking to force the Trinity into syllogistic systems was that all confessions of God must be "governed by rules,"[2] a practice that is also called grammatical doctrine. Lewis Ayres defines grammatical doctrine among the Church Fathers as the "matrix of principles and rules for theological discourse . . . so that one runs the least amount of risk speaking unworthily of God."[3] A grammatical theology consists of a series of rules that collaborate and constitute a model that clarifies the loci of theology and how the loci relate to one another.[4]

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[1]Or. 27.1-5 (250.70-84; PG 36.14-16).

[2]Or. 27.5 (250.84; PG 36.16).

[3]Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 52.

[4]George Lindbeck presents a contemporary proposal for grammatical doctrine. His purpose is not to guard orthodoxy as much as it is to promote ecumenism. Lindbeck's proposal is similar only in the sense that he recognizes the possibility of many models. The important difference is the lack of clarity concerning how the grammar corresponds to reality. George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1984). See also Frederick Norris, "Theology as Grammar: Nazianzen and Wittengenstein," in *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the*

Frederick Norris states that models are to be judged by three criteria: "Their adequacy always depended upon their ability to bring together what was said variously and widely in Scripture, to understand it within the church and to make it clear to specific audience."[5] Doctrines should represent what is revealed and present it in a manner that allows the church to faithfully worship God. The grammatical rules must be consistent with one another so that they constitute a coherent model. The grammar of doctrine insists that certain dogmas are primary and articulates dogmas in relation to one another. The theologian's work is to promote worship and protect the church by establishing clear confessions of God and his mysteries. Gregory's grammatical theology determined the nature and method for orthodoxy in the East because he applied proper boundaries based upon God's revelation that promoted worship.

Gregory's Use of Scripture as a Grammatical Theologian: A Model of Scripture Interpreting Scripture

A ruled reading of Scripture takes into account all the texts and doctrines revealed in order to present theological principles. In short, a ruled reading of Scripture is a formal system of reading Scripture in light of Scripture.[6] Gregory's grammatical theology is best seen when he establishes rules to better understand the various truths

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Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts, ed. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 237-49.

[5]Frederick Norris, "Wonder, Worship and Writ: Patristic Christology," *ExAud* 7 (1991): 59.

[6]See Frederick Norris, "Gregory Nazianzen: Constructing and Constructed by Scripture," in *The Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity*, ed. Paul M. Blowers (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 149-62.

revealed in Scripture. Grammatical theology is not unique to Gregory. His opponent Eunomius also practiced grammatical theology. The two theologians gave primacy to different dogmas and methods in their theology so that the most convictions that were most important to them were safeguarded. Their differences will be demonstrated in how they employed Scripture and logic in their theology.

George Prestige points out that one of the key distinguishing marks between the orthodox theologians and the heretical is that the former "showed a far profounder sense of the need to interpret the Scriptures as a whole by comparing one passage with another."[7] He argues that the orthodox demonstrated an ability to reason how Scripture interprets Scripture in contrast to the heretical theologians who tended toward equivocating on technical terms and a "parrot repetition of biblical texts."[8] The schismatics practiced a reading that Prestige characterizes as a "fundamentalistic literalism" and "concentrated on a few selected texts."[9] The difference in their practices of reading Scripture and methods of theology are seen when they argue over the meaning of words and theological concepts.

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[7]George Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), 147. See also Thomas A. Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, Patristic Monograph Series 7 (Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979), 2:434.

[8]Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 153.

[9]Ibid., 147. Prestige declares, "theology does not consist in parrot repetition of Biblical texts, but in rational thought about biblical data" (ibid., 153).

The Different Interpretations of Christ's Reign

In Or. 30.4 Gregory shows the importance of allowing the proper sense of a word to be derived from the text itself. In this argument Gregory is responding to Eunomius' argument from 1 Corinthians 15:25 that Christ only has a temporal reign in contrast to God's eternal reign.[10] He cites 1 Corinthians 15:25 in contrast to Psalm 110 to show that God's reign has no end in contrast to the Son's reign which will end when the Son hands the kingdom over to the true God. Eunomius' argument has two basic assumptions that Gregory will reject. First, according to Eunomius, the term "until" has the same meaning no matter the context. Second, Eunomius interprets the term *Theos* as a reference to the Unoriginate God in contrast to the Son, not the Trinity as a whole. The force of Eunomius' argument is that the Son only reigns until he hands the kingdom over to the one true God.

Gregory responds by explaining that 1 Corinthians 15:25 states that the Son will reign until God, the Trinity, is all in all.[11] He argues that the reference to "God" in the text is referring to the Trinity as a whole. The basis of the argument is that the Son and the Father rule inseparably and that there is further evidence in Scripture to show that there is no end to the Son's rule. How one interprets the term "God" ultimately hinges upon the meaning of "until."

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[10]Eunomius, *The Extant Works*, trans. Richard P. Vaggione, Oxford Early Christian Texts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), *Apology* 27 (Vaggione, 73).

[11]Or. 30.6 (250.236-38; PG 36.109).

Gregory argues that Eunomius' interpretation misses the different contexts and usages of the term. "Until" could be a reference to an event or have a temporal sense; Eunomius insists that it is always the latter. Gregory states that the Son's reign is eternal because the event that ends that reign is the submission of his enemies, at which point he would no longer reign over them in the same way. The reign changes because there is a new event that ends one reign and begins another. 1 Corinthians is not referring to two different reigns. Instead both texts are referring to the reign of the Son that is eternal. 1 Corinthians describes how the eternal reign changes in the eschaton. He also introduces into the argument Luke 1:33 that provides clarity on the reign of Christ: "There is no end of his royal rule." When all of these texts on Christ's reign are taken into consideration together, the conclusion is that "until" is referring to the Son's reign here on earth. The change referred to in 1 Corinthians 15 is a different kind of rule that takes place in the eschaton because the nature of the rule changes. The reign is not temporal, but eternal. The "until" simply refers to the event of God putting the world back into perfect order and thus a different reign begins.

Gregory models how Scripture should be read in light of Scripture and the orthodox confession of the Trinity in the argument above. He appears to take more care in reading the texts in context, and reads all of Scripture as the work of one author. Gregory takes the clearer texts and demands that all of the passages that speak of Christ's rule must be understood together. The reference to God cannot be limited to the Unbegotten alone because this would deny the Son's inclusion in the divine community

and eternal reign.[12] He safeguards what has been handed down, but it is not merely repeating a creed.[13] His vision of God is from all of Scripture, and his hermeneutic protects him losing a pure vision of the Triune God from a single text. Gregory is able to reason through its difficulties with simple rules such as how God can be a reference to the entire Trinity or to the Father alone given the context of the passage.[14] The rule avoids narrowing the meaning of a single word and focuses upon how to distinguish the persons of the Trinity.

The Different Interpretations of The Lowly Descriptions of Christ

When confronted with paradoxical statements concerning the humanity and deity of Christ, Gregory provides rules that help the church better distinguish his two natures.[15] Gregory's *Fourth Theological Oration* (Or. 30) explains how Scripture should be read according to this rule: "Allocate the more elevated, the more distinctly divine expressions of Scripture to the Godhead, the humbler and more human to the New Adam, God passible for our sake."[16] The rule is meant to protect the church's confession of

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[12]Or. 30.6 (250.236-38; PG 36.109).

[13]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72).

[14]Paul S. Russell provides further explanation of Gregory's exposition of 1 Cor 15 in "St. Gregory's Exegeses against the Arians, Still a Viable Christian Tool," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 123-30.

[15]Gregory shows how a proper distinction of the persons of the Trinity and the natures of Christ are essential for Christianity, "but if all that the Father has belongs also to the Son, except Causality; and all that is the Son's belongs also to the Spirit, except His Sonship, and whatsoever is spoken of him as in his Incarnation belongs to me a man, and for my salvation so that by taking of my nature he may impart his own by this new comingling," Or. 34.10 (318.216; PG 36.254).

[16]Or. 30.1 (250.226-28; PG 36.107), ET: Williams, 93. Gregory argues, "You must predicate the more sublime expressions of the Godhead, of the nature which transcends bodily experiences, and the

Jesus' divine and human nature.[17] The rule is a necessary solution to the multiple ways Scripture speaks of Jesus who is both God and man because Eunomius is emphasizing the texts that refer to Jesus' lowly, human nature to insist that Jesus was not fully divine.

Eunomius gives primacy to monotheism in a way that does not allow for the Son to share in the Godhead. According to Eunomius, God's primary name is Unoriginate. There cannot be two unoriginate beings, nor can the Unoriginate be divided or multiplied. To deny this would necessarily contradict monotheism because there would be two uncreated beings. His conclusion is that the begotten is different than the Unoriginate in essence as evidenced by his name, begotten Son, and the Son's own confessions that the Father is greater.[18] The latter proofs of Eunomius are what Gregory refers to as the "more humbler and lowly" expressions of the Son. Instead of interpreting

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lower ones of the compound, of him who because of you was emptied, became incarnate and (to use valid language) was 'made man,'" Or. 29.18 (250.214-16; PG 36.97-100, ET: Williams, 85-86). See John A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 298-99.

The opening lines of "On The Son" demonstrate the stereological emphasis of Gregory's Christology: "First of all we shall sing the Son, honoring that blood which is our passion's cleansing," *Poem* 1.1.2.1-2 (PG 37.398, ET: Gilbert, 39). He asks the rhetorical question for those hoping for salvation in Christ yet denying his deity: "Through Christ's sufferings, you may become god hereafter" why do you make him a "co-slave" meaning he has made him a creature like man," *Poem* 1.1.2.45 (PG 37.400, ET: Gilbert, 41). He continues, "But if it's that, to rescue you from your passions, he took on a body, would you therefore set a yardstick on his great famed Godhead? Has he sinned, in pitying you? To me, rather, he's the more amazing. For he didn't shave off any bit of Godhead, and still he saved me, stooping as a doctor over my foul-smelling passions," *Poem* 1.1.2.57-61 (PG 37.400, ET: Gilbert, 41).

[17]There is similarity between what Gregory is accomplishing with this rule and what the earliest creeds were seeking to accomplish. The Nicene and Apostle's creed stated what the church believes concerning Jesus' historic birth and death while also protecting his divine nature. There is no direct connection to the wording of these creeds, but Gregory was an adamant defender of the Nicene Creed and it is probably that the Creed helped inform this rule.

[18]Eunomius *Apology* 21 (Vaggione, 61); *Apology* 28, "God is one, both unbegotten and without beginning, admitting of no being prior to himself (for nothing can exist prior to the Unbegotten), nor with himself (for the Unbegotten is one, and only he is God), nor in himself (for he is simple and uncompounded)" (Vaggione, 75).

these expressions in light of the incarnation, Eunomius makes these declarations about the Son's lower rank in being to the Unoriginate. He argues that the Son agrees with the Law and the Prophets that there is one God when he confesses, "I am going to my God and your God—the only true God, the only wise God, who alone is good, alone mighty, who alone has immortality."[19] The Son by his name, and therefore his nature, is "subject to him both in his essence and his will."[20] He argues from the name "only-begotten" that the Father causes the Son, "but the Father, being unbegotten, has no cause of his essence or goodness."[21] The Son is lower than the one true God because of his name, his being caused by him, and his own confessions.

Gregory explains his rule using one of the most controversial texts in the fourth century Trinitarian debate, Proverbs 8:22: "The Lord created me at the beginning of his ways for his work."[22] Gregory applies a further qualification to his rule in order to apply it the passage, "whatever we come across with a causal implication we will attribute to the humanity; what is absolute and free of cause we will reckon to the Godhead."[23] Gregory proposes that Proverbs 8:25, "before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth," presents the divine nature of the Son because the action of begetting does not refer to the Son's nature being caused. Begetting is moved outside of

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[19]Eunomius *Apology* 21 (Vaggione, 61).

[20]Eunomius *Apology* 26 (Vaggione, 71).

[21]Eunomius *Apology* 21 (Vaggione, 63).

[22]Or. 30.2, (250.226-30; PG 36.105), ET: Williams, 93-94. Proverbs 8:22, "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old" (ESV).

[23]Or. 30.2 (250.226-30; PG 36.105), ET: Williams, 93-94.

the realm of causality because it is an eternal begetting that takes place outside of the created realm. The main distinction that the Nicene theologian had to make was that the Son was the Creator, not a creature. He concludes that in this proverb, the Son's human generation is being spoken of in verse 22 and his "primal and less comprehensible" generation in verse 25. Gregory recognizes that there are a number of ways the passages could be interpreted (poetical or personified), but sees a clearer way to read Proverbs 8 that confesses both the deity and humanity of Christ.

Gregory's rule provides a clear way of distinguishing and protecting the two natures of Jesus. He is able to reason from Scripture using the distinguishing mark of causation so that anything that is caused in the created order is not God. Eunomius and Gregory would both agree that nothing created can be confessed to be God. In order to maintain the deity of Christ, he allows for a different reading of Proverbs 8:22 than his predecessor Origen. The traditional orthodox reading of Proverbs 8:22 was that it was referring to the Son's eternal begetting.[24] Gregory recognizes the language of the verse could be referring to the human nature that would be created for the Son in the incarnation. He also recognizes that Proverbs 8:25 addresses God's relationship to wisdom similar to the Prologue of John where it could be interpreted as a reference to the divine begetting that does not imply causation, but remains in mystery.

Another example of Eunomius interpreting the Sonship expressions wrongly is his emphasis on the Son calling the Father "greater" and "my God and your God" in

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[24]Origen *On First Principles* 1.2.1 (252.35); 4.4.1 (253.86).

30.7.[25] Eunomius argues that these expressions make it clear that Jesus recognized himself as distinct and different from the one true God. The expressions do not mean that the Son lacks divine characteristics such as goodness and wisdom, but only that the Father has preeminence over the Son in being greater in nature as the one true God.

Gregory argues that the Son's confession of the Father being greater cannot simply refer to his human nature declaring God greater, because this would be trivial and obvious.[26] Rather, the Son's confession that the Father is greater is within the Trinitarian relationships. Accordingly, Gregory provides another rule concerning causal relations within the Trinitarian relations to protect the distinction of the Father and Son: "the superiority belongs to the cause and the equality to the nature."[27] Causation refers to the persons within the Godhead, where Gregory is taking the "greater" statement literally, but not according to the shared nature or Godhead. Rather it is an explanation of the relationship between the Father and Son that is based upon the latter being begotten. The

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[25]Eunomius *Apology* 21 (Vaggione, 61).

[26]Or. 30.5, Gregory argues that the Son's crying out "my God, my God" on the cross is a reference to our condition. "Thus it is that he effects our submission, makes it his own and presents it to God." "He is not forsaken either by the Father or, as some think, by his own Godhead, which shrank in fear from suffering, abandoning the sufferer . . . he expresses our condition" (250.234; PG 36.109, ET: Williams, 96-97).

[27]Or. 30.7. It is in the form of a rhetorical question in the text. Or. 30.7, "certainly, supposing the Father were called "greater" with no mention of the Son's being "equal," they might have a point here. But if it is clear that we find both, what will the noble fellows say, what strength does their case have? How can there be harmony between incompatible terms? It is impossible for the same thing to be, in a like respect, greater than and equal to the same thing. Is it not clear that the superiority belongs to the cause and the equality the nature. We admit this with good grace. But someone else might persist with our argument and say that derivation from the uncaused does not mean inferiority to the uncaused. He will share in the glory of the unoriginate because he derives from the unoriginate; for men of sense, his generation is a further fact, as significant and as august, about him. Of course, the explanation that the Father is greater than the Son considered as man is true, but trivial. Is there anything remarkable about God's being greater than man?" (250.238; PG 35.112, ET: Gilbert, 98-99).

Father is the first and the cause within the persons, but this language is limited to the personal existence of each, not their divinity. (The particulars of how this grammar works within his Trinitarian doctrine will be explained further in the next chapter.)

In both cases above Gregory protects the divine nature of the Son from having causal notions that would place him outside of the divine nature and within the created order. The human nature of Christ certainly has an origin; therefore, any reference to the Son's nature that implies causation is attributed to the human nature. The Trinitarian relations have characteristics that distinguish each person. One of Gregory's primary ways of distinguishing the Father and Son is the Father's *Monarchia* and begetting of the Son; such a distinction gives him preeminence among the persons with reference to relationship, not nature. There is a place among the personal relationships for causal language that properly distinguishes them without dividing the Son from the divine nature. The language of Scripture is complicated, yet clear, concerning the Son, because he is spoken of in so many ways. He is the Father's Son, truly God, truly man, and God incarnate. Each of these must be placed within their proper place. A series of rules regulates how the different proclamations describe Christ accurately while defending his true identity in each case. This is Gregory's "religious reading" of Scripture, as Scripture must agree with Scripture and be interpreted together and in light of the rule of faith.

Trinitarian Rules For Salvation And Spirituality

The rule's importance is seen when Gregory makes it clear that the different interpretation is not simply a difference in how to read Scripture, but is tied to the hope of salvation. Gregory makes his concern emphatic when interpreting Proverbs 8 by asking,

"but what is the cause of the manhood [of Christ], which God submitted for us? Our salvation, of course, what else could it be?"[28] The arguments that led to Nicaea in 325 and that continued after Constantinople should be understood as soteriological as much as Christological.[29] Gregory must protect both natures of Christ so that the church can experience salvation that he often articulates as *theosis*. Gregory summarizes how his salvation is dependent upon a proper confession of the Son's full deity and humanity, "in order that I might be made God to the same extent that he was made man."[30] In Oration 38, *On the Theophany*, he makes it clear the God must come to the human race in order for man to come back to him. The feast marked the occasion of

> God's coming to the human race, so that we might make our way to him, our 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. For I must experience the lovely reversal: as pain came out of happiness, so happiness must return from pain…not celebrating weakness, but healing, not celebrating this creation, but our re-creation.[31]

He speaks of salvation as a "lovely reversal" following the lines of Athanasius' argument that if Jesus were not divine, man would not be forgiven.[32] In Oration 40,

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[28]Or. 30.2 (250.226-30; PG 36.105), ET: Wickham, 93-94.

[29]See Robert C. Gregg and Dennis E. Groh, "The Centrality of Soteriology in Early Arianism," *ATR* 59 (1977): 260-77. They have also published *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981).

[30]Or. 29.19 (250. 216-18; PG 36.100), ET: Wickham, 86-87. Gregory clearly sees the need for forgiveness. See Or. 38.12-13 (358.126-30; PG 35.324), Or. 14.14 (PG 35.876), and Or. 42.16 (284.52; PG 36. 472).

[31]Or. 38.4 (357.108-10; PG 36.316), ET: Daley, 118.

[32]Athanasius *On the Incarnation of God* 54, "he was made man that we might be made God" (199.184). The early Arians tied the hope of salvation to imitating the Son whereas the Eunomians conceived salvation in terms of knowing God. Athanasius' doctrine of salvation did focus upon man

Oration on the Holy Baptism, Gregory makes it clear the two natures are necessary for salvation:

> [Christ] in His own person is entire man and perfect God in one for the sake of the entire sufferer, that the Son may bestow salvation on your whole being, having destroyed the whole condemnation of your sins: impassible in his Godhead, passible in that which he assumed; as much man for your sake as your are made god for his.[33]

The full humanity is necessary as he rearticulates the rule of Origen: "whatever is not assumed, is not redeemed."[34]

The Son who assumed human nature must be considered fully God because only God saves. One passage in Gregory causes some confusion concerning how the divine Son took on flesh, "what he was he set aside."[35] Elsewhere, Gregory affirms that the Son took on flesh by "not changing what he was because he is unchangeable; but

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knowing God, but he proposed that man needed more than an intermediary. Man had the law and the prophets, he needed a "divine intervention of an altogether different order" (Khaled Anatolios, "Athanasius' Christology Today: The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ in On the Incarnation," in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E. Daley, S. J.*, ed. Peter W. Martens [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008], 35).

[33]Or. 40.45 (358.302-04; PG 36.421). Or. 38.13, "He came forth then as God with that which He had assumed, One Person in two Natures, Flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former. O new commingling; O strange conjunction; the Self-Existent comes into being, the Uncreated is created, That which cannot be contained is contained, by the intervention of an intellectual soul, mediating between the Deity and the corporeity of the flesh" (357.132; PG 36.325, ET: Daley, 123).

[34]Gregory of Nazianzus *Epistle* 101.5 (PG 37.181), ET: Wickham, 158, and *Epistle* 136.16, "The whole man would not have been redeemed, if the Word had not assumed the whole man" (PG 37.232). Gregory makes a similar argument for each person of the Trinity with an emphasis on the Holy Spirit in Or. 23.12, "And so to dishonor or separate any one of the three is to dishonor our confession of faith, that is our rebirth, our Godhead, our deification, our hope. You see how gracious the Holy Spirit is to us when we confess him as God and how he punishes us when we deny him" (270.304; PG 35.1163, ET: Vinson, 107.140).

[35]Or. 37.2 (318.304; PG 36.286).

assuming what he was not because he is full of love to man."[36] These two confessions could be considered contradictory as the Son sets something aside, but at the same time he does not change what he was. The former confession that could imply an emptying of the Godhead leads Gregory to confess that he has "fallen into human language" while trying to confess the mysteries of God.[37] He then defines what he meant by laying aside: "if he had remained what he was, keeping himself unapproachable and incomprehensible." This clarification shows that what he had laid aside was not being known as the Triune God who saves.[38] Gregory makes the full deity clear in his poem on the Son, "for he did not shave off any of his Godhead, and still he saved me, stooping as a doctor over my foul-smelling passions. He was a man, but God. David's offspring, but Adam's maker."[39] The deity cannot be divided or multiplied, because it is spiritual and simple. In his condescension, the Son remained perfectly God, completely man, and one person in order that he might reunite man to God.

The unity of God and man in Christ reverses the curse from Adam that separated God and man. In Or. 39 Gregory argues that by becoming the New Adam, Christ "should save the old." In the incarnation God, the Trinity, begins the completion of his reordering the fallen creation. Man had been severed from the creator by the deceit of Satan. This was not the plan of God. His plan was to reconcile God and man, and this

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[36]Or. 39.13 (358.173; PG 36.347).

[37]Or. 37.2, "if he condescended to Flesh, he will also endure such language" (318.304; PG 36.286).

[38]Or. 37.3 (318.304; PG 36.286).

[39]*Poem* 1.1.2.61-63 (PG 37.404), ET: Gilbert, 41. He uses same analogy in Or. 37.5.

was only possible with the mingling of the two natures.[40] Uniting in himself deity and humanity, the Son allows the power of the former to prevail over the latter, "so that we might be made divine to the same extent that he was made human."[41] The result of the incarnation is that "the condemnation of the flesh should be abolished, death being destroyed by his flesh."[42] In his poem *Against Apollinarius*, Gregory confesses that God, "the Mind," fastened himself to "all the nature of man, consisting of three things, soul, mind, and the body's mass."[43] By doing this, God "destroyed sin's accusation utterly, and by dying, slaughtered the slaughterer." The key aspect of this argument is that the Son is one and God and man are reconciled in his unity.[44] Only an incarnation that includes a full deity and full humanity can reunite the Creator and the creature.

Gregory saw his duty as "guarding the truth that we have received from our fathers, revering Father and Son and Holy Spirit; knowing the Father in the Son, the Son in the Holy Spirit, in which names we have been baptized, in which we believe, and under which we have been enlisted."[45] Gregory demonstrated an ability to read all of

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[40]Or. 39.13, "Spirit with flesh, and the eternal with time, and the uncircumscribed with measure, but also Generation with virginity, and dishonor with him who is higher than all honor; he who is impassible with suffering, and the immortal with the corruptible" (358.176; PG 36.347). See Beeley "Gregory of Nazianzus on the Unity of Christ," in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E, Daley, S. J.*, ed. Peter W. Martens (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 97-120.

[41]Or. 29.19 (250.216-18; PG 36.100), ET: Wickham, 86-87.

[42]Or. 39.13 (358.176; PG 36.349).

[43]Poem 1.1.10.6-9 (PG 37.464), ET: Gilbert, 81.

[44]Or. 37.2 (318.304; PG 36.286).

[45]Or. 6.22, "believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, one essence and glory; in whom also baptism has its perfection, both nominally and really (you know who hast been initiated!)" (405.174-76; PG 36.749, ET: Vinson 107.20). See also Or. 42.16 (PG 36, 472).

Scripture together and establish rules that safeguard what can be known from all of Scripture. He was also willing to break away from the traditional reading of texts like Proverbs 8:22, but did so in order to provide a stronger defense of the orthodox dogma of the Son's deity. Gregory's contention with Eunomius is that his interpretation "robs the written words of their sense."[46] Eunomius chose certain texts that he believed proved his position without relating his interpretation of these texts to others. In response to Eunomius' interpretation of these phrases, Gregory argues, "one could easily go through each of these expressions in detail and give a truly religious interpretation."[47] This reference to a "religious interpretation" is Gregory's method of interpreting all of Scripture together as a whole with the purpose of arriving at a purified vision of God.

As demonstrated above grammatical doctrine has two components. First, it determines how all the various texts in the canon are to be read together and deciding which texts have primacy over others. The second component in grammatical doctrine is to derive theological rules from interpretation. These are not mutually exclusive steps, but are interdependent as the rules and the interpretation influence one another. This is seen in how Gregory provides a different interpretation of Proverbs 8 by using the rule based on causation. Grammatical doctrine has played a central role in the church's doxology by setting forth scripturally sound confessions. The practice of grammatical doctrine is based upon the Bible presenting doctrines and mysteries that must be held in proper tension.

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[46]Or. 30.1 (250.226-28; PG 36.107), ET: Wickham, 93.

[47]Or. 29.18 (250.214-16; PG 36.97-100), ET: Wickham, 85-86.

Gregory's Grammar for the Knowledge of God

The two most important doctrines for the study of the Trinity are, first, God's essence is ineffable and, second, God has provided a reliable revelation of himself. Lossky claims that Gregory necessarily contradicts himself by espousing that God is revealed and hidden.[48] This accusation fails to see the proper tension of seeing God in himself and God as he has revealed himself. The grammatical theologian establishes what is known about God and crafts a series of rules that safeguards what has been revealed. This approach ensures that the church is able to confess God and his mysteries without fear of confessing him wrongly or inappropriately. A grammatical confession does not intend to explain God and his salvation, but to guard the paradoxes and mysteries.[49] This distinction was one of the key differences between Gregory and his opponents.

Gregory's Grammar for Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology

Gregory recognizes the great difference between God and man, and therefore establishes rules for how God is to be confessed based upon what can and cannot be

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[48]Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Press, 1974), 69. McGuckin provides an answer to Lossky's accusation in "The Vision of God in St. Gregory of Nazianzus," *StudPat* 32 (1997):145-52. T. A. Noble also provides a defense of both parts of speech existing paradoxically in Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity ("Paradox in Gregory Nazianzen's Doctrine of the Trinity," *StudPat* 27 [1991]: 93-99). Lieggi argues that these two truths are a paradoxical mystery, "To know God is impossible to human reason with the means it has at its disposal, but it is still possible nonetheless, because God has chosen to make himself known by revealing himself" (cited in Joseph Trigg, "Knowing God in the Theological Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus: The Heritage of Origin," *VCS* 94 [Boston: Brill, 2009], 86).

[49]Paul Helm, *John Calvin's Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

know about him. This is what gives theological speech two parts, what is denied (apophatic) and what is confessed (kataphatic).[50] These two parts of Christian grammar allow for the believer to approach God with the appropriate boldness and wonder.

The first part of theological speech is kataphatic. It consists of the positive assertions concerning what can be known about God from his revelation.[51] These confessions are primarily based upon God revealing his names and are also derived from the actions of God. Scripture speaks to a partial knowledge of God in many ways, most explicitly in 1 Cor 13.[52] Paul explains the role of gifts by emphasizing that the church only sees God dimly through a mirror in this present age, but one day the church will see him face to face.[53] The grammatical theologian must maintain that there is partial, yet

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[50]Frederick Norris recognizes this balance between God being ineffable while truly revealing himself, "because God in his nature is incomprehensible and yet is revealed sufficiently, theology will never be amenable to tight syllogistic systems. Its subject is not open to that kind of investigation" (Norris, "Gregory the Theologian," 474). Gregory argues for two parts to every doctrine in light of Eunomius' arguing that God is unbegotten (ibid., 478). McGuckin explains that the apophatic and kataphatic are left over from Athanasius' doctrine, "a fundamental legacy of Christianity, and widely apparent in the Scriptures themselves" (McGuckin, "The Vision of God in St Gregory of Nazianzus," 146). "Gregory is insisting that the Unknowable can be known by creatures without thereby ceasing to the Unknowable"—this supposed "Cappadocian achievement" is really an "otherwise unremarkable re-statement of the basic axiom of the Alexandrian theological tradition" (ibid., 148).

Gregory states, "Every speech has two parts to it. One part aims at establishing one's own position; the other refutes the opposing case," Or. 29.1 (250.176-178; PG 36.73A-76A, ET: Wickham, 69). Or. 28.9, "An inquirer into the nature of a real being cannot stop short at saying what it is not but must add to his denials a positive affirmation and how much easier it is to take in a single thing to run the gamut of particular negations! The point of this is that comprehension of the object of knowledge should be effected both by negation of what the thing is not and also by positive assertion of what it is" (250.116-118; PG 36.36, ET: Wickham, 43-44). Or. 28.5, "There is a great difference in being able to know something exists and knowing what something is" (250.108-110; PG 36.32, ET: Wickham, 40).

[51]Donald Winslow explains this distinction in Gregory's Christology in "Christology and Exegesis in the Cappadocians," *CH* 40 (1971): 394-96.

[52]See Ors. 2.55; 7.17; 8.3; 14.2, 23; 19.12; 20.1, 12; 24.19; 26.1; 28.3, 17, 20; 29.11; 32.12, 15; 38.2, 8, 13, 1; 45.3 for examples of Gregory alluding to this text.

[53]Or. 20.12 (270.80-82; PG 35.1080).

reliable, knowledge of God. Since no perfect vision of God is available until heaven, no theological model can claim to have absolute knowledge of God. This is why the second part of theological speech is necessary.

The second part of theological speech is apophatic. It is negative in the sense that it denies what cannot be known in order to guard against heresy. Apophatic theology requires some knowledge of God because in order to deny something about God, something must be known.[54] Some confessions must be negative in nature because God's being is unknown, or in the words of Gregory, "boundless" and "beyond being."[55] Since God's being is boundless, man's speech must,

> stay within the proper bounds; to speak out the things of the Spirit and, if possible, nothing else; and to speak out with every breath you take, if not more, but in the consciousness of what has been assigned to you, for it is an inspiring and ennobling thing to have the thought of matters divine act as a goad ever urging you to God.[56]

Proper speech is possible, but only if exercised within the proper boundaries or rules.

Gregory's Grammar of God's Infinite Nature

The importance that Gregory places on the nature of doctrine is demonstrated by his opening the Theological Orations with a dedication of the first sermon to the proper boundaries of theological knowledge. Gregory urges Eunomius to keep the

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[54]Gregory is able to clearly deny God having a body because Scripture has said that he is Spirit, Or. 28.9 (250.116-118; PG 36.36).

[55]Or. 38.7 (357.114-16; PG 36.317), ET: Daley, 120. A predecessor of this type of argument is found in Irenaeus and is rooted in Philo. See Norris, "Irenaeus' Picture of God," 17. The rule adopted was "God is enclosing, but not enclosed."

[56]Or. 32.11 (318.108-10; PG 36.188), ET: Vinson, 107.199.

discussion of God "within proper bounds."[57] His accusation against Eunomius is that he puts the great mystery in danger by not approaching God with reverence. Gregory believes that this is because of Eunomius being a "man of vice" who thinks about the Godhead too corporeally or materialistically and according to his own sinfulness.[58] Behr recognizes the distinction between how the two theologians contemplated God in his comment on the first two theological orations, "Gregory has eloquently laid open the scope of theological vision that approaches its subject with awe and reverence rather than imprisoning it in definitions and logical syllogisms, reducing God to an intellectual idol."[59] The specific accusation is that Eunomius fights for "the Word beyond what the Word approves." By this Gregory means that Eunomius argues for "his own gods and passions" by going beyond Scriptural claims and establishing his own rules outside of canonical boundaries.[60] The key term in the argument over the Word concerns what it means for the Father to generate the Son.

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[57]Or. 27.5 (250.84; PG 36.16), ET: Wickham, 28. Gregory declares the following about Athanasius, "he both preserved the unity, which belongs to the Godhead, and religiously taught the three, which refers to the hypostasis, neither confounding the three persons in the unity, nor dividing the essence among the three persons, but abiding within the bounds of piety —remaining within the bounds of worship, by avoiding excessive inclination or opposition to either side," Or. 21.13 (270.134-36; PG 35.1096). Gregory limits speech "to the pure or those being purified," *Poem* 1.1.1.10 (PG 37.400, ET: Gilbert, 37).

[58]Or. 27.2 (250.72-74; PG 36.16).

[59]John Behr, *The Nicene Faith: pt. 1: True God of True God*, Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 2 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004), 342.

[60]Or. 27.6 (250.84-86; PG 36.20), ET: Williams, 29.

Fundamental to Gregory's theology is the rule that only God knows himself perfectly, thus the church's confession is always partial.[61] God's essence is incomprehensible and ineffable for man because God is infinite, holy, boundless, and greater than anything man can imagine.[62] God is infinite and cannot be comprehended by the finite because there is a great divide between the carnal mind knowing a spiritual nature.[63] Gregory establishes this limit by referring to David's confession that, "God is "too wonderful" for him, "too excellent" for him to be grasped."[64] Gregory argues that if Paul, who was called up to the third heaven, found the judgments of God incomprehensible, how much more is the divine nature beyond the grasp of the human

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[61]Or. 6.22, "For they are a single entity not in individual reality, but in, a unity worshipped in Trinity and a Trinity summed up into unity, venerable as one whole, as one whole royal, sharing the same royal throne, sharing he same glory, above space, above time, uncreated, invisible, impalpable, uncircumscribed, its internal ordering known only to itself, but for us equally the object of our reverence and adoration, and alone taking possession of the Holy of Holies and excluding all of creation, part by the first veil, and part by the second" (405.174-76; PG 36.749, ET: Vinson 107.20).

Or. 23.11, "Our minds and our human condition are such that a knowledge of the relationship and disposition of these members with regard to one another is reserved for the Holy Trinity itself alone and those purified souls to whom the Trinity may make revelation either now or in the future. We, on the other hand, may know that the nature of divinity is one and the same characterized by lack of source generation, and procession (these correspond to mind, word, and spirit in humans, at least insofar as one can compare things spiritual with things perceptible and things that are very great with those that are small, for no comparison ever represents the true picture exactly)" (270.302-04; PG 35.1164, ET: Vinson 107.139).

McGuckin states that Gregory "begins the theological task quite decidedly from the perspective that God is unknowable; that is inconceivable and incomprehensible in his nature" (McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 12).

[62]Or. 28.17, "No one has yet discovered or ever shall discover what God is in his nature and essence" (250.112-14; PG 36.36, ET: Wickham, 49-50). *Poem* 1.1.1. 23, "all ideas fall short of the great God" (PG 37.400, ET: Gilbert, 40).

[63]Or. 29.13 (250.202-204; PG 36.92).

[64]Or. 28.21 (250.142-44; PG 36.53), ET: Wickham, 89.

mind.[65] God's nature is boundless and any confession that attempts to explain or describe him establishes a limit upon the divine nature.[66]

Gregory and Eunomius agreed that God's nature is simple, but the two disagreed about the epistemological implications of simplicity. Gregory's doctrine of simplicity entailed that God's nature was perfectly incomprehensible. The various concepts or words applied to God in Scripture are all true of God, but never fully reveal God.[67] They must all be thought of together in order to think about God rightly even though he could not be known fully. Eunomius believed God's nature was perfectly comprehensible.[68] There was one term that perfectly named God's essence, Unoriginate. He argued that the Cappadocians denied simplicity by introducing various terms to name or describe God's essence. Gregory responded to these claims of Eunomius by arguing that God is boundless.

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[65]Or. 28.21 (250.142-44; PG 36.53).

[66]Nicholas Gendle argues that the Cappadocians relied upon Clement more that Origen in the shift to focusing their apophatic theology on the infinite nature of God. He argues that the locus of apophaticism is on the infinite nature of God rather than simplicity. Gregory of Nazianzus is the first to see this great difference. The emphasis is on the transcendence. See Nicholas Gendle, "The Apophatic Approach to God in the Early Greek Fathers with special Reference to the Alexandrian Tradition, Part III, the Cappadocian Achievement," *EKQ* 4 (1983): 305-74. The argument shifted from simplicity to add infinity because Eunomius believed he could know all of God in simplicity.

[67] The concept of *Epinoia* and its implications for man's knowledge of God plays an important part in the Eunomian-Cappadocian disagreement. The Cappadocians argue that God's being is too much for man to know and has been revealed in various ways in Scripture because no one term can adequately portray God. The *epinoia* of God is made up of many ideas and names, each giving a distinct perspective of God, but never the entire essence. Basil declares, "the most holy essence of God receives *epinoia* in various ways," *Contra Eunomius* 2.362 (GNO 1.332). Eunomius argued that the use of multiple names denies simplicity by introducing complexity. The one name unoriginate was the only name that conveyed the essence of God. See Joseph O'Leary, *"Divine Simplicity and The Plurality of Attributes," VCS* 82 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 307.

[68] See Barnes, "The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language," 218.

The argument for God being boundless is central and relates to Gregory's of Nyssa's more popular argument against Eunomius that God's nature is unknown because it is infinite.[69] The key rule for Gregory of Nazianzus is that if man has comprehended God, God is then bounded.[70] Knowing God as he knows himself places unacceptable limits upon the Creator, who is eternal and perfect, while simultaneously placing too much capacity in the power of man. Gregory's goal is to limit what can be said about God so that the church can boldly assert what is known by revelation.[71]

Gregory's Grammar for Knowing God in His Actions

God's nature being ineffable does not mean the theologian is not supposed to pursue a true vision of God or confess him boldly. Rather Gregory believes that speaking about God is the primary purpose of a sermon, "for indeed the very best order of beginning every speech and action, is to begin from God, and to end in God."[72] Also,

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[69]Gregory's arguments for the infinite nature of God being unknowable are primarily found in *Against Eunomius* 2.67-170 (*VCS* 82.74-95). *Against Eunomius* 2.67, "human nature has not the capacity in it to understand precisely the being of God" (*VCS* 82.74). *Against Eunomius* 2.110, "man is limited to scriptural language because God's nature is limitless" (*VCS* 82.84).

The Cappadocians follow the tradition of Origen *On First Principles* 1.1.6, "Our mind cannot behold God as he is in himself, therefore it forms its conception of the Creator of the Universe from the beauty of his works and the loveliness of his creatures" (252.2, ET: Butterworth, 10). See Boniface Ramsey, *Beginning to Read the Fathers* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), 44-7.

[70]Or. 38.7, "The Divine, then, is boundless and difficult to contemplate; the only thing completely comprehensible about it is its boundlessness—even thought some think that the fact of its simple nature makes it either completely incomprehensible or perfectly comprehensible!" (357.114-16; PG 36.317, ET: Daley 120). He goes on to argue that simple is not even a nature, just as composite is not a nature, rather they are both types of natures.

[71]Or. 27.3-5 (250.72-84; PG 36.14-16).

[72]Or. 2.1 (247.88; PG 35.396).

Gregory exhorts his church, "it is more important that we should remember God than that we should breathe: indeed, if one may say so, we should do nothing else besides."[73] The theologian is able to proclaim truth about the ineffable God boldly because God has revealed himself in his actions. Much of Gregory's arguments for the deity of the Son and Spirit derive from the titles they have been given in Scripture and their inseparable actions.[74]

God's Triune nature is revealed through his relationship with his human creation. His actions reveal him truly, but do not give a complete knowledge of his nature. Gregory makes this point clear by comparing his own pursuit of God with Moses ascending Mt. Sinai. The paradox of Moses ascending to see God and not being able to see his face is interpreted by Gregory in light of the essence-energy distinctions. He declares, "when I looked closer, I saw not the first and unmingled nature, known to itself—to the Trinity I mean; not that which abides within the first veil, and is hidden by the cherubim; but only that nature, which at last reaches us."[75] God's essence is too great to be known, but his essence is partially revealed in his actions.

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[73]Or. 27.4 (250.80-82; PG 36.16), ET: Williams, 27-28.

[74]Or. 31.29-30 (250.332-36; PG 36. 168-68) and Or. 29.19 (250.216-18; PG 36.100). For a full treatment of the significance of inseparable actions as a key to a Trinitarian reading of Scripture see Lewis Ayers, "'Remember That You are Catholic' (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *JECS* 8 (2000): 39-82. See Tarmo Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology,* 133. This is a legacy of Athanasius as seen in *Orations Against Arius* 2.16.21 (NPNF^2 4.359).

[75]Or. 28.3 (250.104-06; PG 36.29), ET: Wickham, 38-39. This type of knowledge is distinguished today by the terms immanent and economic. There is a clear difference between the two that guards against the second half of Rahner's Rule, but a clear affirmation of the first, "the economic is the immanent." The economic accurately reveals the immanent, but only partially. Gregory explains that trying to look at the Deity absolutely, "as best we can collecting fragmentary perception of it from its images?" John McGuckin, "The Vision of God in St. Gregory of Nazianzen," in *Athanasius and His*

Gregory recognizes a distinction in the essence and activity in contrast to Eunomius, who divides the two. Gregory's ability to distinguish between the essence and energy without dividing them allowed him to better reason through the various concepts of Scripture inductively.[76] Since he is not limited by the deductive limitation that reduces God's name only to unoriginate, Gregory is able to do justice to all terms that reveal God's nature. God is meant to be "known not directly but indirectly" because "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."[77] Even though the "internal ordering known only to itself" God is to be equally the object of our reverence and adoration, and alone taking possession of the Holy of Holies and excluding all of creation."[78] The first veil covers the holy of holies where God's being is known by himself and those whom he has purified enough to see it. The second veil refers to his order of creation where he is revealing himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[79]

Man can see God's actions, or "what he has brought forth and his order."[80] The incarnate Christ is all that can be seen behind the second veil as man is limited to

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Opponents, Cappadocian Fathers and Other Greek Writers after Nicaea, Studia Patristica, vol. 32, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 145.

[76]This distinction can be traced back to Philo. See Norris, "Irenaeus' Picture of God," 19.

[77]Or. 38.7 (357.114-16; PG 36.317), ET: Daley 120.

[78]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson 107.20.

[79]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson 107.20.

[80]Or. 28.3 (250.104-06; PG 36.29), ET: Wickham, 38-39.

seeing "shadowy reflections of the Sun in water."[81] The eyes of man are too weak to see the true nature of God so he has placed a "dim gloom" or veil over him. The first will only be removed when man is in heaven seeing God's Pure Being. At that time, the internal order of God will be made known, even the nature of the Son's begetting.[82] The mystery is meant to "stir up our wonder" and hope for the day when God "makes himself known to us, as God to gods, perhaps to the same extent that he already knows those that are known by him."[83]

Gregory's doctrine of how man sees God is based upon how God has progressively revealed himself. There are four stages in Gregory's understanding of revelation: the Old Testament, the New Testament, the Church, the final vision in the eschatological horizon. The Father was manifested as God clearly in the Old Testament, the Son was revealed more obscurely. The New Testament manifests the Son's deity and suggests the Spirit's, and now the experience of true believers indwelt by the Spirit should clearly demonstrate the Spirit's deity.[84] The Spirit's deity is revealed through experience in the present church age, but will be made perfectly clear in the future. The dim vision man possesses will become a perfect vision when he sees the Triune God face

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[81]Or. 28.3 (250.104-06; PG 36.29), ET: Wickham, 38-39. See McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 15.

[82]Or. 29.11 (250. 198-200; PG 36.89).

[83]Or. 38.7 (357.114-16; PG 36.317), ET: Daley, 120.

[84]Or.31.26-27 (250.326-28; PG 36.164). An interesting aspect of this progression is the experiential being a basis for proof of the Spirit's deity. The perfect Trinity is seen in this dispensation of God's progressive revelation because the church experiences its power. Gregory refers to the nature of revelation as a "gradual self-disclosure" *Epistle* 101. 5 (PG 37.184, ET: Wickham, 156). See also Poem 1.1.3.24-31 (PG 37.410).

to face.[85] The partial vision is reliable because God's actions reveal his being partially. A more perfect knowledge of the Triune God is the future hope of all believers, "we have the promise that one day we shall know to the degree we are known."[86]

The actions of each person reveal their divinity and their distinction. In his explanation of how the church sees God from Ps 36, "in your light we see light," Gregory argues from each divine person being described as light and revealing the other persons.[87] The conclusion is that it is only in and through the persons of the Trinity that we can ever know the Triune God. He exemplified the emphasis on how each person has a specific role in revealing the entirety of the Godhead in a prayer opening his Theological Orations, "that the Father may approve, the Son aid, and the Holy Spirit inspire it—or rather that the single Godhead's single radiance, by mysterious paradox one in its distinctions and distinct in its connectedness, may enlighten it."[88] The revelation of the

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[85]Or. 29.21 (250. 222-24; PG 36.104). There is another aspect of his eschatological progression where the theologian must be able to distinguish the difference between the two covenants of salvation history, the law and grace. The believer who lives in the covenant of grace is waiting for the unshakeable kingdom where he will see God face to face. See McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 308-309.

[86]Or. 27.10, "But of God himself the knowledge we shall have in this life will be little, though soon after it will perhaps be more perfect, in the same Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory forever and ever amen" (250.96-98; PG 36.25, ET: Williams, 33-34). Gregory explains this progression from 1 Corinthians, Or 20.12, "[Paul] says that he sees in a mirror dimly, but that there is a time when he will see face to face" (270.80-82; PG 35.1080, ET: Vinson 107.115-16).

[87]Or. 31.3, "This is the meaning of David's prophetic vision: "In your light we shall see light." We receive the Son's light from the Father's light in the light of the Spirit, "that is what we ourselves have seen and what we now proclaim—it is the plain and simple explanation of the Trinity," (OGC 118-19; SC 250. 278-80; PG 36. 136). See Winslow, *Dynamic Salvation*, 126. Gregory argues for deity of HS in formulas, progressive nature of revelation, but most of all his understanding of the economy of salvation. He observes, "As his Christological arguments stemmed primarily from his concern that the whole man be save, so too his pneumatology is grounded upon and arises out of specifically soteriological convictions" (ibid., 127).

[88]Or. 28.1 (250.122; PG 36.40), ET: Wickham, 44-45.

three is enough to say that they exist, but never enough to describe the exact nature of their existence.[89]

Thus far the theologian's work is limited by who God is and how he has revealed himself. The apophatic and kataphatic aspects of doctrine are related because the theologian must be able to proclaim even difficult truths such as the Trinity, but also humble enough not to try to describe God and content to simply defend the mystery revealed in Scripture.[90] Some of the most significant ongoing disagreements concerning the nature of God concern how the theologian separates God's being from his actions and what can be known about God from what is unknowable. These disagreements are related because God's nature and actions correlate to how ontology and epistemology relate to one another. The grammatical rules one places upon what can be known about God and how his actions relate to his nature have significant implications on the doctrine of the Trinity, and therefore every other doctrine. Gregory is one of the church's greatest contributors to this ever-developing concern. It was Eunomius and his intellectual articulation of the Arian position that forced Gregory to define the relationship between what men could and could not know about God.

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[89]Or. 29.8 (250.190-92; PG 36.84), ET: Wickham, 76. See also Or. 28.5 (250.110; PG 36.32), ET: Wickham, 40.

[90]Or. 2.38 (247.112; PG 35.446). Daily argues, "the reason for this title [The Theologian] is clearly Gregory's urgent championing of a Trinitarian conception of God and his insistent care to articulate a theological terminology—indeed a theological grammar—for speaking of God in a way consistent with Scripture and the Church's tradition of faith" (*Gregory of Nazianzus*, 41).

Gregory's Rules for Logic

Eunomius and Aëtius have been given the name "Neo-Arians" because of the significant changes they made to the Arian argument.[91] They are certainly Arians in the sense that they deny the Son's equality with the Father, but their arguments are more technical and sophisticated.[92] Early Arians relied upon biblical arguments, whereas the Neo-Arians became so prone to using syllogisms and making technical arguments that they were called *technologues*.[93] The crux of the early Arians' argument was that there was a time when the Son was not. The Neo-Arians denied a temporal begetting because God is beyond time. Another difference was that the Neo-Arians believed they could comprehend God in his being. The early Arians continued along Orthodox lines in holding that the being of God was incomprehensible.

Eunomius declared there were two ways to know God, inductively and deductively.[94] The inductive knowledge is the product of "an enquiry by means of the actions, whereby we distinguish the essence on the basis of its products and completed works."[95] Eunomius' inductive argument is based upon the premise that the essence and

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[91]Their work should be seen as collaborative. Eunomius calls Aëtius "that unconquereable contestant" in *Apology for Apology*. Eunomius' *Apology* and Aetius' *Syntagmation* are the only Neo-Arian treatise extant. See Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Ariansim*, 2:306.

[92] See Wickham for an explanation of this difference. They deny that God begat the Son in time by God because God is timeless, therefore the Son's begetting was timeless. The key aspect is that the Son's name and activity prove he is less than God and does not share in his essence.

[93]Michael Butler, "Neo-Arianism: Its Antecedents and Tenets," *SVTQ* 36 (1992): 367.

[94]Eunomius calls these two ways of knowing God two roads, *Apology* 20 (Vaggione, 59).

[95]Eunomius *Apology* 20 (Vaggione, 59).

activity are different.[96] The strong distinction is the basis for his confession that the Son is the product of God's work and will, and not related to God's essence. The Son's work reflects the will of God because the Son is the product of his will. The Son's work is distinct because it is through him (*di' ou ta panta*) that all things are created whereas it is from God (*ex ou ta panta*).[97] The Son is like the Unoriginate in his actions and will, but completely different and separate in his being.[98]

In terms of deductive knowledge Eunomius "examine[s] the actual essence and with clear and unadulterated reasoning about them make[s] a judgment on them."[99] Eunomius asserts,

> God does not know anything more about his essence than we do, nor is that essence better known to him and less to us; rather, whatever we ourselves known about it is exactly what he knows, and conversely, that which he knows is what you will find without change.[100]

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[96]Eunomius *Apology* 23-24 (Vaggione, 63-67). In summary, God's will is his action and his action is not his essence. The Son is the product of his will, not the essence. See Christopher Stead, "The Platonism of Arius," *JTS* 15 (1964): 22.

[97]Eunomius *Apology* 5 (Vaggione, 39). This distinction is based upon 1 Cor 8:6.

[98]Eunomius *Apology* 9: "If the deity is ingenerate in essence, what was generated by sundering was not generated by sundering of essence, but he posited it by his power. For no reverent reasoning permits the same essence to be both generate and ingenerate" (Vaggione, 43-45). See also Eunomius *Apology* 24: "Accordingly, if this argument has demonstrated that God's will is an action, and that this action is not essence but that the Only-begotten exists by virtue of the will of the Father, then of necessity it is not with respect to the essence but with respect to the action (which is what the will is) that the Son preserves his similarity to the Father" (Vaggione, 65). See Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2:339.

Michel Barnes argues that Eunomius' position was that "the activity produces effects that exist co-extensively in time with it . . . This activity is a cause that receives no traits from its associated essence, and transmits or reproduces no essential traits in the product, but instead produces a work that is like the activity in nature, and not like the original essence." See Michel Barnes, "The Background and Use of Eunomius' Causal Language," in *Arianism After Arius: Essays on the Development of the Fourth Century Trinitarian Conflicts*, ed. Michel R. Barnes and Daniel H. Williams (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 218.

[99]Eunomius *Apology* 20 (Vaggione, 59-61).

[100]Eunomius Fragment II from Socrates *Scholasticus* found in Vaggione, 178-179. See Socrates, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates* 4.7 (PG 67.473) (London: S. Baster, 1844). See Eunomius *Apology* 8 (Vaggione, 41-43).

Eunomius' arguments emphasize the deductive knowledge over the inductive as seen in his beginning with the name of God, Unoriginate, and making conclusions from this name.[101] He argues from the term Unoriginate that only the Begotten Son must be ranked lower than God because he receives his existence from God.[102] The Neo-Arians believed they knew the being of God because they knew he was Unoriginate.[103] The Neo-Arians argued that the Son is not related to the Father in essence because his name is begotten. Instead he is the product of God's eternal will and is similar to God in his work. The Son accomplishes the Father's will in time and creation. The names Unoriginate and Begotten necessarily determined that they were two different kinds of being.[104]

Gregory affirms that God is known inductively by considering his actions, but denies any deductive knowledge of God. Gregory denies the knowledge of God from

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[101]Graham A. Keith, "Our Knowledge of God: The Relevance of the Debate between Eunomius and the Cappadocians," *TynBul* 41 (1990): 66. The orthodox argued against Eunomius on the basis that this name was not found in Scripture. The term Father was the proper name for God and necessarily implied the Son. *Agennetos* was used in orthodoxy to distinguish the Creator from the creature. The problem in Eunomius' use of *agennetos* is that he uses it to separate the Father from the Son.

[102]Eunomius *Apology* 7 (Vaggione, 41). See Gregory of Nyssa *Contra Eunomius* 2.2.32-50 (SVC 82:62-71).

[103]Eunomius prefers the names and distinctions of *agennetos-genetos* and creator-creature because they can be taken literally whereas the terms Father and Son are conventional and cannot be taken literally. His argument for this is that these terms better relate to the "concepts inherent in the underlying objects and accommodate the designations accordingly," *Apology* 18 (Vaggione, 55-57).

Aetius says *agennetos* is the name of God par excellence. See Aëtius *Syntagmation* 12, "The *Syntagmation* of Aëtius the Anomean," trans. Lionel R. Wickham, *JTS* 19 (1968): 532-69. See Frederick Norris, "Rhetoric and Historical Theology: Gregory the Theologian," in *To Teach, to Delight, and to Move: Theological Education in a Post-Christian World*, ed. David S. Cunningham (Eugene, OR; Cascade Books, 2004), 228. Eunomius' *Apology* was primarily focused upon arguing against the term *homoiousios* (See Kopecek, *A History of Neo-Arianism*, 2:305).

[104]Keith, "Our Knowledge of God," 60-88.

deduction because this is speculative and abstract knowledge of God.[105] The only knowledge of God available for man is found in God's actions from which man gathers a fragmented, yet reliable vision of God. Gregory establishes the rule that God's ineffable, incomprehensible being is only known partially through his actions toward the created order.[106] Man does not have access to God's inner divine life, but he can know God as much as God has made himself known through creating, sustaining, and saving the created order.

In Or. 30.18-19 Gregory distinguishes between the names of God to show they reveal his actions, and therefore reveal his nature only partially. He argues that some names refer to his power (e.g., Almighty, King) and others to his providential ordering of the world (e.g., salvation, peace, righteousness). The names cannot limit the being of God, but are primarily ways of expressing his relationship toward creation. Gregory then distinguishes these names from the personal names of deity, "the unoriginate Father; of the eternally begotten Son; of what has issued, or proceeds, without generation, Holy Spirit."[107] These names are the proper names by which the persons are distinguished, but

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[105]John A. McGuckin, "'Perceiving Light from Light in Light' (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 16. McGuckin argues that knowledge is "a personal communion with God which initiates by intimation or sanctification" (ibid.).

[106] See David Hart, "The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics After Nicaea," in *Orthodox Reading of Augustine*, ed. Aristotle Papanikolaou and George Demacopoulos (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 211-13.

[107]Or. 30.19 (250.266; PG 36.128), ET: Wickham, 109.

are also used analogically for the persons. The names necessitate distinction, but cannot imply division because they are still one essence.[108]

Gregory is following the tradition of the early church that distinguished two types of knowledge: *theologia* and *oikonomia*.[109] *Theologia* denotes God's nature to which man does not have access; and therefore, it remains in the sphere of either speculative theology or mystery.[110] *Oikonomia* refers to God's work, particularly his plan of salvation.[111] Gregory distinguishes the essence from the actions allowing the

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[108]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749).

[109]In contemporary theology these distinctions are discussed in terms of the immanent and economic Trinity, archetypal and echtypal knowledge of God, God ad intra and God ad extra. Michael Horton describes this as a distinction of "pilgrims on the way (*theologia viatorum*) and theology of the glorified saints (*theologia beatorum*)" (Michael Horton, *Covenant and Eschatology: The Divine Drama* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002], 183). See also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrence, vol. 1, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, pt. 1, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 1975), 333.

The great divide that has caused contemporary theology to continuously reinvent itself is Kant's divide between the noumena and the phenomena. Kant's strong division did not allow any real knowledge of God whereas the classical/premodern distinction allows for God's revelation to provide true even if incomplete knowledge. Wolfhart Pannenberg claims that a "distinction between an economic and an essential Trinity" can be traced to an eighteenth century theologian named Johann August Urlsperger. See *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 291 n. 111.

[110]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 35.752), ET: Vinson 107.20. The internal ordering is behind the first veil that man cannot pass, but God's actions are revealed behind the second veil. Gregory guards against a complete knowledge, but demand enough knowledge for worship, "its internal ordering known only to itself, but for us equally the object of reverence and adoration."

[111]Origen defined *oikonomia* as the special order and governance of God whereby he was bringing salvation to the world. The root of divinization is found here as the believer is said to participate in God's *oikonomia*. See *Commentaire sur saint Jean* 32.27-33 (385.204).

In *On First Principles* 1.1.6, Origen says that the nature of God is only known vaguely from the work of God, "the work of providence and the plan of the whole world are a sort of rays, as it were, of the nature of God, in comparison with his real substance" (252.22, ET: Butterworth, 10). The nature of God is "incomprehensible, and incapable of being measured. For whatever be the knowledge which we are able to obtain of God, either by perception or reflection, we must of necessity believe that He is by many degrees far better than what we perceive him to be," *On First Principles* 1.1.5 (252.20, ET: Butterworth, 9). In *On First Principles* 1.3.1 Origen declares, "For although no one is able to speak with certainty of God the Father, it is nevertheless possible for some knowledge of Him to be gained by means of the visible creation and the natural feelings of the human mind; and it is possible, moreover, for such knowledge to be confirmed from the Sacred Scripture" (252.46, ET: Butterworth, 29). See Joseph Trigg, "God's Marvelous

actions to reveal the essence. This is in contrast to the strong difference Eunomius places between the two.[112] The key difference in their theology is that Gregory denies access to a complete knowledge of God that Eunomius claims in his deductive syllogisms. The church has real knowledge of the Triune God because of the distinct names and actions, but it is not the complete knowledge that Eunomius claims.

Norris observes that, for Gregory, "because God in his nature is incomprehensible and yet is revealed sufficiently, theology will never be amenable to tight syllogistic systems. Its subject is not open to that kind of investigation."[113] Norris states that, for Gregory, "theological argument is enthymematic. It takes claims and

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oikonomia: Reflections of Origen's Understanding of Divine and Human Pedagogy in the Address Ascribed to Gregory Thaumaturgus," *JECS* 9 (2001): 27-52.

For an argument for this distinction in Irenaeus, see Richard A. Norris, "Who is the Demiurge? Irenaeus' Picture of God in *Against Heresies* 2," *VCS* 94 (Boston: Brill, 2009), 9-36. He observes this distinction is what separates the Orthodox from the heretics. Norris argues that for Irenaeus, "*oikonomia* is therefore the sole legitimate object of theological inquiry and discourse. Whatever goes beyond it is unsure, and therefore unsafe, speculation" (ibid., 10).

Donald Winslow combines both of these under *theologia* but makes the same distinction. According to Winslow, Gregory's doctrine had two kinds of *theologia*: The first was the doctrine of the Trinity. The theologian "attempts the impossibility by striving to comprehend the incomprehensible, a pursuit that ends in humble silence before the divine mystery." The second was the "divine condescension whereby the transcendent God, hidden from our clouded vision, himself speaks to us, reveals himself to us, comes to us. It is here that *theologia* is to be understood as the doctrine, not of God himself, but of God as he is for us. This second kind of *theologia* has its object, not the inner life of the Trinity, but the activity of the triune God on our behalf. It is at precisely this point that *theologia* becomes *oikonomia*. The theologian cannot know God *kat' ousian*, but God can be known as Creator and Redeemer" (Donald Winslow, *The Dynamics of Salvation: A Study in Gregory of Nazianzus*, Patristic Monograph Series 7 [Cambridge, MA: The Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1979], 30).

[112]Michel Barnes demonstrates that Gregory of Nyssa and Eunomius differ in their use of causality. The former expresses a "connatural union" where as the latter expressed a "moral or political" productivity." Gregory of Nazianzus would agree with Nyssen's the definition of causality. Eunomius' strong distinction of essence and energy created too large of a divide between the two concepts so that the Son is only the product and activity of the will. See Michel Barnes, "Eunomius of Cyzicus and Gregory of Nyssa: Two Traditions of Transcendent Causality," *VC* 52 (1998): 59-87.

[113]Frederick W. Norris, "Gregory the Theologian," *ProEcc* 4 (1993): 478.

knows that they can be organized to make compelling appeals."[114] An enthymematic syllogism typically has a suppressed premise that the audience would be expected to understand. Norris calls Gregory's style of argument enthymematic in contrast to the tight syllogistic logic of Eunomius. There is a clear contrast in their style, but Gregory does more than suppress a premise in his logic. Gregory's confession of God presumes that the universal knowledge of God upon which a syllogism must be based is unavailable. His doctrine was based upon inductive reasoning that considered the various ways the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were revealed by names and actions in Scripture.

In Oration 31.8 Gregory provides an example of how the two theologians differ in using logic to articulate God.[115] Eunomius argues that the Father's essence alone is unoriginate in contrast to the Son and Spirit. Gregory quotes the argument of his adversary: "The Holy Spirit must either be ingenerate or begotten. If he is ingenerate,

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[114]Ibid.. 474. Norris has described Gregory's use of rhetoric in his commentary on the Theological Orations. Frederick Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 19-27. Norris argues that in Aristotelian logic, which Gregory adapts, "probability questions, queries not susceptible to syllogistic argument, can be argued technically in that same enthymematic form. Thus when one hears or read an enthymeme, one must be careful to see if it is a necessary demonstration presented only in two parts or a probability argument offered in two parts because it cannot be given syllogistic form. The distinction provides the bridge between deductive demonstrations and inductive presentations," ibid., 19. For an example of the deductive type of Argument see Aëtius' *Syntagmation*. Lionel Wickham introduces this and explains that the syllogisms are more of a "deductive proof" (Wickham, "The *Syntagmation* of Aëtius the Anomean," 534).

Norris has also explained the various elements of Gregory's rhetoric in two articles. See "Of Thorns and Roses: The Logic of Belief in Gregory Nazianzen," *CH* 53 (1984): 455-64; Idem, "Rhetoric and Historical Theology: Gregory the Theologian," in *To Teach, To Delight, and To Move: Theological Education in a Post-Christian World*, ed. David S. Cunningham (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2004), 223-42. See also Rosemary Ruether's work which continues to be one of the best on Gregory's use of rhetoric (Ruther, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1969], 55-128).

[115]Even though the oration is directed toward Pneumatomachians, Norris argues that the quotation that Gregory is addressing in Or 31.7-8 is most likely Eunomian because of the "dialectical, syllogistic combat" (*Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, 191).

there are two unoriginate beings. If begotten, we again have alternatives: either begotten from the Father or from the Son."[116] Eunomius insists that God alone is unoriginate and his simple essence cannot be divided or multiplied. The names provide enough knowledge of God to declare that the essence of the Son and Spirit are different from Unoriginate and thus excluded from deity.[117] The Son is the product of God's will and this is why he is similar to God, but not in the essence. The Spirit is not God because he is the product of the Son, and therefore lower than the Son in power and rank. Eunomius' argument would make the Spirit either the brother of the Son or further removed from the Father in essence because the Spirit would be the product of the Son, not the Father.[118]

Eunomius' tight syllogistic approaches to God fail because in order for his particular syllogisms to work he must have comprehension of God's universals. In order for Eunomius to make this claim, he must assert a major premise concerning the nature of God, Unoriginate, and what generation or procession mean in the divine, eternal realm. Gregory affirms these names apply to the Godhead because they have been revealed, but denies that they refer to the essence of God. The terms are first seen in the actions of

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[116]Or. 31.7 (250.286-90; PG 36.140-141), ET: Wickham, 121. Gregory is probably paraphrasing Eunomius' argument from *Apology* 25-27 (Vaggione, 67-73). Eunomius argues that the Spirit cannot be considered homoousios or *homoiousios*, "since the one implies since the one implies a generation and division of the essence and the other an equality," *Apology* 25-27 (Vaggione, 67-73).

[117]It will be argued in chap. 3 that Gregory avoids this problem by demonstrating that these terms do not apply to the essence. The difference is that Gregory sees Scripture demanding that more than one person be included into the unoriginate essence. Eunomius' argument is based upon "unoriginate" only referring to the essence of the divine essence and this essence cannot be divided or duplicated.

[118]Eunomius *Apology* 25, "we learn that he [Holy Spirit] is third in both rank and dignity of the natures" he cannot be like God since the very same thing cannot occupy the first and third place in order, (Vaggione, 67). See Aëtius *Syntagmation* 2-4 for examples (Wickham, 551-52).

God toward man, as the Father sends the Son and the Spirit. Gregory is able to inductively reason from these actions of God to determine that the names and actions reveal real relations that exist in the one Godhead. Eunomius' argument is based upon a strong Creator-creature dichotomy upon which both Gregory and Eunomius agree upon.[119] Both are concerned that only God is confessed to be God and the created order must be placed in their proper order.

Gregory also warns Eunomius that his syllogisms create exclusive alternatives from the names that are inappropriate for confessing God. The Spirit's procession and work reveal he is distinct from the Father and fully divine rather than distinct from God. His lack of begetting shows he is a distinct third person from the Son. The main problem with Eunomius' argument is that he begins with a non-Scriptural term, Unoriginate, and established it as the truest name for God.[120] Gregory argues no name can ever serve as a perfect concept for God's being. Rather, God is known by his personal names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and his inseparable operations. Gregory concludes, "God escapes your syllogistic toils and shows himself stronger than your exclusive alternatives."[121]

Inadequacy of Human Language

Eunomius insists upon a Creator-creature dichotomy but did not apply this distinction to his epistemology or theory of language.[122] Gregory warns Eunomius

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[119] See Or. 34.8 (318.212; PG 36.247-49)

[120]Eunomius *Apology* 9 (Vaggione, 43-45). See also Aëtius *Syntagmation* (Wickham, 545).

[121]Or. 31.8 (250.286-90; PG 36.140-41), ET: Wickham, 122.

[122]References to creation *ex nihilo* in Or. 40.7 (358.208-10; PG 36.365).

against "transfer[ring] wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names and family ties."[123] The nature of God's begetting and proceeding cannot be derived from the creaturely world, because God is infinite, eternal, and spirit. Gregory reasons from the terms by which God has revealed himself in order to decide what can be known about God, and then denies what cannot be known. Gregory inductively reasons from God's actions rather than deductively reasoning from names. Gregory is consistent with the strong dichotomy of Creator-creature and says "a verbal account of a nature so mysterious, so much beyond words" is impossible.[124]

Theological claims must be limited because the human mind is incapable of comprehending God, and human language is inadequate to explain God. In Or. 28, *On The Doctrine of God*, Gregory considers Plato's declaration, "to know God is hard, to describe him impossible."[125] His modification of this is that "to tell of God is not possible, so my argument runs, but to know him is even less possible."[126] To speak of God is necessary because God has revealed himself. Knowing God meant apprehending

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[123]Or. 31.7 (250.280-84; PG 36.141), ET: Wickham, 121. Gregory exemplifies this by asking if the gender of nouns really relates to the Godhead so that he is masculine or feminine. The same warning is found in Origen *On First Principles* 1.4 (252.80).

[124]Or. 31.8 (250.286-90; PG 36.140-41), ET: Wickham, 122.

[125]There is some contention over if this quote is from Plato's *Timaeus* 28c or another source. Frederick Norris has summarized the various positions in his commentary on the Theological Orations. See *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 110. Origen cites the same passage in *Against Celsus* 7.42 (132.206. ET: Chadwick, 429). Gregory's theology follows Origen at this point by saying God cannot be reached by man unless God reveals himself. Origen states, "we affirm that human nature is not sufficient in any way to seek for God and to find him in his pure nature, unless it is helped by the God who is object of the search," *Against Celsus* 7.42 (132.208, ET: Chadwick, 430).

[126]Or. 28.4 (250.106-08; PG 36.32), ET: Wickham, 39.

him, and this is impossible for "slack and sinking souls."[127] Gregory argues that God "had to give man a shadowy reflections of the Sun in water, reflections which displays to eyes too weak, because impotent to glance at it, the Sun overmastering perception in the purity of its light."[128] Knowing God is not a rational discipline, nor can the Scriptures be approached by reason alone, "that the divine nature cannot be apprehended by human reason, and that we cannot even represent to ourselves all its greatness."[129] Gregory's argument against Eunomius focuses upon how their different theories of language lead to two differing visions of God.

Eunomius believes that he comprehended God's nature because he knew the name Unbegotten. In his theory of knowledge, when the name of an object is known, the nature of that object is comprehended. [130] Keith defines Eunomius' position, "He made no distinction between sense and reference."[131] When Eunomius knows the name for God, Unoriginate, he believed he comprehended the divine essence.[132] Eunomius has a

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[127]He contemplates if Angels might have a better capacity to know him more because they are closer to his light. Or 28.4 (250.106-08; PG 36.32).

[128]Or. 28.3, "had to give man a shadowy reflections of the Sun in water, reflections which displays to eyes to weak, because impotent to glance at it, the Sun overmastering perception in the purity of its light" (250.104-06; PG 36.29, ET: Wickham, 38-39). See Norris, "Wonder, Worship and Writ," 64.

[129]Or. 28.11 (250.122; PG 36.40), ET: Wickham, 44-45. McGuckin observes that the first principle of the Theological Orations is, "theology proper is radically restricted as far as human beings are concerned, and cannot be accessed by logic or illumined by material analogies" (*St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 305).

[130]Or. 27.3 (250.76-78; PG 36.14), Or. 28.2 (250.102; PG 36.28), and Or. 29.21 (250.222-24; PG 36.104). See Eunomius *Apology*16-18 (Vaggione, 53-57).

[131]Keith, "Our Knowledge of God," 73.

[132]Eunomius *Apology* 12 (Vaggione, 47-49). See Tarmo Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 124, and Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 149. See also Or. 28.4, where Gregory argues "for language may show the known if not adequately, at least faintly, to a

Platonic theory of language that names determine essence. This leads him to make the controversial declaration that he knew the essence of God as God knew himself.[133] When Eunomius knows the name of God, anything that does not share this name does not belong to the community. He uses the name as an unqualified reference so that the name was necessarily connected to the reality.

Gregory follows the Aristotelian theory of language that affirms that "reality is prior and language follows."[134] Gregory's theory of language was referential, or what is considered analogical today. The terms the church uses (such as person and essence) cannot fully describe God, but it is necessary for the church to have a clear grammar for articulating the mysteries of God. Gregory demonstrates that human language is unable to describe God because the outcome of trying to explain the ingeneracy of the Father, the biological generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit will cause one to go

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person not total deaf and dull of mind" (250. 106-08; PG 36. 32, ET: Wickham, 39). See also Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates* 4.7 (PG 67.473) (London: S. Baster, 1844). Interestingly, this is not a biblical term. Cappadocians call him out on it. This is why Athanasius and Cappadocians insisted on "Father"; it necessarily implied the Son. See Keith, "Our Knowledge of God," 65.

[133]See chap. 1, note 44.

[134]Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 149. Toom describes Gregory's contrast with the Eunomians as the latter using syllogistic reasoning to arrive at a complete knowledge whereas the former use "a poetic expression of the inexpressible mystery" (Toom, *Classical Trinitarian Theology*, 133). This is what Prestige means by "the transcendence of the Godhead surpasses the powers of ordinary discourse." See Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 237. Gregory also tightens up the way language can be used so that it can not be used in theological discourse outside of how it is used in the secular world. See Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), 124-25. Norris argues that Gregory "depend upon Aristotle's claim (On interpretation 16 A-b) that nouns signify things according to convention or arbitrary designation" (Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, 192).

mad because it is "prying into God's secrets."[135] He argues that man cannot "render a verbal account of a nature so mysterious, so much beyond words."[136]

Gregory establishes rules in order to guard against Eunomius' claim to have a perfect knowledge of God. He must hold this in proper tension with the affirmation that God has revealed himself for the church to confess the mysterious paradox of the Trinity. In Or. 37.2, Gregory explains that the problem Eunomius finds in his doctrine is largely due to the weakness of language.

> I have fallen into human language. For how can so great be said of the absolute, and how can that which is without quantity be called such? But pardon the word, for I am speaking of the greatest things with a limited instrument. And that great and long-suffering and formless and bodiless nature will endure this, namely, my words as if of a body, and weaker than truth. For if he condescended to flesh, will also endure such language.[137]

Gregory provides clarity on his theory of God-talk: "whatever is called God in the full and proper sense is God and whatever is in his nature is a true name for him—granted that real truth is contained in realities, not in names."[138] The terms do not give the church an absolute knowledge of God, but provide a proper way of confessing him according to his revelation. This is best seen in Gregory's allowance on difference terms for person, "we will not become involved in a battle over names, as long as the syllables point toward the same notion."[139] Gregory provides clear distinctions between the grammar for

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[135]Or. 31.8 (250.308-10; PG 36.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

[136]Or. 31.8 (250.308-10; PG 36.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

[137]Or. 37.2 (318.304; PG 36.312).

[138]Or. 29.13 (250.202-204; PG 36.92), ET: Wickham, 80-81.

[139]Or. 39.11 (358.171; PG 36.345-347), ET: Daley, 132.

God that the church uses and the revelation that God has given. The term person does not add content to the doctrine of God, rather, it safeguards the three revealed in names and actions.

Another example shows what Gregory believes language is capable of accomplishing. He evaluates the confusion over the East and West using different terms and concludes that both traditions articulate the same orthodox confession. [140] His conclusion is that the language of the West is impoverished and its confession would be "laughable if not pious." The terms each tradition used were different, but the meaning and orthodox doctrine the same. This conclusion is only possible if one believes God has provided a reliable revelation of his Triune nature.

The referential theory allows for various models or formulas as long as the necessary Trinitarian convictions are protected. Nothing can express the mystery of the Trinity perfectly, but each grammar must set up proper boundaries that protect and articulate what is known about God.[141] He argues that he has explained the unity of God to the best of his ability and if it is not convincing, the church should look for a new

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[140]Or. 21.35, "For we use in a godly manner the terms one *ousia* and three *hypostases*, the one to denote the nature of the Godhead, the other the *idiotetos* of the three; the Italians mean the same, but owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostasis*, and therefore introduce the term *prosopon*, to avoid being understood to assert three *ousiai*. The result, were it not pious, would be laughable" (270.186; PG 35.409).

[141]McGuckin observes that this insistence on silence for what cannot be spoken of is even stronger than Wiggenstein. The most important difference is that for Gregory is not caused by ignorance or inarticulation, but it is rooted in "religious wonder" and the mystery of God. See McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus*, 305.

one.[142] God has revealed himself enough to be praised properly, but God is too great and man too limited, for man to ever describe him completely.[143]

Instead of claiming a complete knowledge of God, the theologian must recognize that no confession of the Trinity can sufficiently describe God. All confessions or doctrines must function as "tools for articulating the basic statements of Trinitarian belief."[144] The best the theologian can do is to collect a fragmentary perception of God's nature from his images.[145] This kind of theological argument "takes claims and knows that they can be organized to make compelling appeals."[146] The revelation provided should promote a humility concerning what kind of statements can be made about God, but is also clear enough for Gregory to claim to be on the "royal road."[147] This is a reference claiming he is on the right path of knowledge of the Triune God in contrast to the Arians and Sabellians.

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[142]Or. 31.16 (250.306-08; PG 36.152).

[143]See Or. 28.7, where Gregory states "No one has yet discovered or eve shall discover what God is in his nature and essence. One cannot define the indefinable, but the church knows enough from his revelation to continually have his praise on their lips" (250.112-114; PG 36.36, ET: Wickham, 49-50). See also Or. 34.9 (318.214; PG 36.249).

[144]Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 69.

[145]Or. 28.13 (250.126-28; PG 36.41). He also argues this from Paul's declaration, "we know in part what we prophecy in part," Or. 28.20 (250.140-142; PG 36.52, ET: Wickham, 52).

[146]See Norris, "Gregory the Theologian," 474; Idem, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, 17-26.

[147]Or. 42.16, "But we walk the middle, royal road, where the experts tell us the pursuit of virtue is to be found" (284.52; PG 36.472).

Gregory's Grammar for Using Analogies in Theology

Gregory limits the role of analogies in theology on the same basis he limits the function of human language. Gregory often uses analogies to defend his doctrine. Most of his analogies focus upon proving that the Father begetting the Son does not produce a different nature or divide the nature of God. He recognizes that the begetting metaphor in Scripture must be limited to avoid including anything bodily, especially time. Gregory puts his own limits on a number of analogies, including the sun with its beam or a spring with its river. After applying a number of analogies to the Trinity, his conclusion is, "I have failed to find anything in this world with which I might compare the divine nature"[148] and "there is nothing to satisfy my mind when I try to illustrate the mental picture I have."[149] Gregory can only, "take part of the image and discard the rest. So, in the end, I resolved that it was best to say "goodbye" to images and shadows, deceptive and utterly inadequate as they are to express the reality."[150] There is no analogy that gives man an understanding of God's nature because God is a different kind of being.

Contemporary theologians often look to Gregory's analogies to find precedence for a social analogy model for the Trinity. Nathan Jacobs argues in this

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[148]Or. 31.31 (350.338; PG 36.169), ET: Wickham, 141-42. One of the reasons he may have found limitations with the analogy is that Apollonarius uses the analogy to imply the Holy Spirit is Great, the Son Greater and the Father Greatest.

[149]Or. 31.33 (250.340-41; PG 36.172), ET: Wickham, 143-44.

[150]Or. 31.33 (250.340-41; PG 36.172), ET: Wickham, 143-44.

manner for what he calls a primary-secondary substance grammar for the Trinity.[151] His argument that Gregory proposes this model of the Trinity comes from the single text (29.13) below:

> Our position of course, is that horses, man, oxen, and each item that comes under the same species have a single concept. Whatever shares in the concept is rightly called by that name, and whatever does not share in it is either not called, or not properly called by that name. Thus too there is a single substance, nature, and appellation of God, even though the names are distinguished along with distinct ideas about him.[152]

What Gregory finds useful in the analogy, Jacobs cites, is that different names do not necessarily mean different natures. The argument gives analogies from the human realm to prove that Eunomius' theory of language is incorrect. The analogy should not stand alone, as the thesis of this dissertation argues, as all of Gregory's grammatical rules need to be considered in light of one another. Gregory clarifies what should be discarded in the analogy in two other Orations:

> Here we have a living image of a living being, indistinguishable from its original to a higher degree than Seth from Adam and any earthly offspring from its parent. Beings with no complexity to their nature have no points of likeness or unlikeness. They are exact replicas, identical rather than like.[153]

And,

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[151]This argument is at odds with the recent paradigm that argues the difference between East and West is the former being Platonic and the latter Aristotelian. See Richard Cross, "On Generic and Derivation Views of God's Trinitarian Substance," *SJT* 56 (2003): 464-480; Idem, "Two Models of the Trinity?" *HeyJ* 43 (2002): 275-94. Vincent Brümmer argues that the Platonic worldview of the Cappadocians kept them from falling into tritheism and that this is not the same philosophical framework of contemporary theologians. When the contemporary theologians apply the new ontology of person and dual essence to the social analogy, they necessarily create three separate gods (Vincent Brümmer, *Atonement, Christology, and the Trinity: Making Sense of Christian Doctrine* [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005], 98-99).

[152]Or. 29.13 (250: 202-04; PG 36.92), ET: Wickham, 80-81.

[153]Or. 30.20 (250.266-70; PG 36.129-32), ET: Wickham, 109-10.

> What was Adam? Something molded by God. What was Eve? A portion of that molded creation. Seth? He was the offspring of the pair. Are they not, in your view, the same thing—the molded creation, the portion, and the offspring? Yes, of course they are. Were they consubstantial? Yes, of course they were. It is agreed, then, that things with a different individual being can be of the same substance. I say this without implying molding or division or anything bodily as regards the Godhead—no quibbler shall get a grip on me again here—but by way of contemplating spiritual realities, here presented on stage as it were. No comparison, indeed, can arrive at the whole truth in its purity.[154]

Gregory repeats the analogy of Adam and Seth more than any other analogy. This analogy establishes what Gregory understands to be a key metaphor in Scripture—the generation of the Son establishes his distinction from the Father.[155] Gregory reflects on what is similar and dissimilar in the relationship between Father-Son and Adam-Seth. Two major pitfalls Gregory must avoid include "Judaizing" the Godhead so that it consists of only one *hypostasis*, or separating the nature so that one is left with three *ousia.*[156] In another place he describes the latter error bringing in a mob of gods or "falling into a heathenism by a multitude of gods."[157] Gregory's purpose is to protect the mystery of the one and the three and maintain a "distinction without division in substance."[158]

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[154]Or. 31.11 (250.294-96; PG 36.145), ET: Wickham, 124-25. See also Or. 31.15 (250.304; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 128.

[155]Or. 29.5 (250.184-86; PG 36.80).

[156]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72).

[157]Or. 38.8 (358.116-18; PG 36.347-48), ET: Daley, 120-21.

[158]Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76), ET: Wickham, 70.

The analogies are limited because there is no real comparison between the natures of the Creator and the creature. God's nature is undividable,[159] eternal,[160] undefineable,[161] infinite,[162] spiritual,[163] one,[164] and simple[165] whereas man's nature is temporal, material, divided, and complex.[166] The clear difference, what he calls a "higher degree" in God's nature, is what he describes as lacking complexity, molding,

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[159]Or. 23.10, "They are not sundered in will. You cannot find there any properties inherent in things divisible" (270.300-02; PG 35.1162, ET: Vinson, 107.138). See chapter 3 for a detailed exegesis of the important passage of Or. 31.14.

[160]Or. 29.2-3, "God always was, and always is, and always will be. Or rather, God always Is. For Was and Will be are fragments of our time and of changeable nature, but he is of eternal being" (250.178-82; PG 36.76, ET: Wickham, 70-71).

[161]Ors. 31.8 (250.308-10; PG 36.153) and 34.9 (318.214-16; PG 36.249).

[162]Or. 34.8 (318.212-14; PG 36.249).

[163]Or. 40.41 (358.290-92; PG 36. 416).

[164]Ors. 29.10 (250.196-98: PG 36. 88) and 42.15 (PG 36. 472).

[165]Or. 28.7 (250.112-14; PG 36.33), Or. 29.11 "the substance of God is what belongs to him particularly and uniquely" (250.198-200: PG 36.88, ET: Wickham, 79), and Or. 30.20 (250. 266-70; PG 36. 129-32). See John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1978), 268. Or. 40.7 "For since to be utterly sinless belongs to God, and to the first and uncompounded nature (for simplicity is peaceful, and not subject to dissension)" (358.208-10; PG 36.368). Or. 40.42, "No, my friends, there is nothing servile in the Trinity, nothing created, nothing accidental, as I have heard one of the wise say" (358.294-96; PG 36.417). Or. 38.7, "The Divine Nature then is boundless and hard to understand; and all that we can comprehend of Him is His boundlessness; even though one may conceive that because He is of a simple he is therefore either wholly incomprehensible, or perfectly comprehensible. For let us further enquire what is implied by "is of a simple nature." For it is quite certain that this simplicity is not itself its nature, just as composition itself is not by itself the essence of compound beings" (357.114-16; PG 36.317, ET: Daley, 120).

Kelly cites Prestige affirming him concerning the simplicity of the Godhead in the Cappadocians, "The whole unvaried substance, being incomposite, is identical with the whole unvaried being of each Person…the individuality is only the manner in which the identical substance is objectively presented in each several Person" (*Early Christian Doctrines*, 266). See also Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 244.

[166]Seen in comparing the kind of begetting each has in Or. 25.16 (284.194-96; PG 35.1221). The importance of these differences in nature is that man too easily thinks of God in crude and bodily ways. See Or. 29.13 (250.202-204; PG 36.92).

division,[167] and being simple and identical. When he uses terms that are derived from the created order he makes it clear that there is no bodily conceptions attached.[168] He is simply using the tools accessible in order to give the best articulation possible in order to facilitate faithful worship of the Triune God.

Conclusion

Gregory's theology can be difficult to understand because it must be gathered from multiple occasional pieces. His consistency in using the same metaphors for God and spirituality throughout his work aids the reader. God reveals himself as one light that is seen in three lights. The illumination that God provides takes place in the soul of man so that his soul is purified of darkness is helped so he can see God. This spirituality is built upon the theological rules that God is incomprehensible in his revelation. The sinful mind cannot grasp the whole of the boundless Being of God, but it can recognize the light of God in his work. Gregory's theology is built upon the mystery of God being partially revealed with the hope of seeing the whole in heaven. His theology consistently draws man closer to God by articulating the vision of God as seen in Scripture. The two parts of Christian grammar allow for the believer to approach God with the appropriate boldness and wonder. The clarity of the revelation will be seen in the next chapter. The

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[167]Or. 23.10 (270.300; PG 35.1161).

[168]Or. 42.17, "for we still have no fear of bodily conceptions attaching to those who are not embodied, as the calumniators of the Godhead think. For the creature must be called God's, and this is for us a great thing, but God never" (284.54; PG 36.472).

numerous confessions of the Trinity will be considered together in order to provide the rules and articulation of Gregory's Trinity.

Gregory's doctrine of the knowledge of God can be summarized as follows:

1. God's infinite nature is different than anything created and therefore the manner and method by which man knows and talks about him must be different. God is not to be approached as an object of inquiry, but with awe and worship. Man is incapable of knowing God perfectly because of his finite and sinful nature. He is dependent upon God revealing himself and illuminating the heart in order to grasp an accurate vision of God. Human language is adequate for articulating truth about God, but it is not capable of describing the absolute nature and existence of God.

2. God is primarily known by his actions. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit demonstrate deity by performing activities that only God can perform (creation, salvation, revelation). God's revelation is trustworthy and sufficient to define the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. God has made himself known in redemptive history and actions in the world. Therefore, God is to be known as he has revealed himself and the church is to confess what has been revealed and then provide safeguards for what has been revealed. The primary source of any confession must be Scripture and any other terms or forms are merely grammars that are to be used to help articulate and safeguard the mysteries.

3. All confessions of God are limited in their ability to articulate God. Confessions should be seen as models that seek to organize and protect what has been revealed. No model is perfect and there can be different models and confessions. Scripture reveals all the content for the doctrine of the Trinity, but this content can be presented with various terms and rules as long as all of the content revealed is confessed and safeguarded. The terms and grammars developed by the church are always secondary to the revelation of God. Confessions must have two parts. The kataphatic declares what has been clearly revealed. The apophatic guards the church from confessing what cannot be confessed based upon what has been revealed.

CHAPTER 3

GREGORY'S GRAMMAR FOR THE TRINITY

Every confession of the Trinity must provide grammatical rules that determine how the particular aspects of the Trinity are properly confessed together as a model. The theologian must define and place in proper order the oneness and threeness; the unity and the distinctions; the relations between the Father, Son, and Spirit; and the inseparable and distinct actions of the three. Examples of some key grammatical issues include how one defines and uses the term "person" in relation to essence, or where one places the Monarchy and if it refers to the person or essence. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the most essential rules of Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. Identifying these rules is the first step. Understanding how these rules relate to one another will be the more difficult and important step. Gregory's rules function together as a consistent model to safeguard the Christian doctrine of God. This means his rules do justice to all Scriptural claims and provide a functional confession for the church that guards the one, the three, and the mystery.

Gregory's rules for the more general aspects of the Trinity will be demonstrated first. The first section will show how Gregory held together the distinct components of the Trinity in the paradox of one and three while clarifying for how the church should confess the paradox with a precise grammar. The summary of Gregory's various paradoxical and polemical articulations for the Trinity will be analyzed in order

to demonstrate the clarity of his grammar. The Trinitarian grammar both maintains appropriate mystery for worship and clarity to secure a true confession of God that leads to salvation.

The second section will demonstrate how Gregory defined and properly ordered the concepts of the persons-essence and the threeness-unity. These are the most important and possibly dangerous aspects of the Trinity. How a theologian divides the one and three and where he makes distinctions is what determines if his confession and doctrine is heretical or orthodox. One of Gregory's most significant contributions is providing a more precise framework of the church to confess the Trinitarian distinctions.

There are two significant aspects of his grammar that will be clarified in the second section on the distinctions. First, Gregory's grammar for the Monarchy demands that the Father is first in the order of persons, but does not allow for the Father to cause the essence of the other persons. Second, Gregory's grammar for the essence includes a strong doctrine of simplicity in contrast to a generic essence. These two aspects of his theology relate to the major trends that have influenced contemporary doctrines of the Trinity. The first loosely relates to the Social Analogy models that make the personal relations and the unity of will the oneness of the Trinity. The grammar also relates to the safer, less popular, grammar that unifies the Trinity in the Father with his role among the persons as the *principium or Monarchia* of the Trinity. The second relates to the Social Analogy models that emphasize a generic essence or a primary-secondary substance model in their Trinitarian grammar. Gregory's doctrine will be compared to these contemporary models in the following chapters in order to show that the classical model represented by Gregory is a safer, more faithful confession of the Trinity for the church.

The difficulty in summarizing Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity with specific rules is that it involves formulating a systematic approach out of his numerous sermons, letters, and poems. His theology is similar to David Tracy's description of touring an ancient city where you can never get a perfect lay of the land no matter how often you visit.[1] Gregory's work is difficult because most of his writings are occasional pieces that were directed to a particular problem hindering the church. The closest Gregory comes to providing a single treatise on a specific doctrine would be his Theological Orations.

The reason for adopting the systematic approach is to bring clarity to how all the grammars relate to one another. Gregory demonstrates how a systematic theologian should use a number of rules to confess and safeguard doctrines in order to promote worship within the church. It will be demonstrated that Gregory was consistent in his grammar for the Trinity and provides numerous full confessions of the Trinity in his sermons. He also organized his own work to be handed down. This implies that he understood his sermons to be a unified work without contradiction.[2] While the works are in large part occasional, he clearly saw himself carrying the torch of Orthodoxy. The church has interpreted him as such by honoring him with the title "The Theologian" and accepting his work as authoritative on the doctrines of the Trinity.

The high point of his ministry and influence was pastoring the church at Anastasia, but this was a short ministry and ended in embarrassment. While he did not

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[1]David Tracy, "Augustine's Christomorphic Theocentrism," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine,* ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: SVS Press, 2008), 263. Christopher Beeley makes a similar remark in *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 189.

[2] Behr argues that Gregory is the first major theologian to compile his own works (*The Nicene Faith*, vol. 2, 330).

accomplish many great victories in his own day, and most of his ministry was spent in isolation or insignificant towns, he clearly saw his work as defining what he hoped would be Orthodoxy. He believed his work was continuing the Orthodox defining theology of Origen, Athanasius, and Basil.[3] These components of his work allow for the kind of systematic approach to his work. This approach is in contrast to how many contemporary theologians treat his work. Most isolate one or two texts and use them as the whole of his doctrine without considering how particular occasional confessions fit into his larger grammar and doctrine of the Trinity.

Paradox and Polemics

Gregory is best known among Protestants from John Calvin's quotes from Or. 40.41 in *The Institutes of The Christian Religion*.[4] The context of the passage is encouraging candidates for baptism to keep this confession. Gregory calls the confession his desire and "the good deposit, by which I live and work,"

> The confession of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, this I commit unto you today; with this I will baptize you and make you grow. This I gave you to share, and to defend all your life, the one Godhead and power, found in the three in unity, and comprising the three separately, not unequal, in *ousia* or *phusin*, neither increased not diminished by superiorities or inferiorities; in every respect equal, in every respect the same; just as the beauty and the greatness of the heavens is one; the infinite conjunctions of three infinite ones, each God when considered in himself; the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Spirit, each according to its *idiotes*[5]; the three one God when contemplated together; each one God because consubstantial; one God because of the *Monarchia*. No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendor of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the one. When I think of any one of the three I think

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[3] Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson 107.20.

[4] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 1:13:17.

[5] Phrase not found in PG, but in SC 358.294.

> of him as the whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me. I cannot grasp the greatness of that one so as to attribute a greater greatness to the rest. When I contemplate the three together, I see but one torch, and cannot divide or measure out the undivided light.[6]

This type of confession is prominent among Gregory's Orations and poems. A number of key elements that typify all of Gregory's confessions are evident in this confession.

The overarching conviction is seen in Gregory's emphasis that a proper confession of the Trinity is necessary for salvation and spirituality. Many of these arguments relate to the fact that the church baptizes believers in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This necessarily shows that all three persons are being worshipped because they are involved in the work of salvation. Gregory argued from this that if this Son is not fully divine, he is not able to reconcile man with God. Gregory refers to sin as a distance between God and man and as wounds that damage and destroy man. The Son takes on flesh in order to reunite God and man in his own person. He has also come to heal the wounds of man. This last aspect of the savior's work defined the nature of pastoral care, as the pastor became the "physician of the soul."[7] The Spirit's deity is essential because he is "our rebirth, our Godhead, our deification and our hope."[8] The Spirit directs man to Christ by illuminating his heart and Christ carries him to the Father. All three persons must be confessed together.

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[6]Or. 40.41 (358.292-94; PG 36.417).

[7]Or. 2.16 (247.104; PG 35.425); Poem 1.1.3.3 (PG 37.410), ET: Gilbert, 43. See Keith Goad, "Why Pastors Should Flee the Ministry: A Meditation from the Pastoral Theology of Gregory of Nazianzus," *Churchman* 124 (2010): 105-26.

[8]Or. 23.12 (270.304; PG 35.1163), ET: Vinson, 107.140.

The other two major aspects will be used to outline the major sections of the chapter: protecting the paradox and protecting proper distinctions.[9] First, the mystery of the paradox must be safeguarded and defended.[10] This is seen in his confession that the one leads him to the three and the three to the one. The three and the one are too great to be grasped. This is the kataphatic aspect of his doctrine that seeks to protect worship by protecting the mystery. Second, the Orthodox confession of the Trinity is marked by proper distinctions and divisions. Gregory also understood that each person's deity must be safeguarded without dividing the essence in order to provide proper worship in the church. Each person's deity is necessary for the believer to be reconciled to God and lead a spiritual life.

Protecting the Paradox in the Polemic

Gregory will often confess what he calls paradoxical mysteries such as, "one in its distinctions and distinct in its connectedness"[11] and "dividing them before combining them and combining them before dividing them…a unity worshipped in trinity and a Trinity summed up into a unity."[12] Gregory argues that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must be worshipped as a paradox because they are "one in their separation and separate

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[9]Robert Letham recognizes Gregory's brilliance in protecting the proper distinctions (Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R 2004], 378-79).

[10]This is not paradox in the modern Kierkegaardian sense, but simply stating that there is a mystery beyond man's comprehension. The tension of mystery must be protected in doctrine so that what must be confessed what cannot be confessed is clear for the church.

[11]Or. 28.1 (250.122; PG 36.40), ET: Wickham, 44-45. The primary referent is to the single Godhead's single radiance. Gregory states, "that unity is worshipped in Trinity and Trinity in unity, both its union and distinction miraculous," Or. 25.17 (284.198-200; PG 36.40, ET: Vinson, 107.143).

[12]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 35.749), ET: Vinson, 107.20.

in their conjunction."[13] This paradox reflects the kataphatic-apophatic roles of theological speech. God has revealed enough to say there are three and that the confession of the three cannot imply that there is more than one God. The weakness of human language and the boundaries of the created order hinder the confession of the Trinity from being completely removed from the realm of mystery.

Protecting the paradox means Gregory avoids any over simplistic descriptions of the Trinity. The confession is not reduced to one or three because "each one God, if contemplated separately, because the mind cannot divide the indivisible; the three God, if contemplated collectively, because their activity and nature are the same."[14] It means that treating the Trinity as an arithmetic problem is outside the boundaries of piety. He will argue that there is numerical distinction in the persons and numerical unity in the essence, but beyond this confession it is a mystery.[15] The confession of the Trinity must go beyond an "itemized collection of disparate elements" to guard against "calling it a decad, centad, or a myriad…the arithmetic possibilities are many."[16] Confessing the Trinity is not as simply as adding the three persons to get one.

> A perfect Trinity of three perfect *hypostases*; a monad taking its impetus from its superabundance, a dyad transcended (that is, it goes beyond the form and matter of which bodies consist), a triad defined by its perfection since it is the first to

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[13]Or. 23.8, "even if this is a paradoxical statement" (270.296-97; PG 35.1159, ET: Vinson, 107.137).

[14]Or. 23.11 (270.302; PG 35.1165), ET: Vinson, 107.139.

[15]Or. 29.1, "Monotheism, with its single governing principle, is what we value—not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person (after all, self-discordant unity can become a plurality) but the single rule produced by equality of nature, harmony of will, identity of action, and the convergence towards their source of what springs from unity—none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the substance. For this reason, a one eternally changes to a two and stops at three—meaning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (250.176-178; PG 36.73-76, ET: Wickham, 69).

[16]Or. 23.10 (270.300-02; PG 35.1162), ET: Vinson, 107.138.

> transcend the synthesis of duality in order that the Godhead might not be constricted or diffused without limit, for constriction bespeaks an absence of order. The one is thoroughly Judaic; the other, Greek and polytheistic.[17]

The Trinity is unique and is only known perfectly by the Trinity himself and the Triune God is only worshipped as a mystery "on account of its infinity and undefinableness."[18] These paradoxical confessions help protect the Trinity from improper distinctions in the Trinity that would reduce the three to one or expand the one to three. The paradoxical and polemical must be understood in light of each other because they are necessarily related. The first guards what is not revealed, the latter what is revealed.

Polemics Demand Tight Grammar

While confessing the mysterious paradox of the three and one together, Gregory does not leave the confessions to be purely mystery because there are clear dogmas that must be safeguarded. For Gregory there is no dogma more essential to the Christian life than the Trinity. Gregory's primary opponent was Eunomius, a Neo-Arian, but there are still numerous heresies threatening the church including Pneumatomachianism and Sabellianism.

Gregory states that the rise of numerous heretical groups is why his doctrine must have two parts.[19] One part says what he believes and the other refutes the heretics. Together they give the church the proper boundaries within which they can worship. The

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[17]Or. 23.8 (270.296-97; PG 35.1159), ET: Vinson, 107.137.

[18]Or. 34.9, "For since we cannot properly describe even the greatness of its nature on account of its infinity and indefinableness, how can we assert its humiliation? But if one be estranged from God, and therefore divides the one supreme essence into an inequality of natures, it would be a marvel if such a person were not cut in sunder by the sword" (318.214; PG 36.250).

[19]Or. 29.1 (250.73;PG 36.73), ET: Wickham 69.

need for precision was demanded because of the importance of the Trinity and the polemical context of the fourth century. Arguably, the fourth century is the most important period for Orthodoxy and the doctrine of the Trinity. This is because opponents of the Trinity gained political power and developed stronger intellectual arguments against the Trinity. The greatest defenders of the Trinity also arose in this century and Gregory stands as one of its more able defenders and presents the doctrine in its fullness.[20]

His doctrine avoids the extreme dangers of Arianism and Sabellianism by staying on what he called the "Royal Road" and "the center."[21] The Royal Road refers to confessing the Trinity according to what God had revealed and according to church tradition in order to avoid the extreme dangers of various heretical groups. He follows Aristotle's rule of the golden mean in his logic. He avoids the extremes that reduce the Godhead to one by either contracting the three into one or dividing them according to essence. He regularly calls the doctrines of Arius and Sabellius plagues, insane, and carnal. His reasoning for these accusations is that the positions are unbiblical, illogical, and are the fruit of vice. By denying the deity of the Son and the Spirit, these heretical groups were denying salvation and spirituality. The Orthodox confession is a correction to the heresies because it operates "within the bounds of piety, by avoiding the excessive inclination or opposition of either side."[22] The "bounds of piety" follow the tradition of

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[20]Michel Barnes, "The Fourth Century as Trinitarian Canon," in *Christian Origins: Theology, Rhetoric and Community*, ed. Lewis Ayres and Gareth Jones (New York: Routledge, 1998), 47-67.

[21]Or. 42.16 (284.52; PG 36.472).

[22]Or. 21.13 (270.134-36; PG 35.1096).

Athanasius and upholds the unity and threeness in their proper places.[23] He believes the church's confession must be precise in order to avoid the extreme dangers of heresies.

In Or. 29.2 Gregory refers to three different kinds of beliefs: atheism, polytheism, and monotheism.[24] The first two are dismissed as Greek with the first being described as a lack of a governing principle and the second "a plurality of such principles."[25] They are dismissed on the grounds of promoting a lack of order. Anarchy or atheism is not as much of a concern for Gregory as it is for the Apologists that preceded him. He is able to do most of his work under the first clearly trinitarian emperor, Theodosius. His only work as an apologist was to prove that Christians had as much of a claim on the classics of Greco-Roman culture. This is in light of Julian's accusation that Christians had made the gods angry and called for a return to classical paganism. Other than showing that the classics could be implemented into Christianity, his work should be primarily considered internally focused to Christianity. This means his primary arguments were among those claiming to be Christians, not those denying the existence of God.

Gregory's primary polemical context is not opposing polytheism, but defending himself against accusations of polytheism.[26] His Arian opponents accuses him of polytheism because he proposes the Father, Son and Spirit are all God. The argument against him is that by using the term *hypostasis* he introduces three different beings. The

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[23]Or. 21.13 (270.134-36; PG 35.1096).

[24]Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76).

[25]Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76), ET: Wickham, 70.

[26]Or. 31.13 (250.302; PG 36.147).

primary concern of the church is to confess the three without dividing or multiplying the essence. Both Gregory and Eunomius agree that these options were impossible for the essence of God.[27] The main difference is how Gregory provided distinctions outside of the essence.

Gregory argues against polytheism on two fronts. First, if there are three divine essences there would be a mob of gods that sever, diffuse, or constrict the deity.[28] He repeatedly denies a confession that divides the essence or proposes three different kinds of essence.[29] In Or. 20.6 he argues, "nor, on the other hand, ought we divide them into three substances that are either foreign, dissimilar, and unrelated."[30] Here Gregory is going on the offensive by accusing the Arians of polytheism because they propose three different kinds of divine essences. The Arians believed that the Son possessed a number of divine qualities, but separates him from the one true God by denying him aseity. Since the Father caused the Son, the Son is not truly God, but still divine. Gregory makes it clear that the Arian division presents three divine beings even if they are ordered in a hierarchy of being.

The second argument focuses on the lack of order that polytheism would necessarily imply. Against polytheism he argues, "we plunge into the equal but opposite evil of positing three individual sources and three gods."[31] The lack of order among the

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[27]Or. 21.13 (270.134-36; PG 35.1096). Eunomius *Apology* 22 (Vaggione, 63).

[28]Or. 38.7 (357.114-16; PG 36.317) and Or. 23.8 (270.296-97; PG 35.1159.

[29]Ors. 6.22; 20.5; 21.13; 23.11; 31.9; 33.16; 37.22.

[30]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111.

[31]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111. See also Or. 25.16, "Polytheism, with a plurality of such principles, involves faction and hence the absence of a governing principle, and this

three is based on there being three essences and therefore three sources.[32] This denies a single rule or order among the persons so that there were three first principles in opposition to each other. Gregory state that the "Gentile plurality of principles from which we have escaped."[33] Each person would have his own will so that he performed his own action. In this doctrine they would "lack order and authority and are, so to speak, rival gods."[34]

Gregory avoids polytheism by affirming one single divine nature and a strong doctrine of the Monarchy of the Father. The Father being the head of the Son and the Spirit assures a unity that does not allow the three to lack a harmony of will. Without a proper order among the persons and one will in the essence, each of the three persons would have their own will. Each person could then desire and accomplish different tasks in the created order. Gregory argues that the end result would be anarchy. There is one God that exercises a single sovereignty over creation and salvation. Without a hierarchy of persons, salvation would be challenged because there would not be a unified work where the Father sends the Son and the Son accomplishes the Father's task. This is why

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involves disorder again. Both lead to an identical result—lack of order, which, in turn, leads to disintegration, disorder being the prelude to disintegration" (284.194-96; PG 35.1221, ET: Vinson 107.171-172).

[32]Beeley argues that for Gregory, "the real error of polytheism is not that there are more than one divine figure, but that they represent a plurality of principles and are not ordered under any single one in the way that the Son and the Spirit are, by sharing an identical divine nature, which they derive from the Father" (Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 207).

[33]Or. 2.37 (247.154; PG 35.446).

[34]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111.

he often refers to monotheism as Monarchy.[35] There is one rule that consists of three persons operating inseparably.

The last option for theism was what he calls Monarchy where there is one God who is the sole principle of authority. The term *Monarchia* in this context refers to one God with sole authority.[36] Gregory uses of the term to refer to the Father, the essence, and the entire Godhead.[37] In the debate concerning theism, Gregory is a Monarchist as it refers to monotheism, but his confession of the *Monarchia* includes three persons who are all God the Creator. Gregory argues that the Arians and the Sabellians propose extreme positions from the doctrine of the Monarchy stating that the true God is only one *hypostasis*. He elaborated on their particular kind of Monarchy by calling it "Judaism." This implied that they had not recognized the progressive revelation that clearly reveals the Son and Spirit as part of the *Monarchia*.[38] The Arians and Sabellians were both emphatic on the unity of the Godhead and each sought to protect that unity at the cost of

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[35]Or. 29.2, "Monotheism, with its single governing principle, is what we value—not monotheism defined as the sovereignty of a single person (after all, self-discordant unity can become a plurality) but the single rule produced by equality of nature, harmony of will, identity of action, and the convergence towards their source of what springs from unity—none of which is possible in the case of created nature. The result is that though there is numerical distinction, there is no division in the substance. For this reason, a one eternally changes to a two and stops at three—meaning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In a serene, non-temporal, incorporeal way, the Father is parent of the "offspring" and originator of the "emanation"—or whatever name one can apply when one has entirely extrapolated from things visible" (250.178-80; PG 36.76, ET: Wickham, 70).

[36]Or. 38.7-8 (358.116-118; PG 35.347-348). See also Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76). See Norris, *Faith Give Fullness to Reason*, 133.

[37]These different references will be explored further when considering Beeley's proposal for *Monarchia*. Or. 29.2 is a reference to the single rule of the Godhead as a whole with proper distinctions among persons (250.178-80; PG 36.76). Or. 25.15 refers to the Father as the *Monarchy* of the three, but Gregory protects the monarchy language from implying causation in order to protect the full deity of the Son and the Spirit in the same passage (284.193-94; PG 35.1219). See also Or. 23.10 (270.300-02; PG 35. 1162).

[38]Or. 33.17 (318.204; PG 36.237). He refers to a baptism in the name of the Father as merely Jewish. Being baptized in the name of the Son and Holy Spirit makes it a perfect baptism.

the Son and Spirit's deity or existence. The role and placement of divine causation is central to the *Monarchial* debate. Gregory argues that within the Trinity there is a proper ordering that avoids the concept of causation being applied to the essence. This establishes the Father as the head of the Son and the Spirit so that the persons are distinct and so that they have a "harmony of will."[39] It avoids the essence of the Son and Spirit being caused because this would make them less than the divine creator and savior.

Even though Gregory's main opponents are Eunomians, Gregory recognizes the danger of Sabellianism. The heresy is rooted in not making distinctions among the persons. The Sabellian position proposes that three *hypostases* are merely names, "stripping them of any distinction."[40] The Sabellians fear that confessing three real distinct *hypostases* necessarily implied three distinct divinities. Out of fear of polytheism, they confess one God, one *hypostasis*, so that the three are not truly distinct. Gregory's confession recognizes the fear of polytheism could lead the church to confess one *hypostasis*:

> We ought not, on the assumption that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the same, adopt language that from fear of polytheism contracts its reference to a single *hypostasis*, keeping the names but stripping them of any distinction; we may just as well call all three one as say that each by definition is nothing, for they would hardly be what they are if they were interchangeable with one another.[41]

His doctrine takes the revelation of God in Scripture to necessarily imply real distinction because of the names and actions of the three. Gregory's chief argument against the

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[39] Or. 25.15 is a reference to the Father as the *Monarchia*, "Neither should we place the Father beneath first principle, so as to avoid positing a first of the first, thus necessarily destroying primary existence nor say that the Son or the Holy Spirit is without beginning. Thus we shall avoid depriving the Father of his special characteristic" (284.193-94; PG 35.1219, ET: Vinson, 107.170).

[40]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111.

[41]Or. 20.5 (270.68; PG 35.1071), ET: Vinson 107.110.

Sabellians is that the distinction cannot be merely in name nor can it be simply numerical.[42] The names do not give direct knowledge of the reality they represent, but they do reveal something true about the realities. While he sympathizes with Sabellian concern, he does not allow the concern to deny what he sees clearly revealed in Scripture and essential to the church's salvation.[43]

The Neo-Arians were causing most of the unrest in his area, especially during the time when he was preaching his most influential sermons in Anastasia. Eunomius' confession was as follows:

> We believe in one God, the Father almighty, from whom are all things;
> And in one only-begotten Son of God, God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things; and in one holy Spirit, the Counselor, in whom is given to each of the saints an apportionment of every grace according to measure for the common good.[44]

From this it is clear that the division is not of the nature so that the three are different kinds of beings. Eunomius' doctrine for the three demands that there is a hierarchy of being. Gregory's doctrine proposes a hierarchy that provides distinction in the person, not a difference in the essence. These distinctions were discussed in the previous chapter and will become clearer when the persons and nature of the Trinity are further defined below.

Gregory's grammar sought to protect the three as distinct and "each fully God when contemplated separately and one God when considered together."[45] The burden in

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[42]Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76).

[43]Or. 40. 43, "But are you afraid of being accused of tritheism? You take possession of this good thing, the one in three, and leave me to fight the battle" (358.298; PG 36, 420).

[44]Eunomius *Apology* 5 (Vaggione, 39).

[45]Or. 40.41 (358.292-94; PG 36.417).

his polemical context would be how he defends the unity of the three without the danger of polytheism. His answer is to find unity in the Monarchy of the Father and the simplicity of the nature. These two doctrines have lacked clarity in contemporary theologians who claim to follow the Eastern tradition established by Gregory. These two grammars for unity will be demonstrated in the last section. Defining the persons and their role will first help in defining the exact grammars for the unity.

Proper Distinctions in Essence and Person Grammars

In response to the impiety of the Arians and Sabellians, Gregory safeguards the divine status of the three and their unity with a precise grammar. Or. 39 provides an example of how Gregory moves from the mystery of the Trinity to the grammar for the Trinity,

> And when I speak of God you must be illumined at once by one flash of light and by three. Three in *idiotes* or *hypostases*, if one prefers to call them, or *prosopon*, for we will not quarrel about names so long as the syllables amount to the same meaning; but one in respect to the *ousia* —that is, Godhead. For they are divided without division, if I might say, and they are united in division. For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead is, or to speak more accurately, who are the Godhead.[46]

Gregory protects the church by providing proper distinctions in his confession. The difference between heresy and orthodoxy in the doctrine of the Trinity is simply based upon what is divided and how it is divided. Certain terms must be preserved for the essence and others for the three. A careful doctrine of the Trinity makes the essence grammar and the person grammar clear and distinct. If the essence is divided or the

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[46]Or. 39.11 (358.171; PG 36.345-47), ET: Daley, 132.

persons are not, there is either three Gods or no Trinity. For the orthodox or pro-Nicene party the division is a real numerical distinction in the deity among the persons, but cannot be division of the divine substance. The distinction is precise and must be maintained because denying the divine power of the Son or the Spirit is denying salvation. Each grammar for the Trinitarian persons must be confessed in its proper order and in its proper relation to the other rules. Every model of the Trinity has rules that must align with Scripture and be consistent to one another. The importance of his rule is seen in how he avoids heresy, defines his terms, and identifies the relationship between the essence and the persons

In response to the Arians and Sabellians, Gregory clearly marks out the proper place for distinctions, "the one is praiseworthy when rightly understood; and the three when rightly distinguished; when the distinction is of *prosopon*, not of Godhead."[47] There must be a real distinction among the persons and an absolute unity in the essence. The terminology for the distinction can be different but the concepts must be the same, "It is our duty then both to maintain and the oneness of God and to confess three *hypostasis*, or *prosopon*, each with his *idiotes*."[48] In Or. 20 he argues, "Hence we worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, distinguishing their *idiotes* while maintaining their divine unity."[49] Gregory guards against the distinction being in the

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[47]Or. 37.22 (318.234; PG 36.307). Or. 23.10, "Rather, Trinity is a comprehensive relationship between equals who are held in equal honor; the term unites in one word members that are one by *phusin* and does not allow things that are indivisible to suffer fragmentation when their number is divided" (270.300-02; PG 35. 1162, ET: Vinson, 107.138). Or. 42.16, "they are three, who are distinguished not by natures, but by properties" (284.52; PG 36. 472).

[48]Or. 20.5 (270.68; PG 35.1071), ET: Vinson 107.110.

[49]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111.

essence because this would lead to polytheism. He is clear with his intentions in the precise grammar of the mystery, "The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three *hypostases* within the single *phusin* and quality of the Godhead . . . The three are one in Godhead and the one is three in *idiotes*." [50] The full deity of the three, their unity, and the singleness of deity must simultaneously be confessed.

Defining Gregory's Terms for the Trinity

From the confessions above it is clear that Gregory provides consistent terminology to secure the distinction between the persons and essence, the three and the one.[51] There are a number of terms used in the confessions because no name ever fully describes God, and tradition has applied various terms to the Trinity to safeguard it. The terms *hypostasis*, *idiotes*, and *prosopon* are references to the three while the terms *ousia* and *phusin* are reserved for the one.[52] He prefers *ousia* to *phusin* because the later can imply "stuff" or material. Godhead was also a term that Gregory used to refer to the one essence, but it was also a reference to the Trinity as a whole.[53] This distinct terminology in his Eastern confession is the basis for Gregory being able to accept the Western

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[50]Or. 31.9 (250.290-92; PG 36.142), ET: Wickham, 123.

[51]This is the Cappadocian settlement that Leinhard argues does not take place as a true formula until Augustine. See Joseph T. Leinhard, "Augustine of Hippo, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory Nazianzen," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 83.

[52]Ors. 6.22; 21.13; 31.9. *Idiotes* and *hypostasis* are his most common references for the three while he seems reluctant to use *prosopon* because of its use among Sabellians.

[53]Or. 39.11, "For the Godhead is one in three, and the three are one, in whom the Godhead exists, or to speak more accurately, Who are the Godhead" (358.171; PG 36.345-347, ET: Daley, 132). Franz Dunzl argues for this same distinction in terminology in Franz Dunzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 107. This is similar to how the New Testament writers used *Theos* to refer to the Father alone or to the Trinity as a whole. Gregory recognizes that there are texts where Godhead must refer to all three persons (1 Cor 15:28) in Or 30.6.

confession that uses different terminology. He states that Athanasius looked into what each party meant by their confessions and concluded they had the same referents while using different terms:

> For we use in a godly manner the terms one *ousia* and three *hypostases*, the one to denote the *ousia* of the Godhead, the other the *idiotes* of the three; the Western Theologians mean the same, but owing to the scantiness of their vocabulary, and its poverty of terms, they are unable to distinguish between *ousia* and *hypostases*, and therefore introduce the term *prosopon*, to avoid being understood to assert three *ousia*. The result, were it not pious, would be laughable.[54]

The terms used to articulate the distinctions can vary as long as they make proper reference to the three and the one. The objective is to secure the strongest possible confession while recognizing that all language fails to describe the mysteries of God perfectly. Gregory argues that if the Son could condescend and take on human flesh without losing the power of his deity, then God could be spoken of with human terms without causing danger. He distinguishes each aspect of the grammar for persons and the essence.

The different terms for person—*hypostasis*, *persona*, *prosopon*—have caused some confusion. The different interpretations further confuse the meaning of these terms. *Hypostasis* has been translated as "individual reality," "individual existing entity," "and "personality."[55] The first two can imply a substantive aspect in the person. The latter is problematic because it could imply modern day conceptions of personality as "centers of consciousness." The confusion over them is not new. Even while Gregory used them, he knew there was some confusion. *Hypostasis* could be seen as implying three different

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[54]Or. 21.35 (270.186; PG 35.1111).

[55]The first two translations are from Vinson and the latter from the NPNF^2.

essences.[56] *Persona* could be three faces of the one. The main point is that none of these terms are Biblical and should not be seen as primary grammars. The term person cannot be used like Eunomius used Unbegotten as a starting point to deduce from what these three are. The term person is simply used as a means of distinguishing the three and safeguarding their distinctions.

Translations fail to make clear that Gregory often used *idiotes*.[57] *Idiotes* should be translated more literally as "unique characteristic." The importance of this term is that it is vague enough that it does not necessarily imply too strong a difference or individuality. It avoids the complications that some translations introduce by implying personality or property. It is strong enough so that the three cannot be fused, contracted, reduced.

The fullest definition he gives for what the persons consists of is "intellectual, perfect, self-existent, numerically separate, but not separate in Godhead."[58] Gregory gives some indication as to what is not included in the personhood of Christ in his poem against Apollonarius. He declares that the Son added to himself a complete nature of man that consisted of three things "body, soul, and mind."[59] He argues that whoever removes the mind from the human nature removes themselves from the hope of salvation

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[56]See Or. 42.16 (284.52; PG 36.472) for his argument against both problems.

[57] Prestige argues that the term *idiotes* should be translated as "particularity" and goes back to Alexander of Alexendria (*God in Patristic Thought*, 245). E. P. Meijering argues that *idiotes* is distinctions/relations of the three, "but not in being" (Meijering, "The Doctrine of the Will and of the Trinity in the Orations of Gregory of Nazianzus," *NTT* 27 (1973): 111).

[58]Or. 33.16 (318.202; PG 36.234-35).

[59] Poem 1.1.10.3 (PG 37.464), ET: Gilbert, 81. See also Or. 30.21, "he became all that we are, sin apart—body, soul, mind" (250.270; PG 36.132, ET: Wickham, 110).

because he had to assume the mind to heal and save it.[60] The difficulty here is the distinguishing between the person having an intellect, but not a mind. This could be a contradiction caused by two different polemical contexts. Another option could be that his doctrine was further refined by the Apollonarian debate. A third option is preferred considering Gregory bound his work together and would have been aware of the apparent contradiction.

The person having an intellect complements the nature having the mind. These terms are not a key part of Gregory's grammar, but do give some insight into how he distinguishes the nature and person. In the poem, *Against Apollonarius*, Gregory argues that the mind of God (*noun ton megiston*) added to itself the full nature of humanity, which included a mind (*nou*).[61] In Or. 33.16, *Against the Arians*, he argues that the three *idiotes* are perfect having their own intellect (*noerais*). The terms are obviously related to one another, but they also provide enough distinction for a Trinitarian grammar. The person is intellectual or rational so that it is able to choose according to the one mind which is located in the one, simple nature shared by the persons. This is important for the person-nature relation of the Son because the one person must choose between the two minds of the natures.[62]

Gregory's refutation of Eunomius' argument in Or. 30.15-20 will help distinguish what Gregory means by the use of these references to the nature and the

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[60]Epistle 101.14 (PG 37.200), ET: Wickham, 158.

[61]Poem 1.1.10.3 (PG 37.465), ET: Gilbert, 81.

[62] Prestige states that the model for their theology is "[God] is one object in Himself and three object to Himself." Greek theology can be encapsulated in modern language as "in the formula that in God there are three divine organs of God-consciousness, but one centre of divine self-consciousness. As seen and thought, he is there; as seeing and thinking, he is one" (*God in Patristic Thought*, 301).

person.[63] Gregory's adversary is arguing that since the Son is ignorant of the last day and hour, he is not fully divine. Gregory's answer is that confessions like these from the Son are references to the passible human nature, not the impassible divine nature. The Son at different times speaks from one nature and not the other. The conclusion from this is that knowledge is based in the nature, but the person (Son) is choosing when to speak from one nature and not the other. The person does not contain the knowledge, but acts and chooses according to the knowledge provided by the essence. The essence consists of the mind, that is knowledge, and the person contains the capacity to choose to act according to this knowledge.

Gregory addresses the question of whether the Son has a distinct will,[64] another key aspect of the personhood of the Son in the previous section in Or. 30.12. He argues that the Son, stating that he came "not to do my own will," is refuting the idea that he has his own will separate from the Father. He explains the expression of the Son, "for what is mine is not distinct from what is yours but belongs to both you and me, who have one will as we have one Godhead."[65] Following Gregory's insisting that proper distinctions be made for a proper confession, it is clear that he did not give each person an independent will. The Father and the Son do not have a "distinct" will, but the will is placed in the essence or Godhead. Gregory alludes to the argument prior to this one concerning the Son not being able to do anything but what the Father does.

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[63]Or. 30.6 (250.236-38; PG 36.109), ET: Wickham, 97.

[64] Prestige argues that Gregory is following from Basil's argument in *On The Holy Spirit* 2.21 that the divine will must follow the divine *ousia* (*God in Patristic Thought*, 256). There is one will because there God is one in operation and energy (ibid., 257). He believes Gregory argues for unity "by reason of the identity of *ousia* and of power" (ibid., 261).

[65]Or. 30.12 (250.250; PG 36118), ET: Wickham, 103.

Gregory argues that the phrase "cannot do" can mean a number of things.[66] He concludes that the meaning for this expression from the Son is "totally inconceivable" just as "God cannot do evil." His argument places the will in the essence, "here it cannot be the case that the Son does something that the Father does not do. For all that the Father has, is the Son's and vice versa."[67] The will of the Son is the same as the Father because they have the identical essence. The will is found in what they share, not in their *idiotes*. After answering all the objections of Eunomius Gregory declares that some ascriptions refer to the essence and others refer to the distinctions. The latter includes the grammar of the Father, Son, and procession.[68] The Son is from the Father, and is identical in essence. These two distinctions will be explained further as two of the major grammars for unity.

The above distinction and explanation demonstrates that Gregory is not seeking to use the grammars of person and nature in a way that coincides with human personhood and nature. The Sonship of the second person of the Trinity is unique because he has two natures from which he is acting. The two natures are antithetical to one another. One is perfect, spiritual, impassible, eternal and the other is material, passible, and temporal. He provides clarity as to how the passages Eunomius uses to propose his own doctrine are to be interpreted in the Orthodox confession. Clear aspects missing from Gregory's use of language for person include the modern notion of

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[66]Gregory lists these: (1) Want of capacity; (2) General rule like "a city on a hill cannot be hidden"; (3) Moral unsuitability; (4) Willful refusal; (5) Impossible for a nature such as a camel going through the needle of an eye; (6) Totally inconceivable. See Or. 30.11 (250.248; PG 36.118, ET: Wickham, 100-01).

[67]Or. 30.11 (250.248; PG 36.118), ET: Wickham, 100-101.

[68]Or. 30.20 (250.266-70; PG 36.129-32), ET: Wickham, 109-10.

personality or a center of self-consciousness. Gregory does not deduce what these three are from the term "person" because it is not a biblical term. Rather, he has inductively reasoned from Scripture that there are three who cannot be confused or contracted and sought to safeguard them.

Safeguarding the Three

Gregory's grammar for the three will be summarized and explained before the more complicated and difficult doctrine of unity is examined. It is somewhat difficult to explain the doctrine of the three without having some immediate impact on the one, and vice versa. In order to provide clarity, they will be considered separately, and then explained together. Gregory defends the threeness of the persons in a number of ways. The clearest distinguish marks are their names and actions.

Father-Son Distinctions and Equality

Gregory guards the threeness of the Trinity primarily by arguing that each person has a unique characteristic that is revealed by their names and actions,

> The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three hypostases within the single nature and quality of the Godhead The Son is not Father; there is one Father, yet he is whatever the Father is. The Spirit is not Son because he is from God; there is one Only-Begotten. Yet whatever the Son is, he is. The three are a single whole in their Godhead and the single whole is three in *hypostases*. Thus there will be no Sabellian "one," no three to be mischievously divided by our contemporaries.[69]

One of the key strategies among the Fathers when defending the Trinity was to start with the Father and Son to show that two can exist as one God. The logical next step was to

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[69]Or. 31.9 (250.290-92; PG 36.142), ET: Wickham, 123.

argue for the third person.[70] Gregory approaches the Trinity this way explicitly in Or. 31.13 where he argues against the Pneumatomachians by stating that "the very argument you can use to rebut the accusation of ditheism will suffice for us against the charges of tritheism."[71] The argument for the distinction for the Father and Son is clearest because their names provide the clearest distinguish mark.

Gregory's doctrine focuses on the scriptural terms that distinguish the two persons: Father, Son, and generation. He argues that these terms cannot refer to the essence. The terms do not convey essence in the created order because one becomes a Father in relation to a Son. Gregory's conclusion is that the Father-Son language only conveys a relationship.[72] The Fatherhood, Sonship, and generation that distinguish them are concepts that relate to the created order, but only partially and analogically. It is an analogical relationship because they are perfectly Father and Son, and man is meant to reflect this only partially by his relationships in the created order. The names provide true representations of the two persons, but not complete descriptions.

The concepts must be elevated and applied to the Trinity uniquely because their being and existence is completely different than that in the created order. The Father is most preeminently the Father and the Son most preeminently the Son. The reason for this strong declaration is that the Father has never been a Son and the Son is

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[70]Or. 31.13 (250.302; PG 36.147), ET: Wickham, 127.

[71]Or. 31.13 (250.302; PG 36.147), ET: Wickham, 127.

[72]Ors. 29.16 (250.210; PG 36.95). For Gregory, the personal names designate something other than essence and energy—only the relation of the persons to one another. Ayres argues that "relation in Gregory's theology is thus a category that primarily serves to uphold the paradoxical unity in distinction as consonant with scripture" (*Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 247).

not a Father.[73] The Father's unique characteristics are that he is unbegotten and the "cause" of the persons. The Son's unique characteristic is that he is begotten or generated. Gregory hesitantly calls the Father "greater" because he is the cause of the persons. His hesitation for this confession is that he is not greater in substance or superior as cause.[74] The key to his grammar is that the unique characteristics of the three must be kept out of the grammar of substance, "surely it is clear that when we are looking, if look we can, for what God's substance consists in, personal characteristic must be left out of account."[75] The proper distinctions in the grammar prove to be the most important aspect of the Trinitarian confession.

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[73]Or. 29.5, "He did not begin to be a father—he did not begin at all. He is Father in the true sense, because he is not a son as well. In our case, the word 'father' cannot be truly appropriate, because we must be fathers and sons—the terms carry equal weight. We also stem from a pair, not a single being, making us be divided and become human beings gradually, and maybe not even human beings of the kind we are intended to be. The ties are dissolved by one side or the other, so that only the relationships remain, bereft of realities" (250.184-86; PG 36.80, ET: Wickham, 73).

Also, Or. 25.16, "We should believe the Son is truly a Son in that he is the only Son of one only Father and only in one way and only a Son. He is not also Father but is wholly Son, and Son of one who is wholly Father, and has been Son from the beginning, since there was never a time when he began to be a Son, for his divinity is not due to a change of purpose nor his deification to progress in time; otherwise, there would be a time when the one was not a Father and the other not a Son" (284.194-96; PG 35.1221, ET: Vinson 107.171-172).

[74]Or. 40.43 (358.296-98; PG 36.419). A key concept is that the substance is not divided in the Father being called greater so that the Son would be less deity. Gregory makes the rule clear, "using the greater in all senses, whereas it does not apply to the nature," Or. 40.43 (358.296-98; PG 36.419). Eunomius makes the Son's "greater" confession an argument against his deity, *Apology* 10 (Vaggione, 47). In Or. 30.7, Gregory refutes this claim stating the greater is among the relations, not the essence. See T. A. Noble, "Paradox in Gregory Nazianzen's Doctrine of the Trinity," in *Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Studia Patristica, vol. 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 94-99. See also John P. Egan, "αἴτιος/'Author', αἰτία/'Cause' and ἀρχή/'Origin': Synonyms in Selected Texts of Gregory Nazianzen," in *Athanasius and his Opponents, Cappadocian Fathers and Other Greek Writers after Nicea*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Studia Patristica, vol. 32 (Louvain: Peeters, 1997), 102-07 and, Idem, "Primal Cause and the Trinitarian Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen's Oration 31.14," in *Cappadocian Fathers, Greek Authors after Nicea, Augustine, Donatism, and Pelagianism*, ed. Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Studia Patristica, vol. 27 (Louvain: Peeters, 1993), 21-28, for a further description of the importance of the distinct language.

[75]Or. 29.12 (250.200-202; PG 36.90), ET: Wickham, 80.

Gregory's grammar establishes safeguards for these terms referring to relationship. A key aspect of his grammar is that he does not try to argue for more than what has been revealed about the three. The relationship is the reason for the difference in names and these names gives man a partial vision of who God is as three.[76] The persons must be considered as distinct from one another, but only known because of their "mutual relationship" with one another.[77] The Father is dependent upon the Son as much as the Son is dependent upon the Father for his *idiotes* because the names necessarily imply each other. The Father must be the Father of the Son and the Son must be the Son of the Father. The Father-Son language that distinguishes must be left outside of the essence grammar, "Father" designates neither the substance nor the activity, but the relationship or the manner of being, which holds good between the Father and the Son."[78] The distinction of Father-Son lies outside of the nature as "what God's substance consists in, personal characteristic must be left out of the account. This is the way we find out

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[76]Or. 31.9, "It is their difference in, so to say, "manifestation" or mutual relationship, which has caused the difference in names…The Son does not fall short in some particular of being Father. Sonship is no defect, yet that does not mean he is Father. By the same token, the Father would fall short of being son—the Father is not Son. No, the language here gives no grounds for any deficiency, for any subordination in being. The very facts of not being begotten, of being begotten and of proceeding, give them whatever names and are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively" (250.290-92; PG 36.142, ET: Wickham, 123).

[77]Or. 30.20, "He is 'only-begotten' not just because he alone stems uniquely from what is unique, but because he does so in a unique fashion unlike things corporeal. He is 'Word,' because he is related to the Father as word is to mind, not only by reason of the undisturbed character of his birth, but also through the connection and declaratory function involved in the relationship" (250.266-70; PG 36.129-32, ET: Wickham, 109-10). See also Or. 23.8, "The persons must be revered no less for their mutual relationship when they are thought of and taken individually" (270.296-97; PG 35.1159, ET: Vinson, 107.137). Lewis Ayres observers, "relation in Gregory's theology is thus a category that primarily serves to uphold the paradoxical unity in distinction as consonant with scripture" (*Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 247).

[78]Or. 29.16 (250.210; PG 36.95), ET: Wickham, 84. Or. 29.5, "The ties are dissolved by one side or the other, so that only the relationships remain, bereft of realities" (250.184-86; PG 36.80, ET: Wickham, 73).

that God and ingeneracy are not identical."[79] Gregory argues that the grammar of causality must be maintained in order to defend the distinctions and the unity.[80]

The revelation of the Father and Son's deity and distinction provides key rules for the doctrine of the Trinity. The terms Father and Son are not substance terms, but names that refer to relationships. Instead of following Eunomius' theory of language that determines names reveal substance, Gregory considers what these divine names convey based upon their function in the created order. The divine names distinguish the persons not by essence, but by their relationship to one another. This allows the Son to be distinct and even submissive to the Father without being inferior. This allows for some clarity in the grammar that distinguishes the two persons eternally and explains the hierarchy of the Son's relationship to the Father. The key is that the distinction is based upon the biblical names and the named relationship, generation. Gregory's grammar is restrained from speculating more about what the names mean. A key issue in defining this relationship in comparison to the contemporary models is what constitutes a person. The proper distinctions keep the Father as perfectly Father and the Son as the uniquely perfect Son, and the Spirit as distinct from these two persons, "All that the Father has the Son has also, except for being Unbegotten; and all that the Son has the Spirit has also, except for

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[79]Or. 29.12 (250.200-202; PG 36.90), ET: Wickham, 80.

[80]Or. 20.6, "Nor, by the same token, should we be so partial to Christ that we fail to preserve this very distinction, his Sonhood, for whose son would he in fact be if there were no causal relationship between his Father and himself?" (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72, ET: Vinson 107.111).

generation. And these two matters do not divide the Substance, as I understand it, but rather are distinctions around the Substance."[81]

The Father's unique characteristic is that he is first among the persons as the Monarchy among them because he is established as their cause. Gregory argues that the Fatherhood cannot be stripped away by denying him a true Son.[82] If there is no true Son then he is not truly the Father. He argues that zeal for the *Monarchia* has denied the true distinction of the *Monarchia* by denying him a Son.[83] The Fatherhood and Sonship of the first and second persons is primarily safeguarded by establishing a causal relationship between the two.[84] The Father is the source and has no source while the Son is not without source because he comes from him, but is not subsequent to him.[85] Or. 25.15 provides further grammar to help clarify the distinctions with regard to the Monarchy,

> Define too for us the orthodox faith by teaching us to recognize one God, unbegotten, the Father, and one begotten Lord, his Son, referred to as God when he is mentioned separately, but Lord when he is named in conjunction with the Father, the one term on account of his *ousia*, the other on account of his *Monarchy*; and one Holy Spirit proceeding, or, if you will, going forth from the Father, God to those with the capacity to apprehend things that are interrelated, but in fact resisted by the impious though so recognized by their betters and actually so predicated by the more spiritual.[86]

The key to this passage is establishing proper distinctions of the person and essence of

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[81]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441). Concerning the difference between procession and generation Gregory declares, "and these two matters do not divide the *ousia*, as I understand it, but rather are distinctions around the essence," Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

[82]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72).

[83]Or. 31.16 (250.306-08; PG 36.152).

[84]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72).

[85]Or. 20.7 (270.70; PG 35.1072), and Or. 25.15 (284.193-94; PG 35.1219).

[86]Or. 25.15 (284.193-94; PG 35.1219), ET: Vinson, 107.170.

the three. The second person, the Son, is Lord when referenced in relation to the Father, but God when referenced in himself. Holding together paradox and proper distinctions Gregory confesses, "each one God, if contemplated separately, because the mind cannot divide the three God, if contemplated collectively."[87] The Son is fully God when considered by himself, but being the Son means he must be considered together with the Father as one God. Together they are God, the *Monarchia*, in relation to the world. In their distinctions the Father is the *Monarchia* of the Son.

The confession of the *Monarchia* protects the distinction according to Scripture as the names Father and Son are taken to have a real, if only analogical, reference. The economic Trinity also reveals truth about the immanent relations of the Trinity, even if only a partial revelation of their relations. The primary relationship between the Father and Son revealed in Scripture is generation. The generation is unique among them because it is void of passion, time, and physicality.[88] It is the most unique generation that cannot be understood by carnal and temporal minds, "go insane." The causal relationship will be given more technical treatment below as it also serves as an argument for the unity of God.[89] The key to these concepts is that Gregory limits the causal language to the person of the Father and the Son and keeps the language out of the essence-grammar. All that remains is a mutual relationship between two persons that gives distinction without trying to define and dissect the mystery of the Godhead.

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[87] Or. 23.11 (270.302; PG 35. 1165), ET: Vinson, 107.139.

[88]Or. 25.16 (284.196-98; PG 35.1224) and Or. 20.7 (270.70; PG 35.1072).

[89]Or. 20.7, "And the individual properties will be maintained if, in the case of the Father, we think and speak of him as being both source and without source (I use the term in the sense of causal agent, fount, and eternal light); and in the case of the Son, we do think of him as without source but the source of all things" (270.70; PG 35.1072, ET: Vinson 107.112).

Gregory and Eunomius agree that the generation of God cannot be like that of man.[90] Human generation would imply the impossible division or multiplying of the essence. Eunomius' epistemology that names imply essences requires that the Son is begotten by the will of God, not the essence. In his grammar his emphasis is upon God being unbegotten, not the biblical term Father.[91] Gregory recognizes the biblical affirmation of Father affirms a relationship that is necessary for the first person and necessarily implies the second person. Gregory's most common analogy is that of Adam, Eve, and Seth. He makes sure to maintain that the analogy fails because "no comparison can arrive at the whole truth."[92] What he gains from the analogy is that 2-3 individuals can be of the same substance. The key difference for God is that it does not imply "molding or division."[93] The language of Scripture establishes that a causal relationship exists between Father and Son, but it does not necessarily refer to the essence. Gregory guards against the essence being divided by recognizing three distinct persons who are connected by mutual relationship and sharing the same identical essence. Eunomius avoids it by declaring that they essence of the Son is caused by the will of God.

When forced to provide a safeguard for the Spirit's distinction and deity Gregory declares that the Spirit's unique characteristic as the one who *proceeds* from the

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[90]Eunomius *Apology* 22-23 (Vaggione, 63-65).

[91]Eunomius argues that Father is not a proper name for God. I AM or only true God are more proper names. Father is similar to Spirit. Eunomius believes that it implies passion if used in Gregory's usage, Eunomius *Apology* 17 (Vaggione, 55).

[92]Or. 31.11 (250.294-96; PG 36.145), ET: Wickham, 124-25. Makes similar analogy for Father and Son having same nature without detracting from Father's glory and honor in Or. 23.7 (280.296-97; PG 35.1160, ET: Vinson, 107.136).

[93]Or. 31.11 (250.294-96; PG 36.145), ET: Wickham, 125.

Father. Gregory makes this new grammar explicit, "The Holy Spirit is truly Spirit, coming forth from the Father indeed, but not after the manner of the Son, for it is not by Generation, but by Procession (since I must coin a word for the sake of clearness)."[94] The Holy Spirit cannot be a son or a grandson as Eunomius claimed.[95] Gregory bases the *idiotes* of the Spirit on the sending language of John 15. This characteristic reveals less about the Father-Son relationship, but provides the necessary safeguard to confess the Spirit's full deity and distinction.

Holy Spirit Distinctions and Equality

One of Gregory's most influential contributions is his strong grammar that safeguards the full deity (*homoousios*) of the Holy Spirit. One of Gregory's most difficult polemical contexts was with the Pneumatomachians. Gregory describes them, "[t]hey offer him [the Holy Spirit] neither worship nor disrespect."[96] These theologians confessed the Son's deity, but denied the full deity of the Spirit. The immediate problem was Scripture lacking clarity in attributing a specific descriptions to the Holy Spirit such as, "the Holy Spirit is God." Their accusation is that Gregory has introduced an "unscriptural God" and a "stranger and intruder."[97] The argument is difficult because it

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[94]Or. 39.13 (358.174; PG 36.351), ET: Daley, 133. See also Or. 21.13 (270.134-36; PG 35.1096). Or. 25.16, "In turn, the special characteristic of the Father is his ingenerateness, of the Son his generation, and of the Holy Spirit its procession. But if you seek after the means, what will you leave to them—in the words of Scripture, they alone know and are known by one another—or also for those of us who will one day receive illumination from on high?" (284.194-96; PG 35.1221, ET: Vinson 107.171-172).

[95]He makes a strong argument that the Father is preeminent and the Son second and the Spirit third. Gregory does not refute this ordering. See Eunomius *Apology* 25-27 (Vaggione 67-73).

[96]T. A. Noble lists Norris' argument that there were at least 4 different views on the Spirit ("Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defense of the Deity of the Spirit," T*ynBul* 39 [1988]: 105).

[97]Or. 31.1-3 (250. 276-80; PG 36. 133-36), ET: Wickham, 118-19.

appeared to be more internal to the orthodox or pro-Nicene tradition, and the other defenders of orthodoxy had different ways of approaching the Pneumatomachians.

The problem created additional problems by causing a further divide between Gregory and the other "Cappadocians." When Basil became more lenient toward the Pneumatomachians, Gregory criticized him for trying to keep the unity of the church at the cost of the unity of the Triune God. Gregory and Basil agreed on the deity of the Spirit, but the latter was more gracious to those who hesitated in using homoousious for the Spirit. Gregory's legacy was to be dismissed from the Council of Constantinople because there were questions about which church he was officially serving as bishop. Basil's method and terminology was adopted for the council's confession, but Gregory's theology became the standard for Orthodoxy. Gregory recognizes that the deity of the Spirit is a "difficult doctrine," but defends the absolute necessity of the doctrine on a number of grounds.[98] He argues for the Spirit's deity on the basis of it not being illogical to confess, based upon the confession of the Son, the church's experience, redemptive history, and the divine operations of the Spirit.

Basil's confession attributed divine titles and actions to the Spirit without confessing *homoousious*. Hanson and Noble argue that Basil looks to the "extra-scriptural tradition" because he did not believe Scripture was sufficient to defend the deity of the Spirit.[99] This conclusion is questionable. Basil's *On The Holy Spirit* is primarily focused on how the Spirit is presented in Scripture with actions and titles only

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[98]Or. 31.2 (250. 278; PG 36. 133), ET: Wickham, 118.

[99]R. P. Hanson argues that Basil is breaking away from the Athanasian view that "Scripture is doctrinally sufficient," (R.P Hanson, "Basil's Doctrine of Tradition in Relation to the Holy Spirit," *VC* 22 [1968]: 244).

appropriate for God. Basil, being the more political Cappadocian, sought unity in the church by not insisting on *homoousios* so that those who hesitated to say the term could stay in fellowship. Gregory insisted that the strong claims from Scripture demanded that *homoousios* be used in the confession. Gregory attacks the hermeneutic of his opponents and accuses them of hiding behind the written word while denying what it truly says. Gregory's argument for the deity of the Spirit is different from his argument for the deity of the Son. He admits that Scripture does not ascribe deity to the Spirit as clearly as it does the Father and the Son. Nonetheless, Scripture decisively revealed that deity of the Spirit in his actions, titles, and present ministry in the church.[100]

Gregory concludes the *Theological Orations* by defending the full deity of the Spirit. Michael Haykin calls Or. 31, "the climax and conclusion of [Gregory's] dialogue with the Pneumatomachoi of Constantinople, the best known of Gregory's theological orations and his definitive statement on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit."[101] Oration 31 is not limited to addressing Pneumatomachians because Eunomians are still present and are

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[100]Noble argues that Gregory believes that Scripture is "decisive" on the deity of the Spirit ("Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defense of the Deity of the Spirit," 108). Jean Plagnieaux argues that there is nothing more significant for Gregory than, "the scriptural proof which establishes the deity of the Spirit against the Pneumatomachi and of which the Fifth Theological Oration contained the definitive exposition" (Plagnieaux, "Saint Gregoire de Nazianzene," in *Theologie de la Vie Monastique: Etudes sur la Tradition Patristique* [Paris: Aubier, 1961], 121).

Beeley argues that Gregory's main concern is to prove the deity of the Spirit is not logically impossible. He observes Gregory affirming that it is indicated in teaching, but he emphasizes that Gregory believes it is only seen in Scripture "according to the Spirit" (Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 154). See also, Or. 31.21 and 2 Cor 3:6. It is only seen when one penetrates the "the deeper meaning of Scripture, which comes only with the illumination of the interpreter by the divine light" (ibid., 155).

[101]Michael Haykin, *The Spirit of God: The Exegesis of 1 and 2 Cortinthians in the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the Fourth Century*, in *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 27* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 174. Henry B. Swete calls Oration 31, "the greatest of all sermons on the doctrine of the Spirit" (Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church* [London: Macmillan, 1912], 240).

causing further doubts concerning the confession of the Spirit.[102] Gregory's opponents are demanding absolute clarity from Scripture stating that the Spirit is God in order to include the Spirit in the confession of the Godhead. Gregory accuses his opponents of being too zealous for the letter and not experiencing the true illumination of the Spirit. In their zeal to find proof of the Spirit's deity in the written word, Gregory argues that they actually "are doing battle with the written word."[103] His argument in the oration is two fold: First, he proves that Scripture, if read rightly, does reveal the deity of the Spirit. Second, he proves that the confession of the Trinity and the deity of the Holy Spirit are not illogical.

He states that the fundamental point of the sermon is to disprove the accusation of tritheism:

> We have one God because there is a single Godhead. Thought there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any properties inherent in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided. It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed in three mutually connected Suns. When we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the sole sovereignty, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly. But when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, and to those who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship. [104]

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[102]Norris lists four different views present at the council: (1) Those who believed the Spirit is divine, but not sure that it should be openly confessed; (2) Those that were agnostic because Scripture was not absolutely clear; (3) Those who opposed the Spirit being confessed as God; (4) Eunomians. Norris says the latter group is the main opponent of Or. 31 (Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness*, 34).

[103]Or. 31.18 (250.310; PG 36.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

[104]Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127.

Gregory states that this argument is the central point around which the Oration is built. It makes the proper distinctions to safeguard the deity and distinction of each person so that there are three objects of worship.

His argument in Or. 31 begins by giving a "plain and simple explanation of the Trinity."[105] The argument begins with the principle that only God reveals God, only God provides the light to see the light of God. This hinges upon Ps. 36:9, "in your light we shall see your light." He argues that each of the persons is presented as light so that there are "three subjects and three verbs—he was and he was and he was. But a single reality was. There are three predicates—Light and Light and Light. But the light is one and God is one."[106] Since the Spirit shares the same titles and actions as the Father and Son, he must be understood to share the same divine status. He moves then to argue that the Spirit must be included in the worship of God in order to avoid an incomplete deity. The basis of the argument is that the Godhead lacks holiness without the Holy Spirit. He concludes by making the argument that if the Holy Spirit is not God, then he is incapable of deifying and linking the believer with God.[107]

Gregory makes similar arguments at the end of Or. 31 where his main point is, "All that God actively performs, [the Holy Spirit] performs."[108] Gregory asks the

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[105]Or. 31.3 (250.280; PG 36.133), ET: Wickham, 118.

[106]Or. 31.3 (250.280; PG 36.133), ET: Wickham, 118. He concludes Or. 24.19 with the confession of the Trinity that bounds the three persons together because each one is light through which the other persons and the Trinity as a whole is revealed (284.152-54; PG 35.1191). Or. 40.34, "Do not shut your ears to the Instruction of the Lord, and to his counsel, like the adder to charms. If you are blind and unenlightened, lighten your eyes that you sleep not in death. In God's light see light, and in the Spirit of God be enlightened by the Son, that threefold and undivided light" (358.276; PG 36. 408).

[107]Or. 31.3 (250.282; PG 36.136), ET: Wickham, 119.

[108]Or. 31.29 (250.336; PG 36.168), ET: Wickham, 139.

rhetorical questions, "Is there any significant function belonging to God, which the Spirit does not perform? Are there any titles belonging to God, which cannot apply to him except "Ingenerate" and "Begotten?""[109] The titles he recognizes in Scripture include the Sprit being the Finger of God, Mind of Christ, Spirit of the Lord, Spirit of adoption, Truth, Spirit of Wisdom. All of these imply that the Spirit is doing the same redemptive and revealing work of God. The divine actions include deifying, giving life, illuminating, filling the world, sustaining the world.[110] Gregory confesses, "indeed from the Spirit comes our new birth, and from the new birth our new creation, and from the new creation our deeper knowledge of the dignity of him who from whom it is derived."[111] The actions of saving and creating are reserved for God alone. Another key aspect is that the Spirit is "counted with the Father and the Son." He shows the cooperation with the ministry of the Son by arguing that the Spirit was his forerunner, led him into the temptation, accompanies his miracles, and, when Christ ascends, the Spirit fills his place.[112] From these two sections it is clear that Gregory's basis for including the Spirit in the Godhead is the Spirit's actions. Gregory sees Scripture revealing these actions plainly so that he will not hesitate or have fear in confessing the Spirit's deity.

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[109]Or. 31.29 (250.336; PG 36.168), ET: Wickham, 139.

[110]See also Or. 23.12, "And so, to dishonor or separate any one of the three is to dishonor our confession of faith, that is, our rebirth, our Godhead, our deification, our hope. You see how gracious the Holy Spirit is to us when we confess him as God and how he punishes us when we deny him" (270.304; PG 35.1163, ET: Vinson, 107.140).

[111]Or. 31.28 (250.336; PG 36.165), ET: Wickham, 138.

[112]All titles and actions are taken from Or. 31.29 (250.336; PG 36.168).

His other argument from Scripture is that God has revealed himself "gradually" through redemptive history.[113] Gregory states that there have been two major shifts, or "earthquakes," in history based upon the two covenants. The first covenant was a "transition from idols to the Law, the second from the Law to the Gospel."[114] The Gospel speaks of a future shaking where God's people will be transferred into a kingdom that is unshakable. He finds in these transitions a "comparison" with the doctrine of God where the vision of God becomes clearer and moves toward perfection with each transition. The Old Covenant clearly proclaims the Father, and revealed the Son "less definitely." The New Covenant makes "the Son manifest, and gave us a glimpse of the Spirit's Godhead."[115] The reason for the small glimpse was that the church needed to see the fullness of the three persons "in gradual stages."

He appeals to Christ's teaching that some doctrines were too difficult for the disciples, and includes the deity of the Spirit among these doctrines.[116] His main point is that the Church was not yet ready to experience the power of the Spirit. God provided "piecemeal ascents," so that "by progress and advance from glory to glory, that the Trinity should shine upon more illustrious souls."[117] It is in this later stage of the present church life after Pentecost that the Holy Spirit is revealed most clearly so that each

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[113]Noble explains his use of redemptive history in "Gregory Nazianzen's Use of Scripture in Defense of the Deity of the Spirit,"117.

[114]Or. 31.25 (250.134; PG 36.161), ET: Wickham, 136.

[115]Or. 31.26 (250.136; PG 36.161), ET: Wickham, 137.

[116]Or. 31.27 (250.328; PG 36.164).

[117]Or. 31.26 (250.136; PG 36.161), ET: Wickham, 137. He is making a reference to David in Psalm 83:6; 1 Corinthians 3:18.

person is worshipped.[118] Gregory's chief argument concluding this proof from Scripture is that if the Spirit is not to be worshipped, he could not deify believers. The Spirit must be worshipped because, "from the Spirit comes our rebirth, from rebirth comes a new creating, from a new creating a recognition of the worth of him who effected it."[119] The process of salvation leads to worshipping the God who saves. This is what Gregory calls "the golden chain of salvation."[120] The concluding argument from the progress of revelation is that those who deny the Spirit have not experienced the salvation that only comes from the Spirit.[121]

In other orations, Gregory explains the Spirit's ministry in the present dispensation as the person who indwells the hearts of believers. He confesses that the Spirit is the person "by whom the Father is known and the Son is glorified; and by whom alone he is known; the one class, service, worship, power, perfection, sanctification."[122] There is the golden chain of salvation that leads to worshipping the Spirit individually, but there is also an order that demands the Spirit be confessed as God because he leads the believer to the Son and the Father. The process of the economic Trinity determines how many will ascend in knowing the three persons, "knowing the Father in the Son, the

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[118]He concludes the demand to worship by quoting Gregory wonder worker "three personalities, one Godhead undivided in glory, honor, substance, sovereignty."

[119]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 139.

[120]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 139.

[121] It is by has actions and participation in the creating, revealing, and saving work of God that the church is to recognize he is divine. Gregory's main case for the deity of the Spirit is that its light is seen brightest after Christ ascends into heaven and the church experiences its illumination. See Poem 1.1.3.10-30 (PG 37.408), ET: Gilbert, 43.

[122]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

Son in the Holy Spirit."[123] Gregory confesses the Trinity, "which we worship, which we glorify, whose existence is intimately bound up with our own through our worship of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Spirit."[124] The Spirit is essential to the Christian life because he is the basis for the beginning of salvation and spirituality, and the beginning point of revelation for the church. The order of knowing God from the Spirit to the Son, to the Father coincides with the order in which they were revealed or sent. One of Gregory's rules is that God is to be worshipped according to how he is revealed. The hierarchy of personhood correlates with how he work and is revealed and should be the foundation for how God is worshipped. One experiences salvation and spirituality by ascending to a godly life by experiencing God in the proper order, from the Spirit to the Son and then to the Father.

In addition to the numerous constructive arguments from Scripture, Gregory reasons from Scripture to show that the confession of the Spirit is not irrational or illogical. In Or. 31.5-6 he sets forth the trajectory in which his opponents are forced to make a clear confession. He begins by reasoning that the Spirit must either be a substance or an accident concluding that the Spirit is a being, not a motion or process.[125] If a substance he must either be classified among the creature or as the Creator. He then asks if the Spirit is a creature, why are believers baptized in his name and why the church is called to believe in him.[126] This rhetoric puts the pressure on those denying the deity

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[123]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson 107.20.

[124]Or. 24.19 (284.152-54; PG 35.1191), ET: Vinson, 156.

[125]Based on the Spirit being vexed, grieved, and decreeing.

[126]"Believing in" is in contrast to "believing about."

of the Spirit because of the way the Spirit is used in the liturgy and worship of the church. Only God is worshipped, and the Spirit is already worshipped by the practice of the church.

He has two different sections concerning how the names used to confess the reality of the Trinity relate to one another.[127] The first, Or. 31.7-9, argues against the syllogistic approach that declares that only the unbegotten is God so that the Son is of a different nature. He argues that his opponents are thinking about God with "corporeal ideas" and "transferring wholesale to the divine sphere the earthly names of human family ties."[128] He recognizes the difficulty of "rendering a verbal account of a nature so mysterious, so much beyond words," but concludes that the Spirit's proceeding distinguishes him from the Father and the Son while also safeguarding his deity.[129]

The other section concerning names and realities, Or. 31.20-24, is a response to his opponents' argument that the different names and prepositions used for each person means each person is of a different nature.[130] Acknowledging that the Bible does not state the Spirit is God as his opponents demand, he appeals to what others have seen "inside the written texts to its inner meaning."[131] This is not a mystical "spiritual reading"

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[127]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson, 107.20.

[128]Or. 31.7 (250.288-90; PG 36.140), ET: Wickham, 121.

[129]Or. 31.8 (250.290; PG 36.141), ET: Wickham, 122. Or. 31.9, "The very facts of not being begotten, being begotten, and of proceeding, give them whatever names are applied to them—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively. The aim is to safeguard the distinctness of the three *hypostases* within the single nature and the quality of the Godhead" (250.290-92; PG 36.141, ET: Wickham, 123).

[130]Gregory argues against the prepositional argument, "the prepositions are used jointly of all three," Or. 31.24 (250.322; PG 36.160, ET: Wickham, 132). Basil changed the confessional prepositions to "Glory to the Father with the Son together with the Holy Spirit," *On Holy Spirit* 1.3 (17.24, ET: Anderson, 17).

[131]Or. 31.21 (250.316; PG 36.157), ET: Wickham, 133.

as Beeley proposes, but an argument for the nature of language in Scripture. Gregory walks through various language used for God to show that the names only partially represent the reality. He begins with the Biblical descriptions of God sleeping, walking, and being angry. Gregory and his opponents agree that God does not have a body or emotions to literally perform these actions attributed to him; "indeed every faculty or activity of God has given us a corresponding picture in terms of something bodily."[132] He then argues from the very basis of the Eunomian confession that unbegotten is not scriptural, but is a valid confession based upon Is 44:6, 43:10, and Ex 3:14. The example proves that key aspects of the confession of God are not set forth as plainly as the demand for the confession of the Spirit's deity.

The final polemical argument in the confession concerns how the persons are counted together. His first argument is from the Adam-Seth relation proving that these two are *homoousios* to show that an offspring and not an offspring can be of the same nature. Gregory acknowledges the analogy breaks down (as he will say all analogies do),[133] but his claim is modest. The begetter and the begotten language refers to the mutual relationship which allows the two to be *homoousios*. He again works through the logic of not discounting the Spirit's deity by counting him among the creature. The second instance is found in Or. 31.15-19. His opponents proposed "consubstantial things are counted together, but things that are not consubstantial can only be indicated singly."[134] Gregory responds by showing how a number "indicates an amount of objects,

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[132]Or. 31.22 (250.318; PG 36.157), ET: Wickham, 134.

[133]Or. 31.31-33 (250.338-42; PG 36.169-72), ET: Wickham, 141-43.

[134]Or. 31.18, (250.308; PG 36.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

not their nature." He then provides a number of examples where things that are not *homoousios* are counted together in Scripture and how things that are *homoousios* are not. This passage will receive more attention in the following section on simplicity.

One last aspect of Gregory's doctrine of the Holy Spirit concerns what he would theoretically say about the *filioque* clause.[135] This is an anachronistic question because the major debate took place 500 years after his death, but some basic conclusions can be made from his theological writings. First, it must be remembered that Gregory's method stated that the relations of the Trinity were not completely comprehended by man. The relations could be known partially from the economy. What was known from the economy reflects the reality of the eternal, immanent Trinity. Second, one of Gregory's primary arguments for the Trinity was a hierarchy of persons that went in the order of Father-Son-Spirit, "one eternally changes to a two and stops at a three."[136] He argues, "you see how light shines on us bit by bit, you see in the doctrine of God an order."[137] This order is seen more clearly in how the persons are known as seen above, "knowing the Father in the Son, the Son in the Holy Spirit."[138] The Spirit helps the believer ascend to the Son who helps the believer ascend to the Father. This corresponds with the confession that the Son is the one who sent the Spirit, the *filioque*. Gregory recognizes that the Son asks the Father and the Father sends the Spirit and the Son also sends the Spirit. He does not leave the Spirit as a passive instrument by arguing that

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[135]Or. 24.19 (284.152-54; PG 35.1191), ET: Vinson, 156. McGuckin argues against Western interpretations of Gregory holding to *filioque* clause in "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 11 nt. 6.

[136]Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76), ET: Wickham, 70.

[137]Or. 31.27 (250.328; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 138.

[138]Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749), ET: Vinson, 107.20.

while the Son says, "I will send him," he also says, "He will come."[139] The Spirit's work of rebirth and new creation are the end of what Gregory calls a "truly golden chain of salvation."[140] The Spirit completes the work the Father initiated and the Son carried out.

The main point of his argument is that the Spirit cooperates inseparably with the Father and the Son in salvation. What can be gathered from this economic nature of the Godhead is that both the Father and the Son send the Spirit. He does not dive into the mystery of the Spirit's role within the Godhead like Augustine.[141] Instead, he only argues from what the Spirit performs and safeguards his eternal relation from these actions as the one who "proceeds." One last aspect concerning the *filioque* is that when Eunomius argues that the Spirit must be the grandson being the Son's generation, Gregory does not argue against the hierarchy.[142] Eunomius makes a strong claim against the Holy Spirit being God because he is "third in order," and therefore "cannot be first in nature."[143] Gregory accepts the hierarchy, but protects the particular characteristics of the persons with names. His strong affirmation is that the Spirit proceeds from the Father.[144] This is

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[139]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 139.

[140]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 139.

[141]Gregory makes an argument for the deity of the Holy Spirit stating that the Father and Son would not have holiness without the Spirit. The point is that you either exalt all together, or not at all. This is an odd argument given how he holiness would appear to be a substance attribute and should be applied to the essence, not the third person, Or. 31.4 (250.280-282; PG 36. 137). He makes a similar argument with the Son referencing him being declared the power and wisdom of God in 1 Cor 1:24. His argument is that if the Son is not eternal, the Father was without power and wisdom, Or. 30.2 (250.226-30; PG 36.105). Both arguments appear to break his rules concerning proper distinction while attempting to be a pure Biblicist.

[142]One of Eunomius' primary arguments against the Spirit is that he is subject to Christ. *Apology* 27 (Vaggione, 71)

[143]Eunomius *Apology* 26 (Vaggione, 67).

[144]Or. 39.12 (358.174-76; PG 36.348) and Or. 31.7-10 (250.286-90; PG 36.140-41).

what is essential for his confession, as the Father is the Monarchy among the persons. The Father is the principal sender, but his doctrines of salvation, revelation, and eschatology show that the Son also actively sends the Spirit.

Safeguarding Monotheism

Providing reasons to confess that each person is God was half of what Gregory's polemical confessions addressed. In many ways it is the easier grammar to prove because the three are clearly distinguished by names and actions. The more difficult aspect is reconciling the three distinct persons with the confession of monotheism. We now turn to Gregory's grammar for the unity of the Godhead. This grammar is more complicated because he employs numerous rules and confessions to defend the unity.

Gregory had a number of ways to articulate and defend the unity of the Trinity. In Or. 20.7 he refers to the three primary arguments,

> The oneness of God would in my view, be maintained if both Son and Spirit are casually related to him alone without being merged or fused into him both according to the one and the same essence[145] and if they all share one and the same divine movement and purpose, if I may so phrase it, and are identical in essence.[146]

The three main arguments for unity are the three persons operating inseparably toward

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[145]"both according to the one essence" not in Vinson, but in SC 270.70.

[146]Or. 20.7 (270.70; PG 35.1072), ET: Vinson 107.112. This is the first half of the men-de construction. The first half refers to his argument for the unity, the second to the distinction of persons. A similar argument can be found in Or. 23.11, "because their activity and nature are the same" (270.302; PG 35. 1165, ET: Vinson, 107.139).

the same end, the three sharing the same identical essence, and the Son and Holy Spirit being united under the Monarchy of the Father.[147]

The Three Are One in Their Inseparable Operations

The first of these safeguards, the three operating inseparably, relate to one of Gregory's arguments for the three distinct persons in the Godhead. The persons cannot be confused with one another because they each have their distinct operations. The baptism of Jesus proves this with the Spirit descending, the Father declaring, and the Son being baptized.[148] They also have their own unique titles that they do not share with the other persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With their distinct role, they all work inseparably for the same purpose—man's salvation. Arguing for the unity, Gregory demonstrates that the persons share in the same purposes and operations, as well as receiving similar titles. These two latter aspects are the beginning points for arguing for the unity of the Trinity. Gregory's beginning point is based upon his epistemology of starting with the economy in order to understand the eternal Trinity. The confession must begin with how God has revealed himself in titles and actions and then move forward to make proper conclusions from these theological observations. There are three actions that only God performs: Creating, Redeeming, and Revealing. Gregory argued that since each person participated in these actions with the same purpose they all must

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[147] Hanson argues that in orations Gregory argues persons have "equal dignity of nature, agreement of will, identity of action, convergence towards unity of those who derive from it" (*Search for the Christian Doctrine of God*, 711). Grillmeier also observes that, "the unity and distinctions in the Godhead are to sought trough different approaches, they only dimly grasps a corresponding insight into Christology" (*Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol.1, 368).

[148] Or. 39.16 (358.184; PG 36.353).

be considered God.[149] The argument also established that since each one had a unique operation within these actions, they must be kept distinct within the Trinity.

In Or. 34.8, the Son's and the Spirit's deity is defended by arguing they are above creation. Gregory argues that there are two primary differences among things that exist, "namely rule and servitude." The rule is "creative and originating and unchanging" and the other is "created and subject and changing." The first is above time and includes the Father, Son, and Spirit that subsists in the one Godhead as the "Three Greatest." The servitude is what is called creation. Each person had a unique creative action, "the cause, creator and perfecter." Gregory argues that only God creates and these three are revealed as a single God by their inseparable works of creation. This grammar is an argument for their unity because they are all performing the divine action of creation, but each are performing it distinctly.

Eunomius argued that the different creative actions represented different essences among the persons. Therefore, in 1 Corinthians 8:16, the all things being of the Father reveals that he is the true God and all things being from the Son reveals a separate operation making him less than divine. The Son's actions are part of the divine purpose because he is the product of the divine will himself.[150] Gregory interprets the meaning of the different actions represented by the prepositions "of" and "from" differently,

> For to us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things; and one Holy Spirit, in whom are all things; yet these words, of, by, in, whom, do not denote a difference in *ousia* (for if this were the case, the three prepositions, or the order of the three names would never be altered), but they characterize the *hypostases* of a *ousia* which is one and. And this

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[149]McGuckin sees glimpse of perichoresis in this argument ("Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 12). He references Or. 42.15 (384.64; PG 36.472) and Or. 29.2 (250.178-80; PG 36.76).

[150]This is seen in Eunomius' confession in *Apology* 5 (Vaggione, 39) quoted above.

> is proved by the fact that they are again collected into one, if you will read –not carelessly—this other passage of the same apostle, "Of him and through him and to him are all things; to him be glory forever, Amen."[151]

The first confession from Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:6 shows that they are distinct because they are performing distinct creative acts. This does not mean they are divided, rather, their inseparable operations prove they are indivisible. The second passage from Paul, Romans 11:36, shows that the prepositions are united in the one confession of the Godhead so that together the three are confessed and glorified as one.[152]

The main argument that Gregory makes above is that the Son must be understood as separate from creation because he participates in the activity of creating. In Or. 34.13, he argues that Paul confesses the three persons in different orders to show that they are one in their actions and essence. Gregory explains that Paul attributes the same operations to the Son and the Spirit at different times. The point of this argument is that they are one God doing the same work and when one is not mentioned in the operation, they should be understood because the Triune God is always working in harmony.

In Or 42.15 Gregory argues that God consists of the one who is the Beginning, the one of the Beginning, and the one with the Beginning.[153] The Beginning is a

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[151]Or. 39.12 (358.174-76; PG 36.348). See also Or. 34.15 (318.218; PG 36.255).

[152] Or. 34.15 (318.218; PG 36.255). Gregory's commitment to Scripture and interpreting Scripture with Scripture is seen in these arguments. He recognizes that the Apostle makes confessions for the one and the three at different times and creates a grammar based upon these confessions.

[153]Or. 42.15, "Briefly to run over its details: That which is without beginning, and is the beginning, and is with the beginning, is one God. For the nature of that which is without beginning does not consist in being without beginning or being unbegotten, for the nature of anything lies, not in what it is not but in what it is. It is the assertion of what is, not the denial of what it is not. And the beginning is not, because it is a beginning, separated from that which has no beginning. For its beginning is not its nature, any more than the being without beginning is the nature of the other. For these are the accompaniments of

reference to the Father as the Monarchy or source of the other persons. The relationship of the Son and Spirit to the Beginning solidifies their distinction within the Godhead rather than making them inferior to the Father. The key to Gregory's argument is that the different prepositions used in the confession do not mean the persons are three different kinds of essences.[154] Rather, they show different activity in the economic Trinity that reflects real distinction in the immanent Trinity.

Gregory argues that a confession of the three was the basis for true knowledge of God. As already seen above key epistemological passage for Gregory is Psalm 36:9, "in your light we shall see light." God alone is light and each person is confessed to be light,

> This is the meaning of David's prophetic vision: "In your light shall we see light."[155] We receive the Son's light from the Father's light in the Spirit: that is what we ourselves have seen and what we now proclaim—it is the plain and simple explanation of the Trinity.[156]

One sees the light of the Son in the Spirit and the light of the Father in the Son. Gregory looks forward to the day that the church will see the full light of God, "the radiance of the

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the nature, not the nature itself. That again which is with that which has no beginning, and with the beginning, is not anything else than what they are. Now the name of that which has no beginning is the Father, and of the beginning the Son, and of that which is with the beginning , the Holy Spirit, and the three have one essence—God" (384.64; PG 36.472).

[154]Gregory makes a strong claim form the actions because only God creates in Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441). Or. 30.20, "I find that this same principle applies to God and Lord," and even more strongly to the prepositions "from," "through," and "in," which you use to make an artificial system of the divinity, saying that, *"from whom" applies to the Father, "through whom" to the Son, and in whom" applies to the Holy Spirit*. What would you have got up to if each expression had been given a fixed allocation? As it is, you use them as a means of introducing such a deal of inequality in rank and nature, despite the fact that it is clear, to those who take the trouble to find out, that the prepositions are used jointly of all three" (250.268; PG 36.129, ET: Wickham, 132).

[155]Psalm 36:9.

[156]Or 31.3 (250.280; PG 36.133), ET: Wickham, 118.

Holy Trinity . . . which we worship, which we glorify, whose existence is intimately bound up with our own through our worship of the Father in the Son and of the Son in the Holy Spirit."[157] The key distinguishing factor is that each person of the Trinity illuminates uniquely. In Or. 34.13 Gregory quotes Psalm 36:9 with the clear explanation, "that is, in the Spirit we shall see the Son."[158] The Father speaks his Word and sends his Son, the Son takes on flesh to save, and the Spirit indwells the believer.

Gregory also makes clear that the distinct, yet inseparable, actions in his prayer that introduces Or. 28. He states that the subject of the sermon is the doctrine of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In order to properly study God, God himself must enlighten. He gives the particular roles, "that the Father may approve, the Son aid, and the Holy Spirit inspire it."[159] He then moves to show that the three are working together in the same work of revelation, "or rather that the single Godhead's single radiance, by mysterious paradox one in its distinctions and distinct in its connectedness, may enlighten it."[160] The study of God was not a simple rational exercise. One must know God from God's own act of revealing himself and God is only known to the church from the beginning point of the Holy Spirit. The believer knows God in the ascending order in the opposite order of how God has revealed himself. He knows the Son in the Spirit and the Father in the Son. Proper piety must follow the pattern set forth by God.

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[157]Or. 24.19 (284.152-54; PG 35.1191), ET: Vinson, 155.

[158]Or. 34.10 (318.216; PG 36.254).

[159]Or. 28.1 (250.122; PG 36.40), ET: Wickham, 44-45. The argument is similar to Or. 31.2, but here the persons have a clear hierarchy of roles, "Let the Spirit aid us, and the Word will have its course, and God be glorified" (250.278; PG 36. 133, ET: Wickham, 118).

[160]Or. 28.2 (250.124; PG 36.40), ET: Wickham, 45-46.

The pro-Nicene theologians continually argue that the three must be confessed as one God together because believers receive baptism in the name of the three.[161] In Or. 40, *On Holy Baptism*, Gregory makes it clear that by baptizing in the name of the three, the three are worshipped. If they are worshipped, they cannot be creatures. Each person is essential in the baptism because "whatever you may subtract from the deity of the three, you will have overthrown the whole, and destroyed your own being made perfect."[162] The three must be confessed together. In the same oration Gregory argues for the unity of the three because he is baptizing new converts in the one name that is shared by the three. He makes it clear that a denial of any one of the three is the fruit of those "who measure the Godhead badly." The consequence of such a confession is that it will "make shipwreck of your salvation. For whatever you may subtract from the Deity of the three, you will have overthrown the whole, and destroyed your own being made perfect."[163]

Concerning salvation, Gregory continues the pro-Nicene position that if the Son is not God, he cannot save. The Son must be believed,

> In his own person at once entire man and perfect God, and for the sake of the entire sufferer, that he may bestow salvation on your whole being, having destroyed the whole condemnation of your sins: impassible in his Godhead, passible in that which he assumed; as much man for your sake as your are made divine for his.[164]

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[161]Ors. 6.22; 31.6, 28; 34.11; 40.41-45.

[162]Or. 40.44 (358.294-96; PG 36.421).

[163]Or. 40.44 (358.294-96; PG 36.421).

[164]Or. 40.45 (358.296-98; PG 36.424).

In order for the believer to be truly saved from his sins and made perfect in the Son, the Son must be confessed as fully God and fully man.[165]

The Holy Spirit's role in salvation has already been highlighted above. Since he is the Spirit of adoption and regenerates, he should be worshipped as God.[166] The Spirit's specific role in the deification of the believer is an argument that Gregory repeats a number of times in the defense of his deity.[167] He makes the role of the Spirit among the three explicitly important,

> This is the meaning of our great mystery, this, our faith and rebirth in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and in our common name, our rejection of godlessness and our confession of the Godhead. This is the meaning of our common name. And so, to dishonor or separate any one of the three is to dishonor our confession of faith, that is, our rebirth, our *godliness*, our deification, our hope. You see how gracious the Holy Spirit is to us when we confess him as God and how he punishes us when we deny him.[168]

All three persons must be found in the common name in order for the believer to enjoy true faith and rebirth. The last sentence makes it clear that the Spirit is essential to the beginning of faith. If the Spirit is confessed, the salvation of the Triune God is realized. The fruit of the Spirit being denied is a lack of illumination of the true God.

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[165]Or. 34.10, "but if all that the Father has belongs likewise to the Son, except causality; and all that is the son's belongs also to the Spirit, except his Sonship, and whatsoever is spoken of him as to Incarnation to me a man, and for my salvation, that, taking of mine, he may impart his own by this new comingling" (318.216; PG 36.254-55).

[166]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164).

[167]Or. 31.28 (250.330; PG 36.164), ET: Wickham, 139.

[168]Or. 23.12 (270.304; PG 35.1163), ET: Vinson, 107.140.

The Three Are One in Their Simple Essence

The second grammar for defending the unity of the Godhead concerns Gregory's argument for the identity of essence. It must be remembered that Gregory stated that knowledge of the essence was outside of man's capacity. One of the key grammars related to the doctrine of unity or the simple essence is that Gregory continually states that it must be guarded rather then explained. The essence is unique to the Creator, his essence is "beyond being." This did not result in Gregory not saying anything about the essence, because he had to defend the unity of God against the heretics. It simply means he approaches the doctrine with mystery knowing that he will not comprehend it.

The main issue concerning what Gregory is arguing for in the grammar of "identity of essence" is how he understands the one relating to the three. Is the one a single, simple essence or a common, generic essence shared by the three? Is there a single essence the three share? Does each person have their own equally divine essence? Does he categorize the persons-essence in a primary-secondary or universals-particulars model that is similar to Aristotle's species-individual categories for the created order? A further issue in the debate over the essence is if there is three wills or one if there is one essence, as argued above, how is Gregory doctrine not guilty of Sabellianism? Defining the doctrine of the essence is important because it has a major role in how the confession of one and three is properly divided or distinguished.

There are two main arguments to be made in light of the concerns above. First, Gregory's doctrine of the essence maintains a simplicity that is the same, unique, and singular. Second, his grammar for distinctions and the doctrine of the knowledge of God

does not allow for the one-three paradox to be read in light of Aristotle's categories of universals-particulars.

In order to defend the full deity of the three persons, the Cappadocians incorporate a number of similar arguments. First, the Cappadocians begin their defense of each person by emphasizing that the three persons are all participating and co-operating in the same divine activities. This argument implies an "intrinsic link between powers and nature."[169] Second, they all distinguish the Father from the Son using causal language while denying any ontological causality. Third, the Cappadocians employ a different use of language than Eunomius. This allows them to use different terminology for each person without referring to the one essence. The importance in terminology and the referent of the terms concerning the one and the three is of utmost importance in their defense of the Trinity.

Fourth, they all maintain that the essence of God is simple. Lewis Ayres argues that simplicity was one of the three basic grammars for the pro-Nicene party.[170] Franz Dünzl argues that the Nicene confession of *homoousios* eventually becomes more of a confession of *tautoousios*. The difference is the latter is more emphatically defending a single identical essence.[171] McGuckin sees one of the most significant Cappadocian contributions being the, "the completion of Athanasius' argument that generic or qualitative similarity in the persons of the Godhead had perforce to give way

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[169]Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 27-29.

[170]Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 281.

[171]Dunzl, *A Brief History of The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 93.

to the affirmation of absolute identical essence."[172] Behr argues against those that propose Gregory taught an abstract concept, category or class.[173]

Simplicity is the common ground from which Eunomius and the Cappadocians argued against one another. The main concern for all the Cappadocians is arguing how the essence is applied to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit without implying a division in the divine essence, but protecting the distinction of persons. Eunomius begins his doctrine of God asserting that the doctrines of simplicity and unbegotten necessarily imply one another and exclude the begotten Son from simplicity.[174] Nyssen argues against Eunomius on the basis that unbegotten and simplicity are not names that can be substituted for each other. He does not argue against the doctrine of simplicity, but merely what the doctrine implies. The main focus is that unbegotten cannot be declared to be the essence on the basis of simplicity.

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[172]McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 10. He argues that Athanasius had initiated the growing opinion that the *homoousios* was not a generic quality. The reason being that this was, "a crudely materialistic concept inapplicable to a wholly spiritual and simple nature, and that by contrast the true meaning of the *homoousion* was not merely generic identical, or even 'likeness of being' as the Origenistic *homoiousians* liked to say, but rather very identical of begin" (ibid., 8). He argues that Gregory's argument in Ors. 30.20 and Or. 31.16 should put to rest the "ghost of the so called 'generic theory" (ibid., 24).

[173]Behr, *The Nicene Faith*, vol. 1, 294, 364-65.

[174] Gregory of Nyssa quotes Eunomius, "God is called Unbegotten; but the divinity is by nature simple; and what is simple admits of no composition. If therefore God is by nature uncompounded, and the name 'Unbegotten' applies to him, then 'Unbegotten is the name of his very nature, and his nature is nothing else than the unbegotten," *Contra Eunomian* II.23.64. Beeley is correct in pointing out that what the Eunomians are really concerned about is "the idea that the Son who is begotten from the Father can receive the Father's divine being (the only divine being) without dividing it" (*Gregory of Nazianzus*, 211, the passage reference is Or. 31.14). Eunomius accuses Basil of teaching that the "essence receives *epinoia* in various ways," *Contra Eunomian* II.362.140. See Joseph O'Leary, "Divine Simplicity and The Plurality of Attributes," *SVC 82* (Boston: Brill, 2007): 307-38. The concept of begotten in the Godhead implies change and accident, both of which are impossible for God who is "without parts and uncomposed," Eunomius *Apology* 19, (Vaggione 55-58). See also Eunomius *Apology* 7 (Vaggione, 41). Gregory of Nyssa quotes Eunomius, "God is called Unbegotten; but the divinity is by nature simple; and what is simple admits of no composition. If therefore God is by nature uncompounded, and the name 'Unbegotten'

While the Cappadocians share a number of common doctrines and grammars, they have significant differences in how they are articulate and defend the Trinity. Nyssen argues that each person belongs in the "community of the divine." He is best known for the analogy that compares the Trinity to three men, Peter, James, and John. Each one has own distinct properties while sharing the same common nature. He employs primary-secondary language to explain how this analogy helps articulate the Trinity. The conclusion is that the persons have their distinct attributes while all sharing the same primary or universal essence. This language has been adopted as the primary grammar for the contemporary doctrine of the social analogy that emphasizes the generic essence. A number of patristic scholars have shed light on the question of Gregory of Nyssa teaching a primary-secondary substance that divides the Trinity into an absolute analogy with man.[175] Ayres provides the best refutation against the analogy of Gregory being interpreted in the way that contemporary theologians have used it.[176]

Nyssen's primary argument in *Ad Ablabius* is that God is recognized through his actions because his essence is beyond man's intellectual capabilities.[177] The three

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applies to him, then 'Unbegotten is the name of his very nature, and his nature is nothing else than the unbegotten," *Contra Eunomian* 2.23.64.

[175]Michel Barnes, "Divine Unity and the Divided Self: Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology in its Psychological Context," *MT* 18 (2002): 475-96. See also Sarah Coakley, "'Persons' in the 'Social' Doctrine of the Trinity: A Critique of Current Analytic Discussion," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 123-44. Also, Giulio Maspero*, Trinity and Man: Gregory of Nyssa's Ad Ablabius*, VCS 86 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

[176]Ayres, "On Not People: The Fundamental Themes of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology as Seen in To Ablabius: On Not Three Gods," 15-44.

[177]He begins the work arguing from the actions of the persons because God's infinite nature is outside of man's grasp. He argues that the root of Godhead is "see" so that this action should be a marker of who belongs in the divine community, "Godhead signifies operation not nature." Father and Son co-operate. Nyssen argues that terms are accidental and only names given to essence for convenience, *To*

persons are recognized as divine because of their divine operations and co-operation.[178] There is no distinction in the nature of the Father and Son because there is no distinction in their actions. The persons are distinguished by their causal relations, but the number of the essence is one because there is no difference in their natures.[179] This primary-secondary grammar from Nyssen is his secondary argument in *Ad Ablabius* and is only an expression of his doctrine seeking understanding. He makes the shift to the second argument for those who demand that the Godhead is a nature.

His second argument is based upon the rule that when things are counted together, they share the same essence. This argument is submitted only to give an answer for those that demand that Godhead refer to the nature and not the operations.[180] He uses the example of gold coins not being counted as "many golds" but as much gold because the nature is one. He uses the Peter, James, and John analogy to show that there are three individuals, but they should be counted together because they all share the same essence of humanity without difference. This appears to be an analogy that Ablabius has already

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Ablabius (GNO 3.1.55; PG 45.133, ET: Richardson, 259). Gregory argues, "but in each of these terms we find a particular idea which by thought and expression we rightly attribute to the divine nature, what which does not express what that nature essentially is," *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.55; PG 45.133, ET: Richardson, 259). Nyssen, "For we believe that the divine nature is unlimited and incomprehensible, and hence, we do not conceive of its being comprehended. But we declare that the nature is in every way to be thought of as infinite," *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.57; PG 45.134, ET: Richardson, 264).

[178]Nyssen, "As we, 57 have already said, the principle of the overseeing and beholding (*theatikes*) power is a unity in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It issues from the Father, as from a spring. It is actualized by the Son; and its grace is perfected by the Holy Spirit. No activity is distinguished among the persons" *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.57; PG 45.134, ET: Richardson, 256).

[179]Maspero argues that Nyssen's primarily distinguishes the persons by relation, starting with the Father so that they are primary distinguished by their actions that correlate with their eternal relations. See Maspero, *Trinity and Man*, xvii.

[180] This is a clear transition in Nyssen's argument, "If, however, our opponents want to claim that "Godhead" refers to nature and not to operation, we shall revert to our former argument," *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.57; PG 45.134, ET: Richardson, 264).

proposed, "the argument runs like this: Peter, James, and John are called three men, despite the fact they share in a single humanity."[181] This argument supposes that there is a problem with the common habits of speech for how the essence is referred to because if the essence is the same among individuals it should be counted as one. He argues, "to use in the plural the word for the nature of whose who do not differ in nature, and to speak of "many men," is a customary misuse of language."[182] He goes so far as to argue that when Scripture speaks of many men, it is only using "the prevailing use of speech."[183] The development is that man and God are analogous concerning how the one and the many relate to one another. This opens the door for speaking of a universal-particular distinction. This second argument is necessary in order to avoid the Christian God from appearing like the pagan polytheists.[184]

The primary concern for the present work is whether Gregory of Nazianzus uses similar expressions concerning a primary-secondary substance implying a generic essence. Grillmeier observes that the grammar of a general-particular distinction could be implied in Or. 42.16 and 39.11.[185] Gregory will also argue that the three persons share a common essence in Or. 25.16, and share the common name in Ors. 23.17, 40.45. The strongest support that can be found for Gregory proposing a common, generic essence using the primary-secondary grammar is Or. 29.13.

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[181]Gregory of Nyssa *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.57; PG 45.134), ET: Richardson, 256.

[182]Gregory of Nyssa *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.58; PG 45.134), ET: Richardson, 257.

[183]Gregory of Nyssa *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.60; PG 45.135), ET: Richardson, 265.

[184]Gregory of Nyssa *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.58; PG 45.134), ET: Richardson, 257.

[185]Grillmeier, *Christ and the Christian Tradition*, vol. 1, 375.

> Our position of course, is that horses, man, oxen, and each item that comes under the same species have a single concept. On the one hand, whatever shares in the concept is rightly called by that name, and whatever does not share in it is either not called, or not properly called by that name. On the other hand, there is a single substance, nature, and appellation of God, even though the names are distinguished along with distinct ideas about him.[186]

Gregory's argument uses an analogy concerning how man talks about the created order and how he can talk about the Creator. There is one name by which a species is collected and this name has the essence as its referent. In a similar way since there is a single nature for God, there is one name which those who belong to the Godhead all share.

Nathan Jacobs cites this passage as evidence for arguing that Gregory of Nazianzus' doctrine of unity is based upon the Aristotelian primary-secondary substance categories.[187] According to Jacobs, Gregory's doctrine of unity is defined in the concept of one because the three share a common *ousia,* plurality because each person possesses particular properties unique to them. Jacobs makes the analogy that the three persons are like Peter, James, and John because each is distinguished by what is unique to them while they all belong to the common essence or species of human being. Jacobs believes the Cappadocian three-one distinction is best understood as "[t]he three *hypostases* of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are therefore properly analogous to particulars,

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[186]Or. 29.13 (250.202-04; PG 36.92), ET: Wickham, 80-81.

[187]This argument is at odds with the recent paradigm that argues the difference between East and West is the former being Platonic and the latter Aristotelian. See Richard Cross, "On Generic and derivation Views of God's Trinitarian Substance," *SJT* 56.4 (2003):464-80; Idem, "Two Models," *HeyJ* 43 (2002): 275-94. Vincent Brümmer argues that the Platonic worldview of the Cappadocians kept them from falling into tritheism and that this is not the same philosophical framework of contemporary theologians. When the contemporary theologians apply the new ontology of person and dual essence to the social analogy, they necessarily create three separate gods (Vincent Brümmer, *Atonement, Christology and The Trinity*, [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005], 98-99).

Jacobs' article begins with the wrong premise of combining the Cappadocians as if their work was meant to present a united front. Jacobs establishes a definition of the generic essence primarily from Gregory of Nyssa. His evidence from Basil is from epistle 38 that, I believe, has been adequately proven to

each being properly predicated by the one nature, God."[188] There is unity because each person possesses the same kind of essence and they are united by participating with one another in their individual wills. Jacobs explains that the Cappadocians were primarily concerned with not having multiple essences that are not of the same nature because they would have understood this to be polytheism.[189] If there were three that are equal, monotheism is still protected because there is only one kind of deity.

Jacobs is correct that Gregory's polemical context means that a number of arguments are focused upon not having three different kinds of essences in the Godhead like Eunomius or pagan polytheists would. One problem in Jacob's position is not taking into account the stronger statements concerning unity and simplicity when determining Gregory's doctrine of unity. There are a number of grammars or rules that must be taken into consideration. For Gregory, it is not just that the three have to have an equal essence, they must have the same essence. Another problem is that Jacobs argues for a unified Cappadocian argument. It will be argued below that Nazianzen and Nyssen differ on the concept of nature and how the analogy of three men is used to defend the Trinity. The most immediate problem is that Jacobs has failed to read the passage cited in its proper context.

The broader argument for the primary passage, Or. 29.13, lies in discrediting the Eunomian understanding of language. The argument goes back to Or. 29.12 where

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be wrongly attributed to him. This is the only passage for Gregory in the article. Most attention is given to Nyssen and author of Epistle 38.

[188] Jacobs, "On "Not Three Gods"—Again," 338.

[189] This is the concern they have with Eunomius, but they defend themselves against polytheism by denying the proposal of Jacobs.

Gregory questions the Eunomian position that the language of Father-Son designates the essence so that the different names propose different natures. In Or. 29.13, Gregory demonstrates from the way one talks about the species of animals that the one concept can be applied to more than one instance/individual of that species. The argument is based upon how different species are categorized under the same name to prove that if more than one shares the same concept of Godhead, they are the same essence. In Or. 29.14 Gregory gives another example from the word dog being applied to a fish (dogfish) and a canine to prove that the same concept also does not necessarily designate same essence.[190]

The main point of the larger context is that Eunomians wrongly assert the nature of language as it pertains to applying concepts to God. This is seen in Gregory's following sentence that Jacobs leaves out of the quote, "[w]hatever is called "God" in the full and proper sense is God and whatever he is in his nature is a true name for him—granted that real truth is contained in realities, not in names."[191] Jacobs fails to see the polemical purpose of this section is not to describe the essence of God, but to challenge the nature of language that Eunomius has employed for the basis of his doctrine of God. Jacobs also fails to see that this analogy must be limited by the numerous warnings and confessed shortcoming of analogies that Gregory used.

Gregory separates God from creation so that he is not to be known or categorized like natures in the created order. This is a beginning point that Eunomius and Gregory share. Gregory's argument for the primary-secondary substance language has a

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[190]Or. 29.14 (250.204-06; PG 36.92).

[191]Or. 29.13 (250.202-04; PG 36.92), ET: Wickham, 80-81.

very limited purpose that he is quickly dismissed. Its purpose is to argue that names and reality do not have a one-to-one relationship. His main point is to argue that if the difference between names and reality is true for creation, now much more difference is there for the God who is Spirit, infinite, and immeasurable.

Jacobs also fails to recognize the limits that Gregory puts upon analogies between the created order and the Creator. Or. 31.11 is a similar passage to the one Jacobs cites. Gregory is arguing from the analogy of Adam, Eve, and Seth to prove that that the concept of offspring necessarily implies consubstantiality (*homoousios*). After making the analogy, he makes sure to avoid the kind of conclusion that Jacobs makes due to his strict limitations on analogies:

> I say this without implying molding or division or anything bodily as regards the—no quibbler shall get a grip on me again here—but by way of contemplating spiritual realities, here presented on stage as it were. No comparison, indeed, can arrive at the whole truth in its purity.[192]

In Or. 30.20 he also considers the Adam-Seth analogy and concludes,

> I take the view that he is called "Son" because he is not simply identical in substance with the Father, but stems from him…The ordinary image is a motionless copy of a moving being. Here we have a living image of a living being, indistinguishable from its original to a higher degree than Seth from Adam and any earthly offspring from its parent. Beings with no complexity to their nature have no points of likeness or unlikeness. They are exact replicas, identical rather than like.[193]

Gregory's argument from the created order is simply to show that the same concept can refer to two different individuals in the same way. The difference between two men and the two persons of the Trinity is that the former causes a confession that affirms the

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[192]Or. 31.11 (250.294-96; PG 36.145), ET: Wickham, 125.

[193]Or. 30. 20 (250.266; PG 36.129), ET: Wickham, 110.

Father and Son are like one another whereas the latter affirms that they both share the same essence.

Gregory's confession for God states that the Father and the Son must be confessed together as fully divine like Adam and Seth are both fully man. The point of the argument is to show that two individuals, one begetting the other, can have an equal nature. The difference in the kinds of natures between God and man is what breaks the analogy. The unity and nature of God are of a completely different kind or a higher, order than that of man. The unity and essence of God is different from Adam and Seth because it is a simple nature.

Before arguing for the way the divinity can be confessed in Or. 29.13, Gregory provides one of his clearest assertions on simplicity in Or. 29.10,

> Do immortality, innocence, and immutability each constitute God's being? No, if that were so, there would be a plurality of beings of God, not a single being. Or is Deity a composite resulting from these? If these are "beings" or substances there would have to be composition.[194]

Simplicity denies a composite of attributes in the Godhead. He defines the expressions simple and composite as terms that are not the essence, but rather are terms that describe the kind of nature.[195] Not only is the essence not multiplied or denied, but it is not a compound of various attributes. The essence must be void of composition because composition leads to conflict and disorder.[196] Gregory argues in Or. 38.7 that simplicity is not the essence itself, but only the kind of essence it is. It is not made up of parts or

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[194]Or. 29.10 (250.196; PG 36.88), ET: Wickham, 78.

[195]Or. 23.7-9 (270.294-98; PG 35.1159-60).

[196]Or. 23.6 (270.294; PG 35.1159).

attributes because it is "a nature that is in internal agreement with itself, is ever the same, ever perfect, without quality or quantity, independent of time, uncreated, incomprehensible, never self-deficient, nor ever so to be."[197] The essence is boundless and beyond man's comprehension. Gregory's main polemic is opposed to the kind of understanding that Jacobs presents. The point is that the essence is boundless, beyond man's capacity to comprehend, and completely unlike the beings of the created order.[198]

Other Interpretations on the Unity of Being: Coordinately Common in Essence

Richard Cross argues for a similar position as Jacobs, but does so from one of Gregory's most important and debated passages on the unity of the essence (and the *Monarchia*), Or. 31.14. He argues that Or. 31.14 "represents an attempt to defend the indivisibility of the divine essence, co-ordinatively common to all three persons."[199] Cross establishes his view as presenting a primary-secondary natures in the Trinity, "for the co-ordinative view that I [Cross] have been outlining is most naturally understood as asserting that the divine essence is common to the three persons: that it is some kind of genus or species for them."[200] This protects against the accusation of Eunomius that the essence is divided because the universal divinity is the cause of the particulars.

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[197]Or. 23.11 (270.302; PG 35.1165), ET: Vinson, 107.139. See also Or. 23.11 (270.302; PG 35.1165), ET: Vinson, 107.139. This is the strong kind of essence that Cornelius Plantinga denies in Augustine and will be analyzed in chapter five.

[198] Ayres argues that this Creator-creature divide is the most basic building block of the pro-Nicene party (*Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 20).

[199]Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 109.

[200]Ibid., 112.

Thomas F. Torrance interprets Or. 31.14 in a similar way so that the divinity is the cause in the sense that it is "an indivisible monad common to all three."[201] According to Torrance, Gregory is the Cappadocian to follow Athanasius the closest in terms of supplying a perfect equality among the three. He removes the Origenistic notion of the Father's causality among the persons so that the being of God is "essentially personal, dynamic, and relational."[202] He argues that Gregory introduces concepts such as onto-relational[203] and substantial relations[204] so that the three were united in one being by their relationships and interdependence upon one another.

Both Torrance and Cross argue that Gregory's use of "mutual relations" establish a perichoretic, equal unity among the persons where there is no hierarchy. Their argument from Or. 31.14 also fails to recognize the proper distinctions established in other confessions and to interpret the passage in light of his other grammars. They interpret the Monarchial language in Gregory as always referring to the essence causing the three persons so that the three share the essence in common. It will be argued below that Gregory's use of *Monarchia* is not always a reference to the three together. Rather, he uses *Monarchia* in another grammar to protect the priority of the Father. The second grammar refers to the inner-trinitarian relations where the Father is the *Monarchia* of the

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[201]Ibid., 113.

[202]Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 124. He states that the essence is not generic, but a dynamic of the three relating to one another so that there is an "onto-relation."

[203]Ibid., 103.

[204]Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, 27.

Son and Spirit.[205] The theologians have also failed to give proper recognition to the other key grammars for unity that must be confessed together in order to present Gregory's complete model of the Trinity.

Or. 31 contains Gregory's most thorough defense against tritheism. His opponents in the sermon include Eunomians and Pneumatomachians. In Or. 31.13, Gregory states that the sermon has reached its "fundamental point." This section begins a long discourse defending the orthodox confession against the accusation of tritheism.[206] Gregory quotes the accusation against him, "if we use the word God three times, must there not be three gods?"[207] His rebuttal to this claim is that there is a single Godhead that "exists undivided in those that are divided."[208] Just before this section he warns his adversary, "do not truncate the single and equally august nature at any point."[209] The main focus is on how to avoid the confession of three gods while confessing the full deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.[210] This must be done with multiple grammars so that the one essence is protected as well as the equality of the persons who are united in the one essence and their mutual relationships.

Following Or. 31.14 Gregory states what his opponents "might say,"

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[205]Ibid., 113.

[206]This is similar to *To Ablabius*, but the answer will be seen to be fundamentally different. Nazianzen may even be arguing against Nyssen in this section.

[207]Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127.

[208]Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127.

[209]Or. 31.12 (250.298; PG 36.148), ET: Wickham, 126.

[210]Nyssen feels same dichotomy, "Either we must say there are three gods, which is blasphemy; or else we must deny divinity to the Son and the Holy Spirit, which is irreligious and absurd," *To Ablabius* (GNO 3.1.57; PG 45.134, ET: Richardson, 256).

> But what do they say? Do not non-Christians too according to their more expert theoreticians, hold to a single Godhead, and do not we also hold to a single humanity, the whole human race? Nonetheless they think that there is a plurality of gods and not just one, in the way that there is a plurality of men.[211]

His argument against counting the Godhead like the whole of the human race is that God and man are too different. They are different because man is composite, "ever fluctuating and changing," and "mutually opposed and inconsistent even with ourselves."[212] Gregory attempts to give his best explanation of the Trinity while confessing his abilities are limited, "each of the Trinity is in entire unity as much with himself as with the partnership, by identity of being and power."[213] This is in contrast with the Greek polytheism where the gods are opposed to one another and divided in rank. The Christian God is united because the three persons share one, simple essence. This means their actions are all the same and their power equal.

Gregory states an argument for how to count the three together asking if it is a joke, "*Consubstantial things*, you say, *are counted together, but things that are not consubstantial can only be indicated singly*."[214] He responds by mocking the idea that a number does not constitute an essence, "what school of mythology did you get that idea from? Do you not know that every number indicates an amount of objects, not their

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[211]Or. 31.15 (250.304; PG36.149), ET: Wickham, 128. The section is italicized from translation to show these are not Gregory's words, but those of his opponents.

[212]Or. 31.15 (250.304; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 128.

[213]Or. 31.16 (250.306; PG 36.152), ET: Wickham, 129.

[214]Or. 31.18 (250.308; PG 35.153), ET: Wickham, 130. The italicized portion is from the translation where Gregory is quoting his adversary.

nature?"[215] He accuses this position of denying the entire Godhead in an attempt at defending the *Monarchia*, a reference to monotheism in this context. He believes that those making this argument concerning the counting have surrendered to the enemy.

After giving numerous examples of things that are counted together in Scripture but are not of the same essence, Gregory considers what his opponents counter-argument might be, "*But,* someone may say*, what I am talking about is things of the same substance being counted together that have nouns, which are mentioned as well, to match them. For example: Three men, three gods—not three odds and ends*."[216] He responds,

> What answer are we to make? This is the behavior of a man who lays down the law for words, not one who uses them to speak the truth. What I am talking about is Peter, Paul, and John's not being three or consubstantial, so long as three Pauls, three Peters, and as many Johns cannot be spoken of. We demand that you apply to more specific nouns the new-fangled rule you have kept to in the case of the more generic ones.[217]

Norris summarizes his point, "Arithmetic does not determine essence."[218] Again, Gregory's primary concern must focus on the nature of theological language. The concern here is that how things that are categorized by the same genus should be counted together so that they are considered one. The analogy of three men being one nature breaks down because the three have their own particular natures that divide them and they all possess their own nature. They share the nature with one another, but each possesses his own instance of human nature. Gregory is ultimately denying the

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[215]Or. 31.17 (250.308; PG 35.152), ET: Wickham, 129, where Gregory asks if this way of counting is a joke. He responds be stating that in order to protect the *Monarchia*, they have sacrificed the Godhead.

[216]Or. 31.18 (250.308; PG 35.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

[217]Or. 31.18 (250.308; PG 35.153), ET: Wickham, 130.

[218]Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reasoning*, 201.

Aristotelian concepts as adequate for describing God because his properties cannot be divided into essential and accidental.[219] The persons are distinguished by relationship and not according to primary and secondary substances. If one attributes this kind of model for the Trinity, there would be three fathers, three sons, and three spirits. The language for the persons is lifted out of the category of essence, which will be argued below.

Gregory's key rule against the Peter, James, and John analogy is that for these men to be consubstantial, they must be exactly identical in all attributes. The analogy breaks down on one level because there is no essence, property, or attribute that the Father has that the Son and Spirit do not have. This is most clearly seen in the rule that refutes the analogy in Or. 31.19, "demand that you apply to more specific nouns the new-fangled rule you have kept to in the case of the more generic ones."[220] The persons are distinguished by relationship, which would normally be considered an accident in Aristotelian grammar. Gregory does not appear to use it in this way, but instead as something necessary for the Father and Son in eternity. The change in language for how men are counted is a cheap victory for his opponents in this section. It will lead to an ultimate loss because it seeks to make the essence of God and man too similar.

The analogy of Peter, James, and John fails because the three men have a similar essence that is multiplied so that each has his own instance of the same generic essence. The divine unity is without the division or distinction of time, will, or power. The difference between man's essence and God's essence is more than the former being

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[219]Or. 40.42 (358.294-96; PG 36.417).

[220]Or. 31.19 (250.312; PG 36.153), ET: Wickham, 132.

composite and the latter simple. Rather, man's essence is divided "by time, temperament, capacity" and "ever fluctuating and changing" because of these divisions.[221] These distinctions create a "plurality of individuals" in man's case, "but to those who have a simple nature, and whose essence is the same, the term one belongs in its highest sense."[222] Gregory affirms a nature that is singular "in the highest sense" and denies the implication that it is divided or multiplied for three to be identified with this one essence.[223] It is already clear that Nazianzen's distinctions for the one-three are different from Nyssen's because the kind of nature is different between God and man.[224]

Arguing that the natures of the three persons are equal is the first step toward Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. By stating that the main point is to avoid polytheism is only seeing half of the argument and is reducing the criteria for monotheism. This is a clear concern for Gregory, but he was not content with stating that there were three that were perfectly alike. His argument goes further and states that they share the same, simple essence. In Or. 42.16, he asks the question that others would be posing to his use of three *hypostases*, "for what do you mean who assert three *hypostases*?" Do you imply three essences by the term? I am assured that you would loudly shout against those who

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[221]Or. 31.15 (250.304; PG 35.149), ET: Wickham, 128. Or. 28.7, "for composition is the cause of conflict, conflict of division, division of dissolution. But dissolution is utterly alien to God the primal nature. So no dissolution means no division; no division means no conflict; no conflict means no composition, and hence no body involving composition. The reasoning stand so, mounting from consequences to first conditions" (250.114; PG 36.33, ET: Wickham, 42).

[222]Or. 42.15 (384.64; PG 36.472) and Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749).

[223]This will be further explained in chap. 4.

[224]Nyssen will also argue that they are different concerning infinite-finite and spiritual-material, but his counting analogy treats the two as if there is more in common between God's kind of nature and man's.

do for you teach that the essence of the three is one and the same."[225] The nature of God is different than that of man because all men share their own common essence while the three in the Godhead share the one same essence.

The essence must be one in the "highest sense" since it is simple and the same.[226] Gregory makes the distinction between the nature of God and the natures in the created order clearly in Or. 42.15:

> And the union is the Father from whom and to whom the order of the *hypostases* runs its course, not so as to be confounded, but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, of will, or of power. For these things in our case produce a plurality of individuals, since each of them is separate both from every other quality, and from every other individual possession of the same quality. But to those who have a simple *ousia*, and whose *ousia* is the same, the term one belongs in its highest sense.[227]

The natures of the three men are different because of time, will, and power. The three have equal human natures, but not the same power and will. The divine nature is void of composition because if God is composed of parts, there is a plurality of beings. Concerning the three persons of the Trinity Gregory states, "we recognize that as there is one and the same title so is there one and same nature, substance, and power of Godhead."[228] There is only one instance of the one divine nature, whereas there are multiple instances of the individual human natures. Gregory's doctrine of God remains consistent with his Creator-creature distinction as God's being is beyond being, and is

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[225]Or. 42.16 (284.52; PG 36. 472).

[226]Or. 42.15 (384.64; PG 36.472). Or. 38.7, "He is of a simple nature he is therefore either wholly incomprehensible, or perfectly comprehensible. For let us further enquire what is implied by "is of a simple nature". For it is quite certain that this simplicity is not itself its nature, just as composition itself is not by itself the essence of compound beings" (357.114-16; PG 36.317), ET: Daley, 120.

[227]Or. 42.15 (384.64; PG 36.472) and Or. 6.22 (405.174-76; PG 36.749).

[228]Epistle 101.14 (PG 37.204), ET: Wickham, 163.

nothing like the natures that are found in the created order.[229] There are separated from one another as material natures each possessing his own will.

The placement of the will is one of the more complicated and difficult aspects of contemporary Trinitarian discussions. The reason for this is that the term person today implies the concepts of personality and desires so that the three persons of the Trinity are assumed to have their own will. Gregory clearly places the will in the essence in Or. 42.15 above and Or 31.14, "The do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power." [230] This latter aspect is based upon the Orthodox principle that since the three are inseparable in their operation, they must share the same will. The three persons are seeking to accomplish the same objective in creation, revelation, and salvation because they all have the same nature and desire. They are "harmonious" in will because the three persons share the one will. This doctrine relates to the first argument for the unity of God because Gregory argues that each must be considered divine because of their action.[231]

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[229]Or. 38.7-9 (357.114-18; PG 36.316-20), ET: Daley, 120-2. Gregory shows the importance of separating the Creator from all that is created in Or. 34.8, "I find two highest differences in things that exist, viz.:--rule and service; not such as among us either tyranny has cut or poverty has severed, but which nature has distinguished, if any like to use this word. For that which is First is also above nature. I mean the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are neither separated from one another as to be divided in nature, nor so contracted as to be circumscribed by a single person" (318.212; PG 36.247-49).

[230] The do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any of the properties inherent in things divisible. To express it succinctly, the Godhead exists undivided in beings divided," Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127.

[231]Or. 23.11 (270.302; PG 35. 1165) quoted above.

Defining the Proper Relationship between the One and the Three

The one essence cannot be divided, but the persons must be separated so that they are not condensed into one.[232] The divine three is maintained by demonstrating that "the difference lies outside of the substance of God."[233] The essence cannot be divided to avoid polytheism nor can *hypostases* be understood as substances. Gregory makes this point with the question, "what do you mean who assert three hypostases? Do you imply three essences by the term? I am assured that you would loudly shout against those who do. For you teach that the essence of the three is one and the same."[234] Neither persons nor distinctions divide the essence. The divine three is maintained by demonstrating that "the difference lies outside of the substance of God."[235] Gregory explains further, "[a]ll that the Father has the Son has also, except being unbegotten; and all that the Son has the Spirit has also, except the generation. And these two matters do not divide the nature, as I understand it, but rather are divisions *peri* the *ousia*."[236] The persons "rather are distinctions *around* the essence."[237] This is the most explanation that can be found in Gregory for how the persons relate to the nature. The rule establishes that whatever distinguishes them lies outside of the grammar for nature. The persons exist around or

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[232]Gregory calls this walking between the royal road. The royal road is the confession of God that avoids the extremes of Sabellius and Arius. Or. 42.16, "But we walk the middle, royal road, where the experts tell us the pursuit of virtue is to be found" (284.52; PG 36. 472).

[233]Or. 29.12 (250.200-02; PG 36.90), ET: Wickham, 80.

[234]Or. 42.16 (284.52; PG 36.472).

[235]Or. 29.12 (250.200-02; PG 36.90), ET: Wickham, 80.

[236]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

[237]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

alongside the one undivided essence in plurality, but there is no plurality in essence. The persons are relationships that participate in the one nature of God without dividing or multiplying the essence.

In order to better understand the doctrine of simplicity some explanation of how the persons relate to the one essence is necessary. While Gregory ultimately leaves this contemplation in the realm of mystery, he provides some basic concepts that will give clarity. First, the essence cannot be divided or multiplied and it is an absolute singular. Second, Gregory gives one brief statement on how the three relate to the one without any more explanation. The context is arguing that the concepts of generation and procession as names for Son and Holy Spirit do not invalidate their full deity. His reasoning is that "these two matters do not divide the essence, as I understand it, but rather are distinctions around the *ousia*."[238] The three coexist as persons in such a way that they have a divine nature, but it is the same divine nature. A problem that will be explained further in the next section is if the essence is the Father's proper and is shared or truly common to all three.

Gregory's teaching that the three persons share the one essence fits with his definition of person. His grammar for person as relationship does not seek to equate divine personhood with human personhood, but limits the definition to "center of relationality."[239] The vagueness of this definition is intentional because it does not seek to imply anything in the personhood that is not taught in Scripture. What is clear from Scripture is the names reveal relationships, so the persons must contain what is essential

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[238]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

[239]My term.

for relationships, but man cannot know what this is in the infinite Godhead. The grammar for person as used in the Trinity is also seen in his Christology. McGuckin recognizes that Gregory is the first person to answer Christological issues from a Trinitarian theology. Since he limits the meaning of person to "center of relationality," he is able to add to the person of the Son a human nature. The Son now "relates" the two natures together. This is stated in terms of mingling and perichoresing in Gregory.[240]

Gregory makes a clear distinction in his Christology while defending that the Son has a complete human nature and is fully divine. He argues, "there are two natures, God and man, but not two sons or gods." He continues, "in sum: the constituents of our savior are different things (since invisible and visible, timeless and temporal, are not the same), but not different people—God forbid!"[241] The person being relational provides for proper distinctions between the person and essence in the Trinity and the incarnation. The person being the "center of relations" means that three can be "in relation" without there being an essence. It also means the one person can relate two natures together and relate believers to the Father. The adoption of believers is dependent upon being connected with the Son who reconciles God and man.

One final observation on the language of the primary-secondary substance model and the analogy with three men concerns how the two Gregory's clearly disagreed with one another. Nazianzen is either disagreeing with Nyssen's own teaching or with that of Ablabius with whom Nyssen has offered his consent. Nyssen believes the analogy

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[240]Gregory speaks of the two natures in "coalescence," *Epistle* 101.5 (PG 37.183), ET: Wickham, 157.

[241]*Epistle* 101.5 (PG 37.183), ET: Wickham, 157.

has some validity, but does not want to make it his primary argument. He agrees that the way one should count the universal human essence is like the way one should count the divine essence. Nazianzen has a number of problems with the argument as seen above. The most important being the failure of all analogies with creation because there is such a great difference between God and man.

The primary-secondary language is employed by both Cappadocians, but with hesitations. Both prefer to use the clearly biblical argument from God's actions. Nyssen appears to allow the analogy by changing the grammar for humanity in order for it to apply appropriately to the Godhead. Nazianzen does not allow for such a change, rather he demands an entire separate grammar for the Godhead. One can refer to a common essence among the three as long as it is referring to the three possessing the one and same essence. The primary-secondary grammar ultimately fails because it implies the persons are distinct because of properties and that the essence is divided.

The Three Are One in the *Monarchia*(s)

The final grammar for the unity of essence is Gregory's use of the *Monarchia*. There is a long history of debate concerning how Gregory used the concept of *Monarchia* in his confession of the Trinity. There appears to be two different grammatical roles for the term *Monarchia*. One establishes the Triune God as a whole so that the Creator is set apart from creation. The other seeks to distinguish the persons who exist within the God and provide a proper order among the persons. As already seen above, the *Monarchia* is used as a reference for monotheism over against polytheism and atheism.[242] Gregory's

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[242] Prestige argues that Monarchy is the term that best and most often expresses monotheism

grammar demands that all three persons must be understood to exist distinctly within the one Monarchy and single rule. While *Monarchia* is a reference for one God, the key issue is how Gregory used *Monarchia* within the other grammar. The *Monarchia* is also a key intra-Trinitarian grammar for the Father being the *arxe*, *aitia*, and *aitios* of the Son and Spirit. The debate among Patristic scholars is how Gregory uses both grammars alongside one another and what he includes in the causal language of the latter.

The main text at the center of the confusion is Or. 31.14. The difficulty with the text is Gregory arguing for a single Godhead and then referencing that three "derive from the single whole and have reference to it" as well as

> when we look at the Godhead, the primal cause, the *Monarchia*, we have a mental picture of the single whole, certainly, but when we look at the three in whom the Godhead exists, and at those who derive their timeless and equally glorious being from the primal cause, we have three objects of worship.[243]

This passage is complicated in light of other passages that refer to the Father as the *Monarchia*, cause, and source of the other persons. The primary texts that must be interpreted alongside of Or. 31.14 are Ors. 23.7-8, 25.15-18, 29.2-3, 30.16, 42.15.[244] The main concern is how the three derive from the primal cause while also stating the Father is the primal cause of the Son and Spirit. This raises questions concerning the Father's relation to the essence as well as the "nature" of the causal relation of between the Father and Son.

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and that it is a metaphor for king. Triad was not originally a declaration of unity, but constituted the main problem Christians had to overcome concerning the monarchy (*God in Patristic Thought*, 94).

[243]Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127 (translation has single rule, I included *Monarchia*).

[244]These are texts that Beeley cites as main confessions of the Trinity.

The most popular interpretation is that Gregory's use of the various causal/source terminology is ambiguous and possibly contradictory because in some places he says that the Father is the *Monarchia* and in others he says the essence is the *Monarchia*. There are two positions that seek to reconcile the confusion. First, the Father is the cause of the person of the Son and Spirit, but there is hesitation in confessing the Father is the cause of their deity. Second, the Father is the source of the person of the Son and Spirit as well as their deity.[245] The major difference between these two positions is that the latter emphasizes the Father as God proper and blurs the distinctions between person and essence. A third option was seen above in Torrance and Cross who limit the Monarchy to the essence.

The various attempts understand that every model must have rules that are consistent with one another and present a full confession that protects the church from heresy. Gregory's two grammars for the *Monarchia* can be reconciled so that they fit within his model consistently. How the other attempts recognize the role of the *Monarchia* will be seen to be the outcome of the authors prioritizing different texts.

Another interpretive issue that has divided scholars concerns the different theologians that have influenced Gregory. The main debate is over his dependence upon Origen and/or Athanasius. This is only important because the former is understood to influence a strong hierarchy that prioritizes the Father, and the latter presents an equality that reduces the importance of the hierarchy.

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[245]Cross has proposed another view on the *Monarchia*, but it has more in common with the generic essence and will be considered below in relation to Torrance.

The earliest attempt at reconciling the confusing language of Or. 31.14 and the different teachings on *Monarchia* is found in Ps.-Cyril.[246] Salmond quotes Gregory and makes important changes to the debated passage on the *Monarchia*:

> When we look at those things in which the Godhead is, or, to put it more accurately, which are the divine, and those things which are in it through the first cause without time or distinct in glory or separation, that is to say, the *hypostases* of the Son and the Spirit, it seems to us a Trinity that we adore.[247]

The key change is that the three are no longer referenced as from the primary cause. Rather, the first cause is the Father from whom the other persons are derived and are brought into the divinity (Godhead).[248] The Father is equated with the divinity so that he causes the other persons to be in the Divinity. This demonstrates the difficulty of the passage as early theologians saw the need alter it in order to reconcile it with the rest of Gregory's teaching and the Orthodox faith. Egan points out that the difficulty with these changes that equate the Father with the primal cause and Godhead is that in Gregory's oration the Father is now the source of his own being.[249]

T. A. Noble is a more recent scholar who proposes that Gregory possibly contradicted himself without seeking to reconcile the two teachings on *Monarchia*. He proposes that Gregory embraces paradox by using two incompatible models of the Trinity. His work begins similar to this chapter showing the various paradoxical confessions that define Gregory's theology. He then explains that Gregory proposes the

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[246]John of Damascus *On The Orthodox Faith* 1.8 (trans. S. D. F. Salmond, NPNF^2 9:11).

[247]Ibid.

[248]A. Theodorou also argues that "those in whom the Godhead exists" refers to the Father as the source of the Son and Spirit, "Light as Image and Symbol in the Theology of Nazianzus," *Theology* 47 (1976): 254.

[249]Egan, "Primal Cause," 24.

Father as cause and not the cause in various texts[250] as well as the Godhead being the cause.[251] Noble finds himself in agreement with the Meijering and Norris complaint that these two models are incompatible. Meijering argues,

> Gregory's position seems logically untenable. Logically one would have to choose between Athanasius' doctrine of the complete equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the ontological subordination of the caused beings to their causes. Gregory somehow wants to combine these positions.[252]

Norris believes Meijering has "perhaps found the most glaring error in Gregory's understanding of God."[253]

John Egan is another prominent patristic scholar who finds Gregory's different confessions difficult to understand together. He observes that Or. 31.14 could be interpreted to teach that the divine essence is the primary cause of the Father and then the Father is the cause of the Son and Spirit. This in itself is difficult to understand, but Egan argues that Or. 31.33 explicitly contradicts this teaching when Gregory says, "nothing is prior to God to be his mover—he is the cause of all and owns no prior cause."[254] Egan concludes that the language of Or. 31.14 is philosophically arbitrary and the expressions are "loose" as Gregory intends for the Father to be the primary cause of the source of his own being.[255] Egan believes that the McGuckin finds the key to finding consistency in

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[250]Ors. 25.25; 32.5; 40.43; 29.15.

[251]Or. 31.14 (250.302; PG 36.149), ET: Wickham, 127.

[252]Meijering, "Doctrine of the Will," 111. Beeley argues that Meijering's position has been the norm of interpretation.

[253]Norris, *Faith Gives Fullness to Reason*, 45.

[254]Egan, "Primal Cause," 24.

[255]Egan, "αἴτιος/'Author'," 102-07. See Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 248.

the language by stating "the process of origination and reciprocal relations is the dynamic order which is not only the very constitution of the Trinity, but its whole meaning."[256]

McGuckin emphasizes Ors. 25, 29.2-3 to establish his rule for how Gregory makes the Father and the Godhead [equivalent] in Or. 31.14. McGuckin proposes that Gregory is arguing for the divine unity by insisting "it is a personal communication of the divine nature to the Son and Spirit, timeless, immaterial, and incomprehensible."[257] The main concern is Eunomius' asserting that making the Father greater than the Son makes the Son inferior according to nature. He argues that the Father is the hypostasized Godhead communicating the Godhead to the other two hypostases. The point of Gregory's argument using causality is that, "the Son and Spirit have no other being except that which is the Father's."[258] He makes the distinction here that the Father is greater in *hypostasis*, not nature because "the causality is not attributed to the Divine Nature." [259]

McGuckin pauses in asserting the causation of the Son's *ousia* because of the simplicity and clarity in proper distinctions in the Trinity.[260] McGuckin argues that two of the Cappadocian achievements were to solidify the essence as a single, simple *ousia*, and define the proper distinctions and terminology for the Trinity. The second of these

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[256]Egan, "αἴτιος/'Author'," 106-07. See McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 29.

[257]McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 27. This is in opposition to the Platonic understanding of unity that lies in the nature itself.

[258]John McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 295.

[259]Ibid.

[260]McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light," 25.

establishes the Father as the cause and source of unity for the Trinity. The first contribution guards this communication in two ways. The Father is the cause of unity and is confessed to be the cause of nature in Or. 31.14 only so the nature is not left in the abstract or as removed from the three. He argues that this is the forerunner of perichoretic relations as the unity is internal in the Godhead and established by the Father being the source and cause of the Son and Spirit.[261] McGuckin makes the *Monarchia* of the Father the central argument for the unity of the Trinity and the constituting factor of the Trinity without loosing the distinctions of person and essence. His argument also emphasizes the unity being found in the simple essence.[262]

There are a number of theologians who believe the *Monarchia* can only refer to the three together as one God in relation to the world. Thomas F. Torrance's unique contribution to the debate is his argument that Gregory succeeds in opposing the Monarchy of the Father that was inherited by Origen.[263] Torrance argues that Gregory is weary of *Monarchia* being connected to the Father because it might cause subordination. He believes Gregory introduces a major shift from Origen so that *Monarchia* is not limited to one person.[264] Torrance argues that this represents Gregory affirming Athanasius's belief that "divine *ousia* is being considered in its internal relations."[265] This limits Gregory's grammar for the *Monarchia* to only referring to the three together in

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[261]McGuckin says, "causality is the Father's very proprioum and the root of the inner harmony of the inner dynamic of the Trinitarian relations" (ibid., 11).

[262]Ibid., 25.

[263]Torrance, *Trinitarian Faith*, 319-22.

[264]Ibid., 239, 328.

[265]Ibid., 321.

relation to the created world. Richard Cross agrees that Monarchy is a reference for all three so that it is a term describing God's relation to the creation.[266] He argues that the causation establishes "the indivisibility of the divine essence, co-coordinately common to the three persons."[267] Wolfhart Pannenberg argues that if the Father is given priority, the equality of the three persons is threatened.[268]

John Behr interprets the Monarchial teachings to be consistently referring to the Father so that the single rule of God is not simply referring to the one God over against a plurality of gods. Rather, it refers to the "One God and those derived from him, sharing an identity of nature, will, and action with him."[269] He interprets Gregory's teaching in Or. 29.2 as the Father from whom the Son and Spirit are derived. "The singularity of God," Behr argues, "lies in the fact that the being of the Son and Spirit is none other than the being of the Father himself."[270] This interpretation is very similar to McGuckin, but without the clarity concerning the distinctions between the *ousia* and person.

Meyendorf seeks to reconcile Gregory's grammar for the *Monarchia* by making the Father the cause of the Son and Spirit and also makes the Father the cause of the divine nature. Depending on De Régnon's paradigm he emphasizes the West

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[266]Cross, "Divine Monarchy," 115.

[267]Ibid., 109. He has a trajectory where Egan, Ps.-Cyril, Meijering are wrong concerning the Father being the cause and source in Or. 31.14 and argues against Torrance.

[268]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology,* vol. 1, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 279. See also Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 212.

[269]Behr, *Nicene Faith*, 2:343.

[270]Ibid., 361.

prioritizing the essence over personal diversity so that the persons are "only relatively distinct."[271] Gregory is paradigmatic of the Greek model prioritizing the Father. The Father, not the essence, is the "origin of hypostatic existence."[272] The Father thus becomes the cause (*aitia*) and principle/cause (*arche*) of the divine nature, which is in the Son and in the Spirit."[273] This position is difficult to reconcile with Gregory's teaching in the same way that Egan highlights. This would make the Father prior to the divine nature rather than the Father being the divine nature.[274]

Lewis Ayres emphasizes the Father's causality similar to McGuckin, but with more emphasis on the role of simplicity. Ayres and McGuckin both recognize Gregory's clarity in confessing a simple essence in the Trinity (as well as Beeley). The slight distinction is how it is used in reconciling the causal language with simplicity. Ayres disagrees with Meyendorf's thesis concerning two different models arguing that Or 29.2-4 is not from a personalist over against an essentialist perspective.[275] Ayres interprets Or. 42.15 as teaching "the three have one nature—God. The principle of unity is the Father, from whom the other two are brought forward and to whom the are brought

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[271]John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 184.

[272]Ibid., 183.

[273]Ibid., 183.

[274]Beeley criticizes Meyendorf's interpretation of being too dependent upon reading Gregory in De Regnon's paradigm in "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God the Father in Gregory of Nazianzus," *HTJ* 100.2 (2007): 213.

[275]Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy*, 246.

back."[276] The generation of the Father is limited to the personal existence so that it "produces the triunity as the perfection of divine existence."[277]

Christopher Beeley's recent work stands out as the most thorough study on the role of the Monarchy. He seeks to reconcile Gregory's role of the *Monarchia* by arguing that the Father is God proper and as such is the cause of the Son's person and essence.[278] The main difference between his and McGuckin's proposal against Meyendorf's is that the essence is not removed from the Father. He begins by prioritizing Or. 25.15-18. He argues the central aspect of Gregory's doctrine is "the eternal being and generation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, organized around the priority of God the Father as the source and cause of the Trinity."[279] He believes Gregory's doctrine of unity is grounded in the Father being the *Monarchia* and the primal cause of the Son and Spirit as he conveys his Divinity to them.[280] Gregory calls the Father greater "on account of his role

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[276]Ibid., 246.

[277]Ibid., 245.

[278]Beeley, "Divine Causality," 199-214.

[279]Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 211.

[280]Ibid., 206. Beeley's primary opponents are those that assert that the divinity is the Monarchia of the three persons. Beeley's main point in his article in response to Ayres' *Nicaea and its Legacy* is that causation and equality are not dichotomies as Gregory held the two together. See Beeley, "Divine Causality and the Monarchy of God." Meijering and Thomas Torrance are among many who Beeley is speaking of concerning the contradiction in simultaneously confessing causation and equality. See E.P. Meijering, *God Being History* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing, 1975), 112-113.

Beeley explains, "to set the record straight, Gregory's doctrine of divine causality entails the affirmation that causality and consubstantiality, just as much as causality and personal distinction within the Trinity necessarily belong together in one and the same theological principle" (*Gregory of Nazianzus*, 212). "The Son is also "God," because he fully possesses the divine nature that he receives from the Father" and The Father fully conveys his divinity to them, "causing them to possess the same divine nature, so that all three together are one God" (ibid., 206).

as the source of both the equality and the divine being of the Son and Spirit."[281] The position of Beeley emphasizes the causal priority of the Father among the persons so that the Father is seen as God proper and the one who causes the deity and existence of the Son and the Spirit.

His argument for the strong causality of the Father is based upon two problems that he believes have confused the role of the *Monarchia*. First, he states that Gregory's doctrine has been treated as if the Father is either the cause and ontologically superior or not the cause so that they are equal.[282] The issue is what the causal language necessarily implies and how Gregory uses the language within his own grammar. Beeley is correct in that these two options are not exclusive and that neither do justice to the precise doctrine of Gregory. Second, Beeley believes Gregory's causal language blurs the distinction of one-three and essence-person so the Father becomes the primary nature, primary cause, and primary source of the Trinity with regards to the persons and being.[283] He believes that the one and three categories are used "loosely" so that he "does not trouble himself over these distinctions enough to make any significant doctrinal assertions about their character per se."[284] Beeley's strong position of causation is seen

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[281] Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 209. He also states, "the Son and Spirit fully share the Father's divine nature and are therefore also God" (ibid., 206).

[282]Beeley, "Divine Causality," 201.

[283]Gregory establishes the Father as the *Monarchia* among the persons in Ors. 20.7-8; 25.15; 30.11, 20; 31.30; 31.30; 34.10; 40.43.

[284]Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus,* 223. Beeley argues that this is in contrast to Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.

in his criticism of Meijering for separating the hypostasis and divine nature so that the Father is origin of hypostatic subsistence and not the nature.[285]

Defining the Proper Roles of the *Monarchia*

Beeley is correct that the *Monarchia* is essential to Gregory's doctrine of the unity, but I think Beeley overstates how the causal language functions within Gregory's grammar. The Father's position as source (*arxe*) and cause (*aitia*) are central aspects of Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity. The *Monarchia* secures the distinction, as each person is defined by their unique characteristic (*idiotes*), and the unity, because the Father is from whom and to whom the order of the Persons runs its course.[286] The Father being the *Monarchia* is not the absolute rule of Gregory's grammar for unity, but must be understood in light of his other rules and overall model.[287] As seen above he has three different arguments for the unity of God. The *Monarchia* of the Father must complement simplicity and inseparable operations.

The beginning point of Gregory's understanding of God is the strong Creator-creature distinction.[288] His polemical goal in opposition to the Eunomians is to prove the Son belongs to the former category and also that the Father is not God alone.[289] In Or. 20 Gregory argues that the unity is based upon an identical essence among the persons, and

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[285]Ibid., 212.

[286]Or. 20.6 (270.68-70; PG 35.1071-72), ET: Vinson 107.111.

[287] See Or. 6.13, "For this [Trinity] too both is, and is believed in faith to be, one God, as much for its inner harmony as for its identity of substance" (405.154; PG 35.740), ET: Vinson, 107.13.

[288]Or. 41.9 (458.334; PG 36.441).

[289]This is distinct from Nyssen's argument concerning classes and communities. See below.

the distinction is guarded because the Father is the cause of the Son. This relationship of cause distinguishes the persons, while the Son's essence is the same as the Father's, as he is also declared to be the cause of all.[290] I will demonstrate that Gregory's grammar is specific and clear concerning the person and nature so that the Father is the *Monarchia* only in relation to the Son according to his person and does not imply the Father being the cause of the Son's divine nature.

Beeley argues from a handful of primary texts, the most important for Gregory being Ors. 2, 20, 25, because these are not in a polemical context. He includes the Theological Orations among the important texts in understanding the Trinity, but others take precedence over them because they are Gregory confessing the Trinity in his preferred terms and not polemical. Gregory provides a number of confessions where he begins with a clear statement that this is the confession of the Trinity. I disagree with Beeley that these should be prioritized over other confessions because Gregory is always aware of his larger polemical context. He is constantly arguing that his position is the "royal road," "the center," and "within the limits of piety" over against the other confessions.

Gregory's earliest confession of the Trinity is found in his defense of his flight to Pontus (Or. 2). He includes the confession of the Trinity in this Oration as a reason why he fled. A pastor must be able to lead his church in worshipping God by confessing him with clarity and avoiding heresies. Approaching such important mysteries brought fear and trepidation to the young pastor. It is already clear from this text that, even in

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[290]Or. 20.7 (270.70; PG 35.1072), ET: Vinson 107.112.

what Beeley calls Gregory's non-occasional confessions, he is always aware of the heresies of Sabellius and Arius.

Beeley recognizes this confession emphasizes the Father as the cause of the Son. Gregory argues against the Eunomian doctrine that the Godhead is limited to the Unbegotten by stating that his opponents are afraid that God would perish "if he were the Father of a real God of equal nature."[291] He explains that the Fatherhood of God would be robbed if the Son was ranked among the creation and the Sonship would be robbed if the Father was not his cause (*arxe*).[292] He continues his argument, "for he would be the cause (*arxe*) of petty and unworthy [beings], or rather the term would be used in a petty and unworthy sense, if He were not the cause (*arxe*) of the Godhead and goodness (*agathotetos*), which are contemplated in the Son and the Spirit."[293] He concludes the confession, "for both the unity of the Godhead must be preserved, and the Trinity of Persons confessed, each with his own property (*idiotes*)."[294] The important aspects in the confession for the present study include the object of what is caused and the distinctions between the person and essence.

Gregory's declarations concerning the Father causing the Son are stronger in this confession than most. In Or. 2.37 he states that the Father must be the cause of a "real God of equal nature" and in Or. 2.38 he makes the Godhead the object of the Father's cause. The polemical context is obviously focused on establishing the full deity

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[291]Or. 2.37 (247.112; PG 35.446).

[292]Or. 2.38 (247.112; PG 35.446).

[293]Or. 2.37 (247.112; PG 35.446).

[294]Or. 2.37 (247.112; PG 35.446). The argument continues proclaiming the whole of God must be confessed because he is salvation and the primary hope, Or. 2.40 (247.114; PG 35.448).

of the Son. According to his opponent, the Father would only be able to be the cause of others less significant and unworthy than himself. His emphasis is that this would limit the power of the Father if he could only cause things less than himself.

A key interpretation/translation issue arises over what Gregory describes as petty, beings or persons. The following phrase states that the Father is the cause of the Godhead "contemplated" in the Son. The key here is that Gregory appears to guard his language as he considers the sense of the term. Gregory's burden of proof is to assert that the Father is the cause of others who are like him while also not challenging the unity of the Godhead. If he literally meant that the Son's being or Godhead was caused by the Father he would be challenging the unity the divine nature and the status of the Son. The unity would be challenged because Eunomius' argument is that Gregory divides or multiplies the essence. The status of the Son would be challenged because he would be the product of either the will or the nature of the Father. Since his grammar elsewhere asserts that there is one Godhead or *ousia* of the Trinity, this argument should be seen as a strong assertion that Gregory then modifies to assert the full deity of the Son. The Son is fully God because he is the Son who shares the same Godhead. It is his unique characteristic (*idiotes*) that protects his deity and the Father's primacy among the persons. Beeley's argument that the Father is God proper and that he conveys his deity to the Son is a possible reading of this text.

Beeley believes Or. 25.15-18 is one of Gregory's clearest confession of the Trinity because it lacks a polemical context.[295] Many of the themes established in Or. 2

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[295] I believe the problem he runs into with analyzing Gregory's arguments concerning causation is his prioritizing what he considers less occasional pieces over those that are more polemical (Seen clear in his article. Says that the theological orations are "mainly defensive in character and consist

are carried over to this confession and others. Gregory is giving a summary of his confession here as he begins the confession, "define too for us our orthodox faith."[296] The confession begins with the clear distinctions and titles for the Father and Son,

> [*MEN*] one God unbegotten, the Father, and [*DE*] one begotten Lord, his Son, referred to as God when he is mentioned separately, but Lord when he is named in conjunction with the Father, the one term on account of his nature, the other on account of his Monarchy.[297]

Beeley rightly recognizes that Gregory's confession here references the Father as God first in distinction from the begotten Lord. This terminology is also seen later in the same section where the Son and Spirit are said to be "from God," a reference to the Father.

In this text Gregory establishes that the doctrine of the Trinity starts with the one God, the Father. The next step is to include the Son in the Godhead while maintaining his distinctions. His grammar reflects that of 1 Corinthians 8:6, "yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." The Father is sometimes called God in references to the Son, but this does not deny the full deity of the Son. Instead, it protects his distinction. The confession of Gregory makes this clear

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almost entirely of negative arguments" (Beeley, "Divine Causality and the Monarchy," 204). He proposes that one will find a purer teaching in the former than in the latter. I would argue the contrary as Gregory would be most careful with his terms and arguments as he knew many opponents and those seeking answers would be in his audience. I think Gregory's straightforward teaching on the Trinity for his followers would deserve a special place, but I am not sure this teaching exists in Gregory's corpus. The age was contentious concerning the Trinity and Gregory may have been the most contentious proponent of the Orthodox position. Beeley prioritizes Or. 25.15-18 calling it Gregory's "most significant single doctrinal statement" (*Gregory of Nazianzus*, 202). From this passage Beeley concludes, "Gregory characterizes the three persons chiefly by their point of origin and their resulting relationships to one another" (ibid., 205).

[296]Or. 25.15 (284.193-94; PG 35.1219), ET: Vinson, 107.170.

[297]Or. 25.15 (284.193-94; PG 35.1219), ET: Vinson, 107.170. I have included the Greek Men-De because it helps show the structure of Gregory's argument.

as he explains what the terms God and Lord mean when applied to the Son. The first is a reference to his nature that is independent, one, and the same as the Father. The second is a reference to how he is distinct and related to the Father.

Gregory's confession cannot place the Father below the first principle or make three first principles because of the order of the Trinity revealed in redemptive history and Scripture. The Father's special characteristic is being the cause of the Son and Spirit. This means the two persons cannot be said to be without beginning. This is "paradoxical" because "they are not (without beginning) in terms of causation, since they are indeed from God although they are no subsequent to him…but they are without beginning in terms of time since they are not subject to it."[298] Beeley is correct in that this orthodox confession promotes a hierarchy and equality simultaneously while avoiding the heresy of Arianism by stating the causation is outside of time. This is not enough for Gregory's polemical context because his main opponents were Neo-Arians.

The strongest causal language comes in the next section as Gregory tightens his confession to avoid Neo-Arianism. The first principle of the Father is further explained as he denies a "Judaic" Monarchy. The problems with the Judaic position are of two types. First, the Son and Spirit are absorbed back into the Father. This denies their real, eternal existence. Second, the Godhead of the two is stripped "as though God feared some rival opposition from them or could produce nothing higher than creatures."[299] The argument could be interpreted as God the Father producing two other person-divines as himself. This interpretation is impossible based upon Gregory's

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[298]Or. 25.16 (284.193-94; PG 35.1219), ET: Vinson, 107.171.

[299]Or. 25.16 (284.194-96; PG 35.1221), ET: Vinson 107.171-72.

doctrine of simplicity. Instead, Gregory is arguing merely that the Son and the Spirit are fully divine even though caused by the Father. Immediately following this argument Gregory makes this clear as the persons' unique characteristics cannot be shared by one another. He states, "in this way, the divinity of each will be defined in terms of its *idiotes*, the procession and the Sonship."[300]

Beeley is correct in his interpretation that this passage teaches that the Son and Spirit fully share in the Father's divine nature.[301] He is also correct to point out that at the center of Gregory's distinctions is the *Monarchia* of the Father as he is the primary cause of the Son and the Spirit. Beeley's interpretation becomes difficult when he makes statements such as the Father is the cause and source of the Trinity as a whole so that he is the cause of the person and nature of the persons. The Father communicating or conveying his nature to the Son and Spirit is less problematic if the understood in light of a simple nature that is shared by the three equally. Interpreting causation as communicating in this way is still foreign to Gregory as the causal language is limited to the relation between the persons and must remain outside of the nature. The Son must be equal with the Father in the confession of being fully unbegotten when the grammar is referring to the one essence the two persons share in order to avoid the Neo-Arian heresy.

The other major passages state that the Father is the cause of the Son and Spirit describing more explicitly that the two derive from the Father. In Or. 32.5 the Spirit is said to take his existence (*uparxin*) from the Father. The immediate context is describing how the three persons are distinguished by their unique characteristics (*idiotes*), and

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[300]Or. 25.16 (284.194-96; PG 35.1221), ET: Vinson 107.171-72.

[301]Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 205.

therefore, this term should be interpreted to refer to the hypostatic subsistence. Or. 40.43 makes a similar claim that can be interpreted the same way as Gregory states that the Father is greater because from him flows the equality and existence (*einai*) of equals. The 3-1 distinction protects this from referring to the divine nature or Godhead (even though this is a possible translation). Within the same passage Gregory reaffirms the 3-1 grammar with which one must interpret this passage. He states that he is fearful of how the idea of greater could be understood and guards against it being applied to the nature. He denies the terms can be used to divide the nature or be applied in all senses, namely "whereas it does not apply to the nature, but the cause." This modification can be seen as a necessary outcome from the 3-1 grammar where the Father causes the son in his person, but this language is guarded against the Son's nature and Godhead. The essence is not divided so that the Son's nature is not derived from the Father, which would lead to a confession of more than one Godhead.

One final text that Beeley cites is 30.7 where he believes Gregory argues that the Father is greater than the Son as the eternal source of his existence.[302] This is not a problem if Beeley is only asserting that the Father is the cause of the Son's subsistence. Gregory is clear concerning the person-essence distinction when he asks, "Is it not clear that the superiority belongs to the cause and the equality the nature?"[303] Concerning how this use of causal language functions within the Godhead, it shows how the Father is greater with regards to the causal relationship among the persons while equality is found

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[302]Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 206-07. Gregory's main point is that the father being greater than the Son must mean more than the Father is greater than his human nature

[303]Or. 30.7 (250.240; PG 36.113), ET: Wickham, 98.

in the one essence.[304] This distinction is only strengthened when this passage is read in light of Or. 30.2 where he gives a rule for how to read the various references to Christ and his two natures, "whatever we come across with a causal implication we will attribute to the humanity; what is absolute and free of cause we will reckon to the Godhead."[305] The rule concerning the natures of Jesus is that there can be no cause concerning his divine nature and the rule concerning his personhood is that it is distinguished from the Father who is the primal cause. These rules must be held together as a causal relation is used two different ways to protect the Son's deity.

Gregory employs the causal relations in his argument against Eunomius in Or. 29. Eunomius divides the language of unbegotten-begotten to argue for two different natures.[306] Gregory would agree if creator-creature were the terms in dispute because they reveal two different kinds of natures, but unbegotten is only the Father's *idiotes* and he is not the cause with regards to the nature.[307] Unbegotten cannot be a reference to his divine nature because it is only stating he has no parent because he is the absolute father.[308] He also argues that unbegotten cannot be the essence as it is only the denial of something and not a proper description of God's essence.[309] Gregory moves beyond denying what the causal relationship is and restricts it to the grammar for persons,

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[304]Or. 40.43 (358.296-98; PG 36.419). A similar confession is found in Or. 30.20 (250.266-70; PG 36.129-32) where Gregory argues that the second person is called Son to show that he is identical in nature and stems from the Father.

[305]Or. 30.2 (250.228; PG 36.105), ET: Wickham, 94.

[306]Or. 29.13 (250.202; PG 36.89), ET: Wickham, 81.

[307]Or. 29.15 (250.208; PG 36.93), ET: Wickham, 83.

[308]Or. 29.12 (250.200-02; PG 36.90), ET: Wickham, 80.

[309]Or. 29.11 (350.198; PG 36.88), ET: Wickham, 79.

"Father designates neither the substance nor the activity, but the relationship, the manner of being, which holds good between the Father and Son."[310] Gregory's distinctions of essence-persons and one-three do not allow Beeley's stronger argument that the Father's role as *Monarchia* includes his conveying the divine nature to the persons. The proper distinctions that establish the most basic safeguards for Gregory's grammar should give hesitation to Beeley's argument that God Proper is the Father. He is the first, primary cause among the persons, but these actions and *idiotes* are distinct from the *ousia* of God. The danger is to have an essence behind the three. This will be a danger in articulating an orthodox confession—but a necessary one.

The passage in Gregory that has caused the most controversy is Or 31.14. Its importance has already been mentioned above concerning the doctrine of simplicity, but it is even more difficult and important in understanding the grammar of causation in the Trinity. An analysis of 31.14 will help elucidate the importance of the clarity of distinctions in Gregory's grammar. Gregory's intention with the passage is to give a summary statement for his doctrine of the Trinity,

> We have one God because there is a single Godhead (*theotes*). Though there are three objects of belief, they derive from the single whole and have reference to it. They do not have degrees of being God or degrees of priority over against one

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[310]Or. 29.16 (250.210; PG 36.95), ET: Wickham, 84. Gregory approaches the same problem of equating the Father or unbegotten with God from the scriptural language of the Son in Or 30. The key passage is Prov 8:22 that states that Wisdom is begotten by the Lord. He responds by asserting that the only reality without cause is the Godhead for, "no one can talk of the cause of God" (Or. 30.2). He argues that Prov 8 has both natures of Jesus as verse 22 refers to "creates" and 25 "begets" and provides the rule, "whatever we come across with a causal implication we will attribute to the humanity; what is absolute and free of cause we will reckon to the Godhead." The Godhead is without cause and when referenced with the Son must refer to the essence and not the Father.

This argument is articulated by Franz Dunzl: "with these terms we are expressing *how* God is but not *what* he is in his substance; we are forming a certain notion of God, but have not exhaustively grasped his *substance*." See Franz Dunzl, *A Brief History of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, trans. John Bowden (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 106.

> another. They are not sundered in will or divided in power. You cannot find there any properties inherent in things divisible.
>
> To express it succinctly, the Godhead (*theotes*) exists undivided in beings divided. It is as if there were a single intermingling of light, which existed, in three mutually connected Suns.
>
> [MEN] when we look at the Godhead (*theotes*) and the first cause (*proto aitia*) and the *Monarchia* we have a mental picture of the one (*eve*), certainly.
>
> [DE] When we look at the three in whom the Godhead (*theotes*) exists, and to those who derive their timeless and equally glorious nature (*onta*) from the primal cause (*proto aitia*), we have three objects of worship.

The meaning of Godhead (*theotes*) is the center of the disagreement. Beeley's interpretation is that the Godhead is a reference to the Father and the other persons are seen to derive their divinity from him.[311] The evidence for his position is that primal cause and *Monarchia* are further explanations of Gregory's grammar for the Father and the concept of deriving is typically reserved for the person-to-person relation. This interpretation is problematic because the three are references alongside of the essence. This would mean that that Father causes his own nature and that nature of the two persons. *Theotes* is most often used as a reference for the essence or the Trinity as a whole. There is evidence within the context that should lead to the conclusion that *theotes* and primal cause in Or. 31.14 are referring to the one essence of God and not the Father.[312]

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[311]Beeley explains, "it can hardly be overemphasized that Gregory is not arguing for the unity or consubstantiality of three divine things in general. Indeed, such an argument would fail to answer his opponents, for the Eunomians are not objecting to the unity or indivisibility of a common divine nature, in the sense of a generic class to which three members belong, but specifically to the idea that the Son who is begotten from the Father can receive the Father's divine being (the only divine being) without dividing it" (*Gregory of Nazianzus*, 211).

[312]In Or. 31 Gregory uses *theotes* to refer to the one essence (Ors. 31.3; 31.5;31.7; 31.9; 31.11; 31.17; 31.26; 31.27; 31.*28;* 31.33) and never the Father alone. Primal cause is used for the Father in Or. 31.30.

The passage is a response to the question posed in Or. 31.13, "If we use the word "God" three times, must there not be three Gods? How can the object of glorification fail to be a plurality of powers?" Gregory's purpose is to avoid the accusation that the divine nature is being divided so that the three objects he is calling the church to glorify are not three distinct Gods or three powers.[313] He answers the accusation affirming one God with three objects of worship because there is one *theotes*. If *theotes* only refers to the Father, he has gained nothing over the Eunomians who already assert that the Father alone is God. Instead, his argument is insisting that the three are worshipped together as the one God, having a simple nature that is undivided.

Gregory argues that there are three "objects of belief" who derive from the single whole and have reference to it, not three distinct gods. The 3-1 grammar within the passage casts doubt upon *theotes* being the Father since the three objects of worship are each said to have their reference and derive from the one. The three are further described as not having degrees of God distinguishing the 3-1. Even more telling is his argument that contrasts the idea of having a priority among the three which the causality of the Father would entail.

The descriptions of the *theotes* continue to lie more within the essence realm because the will, power is not divided in the *theotes* to which the three have reference. Finally, Gregory says he will declare his position succinctly, "the *theotes* exists undivided in those that are divided"[314] which is a distinctive 3-1 grammatical rule. The image of the

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[313]John Egan's approach recognizes this context clearly. See Egan, "Toward Trinitarian Perichoresis: Saint Gregory the Theologian, Oration 31.14," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 89.

[314]This is my translation of the passage because Wickham includes the term "being" which is not in the Greek text and is misleading.

sun is set within the boundaries of 3-1 as well since a single light with three intermingled suns. The grammar of the Father's causal priority is not typically articulated in a 3-1 image, but in a one-towards-another relationship such as the Adam-Seth analogy.

The last two verses are the most important and complicated. Gregory sets them up in a men-de construction as he is emphasizing two different aspects of the *theotes* with each sentence. First, the *theotes* is said to provide an image of the "single whole" which is Wickham's translation of *eve*—one. If "one" is taken as a better translation, then the *theotes* in this sentence should be seen as a reference to the one essence within the 3-1 distinction. The second sentence contrasts with the first because Gregory says man will see three objects of worship when he looks at the "three in whom the *theotes* exists" as opposed to looking at the Godhead and seeing one. The main assertion of these sentences establishes three objects of worship who share the one single essence exists and follows the basic grammar of 3-1.

The problems are found in the ways Gregory qualifies the *theotes* and the three. While the language of the three deriving their being from the *ousia* or *theotes* is irregular in Gregory's Trinitarian grammar, it does not break any of his pre-established rules. The three derive their being together so that all are related to the same essence. This makes sense in light of the accusation of tritheism as the three are not three separate beings, but three objects of worship who all share the one *theotes*.

The other complication is how the terms *Monarchia*, *proto aitia*, and *theotes* are typically used. The usage in Or. 31.14 is not the most common, but it is also not the only time the essence is called the *Monarchia* of primal cause. The nature has been

called the *proto ousia*.[315] The Father is typically referred to as primal cause, but the essence is called "primal cause" in reference to being the creator of man.[316] The *Monarchia* and primal cause references are establishing these three who are the one *theotes* as God in contrast to creation. The three are one, God, and eternal so that tritheism is avoided as well as reducing the Son to less than God. This makes sense especially in light of the question from 31.13 that Gregory is answering.

McGuckin's interpretation is less problematic as he proposes that Gregory is speaking of the essence of the Father which is shared among the persons. The difficulty with this interpretation is that the *theotes* is not said to be degrees of priority, which would be the typical Father-*Monarchia* grammar. He is not arguing for the primacy of the Father, but the equality of the three. These arguments are not necessarily exclusive, but in this passage, the latter is the clear emphasis. The focus is on the nature not being divided and the persons not having a greater share or claim to the essence over against the other persons.

The *Monarchia* is an essential grammar for the Trinity, but must be interpreted in light of the every other grammar. Causation must be limited to the grammar of the persons as it is the logical outcome of the Father begetting and sending the Son. The Father's *Monarchia* cannot imply causation of the Son's divine nature because this would deny the full deity of the Son. It would be a derived deity, not the deity "natural" to the Son. The *Monarchia* is a clear safeguard for not collapsing the three into one as it clearly defines and distinguishes the *idiotes* of each person. It also provides order and harmony

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[315]Ors. 28.3; 28.7; 30.16.

among the persons in their works of creation, salvation, and revelation. It cannot be confused with the sole *Monarchia* of the Trinity as a whole were the three are distinguished as one Creator God over against all creation.

Conclusion

Gregory's grammar for unity is complex, but not complicated. He begins with the economy and the individual works of the three to prove that each participate in the unique work of God. He then avoids the assumption that three divine agents implies three divine essences by maintaining the doctrine of simplicity. This means the three persons relate to the essence equally and together. Finally, within the Trinity there is a unity among the persons. They all function from the same essence, will, and power. The Father, however, has a special role as the *Monarchia* among the persons to protect the unity of the work and the unique characteristics of the three.

Gregory's overall model of the Trinity consists of a number of grammars that must be understood in light of one another. He protects the mystery of the Trinity and the revelation with his rules. The doctrine is robust because the revelation of the Trinity in redemptive history and Scripture is multifaceted. He simultaneously keeps himself within the tradition of Orthodoxy while also building up the argument for the orthodox beliefs to strengthen the doctrine of the Trinity.

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[316]Or. 28.13, "Because though every thinking being longs for God, the primal cause, it is powerless, for the reason I have given, to grasp him" (250.126; PG 36.44, ET: Wickham, 47).

Gregory's grammar for the doctrine of the Trinity is summarized by the following:[317]

4. The oneness and threeness of God must be presented with clear distinction while also recognizing that there is great mystery and paradox in the one and three. The church has adopted particular terms that help distinguish the one and three.

5. The three are distinguished in Scripture by their names and operations. Redemptive history first reveals a Father clearly and the Son vaguely, and then the Son clearly and the Spirit vaguely. They are distinct in their names as the Father is truly and only a Father and the Son is truly and only a Son. This relationship is what distinguishes them as they are codependent upon one another for their unique characteristic. The Holy Spirit likewise is distinct by the relationship of being sent by the Father. The Triune nature of God is revealed as the Spirit reveals the Son and the Son reveals the Father.

6. The unity of God is seen in the persons' cooperation in activity, unity of essence and Monarchy of the Father. First, the persons all participate together so that there is one creation, one salvation, and one revelation of God. Each person has a unique "role" in the activity, but each has the same goal and purpose. Second, the nature of the three is one and the same so that all three persons share the one essence. The simple nature of God is not multiplied or divided among the three. Instead the three exist in the one Godhead or around it. Third, The Father is the *Monarchia* of the Son and Spirit so that there is order and distinction among the persons. The Father does not possess the Godhead uniquely or more than the Son or Spirit. His Monarchy is primarily seen in his being the sender of the Son and Spirit in redemptive history.

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[317]These continue from the first three theses in chap. 2.

CHAPTER 4

EAST AND WEST COMPARED

One of the growing trends in contemporary Trinitarian theology is to emphasize the Eastern tradition over the Western. The emphasis upon the East assumes a dichotomy between the Eastern and Western traditions, namely between the Cappadocians and Augustine. The strongest opposition comes from Christos Yannaras, John Rominades, John Zizioulas, and Colin Gunton who claim Augustine is the father of modern day atheism.[1] This claim is based upon the accusation that Augustine has divided God and creation in such a way that there is no real relationship between the two. They argue that his doctrine is tied to philosophical abstraction and syllogisms rather than mystery. There are a number of other ways that the East-West traditions have been contrasted.[2] First, I will describe the various ways that the two traditions have been

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[1]For an entire history of how Eastern theologians have valued Augustine see George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou, "Augustine and the Orthodox: "The West" in the East," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Press, 2008), 11-40. The authors prove that the East has only recently questioned Augustine's value and contribution to theology. Gerald Bray mentions Lossky and Zizioulas as two who have emphasized figures such as Gregory of Palamos while rejecting Augustine and Anslem (Gerald Bray, "The Trinity: Where Do We Go from Here?," in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology*, ed. A. T. B. McGowan (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 28; Colin Gunton, following Zizioulas, condemns him as the father of modern day atheism in Colin E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 40 and Gunton, "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," *SJT* 43 (1990): 33-58. Gunton's problem with Augustine is that his formulation of Trinity, "did bequeath problems to the West, and that in solving them some help is to be sought from the Cappadocian Fathers" (*Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 1-2).

[2]Robert Letham lists a number of ways the traditions are contrasted in *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 250-51:

distinguished. Second, I will demonstrate that Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine are in agreement concerning the most basic features of Trinitarian grammar.

Proposals for East and West Division

One obvious distinguishing mark is the historical difference concerning the role of the Spirit that culminated in the actual divide of the East and West in 1050 A.D. The main issue relates to the distinguishing mark below concerning the *Monarchia*. Neither theologian addressed the filioque directly as it relates to the 1050 AD divide, but they both include a strong grammar of inseparable operations that connects all three persons economically. Many contemporary theologians adopt the Eastern position against the *filioque* because they believe the Spirit is sent from the Father to do work separate from the work of the Son.[3] Some fear that the Holy Spirit's personhood is not

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1. The West started from the essence, which has precedence over persons since Augustine. Letham believes the consequence of this to be "the essence tends to be impersonal and the three are problematic . . . moreover, with Augustine, the persons are simply mutual relations within the one essence."
2. The West tends toward modalism and becomes more of a mathematical conundrum and is divorced from the life and worship of the church.
3. By starting with the three persons the East keeps the one and three distinguished. The three are known to be God because they all three act as divine agents.
4. The Monarchy of the Father is a key factor in defending the unity of the God and safeguarding against tritheism.

[3]This doctrine is often found among inclusivists and pluralists who argue that the Spirit is moving apart from Christ in order to claim that one does not have to make an explicit confess of Christ to be saved. The Spirit can carry someone to God apart from their explicit recognition of the Son. Clark Pinnock is an example of a theologian emphasizing the persons distinction to the point of separating them. See Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). Speaking of the filioque clause, he explains, "It does not encourage us to view the divine mission as being prior to and geographically larger than the Son's. It could seem to limit the Spirit to having noetic function in relation to Christ, as if the Spirit fostered faith in him and nothing more. It undercuts the idea that the Spirit can be active where the Son is not named and supports the restrictive reading of the axiom 'Outside of the church, no salvation'" (ibid., 261).

protected in the West since Augustine's analogies and teaching on the Spirit simply place him as the love between the Father and Son.[4]

Another common way of distinguishing the two traditions is that the East used relational analogies and the West was limited to psychological analogies.[5] Edmund Fortman states,

> Augustine's psychological analogy of the Trinity, with its focus on the oneness of God in contrast to the Eastern emphasis on the divine threeness and with its starting point in the divine essence revealed in the human psyche rather that the saving act of God in Christ, set the stage for the Trinitarian theologizing prominent among subsequent Western theologians.[6]

The analogies are understood to be evidence of how both theologians understood the Trinity as Augustine considered the different parts of being and Gregory used relations among persons to explain the doctrine.[7] This is used to promote the West being worried

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[4]Gerald Bray finds fault with Augustine for not giving the Holy Spirit true personhood. "The first two persons reflect each other, whilst the third reflects both the first two. The pattern which is standard for Augustinian trinitarianism, has had the most momentous consequence for Western theology. For Augustine, when all is said and done, the Trinity is best understood in the Person of the Holy Spirit who brings into conscious awareness a unity of divine being which otherwise might tend to separate out into distinct and even opposing principles. At the same time, this unifying principle of goodness, holiness, and love has an objectivity equal to that of the other Persons, and this point must also be stressed. The accusation of Sabellianism, for all its superficial attractiveness, simply will not stick." Gerald Bray, "The Doctrine of the Trinity in Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*," *EJT* 1 (1992): 148.

[5]Behr insists this distinction is legitimate. There are two different kinds of analogies used, but this fails to recognize Augustine exploring the different kinds of social analogies and the Cappadocians denying their own social analogies. John Behr, "Response to Ayres: The Legacies of Nicaea, East and West," *HTR* 100 (2007): 145. See George L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: S.P.C.K., 1952), 235-37.

[6]Edmund Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 141.

[7]Gregory uses an "Augustinian-like" analogy in Or 23.10 (mind, reason, spirit). See Richard P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy, 318-381* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 710 and n. 131. For an argument against properly interpreting and reading Gregory's analogies, see John A. McGuckin, "'Perceiving Light from Light in Light' (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 11.

about arithmetic and ontology whereas the East follows the biblical pattern of defining the persons according to their relations with one another.[8]

There are a number of different ways the two traditions have been divided concerning how each tradition used a particular philosophy. One group argues that the difference lies in the fact that Augustine's doctrine is based on an Aristotelian understanding of essence and the Cappadocians a Platonic.[9] Cross is an example of this group, but he uses this distinction to make sense of the two traditions and explain that their terminology is different, but their doctrines are the same. This is the most interesting distinction since the most common argument against Augustine is that he is too indebted and dependent upon Platonism.[10] For instance, Letham accuses Augustine of being so dependent upon Platonism that he never moves beyond simplicity and the

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[8]The main problem with this criticism is that theologians are focusing on the analogies of Augustine and not carefully grammar and confession that preceded the analogies. The main focus of de Trinitate is not the analogies, but what he concludes from careful analysis of Scripture. This tendency is seen in John Franke's essay, "God is Love: The Social Trinity and the Mission of God" in *Trinitarian Theology for the Church: Scripture, Community, Worship*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and David Lauber (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 109.

[9]Richard Cross, "Gregory of Nyssa on Universals," *VC* 56 (2002): 372-410 and, idem, "On Generic and Derivation Views of God's Trinitarian Substance," *SJT* 56 (2003): 464-80.

[10]Ayres argues that most modern Augustine scholarship does not understand Platonism as the primary driving force behind Augustine doctrine. The accusation of Platonism is still holdover from Adolf Von Harnack's criticism that the early Church quickly corrupted the gospel with Hellenism. An example of this continued criticism of Augustine see Gunton, Colin E., "Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West," 33-58. In *Confessions* 7.9, 44, he is intentional in converting from Platonism to Christianity and recognizes the major difference in how the Logos functions in Christianity. Augustine uses Platonic and Aristotelian concepts and terms to articulate the Christian faith, but often redefines the ideas to better confess the uniqueness of Christianity. See Lewis Ayres, "The Fundamental Grammar of Augustine's Trinitarian Theology" *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner*, ed. Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (New York: Routledge, 2000), 51-76. See also Basil Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation: The Faith of the Early Church*, trans. Matthias Westerhoff, ed. Andrew Louth (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1993), 167-185, and Michel R. Barnes, "Rereading Augustine's Theology of the Trinity" *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 145-76.

doctrine of unity in order to establish a fully Triune God like the East.[11] There are also those who believe that the Eastern Fathers employ Aristotelian primary-secondary substance ontology to explain the one and the three.[12] A third group accuses the West of being too heavily influenced by philosophy and not Scripture in contrast to the East.[13]

The most common way theologians distinguish the two traditions is to propose that Augustine begins with the one essence and the Cappadocians begin with the three persons.[14] Letham states,

> the traditional emphasis on an abstract property or substance, or a divine essence, standing under God has come under scrutiny in recent Trinitarian studies. Theologians today routinely critique the concept as implying that God is an isolated, solitary individual… hence, Augustine spoke of God as a substance that was eternal and unchangeable.[15]

These theologians state that doctrine of simplicity is the problem for the West and Monarchy is the complication for the East. This model sees Augustine and the West tending toward modalism and the Cappadocians toward tritheism or subordinationism.

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[11]Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 184.

[12]Cornelius Plantinga Jr.'s work is an example of this reading and will be analyzed further in chapter seven. Nathan Jacobs' article also espouses to this distinction and was discussed in chapter two. Nathan Jacobs, "On 'Not Three Gods'—Again: Can a Primary-Secondary Substance Reading of Ousia and Hypostasis Avoid Tritheism?" *MT* 24 (2008): 331-58.

[13]John S. Romanides accuses Augustine of following the method of understanding seeking faith because he starts with philosophy. Romanides, *An Outline of Orthodox Patristic Dogmatics*, ed. and trans. George D. Dragas, Orthodox Theological Library, vol. 1 (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2004), 37-39.

[14]Karl Rahner makes this claim in *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel with an introduction, index, and glossary by Catherine M. LaCugna, Milestones in Catholic Theology (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 58 and will be analyzed in chap. 5. Gunton says Augustine begins with the one and therefore overemphasizes it so that he is necessarily is a "monists" (*Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 39-41).

[15]Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 199.

Advocates of this dichotomy also propose that the West reduces the Trinity to an arithmetic problem whereas the East proposes a new ontology of relations.[16]

John Zizioulas argues that the Cappadocians were more interested in the Trinity than in the unity of God. He adopts the common dividing lines as "the well-known textbook thesis that the West began with the unity of God and then moved to the Trinity, while the East followed the opposite course"[17] John Feinberg is also an example of this paradigm being assumed without qualification, "remember that in the Eastern church, Trinitarian discussion typically began with the three hypostases, the distinct persons, whereas in the West, the unity of the divine nature was the focus"[18] Thomas F. Torrance believes the problem with the West is their starting with the essence and attributes of God and then saying something about the Trinity. He states, "the doctrine of the Triune God could be accepted only by the ground of divine revelation and set out within the framework of God saving acts in history."[19] Torrance believes the problem

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[16]John Franke argues that the Cappadocians opened the door of defining hypostases as relation so that a new ontology is introduced--relational ontology, "the eastern understanding was also characterized by the tendency to focus on the three individual members of the Trinity rather than on the divine unity" ("God is Love," 109). This argument follows from John Zizioulas' argument that the Cappadocians created a new concept for ontology as relation in order to more faithfully proclaim the Triune God. See John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution" *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act*, ed. Christopher Schwöbel, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 44-60; "Human Capacity and Human Incapacity: A Theological Exploration of Personhood" *SJT* 28 (1975): 401-47; *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church,* Contemporary Greek Theologians*,* no. 4 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).

[17]John Zizioulas, "The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity," 46.

[18]John Feinberg, *No One Like Him: The Doctrine of God, Foundations of Evangelical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 480. See also Thomas R. Thompson, "Trinitarianism Today: Doctrinal Renaissance, Ethical Relevance, Social Redolence," *CTJ* 32 (1997): 32.

[19]Thomas F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives: Toward Doctrinal Agreement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 4.

with the West is not grounding the doctrine of the Trinity in divine revelation and set forth within the "framework of God's saving acts in history."[20]

A related way of bifurcating the traditions argues that the East starts with the economy of salvation and the West starts with a philosophical unity.[21] Karl Rahner interprets Aquinas' Western model as teaching that all one needs to know about God is known in the essence and attributes of God. Rahner accuses this Western tradition of affirming a "mere monotheism."[22] Rahner proposes that the doctrine of God starts with the three because this follows naturally from revelation and "salvation history." The Father speaks his Word, and this is how the great mystery of God is made known in the world—by his deeds as Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The Father is the "concrete, unoriginate" God who communicates the mystery of the Godhead in his self-communication of the Son in history. This is the basis for Rahner's Rule, "The immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and the economic Trinity is the immanent Yrinity."

Catherine Lacugna has added what Ted Peters has called the Lacugna Corollary to Rahner's Rule, "Theology is inseparable from soteriology, and vice versa."[23]

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[20]Thomas F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 4.

[21]Letham believes Augustine fails to make three more than intellectual because he confesses language is not appropriate. Letham states, "whereas the Cappadocians began with the Bible and Christian experience of salvation, Augustine was driven by the Aristotelian category of relation" (*The Holy Trinity*, 199). Lacugna argues Augustine's ontology was wrong by staring with being and then going to person. According to Lacugna, his theology of the Trinity "was largely cut off from the economy of salvation." Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 199.

[22]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 10.

[23]LaCugna, *God for Us*, 211. See Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 124. See also Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 157, and,

Following Rahner, she argues that "[s]ince the 5th century or so in the Christian West, this ancient teaching has not had an obvious connection with other areas of theology—or with piety and liturgical expression of faith. When Augustine departed from the biblical and pre-Nicene practice of beginning with God the Father as source of divinity and began instead with the one essence, Trinitarian theology became principally speculation of God's inner life rather than exposition of the mysteries of salvation history (economic trinity)."[24] According to Rahner and Lacugna, the doctrine of the Trinity has been an abstract, and therefore irrelevant, doctrine in the West. Peter Jenson's doctrine of the Trinity follows similar lines by identifying God as "whoever raised Jesus from the dead."[25] The emphasis in Jensons' work is that God is identical with his saving actions and speech. He criticizes the West for allowing Hellenic theology, which is "an exact antagonist to biblical faith," to have too much influence on the doctrine of the Trinity. The two main errors of Hellenic theology included the doctrines of impassibility and timelessness.[26] These two rules have been major influences in contemporary theology and will be analyzed in light of Gregory's doctrine in the next section.[27]

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idem, *Social God and Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei, The Matrix of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 53-57.

[24]Catherine M. LaCugna, "The Three Personnel God: The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation," *RSR* 13 (1987): 141.

[25]Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 21, and *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *The Triune God* (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1997), 89.

[26]Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, 1:16.

[27]Robert W. Jenson, "Second Locus: The Triune God," in *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Philadeplhia: Fortress Press, 1984), 115.

The different starting points for the East and West have been traced back to De Régnon's work, *Studies of Positive Theology on the Holy Trinity* (1982), though many do not acknowledge the newness of the distinction. Michele Barnes criticizes De Régnon's distinction because he does not recognize that the early Western tradition is in agreement with the Cappadocians and wrongly attributes later Western traditions with Augustine.[28] Kristen Hennesy, in an article correcting Barnes, sets forth De Régnon's paradigm as distinguishing the Patristic era and the later Scholastic theologians.[29] The Patristic theologians argue for unity from the actions of each person and begin with the diversity of the persons in contrast to the Scholastic theologians who begin with the one nature and the unity of the nature. Hennesey shows De Régnon classifies Augustine within the Patristic model even though he believed the seed of scholasticism was in Augustine.[30] Hennesey concludes that Barnes is partially correct because the contemporary false paradigm is based upon theologians misreading De Régnon.

George Prestige points out a similar difference based upon the terminology used in the East and West. Prestige recognizes that East and West both "accepted the objective triplicity as the basis for their thought, and from that position advanced to the assertion that because the three *hypostases* were equal, they must further constitute a

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[28]Michel R. Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *AugStud* 26 (1995): 51-79. Thompson also recognizes De Régnon as the source of the wrong paradigm ("Trinitarianism Today," 9-42).

[29]Kristin Hennessy, "An Answer to de Régnon's Accusers: Why We Should Not Speak of 'His' Paradigm," *HTR* 100 (2007): 179-97.

[30]"By accentuating the scholastic debt to Augustine, De Régnon subtly argues for the scholastic debt to the Greek Fathers who had such an impact on Augustine's thought" (Hennesey, "An Answer to de Régnon Accusers,"190). She points to Theodore de Régnon, *Etudes de theologie positive sur la Saint Trinite* 1.262 (Paris: Victor Retaux, 1892-98). See also Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 212.

single identical *ousia*."[31] He argues that the Nicene teaching on *homoousios* was too firm on unity to accept similarity and "bound to lead to the dogma of substantial identity." Triplicity was the primary grammar and teaching of the early church, identity was secondary. Regardless of the different starting points, Prestige observes that "either practice is legitimate, provided that such expressions are understood only in a mystery, for God can be more truly conceived than expressed, and exists more truly than he can be conceived."[32]

The most recent trend among Patristic scholars is to divide the traditions by emphasizing the East starting with the Monarchy of the Father in contrast to the West starting with the essence.[33] The West bases the unity of the Trinity in the one nature while the East bases the unity in the Father as the *Monarchia*. This difference is related to the difference above as the Father's role of sending is the basis for the filioque controversy. Most Patristic scholars, notably Christopher Beeley and John Behr, propose this as the main difference. This is the most accurate distinction, but this will be seen as a mere difference in emphasis rather than a real difference in doctrine between Gregory and Augustine.[34] As seen above, the *Monarchia* is an important aspect of Gregory's

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[31]Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, 242

[32]Ibid., 274.

[33]Harnack recognized that the East starts with Father whereas Augustine begins with the essence early. Adolf Harnack, *History of Dogma*, vol. 4, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Millar, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1898; reprint, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1997), 129-31. Contemporary scholars who also see this as the primary distinguishing mark include Franz Dunzl, John Behr, Christopher Beeley, George Prestige, and John McGuckin.

[34]The difference in emphasis will be discussed in chap. 6 where the first principle of Augustine will be shown to be equivalent to the *Monarchia* of the father in Gregory. Doug Kelly is a theologian that recognizes that the Cappadocians distinguish the persons with causal relations while Augustine does so with mutual relations. He concludes be stating that these differences do not propose two different

grammar, but it cannot be separated from the grammar of the simple nature. Likewise, it will be shown that Augustine employs both grammars in his grammar for the Trinity.

Gerald Bray argues that the Trinity is universal Christian doctrine where the West and East can agree.[35] This is essential to the project as the similarities that most theologians over the centuries have found the two traditions to differ, but not bifurcate. My goal is to show Gregory's doctrine as different from Augustine in emphasis and articulation, not content. The central aspects of the doctrine that will be argued to be held in common by Gregory and Augustine include distinguishing between the economic and the immanent Trinity; beginning with the economic Trinity; defining the persons according to their revealed names, actions, and relations; and defending their unity because of their inseparable operations, simplicity of essence, and the *Monarchia* of the Father.

The question of how the traditions relate to one another is important as many contemporary theologians are choosing what they assume is an Eastern emphasis as historical precedent for their starting point for theology. These different starting points create unnecessary and unhelpful dichotomies that potentially move the grammar for the Trinity in extreme directions. In the words of Gregory, they take the theologian off the "Royal Road." Many theologians have given clear arguments for the unity of the traditions. The most notable is the Lewis Ayres' argument that the pro-Nicene party

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theologies, but only distinguishes the models from one another (Doug Kelly, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Grounded in Holy Scripture and Understood in the Light of the Church* [London: Mentor, 2008], 522).

[35]Bray, "The Trinity: Where do We Go from Here?," 29.

shared a number of common convictions even if they had different ways of expressing the Trinity as a whole: simplicity, eternal generation, inseparable operations.[36] I will use the summaries of the basic grammars established in the first two chapters in dialogue with Augustine's arguments from *On The Trinity* in order to demonstrate that these two theologians agreed on the most basic rules and convictions in their doctrine of the Trinity.

Gregory and Augustine are chosen because each represents their respective tradition as the high mark and definitive theologian of the Trinity. This comparison will prove beneficial moving forward. First, it will help the discussion and disagreement move beyond the different starting points of the East and West. Second, it will provide a strong case for beginning with a number of grammatical convictions derived from Scripture before establishing the Trinity on contemporary concepts of being and person. Third, it will clarify the differences between the two theologians are in emphasis and grammar, rather than in the content of the confession.

Similar in Method

In order to compare Augustine's doctrine with Gregory's, the theses that summarized Gregory's methodology and doctrine will be used:

1. God's infinite nature is different than anything created and therefore the manner and method by which man knows and talks about him must be different. God is not to be approached as an object of inquiry, but with awe and worship. Man is incapable of knowing God perfectly because of his finite and sinful nature. He is dependent upon God revealing himself and illuminating the heart in order to grasp an accurate vision of God. Human language is adequate for articulating truth about God, but it is not capable of describing the absolute nature and existence of God.

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[36]Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 281.

2. God is primarily known by his actions. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit demonstrate deity by performing activities that only God can perform (creation, salvation, revelation). God's revelation is trustworthy and enough to define the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. God has made himself known in redemptive history and actions in the world. Therefore, God is to be known as he has revealed himself and the church is to confess what has been revealed and then provide safeguards for what has been revealed. The primary source of any confession must be Scripture and any other terms or forms are merely grammars that are to be used to help articulate and safeguard the mysteries.

3. All confessions of God are limited in their ability to articulate God. Confessions should be seen as models that seek to organize and protect what has been revealed. No model is perfect and there can be different models and confessions. Scripture reveals all the content for the doctrine of the Trinity, but this content can be presented with various terms and rules as long as all of the content revealed is confessed and safeguarded. The terms and grammars developed by the church are always secondary to the revelation of God. Confessions must have two parts. The kataphatic declares what has been clearly revealed. The apophatic guards the church from confessing what cannot be confessed based upon what has been revealed.

The first three rules from Gregory will be considered together because they provide the basic parts of a doctrine of the knowledge of God. There are three matters that are interdependent in Gregory's doctrine of the knowledge of God. I will demonstrate that Augustine is in agreement with Gregory concerning these most basic theological elements of the doctrine of the knowledge of God.

Augustine's emphasis on God's otherness has led many contemporary theologians to discredit his doctrine of God because he removes God too far from the world. Gunton argues that his doctrine of God and creation makes the true God too unknowable. Brad Green, in his dissertation analyzing this particular accusation, provides ample evidence that Gunton's case is overstated.[37] Augustine makes statements such as "all these visions, however, were produced through the changeable creation

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[37]Brad Green argues against these claims in his dissertation, "Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine: An Exposition and Analysis of the Theology of Colin Gunton in Light of Augustine's 'De

subject to the changeless God, and they did not manifest God as he is in himself, but in a symbolic manner as times and circumstances required."[38] This should not be interpreted to mean God is unable to give real knowledge of himself as Augustine makes it clear that real knowledge of God was revealed in the Son's incarnation and in Scripture.

Augustine describes the way Scripture reveals the Creator with creaturely habits of speaking as "making something like children's toys out of things that occur in creation, by which to entice our sickly gaze and get us step by step to seek as best we can the things that are above and forsake the things that are below."[39] Scripture is the starting point for theology. The key to understanding what is being revealed is to move beyond the created order and the sinfulness of the mind.[40] The hope is to grasp a clearer vision of God from his revealed Word that is illuminated by the Spirit.

Augustine makes a strong distinction between how God reveals himself and his nature in himself. Throughout *On The Trinity,* he repeats the rule that God is unchangeable, outside of time, and immaterial. This is always in the context of stating that God uses symbols and images from the created world to reveal himself. Augustine states, "all these visions, however, were produced through the changeable creation subject to the changeless God, and they did not manifest God as he is in himself, but in a symbolic manner as times and circumstances required."[41] The Creator's nature is too

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Trinitate'" (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2000). See also Brad Green, "The Protomodern Augustine? Colin Gunton and the Failure of Augustine," *IJST* 9 (July 2007): 328-41.

[38]*On The Trinity* 2.17.32 (PL 42.866), ET: Hill, 2.7.32, 120.

[39]*On The Trinity* 1.1.2 (PL 42.820-21), ET: Hill, 1.1.2, 66.

[40]*On The Trinity* 1.2.4 (PL 42.822) and 1.3.5 (PL 42.822-23).

[41]*On The Trinity* 2.17.32 (PL 42.866), ET: Hill, 2.7.32, 120.

great to be revealed perfectly through creation, but uses creation to reveal himself in a reliable manner. This does not mean that the church must be silent concerning God because he is able to reveal himself sufficiently. The theologian's work is difficult because God has not provide a perfect, complete knowledge of himself.

Augustine explains the three levels of knowledge of God: God's knowledge of himself, man's thoughts about God, and man's articulation of what he is able to apprehend about God. He states, "the total transcendence of the Godhead quite surpasses the capacity of ordinary speech. God can be thought about more truly than he can be talked about, and he is more truly than he can be thought about."[42] Augustine's hierarchy of knowledge is based upon the hierarchy of being. God alone knows himself and man's mind is incapable of gaining a full knowledge of him.[43] Since God is spirit, the mind is able to contemplate the greatness of God better than words can express. Since God has revealed himself man can seek the unattainable, "people who seek God, stretch their minds as far as human weakness is able toward an understanding of the Trinity, must surely experience the strain of trying to fix their gaze on light inaccessible."[44] Augustine references 1 Corinthians 13:12 like Gregory in how man can only get a partial vision of the Godhead that only causes him to desire more.[45]

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[42]*On The Trinity* 7.4.7 (PL 42.939-40), ET: Hill, 7.3.7, 225.

[43]*On The Trinity* 1.1.3 (PL 42.821-22). He explains, "it is difficult to contemplate and have full knowledge of God's substance" (ET: Hill, 1.1.3, 66). And, later, "his substance . . . cannot be shown in itself." (2.18.34; PL 42.867-68, ET: Hill, 2.7.34, 121).

[44]*On The Trinity* 1.2.8 (PL 42.824), ET: Hill, 1.2.8, 70.

[45]Augustine states, "when we think about God the Trinity we are aware that our thoughts are quite inadequate to their object, and incapable of grasping him as he is," *On The Trinity* 5.1.8 (PL 42.915), ET: Hill, 5.1.8, 194. He argues from 1 Cor 13:12 that even Paul had to confess that he was incapable of understanding the fullness of the divine nature.

The hierarchy's lowest level is in man's ability to talk about the Godhead or articulate what has been revealed because human language is designed to describe the created order. This is where Augustine distinguishes between the content of the confession and the grammar of the confession. Augustine makes this distinction clear when he considers other confessions and states that they "differ in style though not in faith."[46]

The context in which Augustine provides the three stages of knowledge is stating his own difficulty in finding terms to properly distinguish the essence and persons. He finds the distinction of genus and species insufficient as well as every other name. They are insufficient because the terms are meant to describe the finite creation, not the infinite Creator. God has revealed enough for man to recognize there are three who are God and enough to avoid the worship of three gods. He primarily distinguishes the Father, Son, and Spirit with relations, but realizes he must give the three a more precise name beyond three "something's" in order to safeguard their distinctions. He argues that "persons" could be used, but it must be used "outside the normal habits of speech."[47] This is an example of Augustine providing a clear name to safeguard what has been

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[46]*On The Trinity* 1.3.5 (PL 42.822-23), ET: Hill, 1.1.5, 68.

[47]*On The Trinity* 7.6.11 (PL 42.943-45) and 7.4.9 (PL 42.941-42), ET: Hill, 7.3.11, 228 and 7.3.9, 227.

revealed about the Triune God. The language of person had to be used analogically for God as grammar rather than having a one-to-one relationship with God's being and existence.

Augustine's main argument and groundwork for the Trinity is Scriptural teaching that each person is fully God in their actions and relationships. Augustine is usually criticized for his analogies in *On The Trinity*, but the focus of the work is how Scripture reveals the three persons as divine. He states Scripture as his primary starting point, and this is evidenced in the first books of *On The Trinity* as he reasons through a number of key texts.[48] Augustine defines this approach to doctrine as faith seeking understanding. He begins his work with clear exposition of the most important Scripture passages that are being debated concerning the Son and the Spirit. He then seeks to provide logic and grammar for what has been revealed. He ends with searching for an analogy, but finds none. He articulates what must be said because of revelation, but denies an absolute comprehension of the Trinity. The emphasis on beginning with revelation and an understanding of how doctrine functioned like grammar allowed the East and the West to affirm one another in their different languages and models.

Augustine demonstrates as much concern as Gregory for interpreting Scripture and understanding the Godhead with sinful hearts and carnal minds. The "dirt of our sins" makes man "incapable of grasping eternal things."[49] His opponents had the same problem as Eunomius in that they started with carnal ideas and a "misguided love of

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[48]*On The Trinity* 1.2.4 (PL 42.822).

[49]*On The Trinity* 4.18.24 (PL 42.903-05), ET: Hill, 4.4.24, 169.

reason."[50] There are some Platonic themes in Augustine and Gregory as man rises above his own carnality and sinfulness to view the light inaccessible. Both theologians borrow concepts and language from the philosophical traditions of Plato and Aristotle, but neither theologian made one philosophy the primary groundwork framework for their theology. Both theologians find philosophical categories merely helpful in articulating the truths, but never sufficient in giving full descriptions. Scripture provides the content of the faith and philosophy only assisted in articulating the grammatical rules of doctrine.[51]

The East and West, as represented by these two figureheads of the traditions, agree in the most basic method of faith seeking understanding. They both begin with God revealing himself in his actions and speech. The three persons are confessed to be divine because each person performs the actions of God. The speech and actions of God are found in Scripture and they trusted that it is sufficient in revelation to establish the full deity of the Son and Spirit without teaching three gods. They both begin with the economic Trinity as the persons' divine actions and their inseparable operations prove both their distinction and full deity. Both theologians emphasize the weakness of the human mind and human language to ever comprehend or describe the fullness of God's being. Concepts and language from the created order can be applied to God, but never as it is used in the created order. Grammar is applied from the created order analogically to

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[50]*On The Trinity* 1.1.2 (PL 42.820-21), ET: Hill, 1.1.2, 66.

[51]Augustine argues for an interpretation of Prov 8:22 and 8:25 that is like Gregory. The first refers to the Son in the "form of a servant" and the latter in the "form of God," *On The Trinity* 1.18.24 (PL 42.903-05). There are differences in interpretation as Augustine interprets the phrase "the Father is greater than I" in John 14:28 as Jesus speaking from his incarnate state as the servant, *On The Trinity* 1.3.14 (PL

safeguard the doctrine of the Trinity, never to add content or meaning to what has been revealed.

As seen in the previous chapter Gregory, like Augustine, believes the Spirit begins the process of redeeming the believer that moves him to the Son and then to the Father. Both theologians emphasize the doctrine of illumination as essential aspects of how man comes to know God. The mind is naturally too dark and the heart too impure.[52] Matthew 5:8 and 1 Corinthians 13:12 are key texts spiritual text for both theologians because man can only see God as God reveals himself.[53] The goal of their theologies is to protect the doctrine of the Trinity and help the church worship the Triune God. A necessary aspect of this worship was the subject being purified and cleansed in order that they might gain clearer vision of God. Thus far, the East and West have similar beginning points in their doctrine of the knowledge of God. The next section will analyze the more controversial issue in contemporary theology concerning if the two traditions are similar in their doctrines in one and three.

42.828, ET: Hill, 1.3.14, 74). This is a difference in how the texts were interpreted, but does not introduce a difference in grammar or models.

[52]Augustine argues that minds must be purified in order to see God, *On The Trinity* 1.1.2-1.2.4 (PL 42.820-22, ET: Hill, 1.1.2-4, 66). Contemplation leads to the reward of a heart cleansed through faith, *On The Trinity* 1.8.17 (PL 42.831-32, ET: Hill, 1.3.17, 77). This is in contrast to the self cleansing Platonism, *On The Trinity* 4.15.20 (PL 42.901-02, ET: Hill, 4.4.20, 167). For further explanation of Augustine's reading of Matt 5:8 see Michel R. Barnes, "The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400," *MT* 19 (2003): 329-55.

[53]Hill sees 26 references to 1 Cor 13:12. Augustine says of Matt 5:8, "Proof that it is that contemplation for which hearts are cleansed comes from the key text, "Blessed are the clean heart, for they shall see God," *On The Trinity* 1.8.17 (PL 42.831, ET: Hill, 1.3.17, 77).

Similar in Person and Essence Grammars

4. The oneness and threeness of God must be presented with clear distinction while also recognizing that there is great mystery and paradox in the one and three. The church has adopted particular terms that help distinguish the one and three.

5. The three are distinguished in Scripture by their names and activities. Redemptive history first reveals a Father clearly and the Son vaguely, and then the Son clearly and the Spirit vaguely. They are distinct in their names as the Father is truly and only a Father and the Son is truly and only a Son. This relationship is what distinguishes them as they are codependent upon one another for their unique characteristic. The Holy Spirit likewise is distinct by the relationship of being sent by the Father. The Triune nature of God is revealed as the Spirit reveals the Son and the Son reveals the Father.

The above rules were established from Gregory's teaching on the Trinity and will be proven to be central to Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. Augustine sets forth the most basic requirements for the Trinity arguing that any confession must be "according to the scriptures" and in line with the "Catholic commentators." He begins *On The Trinity* with a confession, which establishes the proper distinctions and grammars for the confession of the Trinity.

> Father and Son and Holy Spirit in the inseparable quality of one substance present a divine unity; and therefore there are not three gods but one God; although indeed the Father has begotten the Son, and therefore he who is the Father is not the Son; and the Son is begotten by the Father, and therefore he who is Son is not the Father, and the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but only the Spirit of the Father and the Son, himself coequal to the Father and the Son, and belonging coequally to the threefold unity.[54]

The confession begins with the three personal names to argue for their unity of substance. Their distinctions are safeguarded based upon these names. The basic distinctions must be defined, and then further explained in light of the revelation of Scripture. In order to help the church worship the Trinity, Augustine provides specific rules for how to read

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[54]*On The Trinity* 1.4.7 (PL 42.824), ET: Hill, 1.2.7, 69.

Scripture and confess the persons together. These rules are Augustine's response to the arguments of opponents that focused on certain texts to teach that the Son was less in divine being and power than the Father.[55] Three rules from Augustine will be highlighted in their similarity to Gregory's own rules.

The first rule is "the working of the Father and the Son is equal and indivisible, and yet the Son's working comes from the Father."[56] Augustine begins and grounds his doctrine of the unity and distinctions of the three persons in their inseparable operations.[57] The Son coming to do the Father's work is an aspect of the economic Trinity that reflects what is true in the immanent Trinity. It is only in the three persons' work toward creation that the three are understood to be one. He begins with the three performing the same actions and operating inseparably to argue for the doctrine of *homoousios*. The primary argument that reoccurs throughout the work is that the three persons operate inseparably.[58] He always begins, like Gregory, showing that the Father

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[55]There is some debate concerning whether or not Augustine's opponents are Eunomians. Michel R. Barnes argues that these Arians are not Eunomians because there is no historical evidence of Eunomians in Augustine's area. Michel R. Barnes, "The Arians of Book V, and the Genre of De *Trinitate*" *JTS* 44 (April 1993): 185-95. I believe the opponents are very similar to Eunomians if not Eunomians. Augustine may be the only evidence of Eunomians in his Western context, but he could be responding to Eunomian argument he has read about. It is also possible that Augustine has come across the arguments of the Eunomians in his travels or correspondence and is intending his work to address numerous heresies throughout the world. The arguments of each theologians' opponents are similar, if not the exact same problem. Barnes recognizes that the description of the opponent is similar to that of Gregory, 187. Eugene Teselle argues that the opponents of Augustine in Epistle 148 are similar to the Eunomians. Eugene Teselle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1970), 294.

[56]*On The Trinity* 2.2.3 (PL 42.846-47), ET: Hill, 2.1.3, 99.

[57]The opening books of *On The Trinity* are dedicated to arguing from the inseparable options that all three persons are *homoousios*. *Homoousios* is assumed to begin with because it is the catholic faith, but Augustine argues for it from the three working inseparably in the economic Trinity and sharing the same titles. See *On The Trinity* 1.5.8 (PL 42.825-25); 1.6.12 (PL 42.827); 1.8.15 (PL 42.829-30); 1.8.18 (PL 42.832); 1.12.25 (PL 42.838); 2.2.3 (PL 42.846-47); 2.5.8 (PL 42.849-50); 2.5.9 (PL 42.850-51).

[58]*On The Trinity* 1.5.8 through 1.6.12 (PL 42.825-27); 1.12.25 (PL 42.838).

and the Son perform the same work, and are therefore *homoosious*, and then he moves to makes the same argument for the Spirit.[59]

How the three work inseparably and are one God is one of the key "puzzles" that Augustine seeks to clarify in *On The Trinity*. The other is trying to determine "in what manner the Holy Spirit is in the three, being begotten neither by Father nor Son nor both of them, while being the Spirit of both of the Father and the Son."[60] Augustine, like Gregory, recognizes the absolute importance of confessing the Spirit in equality with the Father and Son while also providing a clear distinguishing mark for the Spirit. There cannot be one begetter and two sons, so some distinguishing mark must be given to the Spirit to safeguard his "personhood."

Concerning the first rule, Augustine states, "this then is the rule which governs many scriptural texts intended to show not that one person is less than the other, but only that one is from the other."[61] The argument Augustine is opposing is based on the premise that since the Son is from the Father, the Son is less than the Father.[62] The Father begetting the Son does not refer to his being less than the Father. Rather, it is only

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[59]Augustine follows the same pattern that one must first determine the relationship and distinction between the Father and the Son and then seek to understand the Holy Spirit, *On The Trinity* 1.3.13 and 1.3.18.

[60]*On The Trinity* 1.5.8 (PL 42.825-25), ET: Hill, 1.2.8, 70.

[61]*On The Trinity* 2.1.3 (PL 42.846-47), ET: Hill, 2.1.3, 99. The context of the rule is Augustine refuting the axiom of the Arians: "The one who sends is greater than the one sent," *On The Trinity* 2.5.7 (PL 42.848-49, ET: Hill, 2.2.7, 101). His primary argument is that the Son was sent into the world to accomplish the one will of God that is inseparable, *On The Trinity* 2.5.9 (PL 42.850-51, ET: Hill, 2.2.9, 102).

[62]Augustine is exercising the same rule of Gregory that the Son must either be the Creator or the creature. He is either the Ruler a servant, *On The Trinity* 1.6.9 (PL 42.825). Also in *On The Trinity* 1.11.22 (PL 42.836).

referring to "his birth in eternity."[63] When the Father is called unbegotten it is simply denying that he is a son.[64] This rule establishes the ground for the confession of the Son being "God from God "because it makes it clear that this person of the Trinity is from the first person of the Trinity.[65] The grammar protects the equality and the distinction based upon the names and descriptions given in Scripture.

The second rule protects the grammars of the person-essence distinction, "nothing is said modification wise" but "not everything that is said of him is said substance-wise." Some things are said" relationship wise" with "no difference of substance."[66] Augustine's Arian opponents argue that the names Father and Son represent two different natures. This would be true if the names Father and Son referred to natures, but Augustine establishes that these names are references to relations, not natures. He agrees with the Arian premise that there can be no modifications in the Trinity, but then argues that where they see modifications in the names he provides a grammar by which these names represent necessary relationships. This correlates with his teaching that each name separates the three, even if they are one substance and inseparable in action.[67]

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[63]*On The Trinity* 2.2.3 (PL 42.846-47), ET: Hill, 2.1.3, 99.

[64]*On The Trinity* 5.7.8 (PL 42.915-16).

[65]Michel R. Barnes, *The Power of God: Dunamis in Gregory of Nyssa's Trinitarian Theology* (Washington, DC.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 119.

[66]*On The Trinity* 5.5.6 (PL 42.913-14), ET: Hill, 5.1.6, 192.

[67]*On The Trinity* 4.20.30 (PL 42.909). Augustine uses Matt 4 as an example of how the three persons operate inseparably in Sermon 52. See Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *JECS* 8 (2000): 39-82.

Augustine is working within Aristotelian categories in this argument against the Arians because they have adopted these two categories for their own grammar. His opponents have made the clear dichotomy that either Sonship is accidental, and therefore contingent so that he is created, or that it is referring to his substance so that he is different in essence. Augustine agrees with the dichotomy of the Creator-creature language, but adds a new category by which he can preserve the distinction and *homoousios* of the Son. He states that the Fatherhood and Sonship fits into the category of eternal relationship. Relation was one of Aristotle's types of accidents, but here Augustine has modified the Aristotelian language to refer to an eternal, unchanging relationship, a move necessary to protect the Son and the person-essence grammars.[68] Augustine had already questioned the categories in his *Confessions*, "what profit did it [Ten Categories] being me? None."[69] Augustine explains,

> I thought that everything that existed could be reduced to these ten categories, and I therefore attempted to understand you, my God, in all your wonderful immutable simplicity, in these same terms, as though you too were substance, and greatness and beauty were your attributes in the same way that a body has attributes by which it is defined. But your greatness and beauty are your own self: whereas a body is not great or beautiful simply because it is a body. [70]

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[68]An accident is always used in logic to refer to that which can be withdrawn from a thing without alteration of the substance. See Richard Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 19. Eugene TeSelle argues that Augustine uses relation like Nazianzen (*Augustine the Theologian*, 295). Augustine logically explains the difference more than Nazianzen so that all terms that do not imply relation are to be considered to refer to essence shared by the three—the simple essence (ibid., 296).

[69]Augustine, *Confessions* 4.16, trans. R. S. Pine-Coffin (London: Penguin, 1961), 88.

[70]*Confessions* 4.16, ET: Pine-Coffin, 88.

The categories were meant to describe the created world and were insufficient for God because he has a simple, spiritual nature.

The third rule correlates with the second, what is said in reference to itself is substance, what is said in reference to another is relationship.[71] Augustine states,

> But since the Father is only called so because he has a Son, and the Son is only called so because he has a Father, these things are not said substance-wise, as neither is said with reference to itself but only with reference to the other. These things are not said modification-wise, because what is signified by calling them Father and Son belongs to them eternally and unchangeably. Therefore, although being Father is different from being Son, there is no difference of substance, because they are not called these things substance-wise but relationship-wise; and yet this relationship is not a modification, because it is not changeable.[72]

This rule further distinguishes the grammar for essence from the grammar for person. The three are confessed with the one in a paradoxical mystery, but clear distinctions can and must be made. He agrees with the Arians in their logic that "if being unbegotten is different from being begotten, then there is here a different substance."[73] He counters the argument, however, "they are marvelously blind if they fail to notice that begotten can only be said with reference to another. Being a son is a consequence of being begotten, and being begotten is implied by being a son."[74] Being a Father to the Son alone necessarily implies that there is a distinction because one is the begetter and the other the begotten, but these names do not necessitate a difference in nature. The terms convey relationship and this is all that is asserted from them.

He further qualifies the rule by applying it directly to the names,

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[71]This is a paraphrase of the numerous rules that Augustine establishes.

[72]*On The Trinity* 5.4.6 (PL 42.913), ET: Hill 5.1.6,192.

[73]*On The Trinity* 5.6.7 (PL 42.914), ET: Hill, 5.1.7.192.

[74]*On The Trinity* 5.6.7 (PL 42.914), ET: Hill, 5.1.7.192.

> Father is only called *in himself* what he is called with reference to the Son, that is his Father or begetter or origin and if whatever else he is called, he is called it with the Son, or rather in the Son, so that he is called great with the greatness he has begotten.[75]

He makes the rule clear in another place, "whatever they are called to indicate their substance they are both called together."[76] Whatever is said concerning power, glory, holiness, etc, is said of the three together but with only one reference because there is only one simple essence. Whatever is said of each person in relation to one another is limited to their uniqueness as a person in relation to the other three.

The names Father and Son necessarily imply one another because it is impossible for the Father to be the eternal Father without the eternal Son. The persons are inseparable by their names. They are "always in each other and neither is alone."[77] Augustine makes the grammar specific that "names only declare relationships"[78] and that it is a "mutual relationship."[79] Interestingly Gunton makes the argument that Augustine makes the persons "relative" in this argument. Gunton does not make the same accusation of Gregory he makes the same observation and argument. The category of relation is used by both theologians to solidify the necessary distinctions based upon what is revealed clearest in Scripture.

Augustine's doctrine above separates the grammar for the three from the grammar of the one so that the persons are safeguarded. It also establishes the three as

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[75]*On The Trinity* 6.2.3 (PL 42.924-25), ET: Hill, 6.1.3, 206.

[76]*On The Trinity* 6.2.3 (PL 42.924-25), ET: Hill, 6.1.3, 206.

[77]*On The Trinity* 6.7.9 (PL 42.929), ET: Hill, 6.2.9, 211.

[78]*On The Trinity* 7.2.3 (PL 42.936), ET: Hill, 7.1.3, 221.

[79]*On The Trinity* 7.6.12 (PL 42.945-46), ET: Hill, 7.4.12, 231.

distinct from one another based upon their names and actions. There are strong similarities between Gregory and Augustine in the way they distinguish the person. First, the language of Scripture is seen as primary. Second, the names are limited to what they necessarily reveal—a distinction of relationship, not essence. Both theologians find the crux of the definition of personhood in the persons being relations among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Third, rules are established so that the different affirmation from Scripture and the confessions are placed in their proper place in order to avoid confusion.

6. The unity of God is seen in the persons' cooperation in activity, unity of essence and Monarchy of the Father. First, the persons are all participating together so that there is one creation, one salvation, and one revelation of God. Each person has a unique "role" in the activity, but each has the same goal and purpose. Second, the nature of the three is one and the same so that all three persons share the one essence. The simple nature of God is not multiplied or divided among the three. Instead the three exist in the one Godhead or around it. Third, The Father is the *Monarchia* of the Son and Spirit so that there is order and distinction among the persons. The Father does not possess the Godhead uniquely or more than the Son or Spirit. His Monarchy is primarily seen in his being the sender of the Son and Spirit in redemptive history.

The second major aspect to compare the two theologians is their doctrine of unity in the Godhead. Augustine combines the same three arguments for the unity as Gregory: the three operating inseparably, sharing a simple essence, and the Father being the first among the three persons.

First, just as the operations and titles of the three reveal their absolute distinction, they also establish that they are *homoousios*. The ascriptions in Scripture that declare the Father is light and the Son is light and the Holy Spirit is light does not mean there are three lights. Rather, "together they are one light" because there is one God.[80] Augustine's main argument that establishes the doctrine of the Trinity is that the three are

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[80]*On The Trinity* 7.3.6 (PL 42.938-39), ET: Hill, 7.2.6, 224.

united in their actions (1.4.25, 84). This is the basis for his doctrine of unity so that he only concludes there is a simple essence after establishing their actions are the same. The three being *homoousios* and acting inseparably are interdependent claims, "God the creator, of one and the same substance, the almighty three, act inseparably."[81] His method of faith seeking understanding is seen in his moving from Scripture to confession. He sees Scripture revealing the three as one, and then forms his grammar to best reflect what is incomprehensible.[82]

Second, Augustine has been accused for distorting the doctrine of the Trinity with his strong emphasis on the essence being simple. As already seen in Gregory, this is not unique to him, but this doctrine was important for all pro-Nicene theologians. Augustine's opponents were in agreement with him as both sides agreed that there were no modifications in the essence of God.[83] The one and the same greatness, therefore, had to be shared by the Father and the Son in a way that did not imply more than one deity or divine essences.[84] Simplicity distinguishes the nature of the Creator from creation, "nothing simple is changeable; everything created is changeable."[85] He affirms the same understanding in *The City of God*, "there is then the sole Good, which is simple, and therefore unchangeable; and that is God. By this good all good things were created; but

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[81]*On The Trinity* 4.20.30 (PL 42.909), ET: Hill, 4.5.30, 175.

[82]This is why he says to take a walk with him down "charity street." The purpose of the work is to move the reader from faith to a clearer vision of the Godhead, *On The Trinity* 1.10.21 (PL 42.835-36).

[83]*On The Trinity* 5.3.4 (PL 42.912-13).

[84]Since they share the one and same greatness the Father and the Son are equal and one, *On The Trinity* 5.10.11 (PL 42.918).

[85]*On The Trinity* 6.6.8 (PL 42.928-29), ET: Hill, 6.2.8, 211.

they are not simple, and for that reason they are changeable."[86] His strongest assertions for simplicity is "what he is, is the very same as what he has."[87] He argues that each attribute of God is identical with each other because there is only one essence. An example of this is Augustine's teaching, "with God to be is the same to be wise."[88] The quote is a reference to 1 Corinthians 1:24 arguing that the Son being the Father's power and wisdom is a reference to the one and the same power and wisdom of the Father. There cannot be two wisdoms because when the Father and the Son are combined, there would be more of God.[89]

The final grammar for unity that is seen in Augustine is his doctrine for the Father's position as the *principium* of the Trinity. He, like Gregory, argues that the economic Trinity must begin with the Father and that this relationship revealed correlates with their eternal relationship. *On The Trinity* open with the emphasis upon he Father's uniqueness being his being the first among the Trinity who sends the Son and the Spirit. He is the head of the hierarchy for the economic Trinity and the purpose of the Son and the Spirit is to bring man back to God.[90] The three persons are different visible manifestations of the inseparable operations "in order to bring home to us that the Father is the source and origin of all deity."[91] In his analysis of John 15:26,"whom I will send

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[86]Augustine *City of God* 1.11.10, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 441.

[87]*On The Trinity* 1.12.26 (PL 42.838-39), ET: Hill, 1.4.26, 85.

[88]*On The Trinity* 7.1.2 (PL 42.933-36), ET: Hill, 7.1.2, 220.

[89]*On The Trinity* 7.6.11 (PL 42.943-45).

[90]*On The Trinity* 1.10.21 (PL 42.835-36).

[91]*On The Trinity* 4.20.29 (PL 42.908-09), ET: Hill, 4.5.29, 174.

from the Father," Augustine indicates that "the source of all Godhead, or if you prefer it, of all deity, is the Father."[92] The Father is the first among the persons and is the source of the "deity" of the Son and Spirit. This language is already extremely similar to Gregory's as the strong assertions of the simple essence and the role of the Father being the source of the Trinity must be interpreted together. Augustine provides clear rules so that the Father and the Son are understood to be the one cause of all that is created while the Father is the origin of the persons from all eternity within the inner Trinitarian relations.[93]

Augustine's Use of Gregory

Above is a comparison of the doctrines of Gregory and Augustine. Before concluding the comparison, Augustine's interaction with Gregory's works in other places needs to be demonstrated. Augustine cites and affirms Gregory's doctrine in his later works. Joseph Leinhard, in his essay "Augustine, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus," demonstrates that Augustine was familiar with at least some of Gregory's work through the translation of Rufinus.[94] Leinhard mentions the two instances where Augustine may be writing with Gregory's work in mind even though he is not cited.[95]

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[92]*On The Trinity* 4.20.29 (PL 42.908-09), ET: Hill, 4.5.29, 174.

[93]*On The Trinity* 5.12.13-5.13.14 (PL 42.919-20).

[94]Leinhard basis this upon the fact that Rufinus had made Latin translations of 9 Orations Gregory of Nazianus by 399. Joseph T. Leinhard, "Augustine of Hippo, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory Nazianzen," in *Orthodox Readings of Augustine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Press, 2008), 91.

[95]Leinhard says that the impressionists approach finds similarities in thought, but he does not think this approach holds great value. A few examples of the impressionist approach are listed below: He recognizes that what is often called the Cappadocian settlement, "one *ousia*, three *hypostases*," is not found in Cappadocians' writing precisely, but is first seen in Augustine's *On The Trinity* 5.8.10 (ibid., 83-84). He

The more promising approach is what he calls the census approach where Augustine names Gregory about eighteen times.[96] In these instances Augustine is citing the names of the various bishops with whom he understands himself to be in agreement in his opposition with Julian the Apostate.

Leinhard emphasizes the textual approach as the most fruitful because Augustine names and quotes Gregory in his works against Julian. The first example Leinhard references is Augustine quoting Gregory's Or. 2, *Defense for My Flight*. Augustine quotes Gregory, "we are attacked within ourselves by our own vices and passions" and "by the law of sin that is in our members, fighting against the law of the Spirit."[97] Augustine demonstrates that Gregory is referring to himself after baptism in order to prove that the two theologians were in agreement concerning the sinful nature of man in opposition to Pelagius and Julian. In another instance he quotes Gregory's Oration 38, *On the Nativity of the Savior*, in support of his position concerning the Fall, "venerate the nativity, through which you are freed from the bonds of an earthly nativity."[98] These and other instances of Augustine quoting Gregory show that Augustine's primary concern on this occasion was predestination. He always cites Gregory as proof for his position and affirms his greatness as an orator and theologian.

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also cites another example where Augustine may be echoing Gregory in asking "what is procession?" Gregory asks the question in Or. 31 and Augustine in *Against Maximus* 2.5 and 2.14 (ibid., 84-85).

[96]Most of the textual evidence is found in Against Julian (422 BC) and Unfinished work against Julian (428 BC) (ibid., 86).

[97]*Against Julian* 2.3.7 (PL 44:678). *Answer to the Pelagians* 2, The Works of St. Augustine, I/24, trans. Roland Teske (Hyde Park, NY: New City, 1998), 341-31 (PG 35:493). Rufinus' translation, *Aplogeticus*, Oration 1.91 (CSEL 46:67-68). Leinard, "Augustine, Basil, and Gregory," 92-93.

[98] In *Against Julian* 1.5.15 (PL 44:650).

Conclusion

As demonstrated above, Augustine and Gregory share the most basic convictions and beliefs concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. Both theologians deny man's ability to know God perfectly, and therefore deny deductive knowledge for God. They both recognize the limitations of human language in describing God and the sinful human mind to think rightly about God. They rely upon God's revelation in Scripture and the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit in their pursuit to grasp a better vision of God. One of the most significant similarities in method is their understanding of how the economic and immanent Trinities relate. The church's knowledge of God is based upon his actions and the church must, by way of induction, then make conclusions about the Godhead. The economic Trinity reflects and reveals the immanent Trinity accurately, but knowledge of the complete immanent Trinity is outside of man's ability.

Concerning the articulation of the Trinity, the two theologians did not interact with each other's thought on the Trinity. They did, however, interact with each other's traditions and affirm that the various articulations of the Trinity were valid. One can see that both wrestled with similar opponents and came to similar conclusions. The unity of the Godhead was a priority for both theologians as they adopted a number of different arguments to prove the full and equal deity of the Son and Spirit. These include the inseparable operations of the three, the simple nature shared by the three, and the *Monarchia* or the *Principiuum* of the Father. While one of these may have been emphasized over the others more in their polemical contexts, each one played a unique part in their grammar for the Trinity. Their arguments for the three employed different

kinds of analogies, but their arguments from Scripture and their models for safeguarding the doctrine share the most basic convictions.

Any comparison of the two traditions concerning these two theologians must avoid an oversimplification of their models. The "textbook" distinction of different beginning points misses the particular arguments of each theologian. The usual conclusion from supposing that the two began with different starting point is that that East tends toward tritheism and the West tends toward modalism. This tendency is only found in those that follow parts of each respective tradition, as the multifaceted grammars of Gregory and Augustine protect the church from confessing either. It is only when contemporary theologians emphasize one of the grammars over the others that these accusations appear to be valid. The grammars of these theologians were not simple because they had to safeguard the infinite, ineffable Triune God from numerous heretical doctrines. The multiple grammars do not give a comprehensive description or a complete vision of the Trinity, but provide clear vision of what has been revealed.

CHAPTER 5

ECONOMIC AND IMMANENT AS IDENTICAL OR REFLECTIVE: RAHNER'S RULE AND GREGORY'S GRAMMAR

Karl Rahner (1904-1984) was a Roman Catholic theologian who hoped to recapture the transcendence of God with a model that blended idealism and Thomism.[1] His writings are important in light of the polemical context of his own day with the rise of the "death of God" movement and in light of his influence in contemporary theology. He changed the face, practices, and beliefs of Roman Catholic theology because of his leadership at the Council of Vatican II (1962-65).[2] His influence among evangelicals is primarily through his contribution in the doctrines of the Trinity and salvation.[3] Rahner, believing the old tradition (or scholasticism) was too influenced by Neoplatonism, presented significant changes to Christian doctrine. The most important change relates to ontology as he defines God in his "becoming" instead of in his "being."

The main focus for this chapter is to present Rahner's doctrinal changes and demonstrate how his method and doctrine greatly deviated from the Eastern

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[1]Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 240. They call him a "mediating theologian." He was trained by Martin Heidegger who had considerable influence on his theology. His dissertation on Thomas Aquinas was rejected because it was too influenced by Martin Heidegger.

[2]Ibid., 238. Rahner was described as the moderate theologian who stood between the conservative Joseph Ratzinger XVI (now Benedict XVI) and the liberal Hans Kung.

[3]Those influenced by Rahner's Rule include Stanley Grenz, John Franke, Ted Peters, Catherine LaCugna, Molly Marshall, and Clark Pinnock.

grammar of the Trinity as defined by Gregory. He claims the Eastern tradition is a precedent for his own model, but it will be shown that he has been selective in what he chooses from the Eastern tradition. His own doctrine will be evaluated in light of Gregory's doctrine of God in order to demonstrate that Rahner deviated from the Fathers in his doctrine of the knowledge of God, Trinitarian distinctions, Creator-creature distinctions, and the proper relationship between faith and understanding.

God the Creator

Rahner's doctrine of creation unites God to the world so that both are dependent upon one another for their "intelligibility." He affirmed creation *ex nihilo* because he was aware of its importance as a Christian distinctive and hoped to avoid the two pitfalls of dualism and pantheism by affirming the doctrine. His position stated, "God establishes and is the difference of the world from himself, and for this reason he establishes the closest unity precisely in the differentiation."[4] Dualism is denied because creation is not eternal with God, and pantheism is denied because of the great difference between God and the world. Rahner's goal was to avoid these problems in a way that draws God and creation closer together without losing a close relationship between the two.

Rahner's uniqueness in his doctrine of God the Creator results from his reason why God creates. According to Rahner, God creates "because he himself wills to impart

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[4]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, trans. William V. Dych (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 62.

himself by externalizing and so giving himself."[5] God does not need creation for his own being, but creates in order to become other than what he is. God's relation to the world and purpose for creating is tied to the very being of God. He asserted that creation *ex nihilo* is a "*grammar of God's self-expression*."[6] God creates as the immutable God who is not subject to change in himself, but is subject to change "in something else."[7]

God's relationship with the world is summed up in Rahner calling man the "cipher of God." His definition of this term is "when God wants to be what is not God, man comes to be."[8] God is not dependent upon man in order to have existence. This protects God's uniqueness as the one simple, *a se* God. However, God becomes dependent upon creation because he must have another in order to become something other than what he was through his experience with man.

Rahner's establishing man as the "cipher of God" follows from his existential ontology. Man experiences himself as a "person" by encountering that which is other than himself and then being united with it.[9] Rahner believed that this is essential for God to be called a "person," because "he experiences himself in another."[10] God's ontology follows the same "metaphysical theme" of being differentiated by another, returning to

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[5]Karl Rahner, *Further Theology of the Spiritual Life I*, trans. David Bourke, vol. 7 of *Theological Investigations* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), 62.

[6]Rahner, *Foundations,* 223. Italics his.

[7]Ibid., 220.

[8]Ibid., 225. Richard Muller summarizes this aspect of Rahner well, "God can become something he was not, man, for the sake of becoming more than he was." Richard Muller, "Incarnation, Immutability, and the Case for Classical Theism," *WTJ* 45 (1983): 34.

[9]Rahner, *Foundations*, 24-30.

[10]Ibid., 74.

oneself, and taking possession of oneself. He also described this process as flowing outwards to another and returning so that "the more the thing thus expressed can perceive itself, all the more does being display itself to itself as its own specific being-present-to-itself."[11] The difference between God and man in this regard is God creates that which is different from himself "in order to make the act of knowledge present to himself."[12] God does not need another because he is "originally illumined by himself and for himself,"[13] but freely chooses to create in order to become in something else.

God the Savior

The Incarnate Word is the means by which God communicates himself to and unites himself with man. Christ, the Word of God, is God's love going out of himself, dispossessing himself, and giving himself away.[14] The Word becomes flesh so that "this God expresses his very own self into the emptiness of what is not God."[15] The incarnation of the Son means God is communicating his own love, vision, and being into what is not God so that God is ultimately united with his creation.

Rahner believed that Christ's "short message" was only concerned with declaring the true knowledge of one God. This monotheism proclaimed by Christ was not concerned with metaphysics or the ultimate reality of Neoplatonism, but the primal

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[11]Karl Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, trans. Michael Richards (Montreal: Palm, 1969), 49. He is describing the function of man, but also relates to the "innermost life of the Blessed Trinity."

[12]Rahner, *Foundations*, 119. The difference between God and man is man encounters a being he knows as his own cause and is dependent upon.

[13]Ibid.

[14]Ibid., 223.

[15]Ibid., 223.

cause—the Father.[16] Christian monotheism is distinguished from Old Testament monotheism because "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the unique God, and just this is the denial of Judaism."[17] God made himself known primarily through Jesus so that any denial of Jesus' unique role was a denial of the true God who had revealed himself.

The true God that Christ revealed can be known generally as the creator from natural reason, but is known as the "eternal, personal, knowing, self-possessing primal cause of our existence" in his historical revelation.[18] The Father of the Trinity is to be considered the "concrete God, and him as necessarily simple, and absolutely unoriginate."[19] The Father is the "generating principle, as source, origin, principle of the whole Godhead."[20] Rahner proposes a strong doctrine of the *Monarchia* as the basis for his doctrine of the Trinity that correlates with his emphasis that the doctrine of the Trinity begins with the three persons. Each person is seen as distinct in his actions as the one true God. The Son's message points back to the one unoriginate God.

Rahner's Rule

His novelty in Trinitarian discussion has been coined "Rahner's Rule" which states, "the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity and the economic Trinity is the

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[16]Karl Rahner, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, trans. Cornelius Ernst, vol. 1 of *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 100.

[17]Ibid., 101.

[18]Ibid, 82-83.

[19]Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel with an introduction, index, and glossary by Catherine M. LaCugna, *Milestones in Catholic Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 59.

[20]Ibid., 61. See also Rahner, *Foundations*, 135.

immanent Trinity."[21] He proposed this shift because the Western tradition has preserved a corruption in the doctrine of God. Thomas' *Summa Theologica* introduces the doctrine of God as the one essence of God in his attributes and then discusses God as three persons. Rahner interpreted this presentation as teaching that all one needs to know about God is known in relation to the essence and attributes of God and affirming a "mere monotheism."[22]

Rahner proposed, instead, that the doctrine of God starts with the three persons because this follows naturally from revelation and "salvation history."[23] The Father speaks his Word, and this is how the great mystery of God is made known in the world—by his actions as Father, Son, Holy Spirit.[24] The Father is the "concrete, unoriginate" God who communicates the mystery of the Godhead in his self-communication of the Son in history.[25] The rule reduces the unity of God to the "missions" of the three so that each is defined not in eternal relations outside of creation, but by their distinct work and missions in the world. There is no immanent Trinity revealed in Scripture; therefore, only what has traditionally been called the economic Trinity is properly attributed to God. The Father

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[21]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 22.

[22]Ibid., 10, 16, and 25. Rahner also accuses the "scholastic" model of presenting a Trinity where any of the persons could have had a "hypostatic union" or "become flesh."

[23]Rahner proofs this approach to the Trinity by claiming a traditional partner in Eastern Theology. See Ibid., 58. The great divide supposed between East and West has been discredited in recent scholarship. See Lewis Ayres, "'Remember That You Are Catholic' (serm. 52.2): Augustine on the Unity of the Triune God," *JECS* 8 (2000): 39-82. See also Michel R. Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *AugStud* 26 (1995): 51-79.

[24]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 47.

[25]Ibid., 59.

is the one, true God that sends the Son, and the Son is not eternally distinct as the "eternally begotten Son," but as the "Word became flesh."

The Incarnate Logos reveals to man the ultimate structure of his own essence so that Christ is central to hearing a personal revelation from God.[26] Christ was a historical event establishing the "ultimate unity of being and knowing" between God and the world.[27] This revelation does not mean that more is revealed about God, but signifies that "God in his most proper reality makes himself the innermost constitutive element of man."[28] Therefore, to become a Christian in the full, authentic sense, one must encounter the "primeval Christian event," the historical appearance of Jesus Christ, because in him God is really present here and now.[29] When man hears of how Jesus transcends in love and forgiveness, he has a new and decisive opportunity.[30] This unique, "unsurpassable" event of Jesus Christ gives Christianity a unique status among all religions so that

> Christianity claims to be the absolute religion destined for all people, which cannot tolerate any other as having equal rights beside it . . . it must come to all people historically confronting and claiming them as their legitimate religion.[31]

Christ is the ultimate sign and revelation from God so that God's saving will is made known in the world.

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[26]Rahner, *Hearers of The Word*, 166-68.

[27]Ibid., 51.

[28]Rahner, *Foundations*, 116.

[29]Karl Rahner, *Grace and Freedom,* trans. Hilda Graef (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 193.

[30]Karl Rahner, *Experience of the Spirit: Source of Theology*, trans. David Morland, vol. 16 of *Theological Investigations* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 15.

[31]Rahner, *Grace and Freedom*, 82.

God the Revealer

Christ's role as ultimate revelation flows naturally from Rahner's doctrine of the Trinity. Christ is God's self-communication so that God can communicate his own reality to that which is not God without ceasing to be God. The Father's unique Word reveals in speech what lies in the hidden depths of God's being. Rahner also calls the God-man self-communication "categorical revelation." By this he means man moves beyond simply experiencing God so that it includes event and dialogue,

> In it God speaks to man, and makes known to him something which cannot be known always and everywhere in the world simply through the necessary relation of all reality in the world to God in man's transcendence.[32]

While God's Word is the highest form of revelation, Rahner does not allow for real knowledge *about* God to be made known because he remains the absolute, ineffable mystery. Christ's revelation is a sign/sacrament so that his salvific disclosure is not in the form of propositions, but is a "self-revelation" of his own being who unifies God and man.[33] The Son of God or Word of God is, therefore, distinct from the Father because he proceeds from God as a free act in order to unify God and the world. The Father creates the world, that which is different from himself, in order to send his Word into it, the unification of God and the world. According to his new ontology, Rahner redefined the hypostatic union as the world's self-transcendence toward God and God's self-communication toward the world.[34] The Word is God's free expression into the world so

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[32]Rahner, *Foundations*, 171.

[33]Karl Rahner, *The Theology of the Spiritual Life*, trans. Karl-H. Kruger and Boniface Kruger, vol. 3 of *Theological Investigations* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1967), 246.

[34]Rahner, *Foundations*, 196.

that the Father is present, yet distinct and incomprehensible. "The Father gives himself to us in absolute self-communication through the Son in the Holy Spirit" is, for Rahner, an assertion about God "as he is in himself."[35] The Son is described as "begotten by him. Not made out of nothing. He is the communication, deriving from the Father's essence (hence not through a decision, or through outside necessity), of the Father's own divine and total essence, of his 'substance,' of his 'nature.'"[36] The Father, Son and Spirit are, therefore, described as "modes of presence" or the "self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists."[37] The Son, as seen above, is primarily defined and distinct from the Father because he proceeds from his essence and is God's self-communication in the world. Based upon Rahner's Rule, the Son's relation to the Father is defined by his mission in the world as the incarnate one.[38]

Rahner defined Christ further by his role as the transcendent man. Another rule attributed to Rahner is "Christology is transcendent anthropology and anthropology is deficient Christology."[39] Christ is God's "historic" self-communication to the world so that he is the synthesis of God and man. The basic human hope and experience of Christ "sustain and justify each other."[40] Rahner asserted that from the beginning humanity was

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[35]Ibid., 137.

[36]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 61.

[37]Ibid., 35.

[38]Ibid., 23.

[39]See Colin J. D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking Out the Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 176.

[40]Rahner, *Experience of the Spirit*, 15.

"the constitutive, real symbol of the Logos himself."[41] Christ is the man who loves and is faithful, "whose whole human existence, embodied in word and action, is open to the mystery which he himself calls, 'Father,' and to which he surrenders himself in trust even when his world is shattered."[42] He is "the initial beginning and the definitive triumph of the movement of the world's self-transcendence into absolute closeness to the mystery of God."[43] Christ had to "achieve the ultimate transcendency of his nature, "divinized" as it is by God's self-bestowal . . . For it is in this that he exists, is aware of himself, and realizes himself."[44] Christ is the supreme experience and example of humanity transcending toward God and the connection for God and the world. The Father has communicated himself in Christ to the world, and Christ has served as the proper human response to God so that God and man are now united in fellowship.

Christ's work is God's self-communication of a "vision and love" in which man can then participate. Christ is transcendent anthropology in the sense that he exercises the potential to hear and obey God, and exemplifies and symbolizes all men in that event. In this way, Christ is the pioneer of transcending into the "infinite horizon" instead of the pioneer of our faith who serves as man's advocate, high priest, and mediator at the Right-hand of the Father. The cross is the supreme symbol for how

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[41]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 33.

[42]Rahner, *Experience of the Spirit*, 63.

[43]Rahner, *Foundations*, 181.

[44]Rahner, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, 64.

followers of Christ should deny themselves.[45] Salvation, therefore, is the final and definitive validity of a person's true self-understanding and true self-realization in freedom before God by the fact that he accepts his own self as it is disclosed and offered to him in the choice of transcendence as interpreted in freedom.[46]

Rahner's doctrine of salvation is the logical outcome of his doctrine of God as Creator and Trinity. The Father is the origin of all and his own self-expression requires man as the "cipher of God" and his Word among men as the hypostatic union of God and man. The hypostatic union represents God's Word being fully communicated and man being completely open to that Word in one person so that the incarnation is not understood as two natures one person, but as an existential unity of God and man. The Father communicating to the world in the Logos means that all men receive this grace and revelation even outside historical knowledge because Christ is always present in every reality as God's self-communication.[47] The Father and the world are initially and ultimately connected by the Father's Word becoming flesh.

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[45]Rahner, *God, Christ, Mary and Grace*, 17. Rahner interprets the *cross* as "the stark demand for the human person to surrender self unconditionally before the mystery of his being that he can never bring under his control, since he is finite and burdened with guilt."

[46]Rahner, *Foundations*, 39.

[47]Ibid., 228. George Lindbeck categorized Rahner as an experience-expressivist theologian. His model is an example a foundational, non-discursive experience, which highlights, in turn, the irreducibly subjective component of experiential-expressivism. Lindbeck rejects such a unilateral relationship between experience and language. Instead, Lindbeck believes language is a communal phenomenon shaping who we are by its distinctive patterns of grammar, syntax and semantics. A key difference between Lindbeck's understanding of doctrine as grammar and Rahner is that the former sees doctrine as articulate truths analogical. The latter exercises univocal language and experience. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1984), 32. See also James J. Buckley, "Doctrine in the Diaspora," *TT* 49 (1985): 447-48.

Paul Molnar gives Rahner credit for placing the Trinity at the center of Christian doctrine, but criticizes him for then removing it with his emphasis on transcendent experience. Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 50-59. Balthasaar likewise accuses Rahner of flattening Christianity because it is experience based. He says Rahner has tied the love for God too closely with love

As a model, Rahner's doctrine of God is consistent with his methodology as God's being is not outside of the created order, but is being expressed and is in the process of becoming within the created order. His model is also connected to his doctrine of salvation and spirituality, and therefore fulfills requirements of the LaCugna Corollary to Rahner's rule, "Theology is inseparable from soteriology, and vice versa."[48] Rahner's emphasis on a relational God and man being necessarily united to him, and therefore one another, makes him consistent. His model will be analyzed and demonstrated as inconsistent with the Cappadocian precedent he claims.

A comparison of the two theologians is difficult because Rahner is introducing a radically new ontology. The comparison is rectified because Rahner claims that the precedent for his new ontology is the Eastern tradition, specifically the Cappadocians. The main goal of the comparison is to determine which theologian provides a better grammar that safeguards the full deity and distinctions of the persons and promotes a worship of the Triune God that saves.

Before articulating the major differences, it should be noted that there are some basic similarities. First, both theologians start with the three, their actions, and their names to define their distinct identity. Second, both emphasize that among the three, the Father plays a distinct role as the *Monarchia* so that he is the source and cause of the Son and Sprit. These differences will be proven to be minimal because of how they interpret

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for man. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cordula oder der Ernstfall, Kriterien* 2 (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966. ET: The Moment of Christian Witness, trans. Richard Beckley [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1969]).

[48]Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991), 211. See also Ted Peters, *God as Trinity* (Louisville: Westminster, 1993), 124 and Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 157.

and incorporate the *Monarchia* and actions in their models for the Trinity. Another similarity is that they both seek to protect the Trinity in light of present threats. A key difference is that Rahner appears to be more dependent upon philosophical presuppositions than upon Scripture, whereas Gregory begins with Scripture and uses philosophical concepts to articulate what he understands to be reveals.

Economic and Immanent: Identical or Reflective

Rahner's most significant influence in contemporary theology is his Trinitarian rule, "the immanent is the economic and the economic is the immanent."[49] There is some speculation concerning what this rules means and how it should be applied. The strict realist interpretation states that the rule is describing God as he is. The anti-realist reading states that Rahner is not describing God as he is, but is only describing the method by which one knows God. Randal Rauser has provided helpful criteria for judging the rule.

> In order for the Rule to be judged worthwhile for theology, we must first identify an interpretation if it that meets two criteria: (1) it must be interesting, meaning either (a) it tells us something important we would not know otherwise or (b) it reinforces something important we already know with unique power and insight; (2) it must be at least possibly true.[50]

Rauser argues that if the strictly realist interpretation is applied, Rahner's rule is either *trivial* or *absurd*.[51] If it is saying that God's revelation reveals the immanent nature

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[49]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 16.

[50]Randal Rasuer, "Rahner's Rule: An Emperor without Clothes?" *IJST* 7 (2005): 81-82.

[51]Ibid., 86. He explains, "If you think about it, Rahner's Rule, which says that 'the economic trinity is the immanent trinity', is a statement of theological realism, that what we know about God is not misleading. In other words, the economic trinity *is* the essential trinity; what we know about God is a reliable guide to the divine nature."

accurately, it would be *trivial* because the rule would not have any significant contribution. Rahner's Rule would simply be saying that God's revelation is not misleading. This is a difficult interpretation because Rahner does not interpret or employ the rule this way. The rule would be *absurd* if Rahner argues that God's entire nature is revealed in his actions so that his being is his actions. This appears to be the most likely reading of the rule as Rahner interpreted it and employed it.[52] Walter Kasper interprets Rahner's Rule in this way when he states,

> We may therefore rephrase Rahner's basic axiom as follows: in the economic self-communication the inner-trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely under the veil of historical works, signs, and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man Jesus of Nazareth.[53]

The other option is the anti-realist interpretation of Moltmann and LaCugna. They interpret the rule to mean that all that is revealed is the economic Trinity and it is divorced from the immanent Trinity.[54] God's true nature is only available in the eschaton. The last two options would be impossible because his actions would be identical with his nature or completely separated from it.

Gregory's doctrine of revelation and man's knowledge of God agrees with the second half of the rule, that God's actions accurately reveal his nature. He would

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[52]John Thompson also reads Rahner in this way and argues that one of his major failures is not providing any distinction between the immanent and the economic. The risk is that he makes "God's actions ad extra a necessity of his being rather than a freely willed decision" (Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], 27).

Helmut Thielicke argues that "the economic trinity becomes a heretical alternative only when it integrates and completely absorbs the being of god into the event of revelation" (Helmut Thielicke, *Doctrine of God and Christ*, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley, vol. 2 of *The Evangelical Faith* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1977], 181).

[53]"The need is to maintain not only the kenotic character of the economic trinity but also its character of graciousness and freedom in relation to the immanent trinity and thus do justice to the immanent mystery of God (not behind) his self-revelation" (Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell [New York: Crossroad, 1989], 276).

adamantly deny the first half that reduces the actions to the nature or completely separates his actions from his nature. Gregory believed that "God-in-himself" was revealed partially in his actions and speech as "God-for-us." God must reveal himself truly, but the revelation is never total.

By reducing the persons of the immanent Trinity to their work as the economic Trinity, Rahner has altered the classical methodology of God by introducing a new ontology. One of the consequences of reducing the immanent nature to be identical with the economic is confusion over how the three are united as one while in keeping with the confession of *homoousios*. Another consequence is confusion over what can be said about God and what must be protected as mystery. Rahner states that knowledge of God is a mystery, but also asserts that the Triune God has revealed his entire self to man in his actions, which means humans could have a complete knowledge of God. Rahner's Rule, and the grammar that it includes, results in problems in the doctrine of the Trinity. First, it fails to properly safeguard the Trinitarian distinctions for one God that eternally exists as three persons. Second, it confuses the Creator-creature difference in being and the language that is used to describe each.

Trinitarian Distinctions

A major difference between Gregory and Rahner is how they begin their doctrines of the Trinity with the actions of the three persons. Rahner claims that beginning with the three persons is the Eastern starting point and follows logically from redemptive history. Rahner's doctrine of the three is limited to how the three have acted

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[54]Ibid., 91-92.

towards creation so that he only defines the Son and Spirit by their missions. This flattens the nature of the redemptive history that Gregory proposes and sees the immanent God becoming more revealed as redemptive history progresses. The three persons have been working toward the same end since the beginning of creation, but the actions have progressively revealed the Son and then the Spirit as history has progressed. Rahner's doctrine does not allow for a progressive revelation of the mystery of God because God's full personhood is revealed in the actions of the Son and Spirit throughout redemptive history.

Gregory's doctrine of the three in their actions provides a proper grounding for their eternal distinctions, as the actions of the three are derived from their eternal relationships apart from creation. Rahner's preference for mode over person and his identification of the Son and the Spirit, have brought the accusation of modalism.[55] Rahner's grammar for the three only grounds the three in relation to the created order so that the eternal identities of the Son and Spirit are not safeguarded. Rahner proposes that the three persons are distinguished by their actions and, therefore, their missions or roles. His confession of the Son's distinguishing mark of the uniquely begotten is reduced to mean he is the Logos incarnate. This causes some doubt as to the Son's status of deity and his aseity because it is not clear that "there was not a time when the Son was not." It is not until God proper, the Father, decides to create the world that the Son's existence is

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[55]Jürgen Motlmann says that he is not a modalist of the Sabellian kind, but he is an "idealistic modalist" in *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), 144-48. Rahner states, "The more, therefore, man experiences himself as subject - even if finite subject - over against the world of objects he has subjected, the more he recognizes in God, not the supreme substance of the world, but the infinite, perfect and absolute subject, namely the archetype of himself" (*The Trinity*, 15). See also Marc A. Pugliese, "Is Karl Rahner a Modalist?" *ITQ* 68 (2003), 229-49.

necessary as the medium by which God relates intimately with the created order. The Son's role of being the self-expression of the Father does not give him the full status of divine personhood because he is the means by which the Father gains a new experience in the world. The eternal identity of the Son as the eternally begotten Son of the Father is in question because his primary identity is tied to the Father's relationship with the world.

Rahner defines person as one who experiences himself in another, so that the Father fulfills his personhood by creating another with whom he can relate.[56] This loosens the safeguard as to how the Son and Spirit have a real personhood because they are means by which the one true God, the Father, has a personal experience and relationship with the world. Their identity is determined by the Father's relationship with the world. This brings some doubt upon the full deity of the Son and Spirit because they appear to be contingent upon God's decision to create. Rahner avoids the term person because he does not want the contemporary definition to be used for the Trinity. While the denial of the term person may have been wise, he has not supplied a proper grammar to safeguard the Son and Spirit's eternal identity and deity.

The accusation of modalism is understandable because he does not give the Son and the Spirit the same status of person as the Father. However, he presents three distinct agents. The more serious error would be Rahner's doctrine of the Son is clearly open to the accusations Arianism. God's Triune being needs man for self-expression since humanity functions as "the grammar of God's self-communication." Since the Son's role in Rahner's theology is reduced to being the Father's expression to man and the Father is God proper, his own eternal status is left in question. He has become a

Demiurge that God has literally begotten in order to create and represent himself in his creation. The Son is only distinct and defined by his *becoming* man so that humanity is essential for the being of the second person. The working out of Rahner's own rule entails that the Tri-unity of the Godhead is dependent upon the creation of the world because there is no Trinity prior to creation, only a Trinity as God expresses himself in mission through the world. Rahner's doctrine of the Trinity is not guarded enough to have a Triune God independent from the world. The Father alone appears to be the sole Creator *ex nihilo* independent of the world.

Gregory's interpretation of the actions is more dynamic than Rahner's economic persons because he does not limit their action to only distinguishing them. His first argument is that the Son and Spirit must be of the single, same essence as the Father if they are performing the same actions. The second argument is that the actions of the three distinguish and define them so that eternal relations are revealed in the actions and order. The Father-Son language is a real, mutual relationship that exists in the immanent Trinity so that the two are interdependent. The relationship is not dependent upon their missions to the world, but is reflected by them. The actions necessarily reveal real persons and relationships that is "behind" the actions in this world. The persons of the Trinity have eternal relations that their missions reflect so that the Father sends the eternally generated Son. The Spirit is also sent, but his eternal relation cannot be generation because this would make him a brother of the Son and confuse the hierarchical order of the Trinity as seen in the economic Trinity.

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[56]Rahner, *The Trinity*, 74. See also Pugliese, "Is Karl Rahner a Modalist?"

Gregory and Rahner both emphasize the Father's *Monarchia*, but Gregory's model protects the Fatherhood and the Sonhip of the persons better by stating that these are eternal relations that define each person rather than mere missions. Gregory's doctrine of the Trinity began with the Father because he was the first person clearly revealed and he is the one who sends the Son and Spirit. The Father is first in the economic Trinity, and therefore, is first in the immanent Trinity. The unity of the Trinity in Rahner's doctrine places such emphasis on the Father that it is difficult to see how the other persons are fully God, *homoousios*.[57] He unifies the Trinity under the Father, but their actions do not unify them, nor does he protect the unity and the *homoousios* of the three with the doctrine of simplicity like Gregory. Gregory's doctrine of simplicity protects one essence and will that all three persons share. Rahner only confesses the Father as simple and he is only simple before creating the world. He does not complement the Monarchy grammar with others in order to provide the proper safeguards against a *Monarchialism* that makes the Father God alone.

To call Rahner a Eunomian would be inaccurate because he is working from a different methodology and ontology. The major difference is that Eunomius, like Gregory, holds to a strong Creator-creature distinction so that God remains unchangeable and impassible after creation. That said, Rahner's emphasis on the Father as the one true, simple God gives the two theologians some similarity as apart from creation he alone is

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[57] J. A. Di Noia argues, "Lurking in this approach is the danger of subordination. This danger can only be offset by a vigorous subsequent defense of the substantial divinity of the Son and the Spirit against the suggestion that they are only derivatively divine" (J. A. Di Noia, "Karl Rahner," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd ed. [Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997], 128). He argues that his appeal to the Cappadocians is more creative and realistic as the Cappadocians made a strong appeal to the aseity and *homoousios* of the Son and Spirit (ibid., 128-29).

God. A further similarity is the role and work of the Son. Eunomius stated that the Son had divine qualities, but was not God unbegotten in essence. He was the energy of God because he accomplished the will of God. Rahner's Christology is similar in that the Son is not eternally begotten with the Father and is completing the mission of God with his actions. The main problem is that the Father is behind the Son communicating through him rather than the three persons communicating to the world together in their inseparable operations. The next section demonstrates another similarity as both theologians use univocal language in their confessions of God.

Creator-Creature Distinctions

Rahner seeks to protect the special and unique nature of God by stating that he is *a se*, simple, and timeless before creation and created the world *ex nihilo*. This safeguards God's nature as unique and unbegotten so that he is different from man. He is not dependent upon another for his actual existence, but he is dependent upon the creation for what he will become. God and man are codependent if God becomes something more after the free choice to create the world, or rather, God's free choice to express himself. Rahner certainly avoids pantheism, but it is not clear that he avoids a panentheism.

According to John Cooper, one does not have to assert that God is dependent upon the world for his being in order to be a panentheist, one only has to affirm God's need for the world to be who he is becoming.[58] Commenting on Rahner's Rule, David

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[58]See John W. Cooper, *Panenthesim: The Other God of the Philosophers—From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 259-60. Cooper discusses a view similar to Rahner's in his chapter on Wolfhart Pannenberg.

Bently Hart states,

> If the identity of the immanent Trinity with the economic is taken to mean that history is the theater within which God — as absolute mind, or process, or divine event — finds or determines himself as God, there can be no way of convincingly avoiding the conclusion (however vigorously the theologian might deny the implication) that God depends upon creation to be God and that creation exists by necessity (because of some lack in God), so that God is robbed of his true transcendence and creation of its true gratuity.[59]

The creation is a means for God to become more than he was. This presents obvious problems for a perfect being theology because it does not safeguard the infinite, spiritual, and Triune nature of God. Bruce Marshall argues that Rahner's Rule makes God depend upon the creation for his life and entails that he must create.[60]

The primary concern is how Rahner's model presents challenges to the Patristic, pro-Nicene doctrine of the Trinity as it does not provide proper distinctions that clarify who belongs in the divine community. Gregory and Eunomius have more in common than Gregory and Rahner in the doctrine of creation because the two fourth century theologians held to a strong Creator-creature distinction. Eunomius and Gregory agreed that God had created all out of nothing and remained distinct from creation. The common ground allowed Gregory an opportunity to argue that all three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are uncaused in the since of having a beginning and must be included in the community of the divine. The implications of Rahner blurring the lines of Creator-creature are seen when one has to decide who belongs in the realm of Creator.

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[59]David Bently Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 157.

[60]Bruce D. Marshall, *Trinity and Truth*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 264.

Rahner's rule does not present an absolute knowledge of God like that of Eunomius, but the end result is the same as Rahner proposes that man has full access to God's nature. The difference between Rahner and Eunomius is that the latter began with deduction so that after claiming God was Unbegotten, he knew the full nature of God. The former emphasizes that God is known from his actions toward creation so that his primary method is induction. When man sees God acting toward the world, he can experience God fully and completely. He does not necessarily do so, but the doctrine proposes an access to the full nature of God because there is nothing that is not revealed about God's present nature.

Rahner assumes that "all beings 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature."[61] Man, in this paradigm, becomes necessary for the articulation of the mystery of God so that he becomes something new, yet now essential, to God. Both God and man are persons and personhood is defined as "experiencing yourself in another." Rahner used his analysis of what makes man a person as a blueprint for what makes God a person. Whereas Eunomius starts with the concept of Unbegotten to define God's being, Rahner begins his doctrine with the concept of person. Rahner states that the term person is used of God analogously with how the term is used for man. Practically he begins by using the term univocally so that his doctrines of God and man are deduced from the concept of person. While this definition does show a clear relational emphasis in the concept of person, it fails to recognize the original meaning of the term in trinitarian grammar. Rahner himself warns against applying the contemporary concept of

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[61]Rahner, *Hearers of the Word*, 49.

person to the doctrine of the Trinity, but unapologetically does so in defining God's personhood.[62] This use of language reveals a great deal about his doctrine as a whole as God and man share the most basic aspect of being together—their essence is tied to being in relationship with another.

Avoiding this type of univocal approach to God and man was foundational to Gregory's doctrine of God. Gregory asserts that God does not become more by creating because he is perfect—perfection cannot be added to or taken away from. The term person was understood to be a secondary grammar that safeguarded what was revealed in Scripture. Scripture was the primary source for confessions and extra-biblical concepts such as person were used analogically in order to protect what was revealed.

Rahner's use of mystery is confusing because God's entire Triune being is available to man if he responds appropriately by faith. The Father is the hidden mystery, but his being is available to man in the historical presence of Christ when he surrenders his life. God's being is also available if man transcends his own existence and

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[62]Nonetheless, the main difficulty regarding the concept of person in the doctrine of the Trinity is rather different, and we have already mentioned it several times before now: When *today we* speak of person in the plural, we think almost necessarily, because of the modern meaning of the word, of several spiritual centers of activity, of several subjectivities and liberties. But there are not three of these in God — not only because in God there is only *one* essence, hence one absolute self-presence, but also because in God there is only one self-utterance of the Father, the Logos. The Logos is not the one who utters, but the one who is uttered. And there is properly no *mutual* love between Father and Son, for this would presuppose two acts. But there is a loving self-acceptance of the Father (and of the Son, because of the taxis of knowledge and love), and this self-acceptance gives rise to the distinction. Of course, that which we call "three persons" in God exist in God with self-awareness. There is in God a knowledge of these three persons (hence in each person about himself and about the two other persons), a knowledge about the Trinity both *as consciousness* and as "*object*" of knowledge. But there are not three consciousness; rather, the one consciousness subsists in a threefold way. There is only one real consciousness in God, which is shared by Father, Son, and Spirit, by each in his own proper way. Hence the threefold subsistence is not qualified by three consciousnesses. The "subsistence" itself is as such not "personal," if we understand this word in the modern sense. The "distinctness" of the persons is not constituted by a distinctness of conscious subjectivities, nor does it include the latter. This distinctness is conscious. However, it is not conscious for three subjectivities, but it is the awareness of this distinction in one only real consciousness. Rahner, *The Trinity*, 106.

experiences God. Rahner's ontology makes the mystery available so that all of God is revealed. Rahner reduces the nature of God to what man can know about him. John Thompson argues that Rahner has "largely failed to distinguish between the free mystery of his grace in the economy and the necessary mystery of the Trinity per se."[63] Paul Molnar argues that Rahner's failure to properly distinguish the actions of God from the nature of God threatens God's freedom.[64]

Gregory's doctrine protects the mystery of God revealed in Scripture according to the nature of redemptive history. This is seen in Gregory's interpretation of I Cor 13 where he declares that God will be seen as he is in the eschaton, but a partial vision is provided for the present church. Gregory's doctrine of the knowledge of God recognizes the nature of God's revelation as progressive so that more of God is being revealed with each new epoch of redemption. God is not incomplete from one epoch to the next, but is perfect and simple. The vision of God is always progressing in the age of the church still as Spirit enlightens the believer to the Son and the Son to the Father so that a purer vision of God is provided as the believer purifies himself. This order of how the three persons are revealed determines the order of how man knows and is saved by the Triune God. This order must correlate with the eternal God for it to be a true revelation. Rahner loses this ordering of the persons by not making knowledge of God and salvation dependent upon the explicit knowledge of the three persons. Further, man is called to look forward to the day when the vision of God is not partial, but complete as God will be seen as he

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[63]John Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 27.

[64] "The incarnation can neither be seen nor described as essential to God; what is here revealed can nether be deduced form a general theory of incarnation, not from the intra-trinitarian life" (Paul D.

is. This event refers to Christ's return when God-in-himself is not hidden from man, but is revealed to those who believed in the partial revelation of God-for-us.

The Proper Use of Philosophy

The overarching problems established thus far have their roots in Rahner's changed ontology. Being is defined in a person's dynamic of becoming other instead of in terms of being itself. According to Rahner, having being means one communicates with another different from oneself and then is united with that other. God is not complete in and of himself because he must create in order to have another for self-communication, to be distinct from, and to unify with.[65] The nature of God is not complete as a Trinity until the Son becomes flesh to unite the ineffable mystery of the Father with the world. This change shows more about Rahner's commitment to a particular philosophy outside of Christian theology, than his commitment to the Orthodox Christian distinctives.

Rahner criticizes the classical doctrines, the creeds of the Trinity, and the hypostatic union for being too dependent upon Neoplatonic philosophy. Rahner's main accusation against the Western tradition that spoke of the essence in distinction from the actions was that it was mere monotheism. Rahner, like many contemporary theologians, continues to follow Adolf Von Harnack's argument that the early church corrupted the

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Molnar, "The Functions of the Immanent Trinity in the Theology of Karl Barth: Implications for Today," *STJ* 42.3 [1989], 381).

[65]See Rahner, "God to be sure is different from the world. But he is different in the way in which this difference is experienced in our original, transcendental experience. In this experience this peculiar and unique difference is experienced in such a way that the whole of reality is borne by this term and this source and is intelligible only within it. Consequently, it is precisely the difference which establishes the ultimate unity between God and the world, and the difference becomes intelligible only in its unity" (*Foundations*, 63).

true Christian faith with Hellenistic philosophy. This is an overreaction to using philosophical concepts in order to make clear doctrinal confessions, both kataphatic and apophatic, about God's nature from his actions. The confusion is that the contemporary philosophies of Hegel and Kant have influenced contemporary theology.

Rahner's main accusations are not directed at Gregory, but do relate to him. As already seen, Gregory adopts a number of concepts and language from philosophy to help articulate his doctrine of the Trinity. He strongly endorses an atemporal, simple, unchangeable being before and after he has created. The main difference in the doctrine of creation between Rahner and Gregory is that the latter believes that the aseity of the Triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exists before creation and continues afterward. Rahner's grammar does not protect the full aseity of the Son and Spirit as their existence is necessarily tied to God's actions in the world.

Gregory's use of actions to confess an immanent Trinity avoids the accusation of Rahner that an immanent Trinity presents a mere monotheism where the true God is the sum of attributes in the essence behind the actions. Gregory begins with a belief about what kind of titles and actions are divine and then determines that these three are divine in their actions. His model begins with the actions of the each person and then seeks to determine what these actions reveal about three persons in their relation to one another apart from Creation. Gregory's doctrine demonstrates why an immanent Trinity must be "behind" the economic. If the Son and Spirit are merely missions of the one true God, then their distinct, eternal identity is not protected.

One must be aware of how the church has borrowed philosophical concepts to articulate the truths revealed in Scripture. Rahner does not fare better than his

predecessor's because he has tied Christian articulation to idealism and existentialism. The difference between Gregory and Rahner is Gregory's ability to show a clear denial of concepts in Neoplatonism that do not correlate with the Christian worldview. Rahner has redefined every aspect of the doctrine of God based upon a new philosophy and his own articulation lacks the restraint seen in Gregory.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Rahner's model presents a number of dangerous grammar changes to the doctrine of the Trinity when compared to Gregory The Theologian:

1. Rahner's model fails to protect the proper dynamic between the immanent and economic Trinity so that God reveals himself truthfully even if not completely. Rahner's methodology and ontology connects God's new identity with his relationship with creation. This causes him to speak of God univocally so that the terms such as person and essence are not used of God and man in the exact same manner. He argues that Scripture denies an ontology, but what he has done is introduced a new ontology adopted from contemporary philosophy.

2. Rahner's model fails to practice a proper grammar in doctrine that speaks of God as wholly other than the created order. Rahner's ontology that defines God's personhood as dependent upon the created world removes him from the classical ontology of Orthodoxy as he promotes a version of panentheism. He argues that one contemporary definition of personhood cannot be applied to the traditional confession of one and three, but adopts the definition that a person is someone who finds their identity in another. His model lacks clarity so that the three are not perfectly and eternally one God apart from creation.

3. Rahner's model fails to provide a comprehensive grammar for the unity of God that protects the absolute oneness of the three in their nature and separates their actions. Rahner's particular problem is that he emphasizes the unity of God by stating that the Father is the true, simple God who creates. This confession for the Father puts the full divine status of the Son and Spirit in question. The actions of the persons are used to distinguish them and not to unite them as the orthodox tradition has united the persons in their inseparable operations. His denial of an immanent Trinity that exists beyond human comprehension and is "behind" the economic Trinity does not allow for the doctrine of a single simple essence to be held in common by all three so that they are one God with three distinct identities.

4. Rahner's model fails to make proper distinctions between the one and three so that the essence and person grammars are distinct and safeguarded. Rahner has a strong doctrine of the three because each one is distinct in his actions. The difficulty is the Son and Spirit are not truly persons and divine in the same manner as the Father. The oneness is found in the Father and the three in the different actions. It is not clear that the Son and Spirit have a distinct identity with the Father apart from creation.

CHAPTER 6

SIMPLICITY, BEING, AND PERSONS: A DISCREPANCY OF DEFINITIONS

One of the most popular trends in contemporary Trinitarian theology is the use of a social analogy to understand and explain the Trinity.[1] Leonard Hodgson is one of

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[1]The following is a list of other theologians who propose a social analogy model: Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, trans. Phillip Berryman (New York: Orbis Books, 1988); Joseph A. Bracken, *The Triune Symbols: Persons, Process, and Community* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), and idem, "The Holy Trinity as a Community of Divine Persons," *HeyJ* 15 (1974): 166-82, 257-70; David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* (Le Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985); Stanley Grenz, *Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei*, The Matrix of Christian Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Colin Gunton, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit: Essays Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2003), idem, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity: The Bampton Lectures 1992* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), and idem, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); Royce G. Gruenler, *The Trinity in the Gospel of John: A Thematic Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); William Hasker, "Tri-Unity," *JR* 50 (1970): 1-32; Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981); Edward Wierenga "Trinity and Polytheism," *FP* 21(2001): 281-94; John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Contemporary Greek Theologians, no. 4 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Press, 1985).

The following are theologians who have written against the social analogy model: Jeffrey E. Brower, "Relations without Polyadic Properties: Albert the Great on the Nature and Ontological Status of Relations," *AGP* 83 (2001): 225-57, idem, "The Problem with Social Trinitarianism: A Reply to Wierenga," *FP* 21 (2004): 295-303, and idem, "Abelard on the Trinity," in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfoy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 223-57; Jeffrey E. Brower and Michael Rea, "Material Constitution and the Trinity," *FP* 22 (2005): 487-505, and idem, "Understanding the Trinity," *Logos* 8 (2005): 145-57; Brian Leftow, "Anti Social Trinitarianism," in *The Trinity: An Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Trinity*, ed. Stephen T. Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 203-49, idem, "Divine Simplicity," *FP* 23 (2006): 365-80, idem, "A Latin Trinity," *FP* 21 (2004): 304-33, and idem, "Modes without Modalism," in *Persons: Human and Divine*, ed. Peter van Inwagen and Dean Zimmerman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007): 357–75; Michael Rea, "Relative Identity and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *PhilC* 5 (2003): 431-46, and idem, "Polytheism and Christian Belief," *JTS* 57 (2006): 133-48; Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance*, Oxford Scholarly Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Dale Tuggy, "The Unfinished Business of Trinitarian Theorizing," *RelS* 39 (2003): 165-83, and idem, "Divine Deception, Identity, and Social Trinitarianism," *RelS* 40 (2004): 269-87.

the first to explicitly propose what is now called the social analogy.[2] Cornelius Plantinga Jr. takes up Hodgson's work and proposes the social analogy is not only the most historical and biblical position, but also the only explanation that does not have inherent contradictions. Plantinga's work goes beyond Hodgson's by positioning the Eastern and Western models as contrary to one another so that the former presents a personal Triune God and the latter a mere monotheism. His primary representative for the Eastern model is Gregory of Nyssa and the Western representative is Augustine. Plantinga argues that the primary problem with the West is that they start with a unity based upon a strong doctrine of simplicity that is borrowed from Neo-Platonism.

Chapter four argued that these two traditions are similar in their basic convictions using Augustine and Gregory of Nazianzus. Plantinga's proposal should be considered more closely in light of Nazianzen's model because he represents one aspect of the social analogy that has claimed the East and been influential in contemporary doctrine. His work is important because of its influence and clarity in how he has made significant grammar changes based upon what he claims to be an Eastern precedent. His arguments against a strong simplicity model and his proposal for a social model will be presented, and then evaluated in light of Nazienzen's model. There has been considerable scholarly work that has argued that Nyssen's model is not as "social" as Plantinga proposes (see chap. 3). A comparison to Nazianzen will further demonstrate that Plantinga has misrepresented the Eastern tradition as Nazianzen is the more important theologian of the Trinity for the tradition. The main concerns of Plantinga's new social model include the priority of sources, the biblical data used to prove his

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[2]Leonard Hodgson, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Croall Lectures, 1942-1943* (New York:

position, and how well it protects the distinctions of one and three while avoiding heresy. It will be demonstrated that Plantinga's new grammar has removed him from the Eastern tradition because he denies simplicity, places the will in the person-grammar, and does not practice a strong Creator-creature distinction in his doctrine.

Standards for Orthodoxy

Plantinga makes the Athanasian Creed the standard for Orthodoxy so that the two most basic rules must be protected.

1. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God
2. And yet they are not (or there are not) three Gods, but one God.

In addition to the basic grammar of one and three, he provides clear standards by which Trinitarian models should be judged. First, the term *person* must be defined to mean the "full sense of the term," so that each person must be a distinct center of will, knowledge, love, and action.[3] Second, the doctrine of simplicity must be modest enough to allow three real, distinct persons as defined above. Third, the model must avoid the errors of Arianism and Modalism. Modalism is the denial of three real persons and Arianism confesses the three as if there were "three *ontologically graded* distinct persons."[4] Finally, the oneness of God must be defined in terms of "intratrinitarian relations" so that God is "one thing, even if it is a complex thing consisting of persons, essences, and

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Charles Scribner's Sons, 1944).

[3]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation, and Atonement: Philosophical and Theological Essays*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 22. He argues this is biblical standard based upon the writing of John and Paul (ibid., 34).

[4]Ibid.

relations."[5] One must determine what Plantinga gains by safeguarding the Trinity according to these standards and what potential problems this model might anticipate.

It can already been seen that he has changed a number of the safeguards and rules for Trinitarian models and that the standards for Orthodoxy have been lessened. While Plantinga and Nazianzen would agree that Modalism and Arianism are to be guarded against, Plantinga gives a very limited definition of Arianism that is questionable in its historical accuracy. The major changes concern how Plantinga demands that when certain terms are used to confess the Trinity, these terms must carry with them presupposed definitions from their contemporary use. The terms *person* and *essence* are no longer being used as safeguarding terms in the confession of the Trinity, but content-providing terms that inform the Trinity.

Primary-Secondary Substance

Plantinga's model provides a grammar for discussing the Trinity different than the Western model by safeguarding the unity with one generic essence that all three persons possess and distinguishing the three by giving each person unique personal properties. Plantinga relies upon the Cappadocians for his historical precedent for how he has defined his terms and unified the three persons. The major methodological difference that he believes makes the Eastern doctrine more faithful to Scripture is that they began with three persons instead of one.[6] He relies heavily upon Gregory of Nyssa because of his social analogy of three men having a common humanity. The three

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[5]Ibid., 37 and 22.

[6]See Michel R. Barnes, "Augustine in Contemporary Trinitarian Theology," *TS* 56 (1995): 237-50 for explanation of "supposedly."

persons John, Peter, and Paul share a *simple common human natur*e just like the three persons Father, Son, and Spirit share a *simple common divine nature*.[7] According to Plantinga, the Cappadocians provide precedent for separating generic essence from personal essence when discussing the Trinity.

Plantinga provides three of his own analogies to explain how the grammar of the Trinity should function. Plantinga proposes his first analogy, "is it like saying John Cooper is professor of theology at Calvin Seminary, Henry Zwaanstra is professor of theology at Calvin Seminary, and Ted Minnema is professor of theology at Calvin Seminary, and yet they are not three Calvin professors, but only one?" He argues that this analogy affirms the threeness, but is inherently self-contradictory. He adds, "Here one instinctively feels the point of the seventeenth-century antitrinitarian complaint that trinitarians simply do not know how to count."[8] Analogy two is, "the oldest native Minnesotan teaching philosophy at Calvin College is Nick Wolterstorff; the author of *Until Justice and Peace Embrace* is Nick Wolterstorff; and the only Michigander who loves the music of a Messiaen is Nick Wolterstorff; yet, there are not three Nick Wolterstorffs but only one." The problem with this analogy is that it does not confess three real distinct persons so that "we have here an analogy not for biblical or even classical trinitarianism but rather for the heresy of modalism."[9] Analogy three is the most promising, "The Cartwright family includes a son Adam, who is tall, silent serious; a son

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[7]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *TT* 50 (1986), 333. This argument is similar to the one discussed in chapter two where Nathan Jacobs's argument was used as an example of not recognizing the proper limits of analogies in the Nazianzen's theology.

[8]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of The Trinity," *CTJ* 23 (1988): 41.

[9]Ibid.

Hoss who is massive, gap-toothed, indelicate; and a son Little Joe, who is a roguish and charming ladies' man."[10] Plantinga argues that analogy three is the only one that properly confesses the two basic standards of the Athanasian Creed. There are three real persons in the fullest sense. The oneness is confessed because there are three persons who all have the same nature and belong to the same family.

In Plantinga's model the three persons are equal because each one posses the same kind of essence and belongs to the same class or community. His only safeguard for avoiding Arianism is avoiding an ontological gradation. Using God as a predicate adjective and not a predicate nominative allows Plantinga to speak of divinity abstractly so that it is a class of being.[11] Therefore, the persons *have* the same generic essence instead of the three being or sharing the one simple essence of divinity. Divinity is treated as a property that all possess so "there is no difficulty whatsoever in holding that there are three persons but only one God—where God is a name for generic divine essence."[12] Thus far his model has passed Plantinga's own definition of Arianism because the three have the same kind of generic essence.

What distinguishes the three from one another is another type of essence—the personal property each possesses. The Father has the permanent property of being eternally related to the Son in a parent/child relationship.[13] Plantinga summarizes how these two essences provide an orthodox Trinity:

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[10]Ibid.

[11]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 31.

[12]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 48.

[13]Ibid., 52.

> Each of Father, Son, and Spirit possesses, then, the whole generic divine essence and a *personal essence* that distinguishes that person from the other two. Both kinds of essences unify. The generic essence assures that each person is fully divine. The personal essences relate each to the other two in unbroken, unbreakable love, loyalty.[14]

He concludes, "[i]n the Trinity, therefore, we should say that *ousia* is the common word for the three but that *hypostasis* is the sign for the specific characteristics or peculiar quality of each."[15] Plantinga emphasizes the common nature so that the three are real, distinct persons who are *homoousios*. The new definitions applied to crucial terms such as person, *ousia*, etc. provide Plantinga with a divine community that is analogous to a human family where each member has properties that distinguish them and one common property that unites them.

Homoousios

Plantinga argues from John's Gospel that perichoresis is the key to understanding the one *ousia* of God. The three persons are declared to be *homoousios* because they all possess the same divine properties and are one *ousia* because they are a family. John combine's the use of "one" and "in" throughout his Gospel so that the oneness of God is understood in their mutual indwelling.[16] The three divine persons are, therefore, one divine family, community, or monarchy. He describes perichoresis as "a sort of intratrinitarian hospitality concept. According to this concept, each Trinitarian person graciously makes room for the others in his own inner life and envelops or enfolds

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[14]Ibid.

[15]Plantinga, "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 329.

[16]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of The Trinity," 51, and "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 25.

that person there. Each is *in* the other two."[17] The Father and Son "are of one substance not only generically but also quasi-genetically . . . not just members of the class of divine persons; they are members of the same family."[18] A family, for Plantinga, is a complex entity of persons and relations that must have an ontological status "in being a composite reality."[19] This means the unity is twofold. There is unity because each person possesses the same kind of nature and the persons are dependent upon each other for their personal properties. The Father is the Father in the Son so that the familial relations define their personal properties.

Plantinga recognizes the different approach he is making from what he calls Western standard. He charges the council of Nicaea for only ruling out Arians and merely supplying a "mystery unity."[20] The unity, according to Nicaea, is wrapped up in the one being of God so that deity is used as a *predicate nominative*. According to Plantinga, contemporary theologians must deny the Nicaean commitment to simplicity so that the three are confessed as three real, distinct persons that share deity as a *predicate adjective*.[21] Plantinga recognizes the difference in his approach from all the fathers in a footnote. The Fathers never used God to name a member of a class, but named his being

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[17]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 25. Dale Tuggy argues that this argument is illogical. Dale Tuggy, "The Unfinished Business of Trinitarian Theologizing," *RelS* 39 (2003): 170.

[18]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 51.

[19]Cornelius Plantinga Jr., "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and The Social Analogy of the Trinity" (Ph.D. diss. Princeton Theological Seminary, 1982), 209-10. This complexity of fully personal entities causes his denial of simplicity. He also says, "person and community are correlative terms and represent equally ultimate realities (ibid., 211).

[20]Ibid., 29 and 230.

[21]Ibid., 198.

God.[22] Plantinga believes that by using God as predicate adjective the social analogy is unscathed by the standard of *homoooousios* because the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all possess the same divine properties in three personal entities. One must recognize the critical shift in categories because, according to Plantinga, they all *possess* the same divine *attributes*. The church traditionally taught that they all *are* the one divine *being*. Plantinga summarizes:

> Let me propose generally, then, that the Holy Trinity is a divine, transcendent society or community of three fully personal and fully divine entities…These three are wonderfully unified by their common divinity, that is, by their possession by each of the whole generic divine essence.[23]

Plantinga's main precedent for this new language of essence being a predicate nominative and of a generic nature is found in Gregory of Nyssa. In Nyssen's works against Eunomius he argues that the Son must be counted in the same community as the Father because they perform the same actions. Nyssen's argument begins with the actions of the three to make conclusions about the one. He makes the argument for community only when addressing Eunomius on his own grounds using his own logic.

What Plantinga fails to see is that the "social analogy" arguments from Nyssen are secondary to his stronger confessional positions that argue for a strong doctrine of simplicity. When he is arguing for the community language he is arguing in the terms of Eunomius to show that even when his own system and terms are used, the Son must still be like the Father in every way. Nazianzen is accomplishing the same argument when he makes analogies with Adam, Eve, and Seth. The Cappadocians achievement was to tighten what *homoousios* meant so that it was a simple essence. The analogies were

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[22]Ibid., 198 n. 44.

ultimately denied because the essence of man and God were too different as Eunomius and the Cappadocians would all agree based upon the Creator-creation distinction.

Problems with Simplicity

In determining how the Trinity should be formulated Plantinga warns theologians away from the strong doctrine of simplicity. All of Plantinga's works on the Trinity charge Augustine for corrupting the doctrine of the Trinity with the doctrine of simplicity. This is always in contrast to the Cappadocians whom he believes deny or redefine simplicity.[24] In his dissertation he asserts, "[s]implicity washes out all real differences with the divine life."[25] Plantinga does see some use for simplicity, but conditions it so that any use must be "modest" enough to allow "real distinctness of Trinitarian persons."[26] Plantinga refuses *Simplicitas* "on the grounds that it is unscriptural, internally incoherent, and glaringly inconsistent with the Trinitarian distinctions."[27]

Many theologians agree with Plantinga's charging simplicity as internally incoherent. The doctrine is denied or modified because the concept of attributes and essence is radically different in contemporary theology in comparison to the Patristic

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[23]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 27.

[24]He says the key to understanding the Trinity is not "falling for Augustine's simplicity program." Cornelius Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 52.

[25]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 202.

[26]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 22.

[27]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 232.

models.[28] The doctrine has been described as having a public relations problem in contemporary theology because it is rarely mentioned except to deny its validity and value in theology.[29] Plantinga's main concern is how the three are understood to be full persons, yet one in a simple God. The first step is to enter the larger debate and then focus on how the three persons deny the simplicity of God's being.

Cornelius Plantinga argues against simplicity using Alvin Plantinga's critique of Thomas Aquinas' doctrine of simplicity. According to Alvin Plantinga there are two major problems with simplicity, "In the first place if God is identical with each of his properties, then each of his properties is identical with each of his properties, so that God has but one property."[30] The second and monumental problem is reducing God to one property—himself. This denies his ability to create because a property cannot act and reduces the personal God of Scripture to a "mere abstract object."[31] Millard Erickson lists similar problems concerning the attributes of God being understood in the doctrine of simplicity. His properties, such as love, justice, omnipotence, etc., would not be distinguished, but are the exact the same thing. This means God would not have any real

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[28]Jay W. Richards explains that in essentialism, one should "think of properties, again, as states of affairs concerning entities of different types; as truths or facts about such entities" (Richards, *The Untamed God: A Philosophical Exploration of Divine Perfection, Simplicity and Immutability* [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003], 91). God has contingent properties because of the decisions he makes from his free will (ibid.). God's absolute properties are those that he has in every possible world.

[29]Ronald Nash says, "The doctrine of divine simplicity has a public relations problem. Few people have any idea what the doctrine entails or why theologians have thought it necessary to ascribe the property of God" (Nash, *The Concept of God: An Exploration of Contemporary Difficulties with the Attributes of God* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983], 85).

[30]See Plantinga's use in "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 202-03 and 39-46.

[31]Ibid., 203.

attributes and causes contradictions such as love and wrath being the same thing.[32] When he identifies his attributes with each other, he denies all attributes. Next, making God's attributes identical with God's being not only reduces all attributes to one, but reduces God to an impersonal attribute himself.[33]

Plantinga continues this reasoning and claims that any strong doctrine of simplicity necessarily denies distinction of persons. If the persons are treated as attributes in Plantinga's understanding of simplicity, then the Father, Son, and Spirit "turn out to be really the same thing" because no real distinction and separation can exist in the Godhead.[34] This means the discussion of the Trinity is critiqued as an inability to count. A strong simplicity can only provide an arithmetic unity, because he uses the analogy of "three-yet-only-one."[35] The three are not fully distinct personal *entities*, but only rational, linguistic expressions that are ultimately consumed by the one divine essence. The end result is modalism where there is one God who reveals himself in different ways, but is only one thing.

Plantinga believes that the main influence behind simplicity is Neo-Platonism, not Scripture. In the strong simplicity position, the three names all refer to the same divine essence and the three are self-relating since it is only one thing and one real

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[32]Bruce A. Ware, "An Evangelical Reformulation of the Doctrine of the Immutability of God," *JETS* 29 (1986): 438-40.

[33]See Millard J. Erickson, *God the Father Almighty: A Contemporary Exploration of the Divine Attributes* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 210-32.

[34]Ibid., 32. These critiques are based upon creeds such as the Council of Toledo (675). "Each single person is wholly God in himself and…all three persons together are one God." Plantinga believes this Augustinian Creed exemplifies the inherent contradictions of the Western tradition. See Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 8. He also finds similar faults in the Athanasius Creed. See Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 41.

[35]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 45.

person.[36] The end result for the strong simplicity model is that one cannot speak as if they are real persons. Instead, since God is only one simple essence, the distinctions are relative and contingent. Plantinga's contention is that the classical understanding of simplicity necessitates a monist doctrine of the Trinity and denies the real personhood of the three.

Plantinga's accusation that simplicity is unscriptural is based upon the doctrine proposing that there is only one person "in the full sense" in the Godhead. Simplicity in the traditional sense proposed a single nature with a single will in the Godhead. According to Plantinga this denies what John and Paul assert when they provide the Father and the Son separate personal properties and wills. The New Testament, especially the Gospel of John, presents two real lovers whose wills are connected, but distinct. Plantinga asserts there is a "wholly different intellectual atmosphere here (in Augustine) from that of John."[37] One atmosphere is Scriptural, the other is Neoplatonic. The Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father. Scripture demands a love from two distinct persons with their distinct personal properties and centers of consciousness, not one love from one lover among the persons. The same can be said for the mutual glorification of the Father and the Son.[38]

Plantinga assumes that because Father and Son have distinct wills and actions toward one another, the personhood of each should be considered in the fullest sense of

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[36]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 31.

[37]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 205.

[38]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 38-39.

the word with reference to a rational self-consciousness and a fully personal entity.[39] If the Father loves the Son there must be two real distinct persons each with his own affection and being. Simplicity reduces the inner-trinitarian love to self-love or nominal love because the distinct persons are reduced to one object, or person as Plantinga defines person, which loves itself.[40]

Personal Properties

It can be seen above that Plantinga has changed the meaning of *homoousios* to fit his social analogy. His major modification and contribution to the Trinitarian grammar, however, is his definition of person. The changes he has made to the meaning of *homoousios* are the results form the changes he first makes to the definition of person and how the three are understood as relating to one another. This follows from his methodological starting point of what he believes is the Eastern position of starting with the three and then discussing the one.

He claims to base his definition of person upon the New Testament witness and the historical definition used by Boethius. Plantinga believes Scripture supports his definition of person as "Paul and John present Father, Son, and Spirit as distinct knowers, lovers, glorifiers."[41] He moves beyond stating how these three relate to one another, and

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[39]The former definition he borrows from Boethius and Leonard Hodgson. See Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 39, 53.

[40]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and The Social Analogy of the Trinity," 202. This is based upon Alvin Plantinga's critique found in *Does God Have a Nature? The Aquinas Lecture, 1980* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1980).

[41]Ibid., 29.

proposes that John understands the three to be "mutually indwelling, knowing, loving, glorifying *entities*."[42] Plantinga adds entity, being, and essence to the concept of divine person in relation to how the term was used in the Patristic grammars. Scripture clearly portray three thinkers, feelers, lovers, etc., but does not provide any substantive difference in the three who are the Godhead. Is there real biblical or historical precedent for this definition?

Historically, Boethius clearly has substance attached to his definition of person, "an individual substance of a rational nature," but this is not representative of the pro-Nicene party.[43] He accuses the fathers of the church for not having a distinct center of consciousness tied to their doctrine of person. Instead, they supplied a person who played a role or a part, such as the *dramatis personae*.[44] Augustine, for instance, had a "less psychological, less subjective, less conscious-oriented" person and proposed a bland, neutral definition.[45] He believes the major problem with the Father's understanding of person is attributing only one person in the rich, full sense of the word to God. The full sense of person, "intelligent, purposive centers of consciousness," must be applied to the three.[46] While this definition does not breach the boundary of ontological language being applied to person, his starting point may. Plantinga states, "Given *the modern concept* of person (a self-conscious subject, a center of action,

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[42]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 44. See John 10:14-15; 16:14-15; 17:24. Emphasis mine.

[43]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 192.

[44]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 30.

[45]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 191.

[46]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 39.

knowledge, love, purpose, will), how many persons does God comprise?"[47] Plantinga, begins with the modern definition of person and seeks to read it anachronistically back into the Trinity. Person is now considered a *concrete* substance and this definition provides the means by which Plantinga makes the generic divine essence abstract.

The generic essence unites and the *personal essence* distinguishes the Father and the Son. The personal properties of generation and filiation have traditionally been applied to the relational subsistences of God.[48] As seen in chapter three, Gregory and Augustine provide a clear and precise grammar so that the generation does not take place in terms of substance and being, because that would differentiate the two persons as two different substances and eternally subordinate the Son ontologically. According to Plantinga, the Father is separated from the Son by filiation, but "if simplicity is denied, there may be other distinguishing *essential properties* as well."[49] The three personal entities all equally possess the same generic deity and are one family according to their mutual indwelling. They are separated in terms of essential properties and distinguishing marks in their personal essences. Having surveyed Plantinga's basic understanding of the key terms and categories of the Trinity, the doctrine must be assessed and compared to Gregory's doctrine.

Historical Analysis

Plantinga relies heavily upon the argument that he has historical precedent in the East because he recognizes that he has introduced significant changes to the

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[47]Ibid., 40. Emphasis mine.

[48]This has already been seen in Augustine in chapter four.

traditional confession of the Trinity. His arguments for the Eastern tradition and against the Western are selective and are not accurate with contemporary Patristic scholarship.[50] Plantinga does not have a strong claim to historical precedent among the Cappadocians as their social analogies were polemically driven and ultimately not their primary grammars for how the Trinity should be confessed by the church. There are a number of scholarly works that have demonstrated how the Pro-Nicene Fathers, East and West, held the most basic convictions together.[51] One of the most important doctrines the theologians from both traditions held in common was simplicity. In addition there has been considerable work in Gregory of Nyssa analyzing his Trinitarian theology in light of theological claims based upon his work.[52]

The main contention with Plantinga's argument from Nyssen is that he makes the social analogy of Peter, James, and John the primary grammar of his Trinity. Ayres has provided an essay demonstrating that the main argument of Nyssen's "On Not Three Gods" is that since the three persons participate in the same action, they are one God. Nyssen only speaks using the analogy when he begins to argue on the heretics ground using their framework. He prioritized, like Nazianzen and Augustine, the unity of the three in one essence because the three perform the same actions. The Cappadocian grammar that emphasizes the three concludes that since the three operate inseparably,

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[49]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 206-07.

[50]Michel R. Barnes argues that viewing Nyssen as the dominant Cappadocian is a new phenomena, as his Trinitarian writings have been regarded highly only recently. Michel R Barnes, "De Régnon Reconsidered," *AugStud* 26 (1995): 51-79.

[51]See chap. 3, 140ff.

they must share the same single essence that includes the same single will. Further, Cappadocian scholar McGuckin argues that the Cappadocian contribution moves beyond a grammar of *homoousios* that meant similar to the single same essence. To say that this analogy represents the Cappadocians demonstrates a failure to read the Fathers broadly as Nazianzen explicitly denies the analogy on the grounds that it does not uphold the grammar of simplicity.

Another concern is that Plantinga has redefined the terms of the Trinity so that essence is defined by the oneness and the person by centers of self-consciousness. He is unapologetic in his proposal that the contemporary definitions he has borrowed are not the classical usage of the terms in the Patristic grammars for either the threeness or the unity. The new meanings are radical shifts in how the Trinity is understood and confessed. The mystery of the one and three is reduced as the persons and nature of God are now confessed in a strong analogy with man. The major concern is how he has shifted a number of aspects that were traditionally affirmed in relation to the essence to now be person-grammar. The most significant of these is including the will in the person so that there are three wills in the Godhead.

Rowan Williams observes that "contemporary theology is increasingly taken up with forms of Trinitarian pluralism that threaten to become mythological—the divine life as interactive drama…content with a highly anthropomorphic plurality of

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[52] See chap. 3 for an explanation as to why his interpretation is in error based upon Nyssen's own work (143-46).

agencies."[53] This is a new emphasis in doctrine and threatens the unity of God as traditionally confessed. Plantinga unites the three with their interpenetrating wills as they work together so that their wills are separate, but united. One particular issue here is his applying the concept of perichoresis to the essence of God. Oliver Crisp has demonstrated that Gregory of Nazianzus applied this concept to the two natures of Christ so that they cooperated with one another in the operations of the one person. Gregory does not apply the term to the Trinity and does not give the term the meaning of interpenetration.[54] There is no evidence that the Cappadocians employed the concept perichoresis in their models of the Trinity to unite the three in the essence.

The Cappadocians argue that the inseparable operations pointed to one essence with one will, not three essences that were inner-connected by three wills working together. The notion of three wills and centers of self-consciousness would have meant that there were three gods who could have their own plans and purposes. The inseparable operations of the three were arguments against a plurality of wills in the Trinity. Plantinga has loosened the definition of monotheism and one essence in order to preserve three real persons. While they have the same attributes, but there is the possibility of multiple conflicting wills who are not necessarily united in will.[55]

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[53]Rowan Williams, "'Sapientia' and the Trinity: Reflections on the De Trinitate," *Augustiniana* 40 (1990): 331-32. A similar criticism can be found in Karl Barth, *CD* 1.1, 374.

[54]Oliver D. Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered*, Current Issues in Theology (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 5. Crisp demonstrates that Nazianzus was first to use perichoresis in his letter to Maximus (Nazianzen Epistle 101). John of Damascus was first to apply the concept of interpenetration of the persons to the Trinity.

[55]Thomas R. Thompson suggests that the danger of tritheism is only present when: (1) there is the possibility of multiple conflicting wills, or (2) when there is a qualitative difference between the divine persons, as was asserted by the Arians, the first "Christian polytheists." Thompson, "Trinitarianism Today: Doctrinal Renaissance, Ethical Relevance, Social Redolence," *CTJ* 32 (1997), 37-38. Plantinga denies the

As already demonstrated in chapter three, Nazianzen maintained a strong doctrine of simplicity that complemented his other grammars for the three. He explicitly denied the analogies as appropriate for explaining or understanding the Trinity because of the Creator-creation divide. In addition, when he confessed three persons, he understood himself to be confessing the same kind of person as the West. Person was reduced to have the mere meaning of relation in Nazianzen so that there was real distinction in action and identity, but he would not go beyond this definition. The inner-penetration was in the grammar of person as each person was dependent upon the other for their distinction such as Father and Son. These were relational terms, not substantive terms.

Methodological Analysis

There are also a number of methodological issues with Plantinga's proposal. The first is his criticism that simplicity was a borrowed conviction from Neo-Platonism that had no biblical grounds. His evidence for simplicity being unscriptural focuses on how the persons must be three distinct centers of consciousness. The persons must be able to have their own love, will, consciousness, etc. This does not take into consideration the theological convictions of the strong simplicity model, the most basic of which was God's aseity as the Creator in absolute distinction from everything that exists as creation. God could not be dependent upon any other being for his own existence. The simplicity model protects the Triune God from Neo-Platonism by making it clear that he is not participating in the forms of perfection, wisdom, etc. He is his own

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subordinationalist position. Ware is able to argue for a weak unity in will because the Father's is supreme, but Plantinga does not believe there is a hierarchy.

essence which is one in the strongest sense so that there is only one God who created everything that exists.

Plantinga's argument against the Patristic doctrine of simplicity as found in Nazianzen does not take into consideration how his grammar of simplicity related to the other grammars to form a model. He has not considered the strong simplicity model as a whole to see if it is consistent and properly safeguards what is revealed in Scripture. Rather, he criticizes simplicity based upon the grammar of person that he has adopted as primary for his own model. The doctrine of simplicity has no place in Plantinga's model because he begins with a definition of person that is necessarily contrary to simplicity and is different than that of Nazianzen.

Person was a safeguarding term in Gregory's model, but it now informs what the three are. Plantinga supplies Scripture and biblical rational for his position so that if the Father and Son love one another, they must be persons because the term is used in human societies. The problem with this is that the term was always used analogically and assumed that it still allowed for real, if not superior, love to exist between the persons. By defining person as relationship Gregory preserved this as well as stating that each person had their own minds. If all the persons share and act from the one single essence and therefore the one single will and love, they are still truly loving one another. He is also guilty of borrowing a concept and deducing the doctrine of the Trinity from that concept in the same was he accuses Augustine of beginning with simplicity.

Plantinga's methodology begins with the three persons maintaining that the contemporary definition of person must be used. Person, therefore, means "center of

action, knowledge, love and will."[56] Plantinga's test for logical coherence demands that the Triune three think, act, and love like humans. This breaks the rule that demands a strong Creator-creature distinction in Nazianzen's doctrine of God. This demonstrates that he has prioritized a particular definition of person from its contemporary context. The difficulty with this is he begins his grammar of the Trinity with a preconceived notion of what person means. Person is not a scriptural term. Person and simplicity are both confessional grammars that are meant to protect what has been revealed. He has not started with the biblical data that informs what must be confessed in the Trinity. Instead, he has prioritized the term person so that it now influences the meaning and content of the Trinity. This necessarily shapes how he reads Scripture as he sees the terms person and essence as the essential grammars for the Trinity even though they have traditionally been used as safeguards with different meanings than those Plantinga has adopted. By changing the meaning of these terms, he has significantly changed the model and grammars of the Trinity.

Plantinga begins his doctrine of the Trinity by adopting the philosophical system of essentialism as the basis for how theological language functions in the confession of the Trinity. Essentialism states that whatever is said about God must be a property of God. By adopting preconceived definitions of person and being based upon essentialism he has reversed the method of Nazianzen that started with the biblical data and then found concepts from the world of philosophy to best guard the Trinity. Nazianzen's theory of language stated that God could not be described like the created order and needed new categories for the concepts since he was a different kind of being.

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[56]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 22.

Nazianzen modeled a "faith seeking understanding" that modified concepts from the philosophical world in order to better guard what had been revealed because they recognized that language was designed to describe the created realm, not the Creator.

By adopting essentialism Plantinga necessarily contradicts Nazianzen's declaration that not everything that is said about God is said substance-wise. Nazianzen had a careful grammar that distinguished the kind of statements that one could say about God according to his essence and the three in order to protect each one. There was a clear Creator-creation conviction represented in their doctrine and grammar that protected what was revealed and the mystery. Plantinga's method, in contrast, speaks of God and man as if the concepts are similar for both. His methodology does not reflect the same Creator-creature distinction because the same categories are used for God and man to constitute them as persons, beings, and families. God is not his own being in the classical since, rather, being divine is an adjective as if it is something the persons participate in like human persons. His method is more similar to that of Eunomius who claimed that his terms adequately described God and presented him fully.

By adopting essentialism and beginning with concepts of being and person Plantinga exercises a univocal language for God and man. The difference between Plantinga and Gregory can be seen in how they both approach analogies. Plantinga's analogy is not as much a defense for how certain terms such as generation and begotten convey likeness. Instead, they function as a control in his theology so that the family of God is just like the families of man. Each person in the family has a generic essence that classifies them and then has specific personal properties that make them individuals. This assumes that the being of God is like the being of man except for being the Creator.

This does not take into consideration the spiritual nature of God and his being infinitely different than the created order.

Finally, Plantinga judges models of the Trinity based upon logical coherency. The doctrine of the Trinity cannot be illogical or incoherent, but Plantinga's criticism of the strong simplicity model requires that God's nature and personhood be like that of man in order to pass the test of coherence. His own position appears to lack proper boundaries that protect the mystery of the Godhead that allows God to be completely different than anything in the created order so that there are three who are in relation to one another while sharing one single essence. His grammar makes distinctions among the one and the three so that each is clear, but he has no grammar that protects the paradox and the mystery. This was a central conviction of all the Cappadocians as their primary argument against Eunomius was that God was infinite and spiritual in his nature. He could not be known or talked about like the created order.

Plantinga's claim to begin with the three persons and the biblical data of the three in contrast with starting with a philosophical concept of unity should be questioned. He has taken traditional terms and redefined them with a different theory of language. The modest changes he claims to have made in the doctrine of the Trinity have significant consequences in the way one approaches the Triune God and how the one and the three are defined.

Theological Analysis

Problems with Equality

One of the most problematic consequences of Plantinga's change in how person is defined is the substantive distinguishing mark of begottenness. According to

Plantinga, biblical writers preserved the title God for the Father; he is the only God in the sense of "font of divinity."[57] The Father is God proper who is "the source or font of the divinity of the Son and Spirit. The latter two may be fully divine, but they are *derivatively* so."[58] The Father-Son language suggests "both kinship and *derivation*" as they are related in a "quasi-genetic way."[59]

The above language is similar to Gregory's grammar of the Monarchy where he emphasized the Father as the first among the persons. The main difference in the two models is that Gregory's grammar of simplicity guarded against the Father being the one true God who literally begets the Son in a manner that is similar to human begetting. The Son is second to the Father, but since they both share the same single essence, they are not graded ontologically. Plantinga's standard for monotheism among the three persons asserts the three fully personally essences must not be ontologically *graded* so that there is not a subordination of essence. If the Son is derived from the Father, he has the same kind of essence, just as a human son and a human father have the same essence. Plantinga's model presents a Son who is caused and begotten more literally not just according to his personal properties, but his generic divine essence.

By insisting on personhood implying substance, Plantinga cannot protect the Son from being derived and dependent upon the Father in terms of his deity. The logical consequences of this theory, in terms of personal essence, make the Son different from the Father and dependent upon the Father for his being and deity. This essentially will

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[57]Plantinga, "Social Trinity and Tritheism," 31.

[58]Ibid., 25. Emphasis mine.

[59]Ibid., 28. Emphasis mine.

cause his own theory to fail his standard of avoiding *ontological gradation*. Regardless of the Son's possessing some divine attributes, the Son does not possess independence as a divine being and, therefore, is inferior in being to the Father. This is what Brian Leftow has called Plantingean Arianism.[60]

Having the same kind of essence is one test for ontological equality, but having an unbegotten nature was the primary test that distinguished the orthodoxy of Nazienzen and Nyssen from Eunomius. Plantinga's grammar does not protect the Son's deity against Arianism or Neo-Arianism because both would say the Son has divine qualities. The issue is if the Son is *autotheos* and unbegotten in his essence with the Father. Plantinga's model does not protect the unity of God and the full deity of the Son because the Son is not exactly like the Father. He has the same kind of essence, but God is uncaused, *a se*, and has no beginning. He can declare that the generation was outside of time, as would Neo-Arians.[61] However, this does not protect the Son's status as true God in the polemical context of Nazianzen and Eunomius, because Eunomius would agree with that the Son has a similar nature and had a begotten nature. There is an ontological difference if one is true God and the other derives his nature.

The key to Gregory's grammar was that the various parts had to all function together so that they each had a role in protecting the various aspects of the revealed Godhead. The *Monarchia* protected unity as there was one person who directed the persons. This was derived and complimented from the doctrine of inseparable actions so

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[60]Leftow, "Anti-Social Trinitarianism," 208.

[61]McCall has argued in Plantinga's defense, but only on the basis of a very minimal definition of Arianism. See Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?: Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 96.

that all the persons were seeking the same end. Finally the grammar of the persons was distinguished by being removed from the realm of essence so that the primary distinguisher was the relations. The Son was truly God and not derived in his essence because of the doctrine of strong simplicity. This is a multifaceted grammar for unity that corrects itself if all the parts are understood together. It is ultimately the denial of simplicity that causes the major error in Plantinga's grammar of unity because he finds the unity only in the Father and the unified will of the persons. This means there are three wills that could will different ends, and two of them are derived from the Father.

Problems with Unity

The concept of *ousia* may also cause a variety of problems for Plantinga. It has already been mentioned above that the Eastern Fathers never categorized God as a member of a class. God is wholly different, and one cannot study the Creator the same way one studies the creation, because "there is such a great difference between God and man."[62] Deity is not a different class of persons to be studied the same way human persons are to be studied. Rather, the one God is a different kind of being*, sui generis*, that is only apprehended as he reveals himself as three persons. The goal is not a mere unity, but a monotheistic unity that still fits with the Judaic conviction that there is only one God who is *a se*.[63] The strong doctrine of unity has been abandoned for the sake of three "real persons," and the end result is three gods. The measure for Orthodoxy in

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[62]The quote comes from not being able to categorize God according to genus, kind, and species. Augustine *On The Trinity* 7.3.7, 226.

[63]Daniel Howard-Snyder argues for the Judaic strong unity, "there are no monotheists unless traditional Jews are monotheists, and when they assert asserts that there exists exactly one God, they affirm

defining the one is loosened because of contemporary beliefs about personhood. Gregory and the Pro-Nicene's did not abandon the doctrine of a single God when confessing the full deity and distinction of three, but the social analogy must loosen the grammar of unity in order to confess what they believe is a real three.

The end result is three gods in the traditional sense. The three are alike, but each one is God in his own nature so that there are really three gods. The argument is that this passes the test of monotheism because it is not the polytheism of the Greeks that had gods warring with each other in a hierarchical model. The definition for monotheism must be weakened and modified in order for the unity of these three to fit into the traditional understanding of one. The divine essence becomes adjectival so that each person is categorized according to the series of divine attributes rather than one single essence that is *sui generus*.[64] They are only one in that they have the same kind of essence and work together. They are not numerically one in nature or will necessarily.

A problem with defining deity as an adjective instead of a noun means there is a fourth "something" in the Trinity. There are three personal entities that possess the divine nature, and then there is the divine nature itself. All doctrines of the Trinity consist of some formulation of the one and three. This must be understood as the basic

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that there exists a certain number of Gods and the number is one" (Daniel Howard-Snyder, "Trinity Monotheism" *PhilC* 5 [2003]: 401-02).

[64] Clearly, if this definition is considered legitimate, Plantinga is not at all guilty of tritheism. William J. Hill, on the other hand, obviously presupposes a different definition of tritheism when he presents the following critique of the social trinitarianism of William Hasker, whose position seems quite similar to Plantinga's.

Put very simply, the unity Hasker gives to the divine nature is only generic in kind. While allowing that the nature of God is common to all three persons, this dissolves any real *identity* of that nature with the persons, singly or severally. . . . The inexorable logic of this position does lead to understanding the members of the Trinity as "participating in" or "sharing" a single nature, rather than being identified in a real and ontic way with it. If this is so, then how is it possible to avoid the implication of tritheism?

skeleton for any Christian doctrine of the Trinity. By moving divinity into another "thing" that is possessed by three persons, Plantinga jeopardizes the basic orthodox standard. The deity is something the three possesses, each his own, so that it is a fourth something instead of the three being the one God who all share the same, simple essence. The main contrast is that unity and personhood have been flattened to having one grammar rather than being understood as a mystery with many grammars that protect one another.

Richard Bauckham supplies a helpful model to understand the one God who is three. YHWH is the God of Israel, and YHWH is one (Deut 6:4). There is one *identity* of God and this identity is revealed to include the Father and Son, both participating in the creation of the world (1 Cor 8:6), and ruling all of creation (Col 1:15; Eph 1:21-22).[65] The Father and the Son are identified with YHWH and are both the one God. Bauckham argues that understanding God as one identity is similar to the concept found in *homoousios* because one God is given the three names Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).[66] Having one identity, which secures one personal agent and one being, necessarily implies "intrapersonal relationships" within the Godhead as all three are identified as the one God of the Shema.[67] Gregory's grammar protects this kind of

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(William J. Hill, *The Three Personed God: The Trinity As a Mystery of Salvation* [Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1982], 218).

[65]See Richard Bauckham, *Crucified God: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

[66]Ibid., 76.

[67]Ibid., 75. Yeago argues convincingly that the Nicene conviction of the one is warranted by Scripture. The argument from warrant is different than what has been proposed by Plantinga because he sees that there are a number of convictions and beliefs that had to be held together in tensions to arrive at the conclusion of how there is one the in the strongest sense while allowing the three to be true and distinct. See David S. Yeago, "The New Testament and Nicene Dogma: A Contribution to the Recovery of

distinction as the relationships between the persons distinguish them without giving a different identity in the essence.

Plantinga uses the analogy of how one family functions as three personal entities for understanding how one God exists as three. He rightly declares that the divine fellowship is the "archetype" for a human family and community. Ironically, he seems to build from how human families *function* in order to provide an understanding of what the divine persons *are*.[68] The Son being declared *homoousios* with the Father at Nicaea separates him from all of creation and identifies him with the one Creator. It does not mean the Son is a separate being who exists in familial relation with two other entities. He is the same God, but a different person. Plantinga redefines the meaning of *homoousios* in order to support his model of the Trinity. He must find a new way to describe the oneness because of his staring point of three essences. However, this definition has no historical precedent and is not presented in the Scriptures.

Plantinga's understanding of community may also pose the problem of tritheism. He recognizes this change and attempts to explain how his doctrine is not guilty of it. With a sympathetic reading, one can see how one family could supply the necessity of one God in the Scriptures.[69] John certainly does tie "inness" to "oneness." Plantinga claims to be of the same mind of John, and if John taught tritheism, "that's

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Theological Exegesis," in *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, ed. Stephen E. Fowl, Blackwell Readings in Modern Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 87-102.

[68]Plantinga, "The Hodgson-Welch Debate and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," 190.

[69]Thomas McCall defends Plantinga's model because the three being like one another is enough for Orthodoxy. See McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?,* 104.

good company in which to be a tritheist."[70] The key question here is if the references here are referring to the economic or immanent Trinity. After Jesus makes the claim, "I and the Father are one" he explains that "I have shown you many good works from the Father," and "believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." This language echoes what Jesus has already said about his work (ch. 5) as he does what he sees his Father doing. The "inness" language reveals that they are operating inseparably. If will is not applied to the persons, it could be concluded, and has been by the Fathers, that the persons working in one another points to a single simple essence.

Plantinga reads these passages as if the "one" and "in" are absolute references to the immanent Trinity so that the eternal unity is found in their being in one another. There seems to be some confusion as to how to read the immanent and economic Trinity in the passage because the work of the Father and Son is only being shown to be unified. Jesus is making ontological statements, but Gregory's model protects them as well as Plantinga's if not better. These strong economic statements of Jesus declare that the Fount and the Father are operating inseparably. The conclusion does not have to be Plantinga's reading. It could be Jesus telling the disciples about his being indirectly rather than directly. The economic Trinity reflects the immanent so that his work being like the Father points back to the persons having the same or a similar nature. The key here is determining how Jesus is declaring the unity. Unity and oneness has been loosened from its strongest and clearest understanding by the social analogy so that it can now mean one in similarity whereas the stronger grammar states one of a kind. While

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[70]Plantinga, "The Threeness/Oneness Problem of the Trinity," 53.

there is a loose monotheism, this grammar does not have the same kind of protection for the one as Nazianzen's model. His grammars combine to protect the unity on multiple levels so that it is among the persons in the Father, among the essence the simple nature, and in the actions that are inseparable. Plantinga's model has a "stronger" grammar for three, but at the expense of the one. This does not protect the proper distinctions or the mystery.

Conclusion

The difficult, yet essential, doctrine of the Trinity must be reconsidered with each generation so modern concepts are not read back into the historical definitions. Plantinga is an example of the trouble that this exercise can bring about. One must also be careful not to provide univocal status to certain analogies to *explain* ineffable doctrines such as the Trinity. The church fathers, Augustine and the Cappadocians, sought to primarily *defend* the essential truths of the doctrines and provide a safe grammar for how the church can talk about the Trinity. Plantinga has a strong tendency toward trithesm because he introduces three wills in the Godhead and treats the divine essence as an adjective that is possessed. He also has a strong tendency toward a form of Arianism because of how he separates the one and the three according to different kinds of properties and then states that the Father is truly God and the Son derives from the Father. Gregory's grammar provides more biblical safeguards that avoids these problems. The new grammar for God seeks to explain the Godhead too much according to contemporary standards rather than protect the various truths revealed with a complicated, yet dynamic grammar. The dangers that Plantinga introduces include the following:

1. Plantinga's model fails to provide safeguards that protect the unity of the Godhead. His doctrine redefines doctrinal standards for unity so that the three simply must be alike. This is a denial of what McGuckin claims is the most significant Cappadocian contribution to Orthodoxy, a tightening up of the single, simple essence grammar for unity.[71] He has made the divinity of each person a set of attributes that the church to categorize the persons. They are three different persons of wills and essences so that they do not necessarily operate inseparably, but could logically operate apart from one another.

2. Plantinga's model fails to protect the proper Creator-creature distinctions. He demands that the term person carries with it its contemporary, full meaning of centers of consciousness, will, and desire. The language for person is used univocally and the nature of God is studied like that of the created order. God is categorized like the created order in an Aristotelian model so that all who possess a certain series of divine attributes belong to the class of God. His analogy also studies God as if her were like three created beings so that there is a univocal relationship between being the Creator and the creature. This questions God's unique being as an infinite, spiritual Creator. The main concern is that God's unity and threeness, as well as his essence, but meet human criteria in order to be logically acceptable.

3. Plantinga's model fails to provide proper distinctions that protect the unity and the distinctions. He moves beyond the mystery of mutual relationship by defining exactly how each person is one and three according to properties so that the Son and Spirit are dependent upon the Father for some set of properties. He confesses the Son is fully God, but then he is dependent upon the Father for his being as he derives from him. The distinctions are described and explained to the point that the Son is less than the Father because he does not share in his aseity.

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[71]John A. McGuckin, "'Perceiving Light from Light in Light' (Oration 31.3): The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Gregory the Theologian," *GOTR* 39 (1994): 23.

CHAPTER 7

CONTEMPROARY SUBORDINATIONIST AND EQUIVALENCE MODELS

Some of the most vigorous contemporary debates and arguments concerning the Trinity and how it should be confessed are taking place among Evangelicals. While it first sounds encouraging that Evangelicals desire to articulate and formulate confessions of the Trinity, the reason for these debates is questionable. The major debates have focused on how the Son relates to the Father in relation to the contemporary gender debates. The different theologians who are involved are clearly seeking a true confession of God, but it is clear that this polemical context has inspired the new focus.

Millard Erickson has provided a survey and analysis of the debate where he has called one model the "gradation-authority" model, but a better name would be "subordinationist."[1] Bruce Ware and Wayne Grudem are the primary proponents of the subordinationist model. The distinguishing marks of the subordinationist model include the persons being distinguished from one another eternally by a difference in authority. The Father is eternally the Father, the Son is eternally the Son, and the Spirit is eternally the Spirit. What distinguishes them is the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father and the Spirit's submission to both the Father and the Son. Erickson calls the other model "equivalent-authority." Adherents to this model, Kevin Giles and Thom McCall,

emphasize that the authority structure seen in Jesus' ministry is limited to his incarnation, as Father and Son are eternally equal in authority.

Each model claims that it better articulates Scripture and better represents the traditional Trinitarian Orthodox doctrine of the church. This chapter will not seek to engage in the gender debate *per se*, but only to evaluate the two models concerning how they define the persons, their roles, and their unity in light of the confession of Gregory. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the arguments of both contemporary models in light of Gregory's grammar in order to demonstrate that neither model protects the full deity and distinctions of the Trinity with the same clarity as Gregory's model.

One of the main charges that proponents of each model make is that the other introduces something new and dangerous. Both models accuse the other of altering the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, but it will be demonstrated that both contemporary models have introduced significant, and potentially dangerous, changes in the doctrine of the Trinity. When compared with Gregory's grammar, it will be demonstrated that the two contemporary models have more in common with one another in how they have defined their terms and changed the person-grammar and essence-grammar.

The two contemporary models will be defined first with their various representatives. There are differences within each model, but the main focus of the chapter will be Ware and McCall because their works represent the most significant changes in Trinitarian grammar. The analysis will have two parts. First, it will prove that the two contemporary models have introduced significant changes to the grammar

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[1]Millard Erickson, *Who's Tampering with the Trinity? An Assessment of the Subordination Debate* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009).

when compared to Gregory of Nazianzus' doctrine. These changes will be explained in light of Gregory's grammar as well as their potential dangers. Second, the particular differences that each model introduces will be tested to determine if they meet Gregory's criteria for Orthodoxy. Their particular changes will be shown to introduce their own unique difficulties in Trinitarian grammar.

Eternal Subordinationists

Bruce Ware has been one of the most outspoken proponents of the subordinationist model. His work, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, articulates his clearest confession of the Trinity. Ware organizes his work around the persons of the Trinity with a chapter on each of the persons and ending with a chapter on their relational community. Within these chapters one finds a number of statements on the unity of the Trinity. He reasons from Matt 28:19 that the term "name" being used in the singular signifies that the nature is singular, not plural.[2] He begins his chapter on the Father stating, "each person is equal in essence as each possesses fully the identically same, eternal divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of the one undivided nature."[3] He makes one of the clearest declarations following his comments on Augustine, "so that each person possesses the divine nature equally, eternally and fully."[4] These statements,

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[2]Bruce A. Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 40. He quotes Augustine affirmatively, "God's whole and undivided essence belongs equally, eternally, and simultaneously, and fully to each of the three distinct persons of the Godhead."

[3]Ibid., 43. He repeats this formula, "identically same divine nature" (ibid., 37). He repeats the creedal safeguards throughout the book, "Each person is equal in essence as each possesses fully the identical same, eternal, divine nature, yet each is also an eternal and distinct personal expression of the one undivided divine nature" (ibid., 69).

[4]Ibid., 41

if interpreted in light of what Augustine said, should be understood to be proposing a strong simplicity grammar for the unity of the Trinity. The problem with Ware's grammar is that he has not clearly articulated how he understands the unity of essence.

When discussing the relational nature of the Trinity, he also makes statements about the unity being grounded "in their commonly possessed essence."[5] This reference to the common essence could be understood in the same way that Gregory uses "common" namely, to safeguard the same nature, and could still fit within simplicity. Further confusion is seen in Ware's concluding paragraphs on the history of the doctrine that state, "in essence, then, each member of the Godhead is identical; but in person each is distinct."[6] Each person fully possesses the identical essence, but how Ware uses the term identical and if he refers to a simple or generic essence is still unclear.

Ware is not clear on the ontological unity concerning a simple or generic essence. He is clear that it is an equal deity, but he is not clear if they each possess the same kind of nature or each share the one single nature.[7] The importance of clarity in the grammar for essence has been made clear from Gregory, the primary-secondary model of Plantinga, and below in McCall's work. The issue is whether the unity of the nature is found in a singular nature or a commonly possessed nature. This has ramifications on how the persons are defined in the Trinity.

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[5]Ibid., 21. See also ibid., 45.

[6]Ibid., 42

[7]There is some evidence that the divine attributes are used in the adjectival sense like Plantinga, "every essential attribute of God's nature is possessed by the Father, Son, and Spirit equally and fully" (ibid., 45).

The grammar is further confused as Ware articulates how the three relate to the one beyond possessing an identical essence. Ware states, "only the three together constitute the nature of the true and living God."[8] He also describes God as "by nature both a unity of being while also existing eternally as a society of persons. God's tri-personal reality is intrinsic to his existence as the one God who alone is God. He is a socially related being within himself."[9] Ware recognizes the need to separate the grammars of person and essence, three and one. He makes it clear that faithful Trinitarian theology has always balanced the "identity and distinction, equivalency and difference," but his language of the three constituting the nature in fact confuses the distinction and identity.[10]

Ware's description of God is vague and tends toward the social analogy as God's unity is defined in the three being united to one another primarily in their relationships, and not related to one another in sharing the same essence. While Ware is unclear on the unity of the nature, he is nevertheless clear on the unity of the relations. The primary unity that Ware emphasizes is that the persons work in *harmony* in contrast to *unison*. Unison lacks, "texture and richness," whereas harmony is an "unified expression but only through differing yet complementary parts."[11]

The main emphasis in Ware's understanding of unity is the harmony of the persons that manifests a clear hierarchical order of authority. Ware states,

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[8]Ibid., 40.

[9]Ibid., 21.

[10]Ibid., 31. He sees the need for clear grammar when he says, "Gods "oneness" and "threeness" are in different respects or senses" (ibid., 41).

[11]Ibid., 42.

> An authority-submission structure marks the very nature of the eternal Being of the one who is three. In this authority-submission structure, the three Persons understand the rightful place each has. The Father possesses the place of supreme authority, and the Son is the eternal Son of the eternal Father. As such the Son submits to the Father just as the Father, as eternal Father of the eternal Son, exercises authority over the Son. And the Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son.[12]

The Father and the Son possess the same divine attributes so that what distinguishes them is their relationship and roles. The Father is distinguished among the persons by his supreme authority. Ware's first evidence for this is Jesus' prayer that the Father's will must be accomplished and not the Son's will. The two persons possess different wills and the Father's has supremacy.[13] Another key passage for Ware is 1 Corinthians 15, where Paul states that the Son will be subject to the Father, "that God will be all in all." Ware supplies a paraphrase of the final phrase, "so that God the Father, who is not subjected to anyone—not even to his own Son—may be shown to be supreme and over all that is."[14] The Father has established his plan from all of eternity and the Son is sent to carry out his will.

The Son is distinguished from the Father by his subordination to him. The subordination is characterized by the Father's headship over the Son in his incarnation and in eternity. This means the incarnational subordination reflects an eternal ordering that is immutable. This distinction is argued from 1 Corinthians 11:1-10 where the *taxis* or ordering of the persons defines the persons in role and relationship. He states that Paul

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[12]Ibid., 21.

[13]Ibid., 46-48.

[14]Ibid., 49.

is showing a "built-in" order and structure of authority in the Godhead.[15] The incarnational submission is also seen in John 5 and 8 where Jesus clearly states that he does not speak or do anything according to his own authority. The incarnational submission is not debated. The question is how the incarnational submission relates to the eternal relationships of the Father and Son.[16]

Ware argues for eternal subordination from the same texts but lays a strong emphasis on the Father-Son language. He states,

> The identity of Jesus as Savior is inextricably tied to his being the Son of the Father, sent by the Father to accomplish the Father's will. In other words, who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish have everything to do with his Sonship, both in the immanent and in the economic Trinity, or more simply, in eternity and in history.[17]

The historical Sonship reflects the eternal relationship of the immanent Trinity. He interprets this to mean that the immanent takes priority over the economic, meaning the economic reflects the immanent.[18]

Ware argues that anyone who denies the eternal submission of the Son has no grounding to explain why it was the Son who was sent and who was incarnated, and not the Father.[19] The main argument is that if the eternal distinguishing marks are not the relationships of Father and Son, and these names to do not signify a real ordering of the

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[15]Bruce A. Ware, "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the Trinity," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective: An Introductory Christology*, ed. Fred Sanders and Klaud Issler (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 164.

[16]Thomas H. McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism? Philosophical and Systematic Theologians on the Metaphysics of Trinitarian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 176-77.

[17]Ware, "Christ's Atonement," 163

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid., 160.

persons, the persons are lost because there is nothing to distinguish them. He goes so far as to accuse anyone who does not keep these names, Father and Son, as being a modalist.

He concludes that the "subjection and dignity of the Son are both taught by his being called Son."[20] The names Father and Sonare not ad hoc, but relate to and reveal the identity of God himself. These relational terms are the key distinguishers of the two persons and these names naturally evoke the concepts of authority. Ware quotes Wainwright affirmatively,

> There must be something about human fatherhood that makes father a suitable way for Jesus to designate the one who sent him. In Trinitarian terms, the crucial point is that Father was the address Jesus characteristically used in this connection.[21]

The authority-submission must be kept in the grammar that distinguishes the Father and Son, and kept out of the unity and essence grammar, in order to avoid the heresy of Arianism. This is why he places it in the realm of relationships.

Jesus Christ's identity is tied to being equal with yet distinct from the Father by his name, the Son. In the incarnation, he receives another aspect of his identity. Ware states, "the identity of Jesus as Savior is inextricably tied to his being the Spirit-anointed Messiah whose very person requires the indwelling and empowering Spirit for him to be who he is and to accomplish what he has come to do."[22] Jesus is dependent upon the

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[20]Ibid., 168.

[21]Geoffrey Wainwright, "The Doctrine of the Trinity: Where the Church Stands or Falls," *Interpretation* 45 (1991): 120. Quoted in Ware, "Christ's Atonement," 160.

See also Ware, "The Father has authority over the Son. There is a relationship of authority and submission in the very Godhead on which the other authority-submission relationships of Christ and man, and man and woman depend. The taxis of God's headship over his Son accounts for the presence of taxis in man's relationship with Christ and the woman's relationship with man" (*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*, 77).

[22]Ware, "Christ's Atonement," 171. His identity "is inextricable apart from his relationship with both the Father and Spirit" (ibid., 173).

Spirit because the Spirit "brings him into being" in the virgin conception and provides the necessary "power and presence" for his Messianic identity.[23] Ware states the relationship most clearly, "Jesus lived his life as a full human in submission to the Spirit."[24] The eternal Son ranked above the Spirit in the immanent Trinity, but for the sake of his mission he humbled himself to depend upon him and follow his lead.[25] The dependence on the Spirit was necessary because the Son, while retaining the divine attributes, "accepted the limitations and restrictions of the expression of certain" attributes.[26] The Son exercises his eternal authority over the Spirit by sending him, but also submits to him as the Son incarnate in order to complete his work as the Savior. In *Father, Son, Holy Spirit*, Ware states that the immanent order will return after the event described in 1 Cor 15. This means that the Eternal order of Father-Son-Spirit exists before and after the redemptive work of the incarnation, but not during the years of the incarnation. The Father-Son relationship is unbreakable, but during the dispensation of the incarnation the Son submits himself to the Spirit in order to fulfill what the first Adam could not.

A final piece of Ware's doctrine of the Trinity is found in a footnote, but it is significant for understanding his model. He argues that the historical concepts of "eternal procession of the Spirit" and "eternal begetting of the Son" are "highly speculative and not grounded biblical teaching."[27] In his essay, "Christ's Atonement: A Work of the

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[23]Ibid., 173. Ware also argues that Jesus' impeccability is dependent on the power and leading of the Holy Spirit in "The Man Christ Jesus" *JETS* 53 (2010): 13-15.

[24]Ware, "Christ's Atonement," 179, and *Father, Son, Holy Spirit*, 91.

[25]Ibid., 182.

[26]Ibid., 183.

[27]Ibid., 162 n. 3.

Trinity," he makes it clear that the Son's eternal identity is to be understood in terms of authority roles and that he is "now begotten as the Christ."[28] This is an explicit separation of the economic ministry from the immanent life of the Trinity as the begetting has not correlation to the eternal Triune relations. The generation and procession language is limited to the incarnation ministry of the persons, and not the expression of their eternal relations to the Father in eternity. Ware recognizes that he is breaking with the Nicene tradition in this grammar.

Wayne Grudem is another proponent of the eternal subordinationist model. He also argues that the eternal subordination of the Son is based upon the Father-Son language. Grudem states, "The Father and the Son relate to one another as a father and a son relate to one another in a human family: the Father directs and has authority over the Son and the Son obeys."[29] He recognizes that there are a number of heresies that have proposed a subordination of the Son to the Father, then distinguishes his view from this position. Grudem argues, "The heresy of subordinationism, which holds that the Son is inferior in being to the Father, should be distinguished from the orthodox doctrine that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father in role and function."[30] The language of subordination is kept out of the essence grammar, but to be submissive to the Father is what defines and distinguishes the Son. Subordination is seen in his actions and functions in the incarnation, which are then read back into God *intra* as the three actions reflect the eternal relationships. Grudem argues from 1 Cor 11 that the parallel, between

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[28]Ibid., 163.

[29]Wayne A. Grudem, *Sytematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 249.

the husband-wife and the Father-Son relationships are strong. The key term, *kephale*, reveals that the head is the "person in authority."[31]

Another proponent of the Subordinationist view is Robert Letham. His work, *The Holy Trinity*, is a substantive, thorough work on the Trinity that provides a great biblical, historical, and contemporary survey. He distinguishes the persons "by position and not status."[32] He rejects concepts such as a hierarchy and eternal subordination.[33] He is clear that the Son's obedience is proper to his eternal relationship as the Son to the Father, but this does not imply subordination in his status. The grammar is limited to his relationship and order in the Trinity.

Unlike Ware and Grudem, Letham upholds the traditional grammar for the distinctions that states the eternal relation between the Father and the Son is eternal generation (*monogenes*). The incarnate obedience is explained in light of the Son's eternal relationship with the Father. This is why the Father could not have become incarnate. If the Father could have become incarnate, Letham argues, God would be acting in an arbitrary manner.[34]

While Letham is more consistent with the traditional confession concerning the distinction of Father and Son, his confession of the essence adopts a number of

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[30]Ibid., 245 n. 27.

[31]Wayne A. Grudem, *Evangelical Feimnism and BiblicalTtruth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2004), 47. Grudem is countering the argument of Gilbert Bilezikian, "Hermeneutical Bungee-Jumping: Subordination in the Godhead," *JETS* 40 (1997): 57-68.

[32]Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2004), 400.

[33]Ibid., 399.

contemporary starting points. He also is unclear in how he views the essence and the unity, but gives clear criticism of the doctrine of strong simplicity.[35] He affirms a form of the social analogy when he affirms Staniloae's quote,

> the entire divine essence, a spiritual essence subsistent in threefold fashion, possesses the quality of being subject to a threefold subject. The subsistence of the divine being is nothing other than the concrete existence of divine subjectivity in three modes which co-penetrate one another, hence in a threefold subjectivity.[36]

The three are further distinguished by their being three subjects possessing their own conscience so that there is a single God in three I's. As in the case of Ware, how Letham understands the unity is vague as he implies that the three are persons in the contemporary sense, each with his own essence. His analysis of the Cappadocian contribution is that the divine *ousia* exists hypostatically.[37]

Equivalence Models

The second model, the equivalence-authority, is represented by Thom McCall and Kevin Giles. McCall's work is an analytic approach to the doctrine of the Trinity summarizing and evaluating a number of contemporary models. The main interest is his chapters where he establishes criteria for how the various models should be judged and his theses for how the Trinity should be confessed in the future.

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[34]Ibid., 397.

[35]Ibid., 184, 198-99. Laying behind these claims is his adoption of the contemporary distinction between East starting with three and the West starting with one.

[36]Ibid., 381. He is affirming a quote by Dumitru Staniloae in *The Experience of God*, trans. Iona Ionita and Robert Barringer, vol. 1 of *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (Brookline, MA: Holy Corss Orthodox Press, 2005), 260-61.

[37]Ibid., 165. Letham is agreeing with LaCugna's summary of the Cappadocians.

After presenting the contemporary models, McCall provides clear principles by which these models should be considered. The first of these is second temple Judaism "as it was received and drawn upon by John, Paul, and the other authors of the New Testament."[38] McCall makes it clear that Second Temple Judaism held to a strict monotheism. This particular monotheism means that "YHWH alone is the Creator and Ruler of all things."[39] Only the one true creator God is to be worshipped. The key to this strict monotheism is that it is "not centered on numerical oneness" so that it entails only one divine person.[40] The New Testament authors carry this understanding of God being qualitative, not quantitative, so that worshipping Jesus with the Father was not a break from monotheism. Paul includes Jesus in the unique identity with God in Philippians 2, while "he is still portrayed as someone whose actions are distinct" from the Father.[41]

The Father and the Son are worshipped together without breaking the confession and tradition of strict monotheism because they are understood to be the one Creator God together. They are seen as distinct because their actions are distinct. The Father and the Son love one another and share a familial unity that allows "some sort of social analogy."[42] Further, the Father and Son perform distinct acts that achieve the same

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Much of his survey of the Cappadocians was over simplicitic. For example, he argues that Nazianzen limits the *Monarchia* to the one God instead of the Father alone (159). This reduces the dynamic of Gregory's grammar.

[38]McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?*, 57.

[39]Ibid., 59.

[40]Ibid., 60. This means that the unity of the Triune God is a qualitative one, not a quantitative one.

[41]Ibid., 62.

[42]Ibid., 67.

purpose.[43] The distinction is best seen in the particular ways the Son functions as a speech agent apart from the Father. The main point is that Second Temple Judaism does not promote two speech agents in the one God, but it also does not deny the possibility. It is obvious that the New Testament witnesses and writers recognized two in their descriptions and worship of Jesus along with God the Father.

One last aspect of McCalls' proposal is that he wants to allow for various forms of unity. The key is to avoid a mere generic sense of essence for unity and he sees the dangers in what he calls the Latin Tradition, which is the strong simplicity model. His stated purpose is not to affirm one or the other models of the Trinity; rather, it is to clarify the strengths and weaknesses of various models. His conclusion, however, is that the traditional doctrine of strong simplicity is not able to protect what he calls a robust doctrine of persons.

In the end he seems to side regularly with Keith Yandell's model, which was not one of the main models examined, but presented as the best option. He approves of Yandell's definition of God as complex without parts, which means that "X is a part Y if and only if X exists, Y exists, X plus something else is all of Y, X is not all of Y and it is logically possible that X exist and Y does not exist or Y exist and X not exist."[44] The main point is that the persons are not parts of God, but it is impossible for the persons to exist without each other. The complexity is necessary because the persons are dependent upon one another. The end result is that there are "three distinct omnicompetent beings" who are necessarily internally related to one another. This God is "simple" in that it is

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[43]Ibid., 69.

one God who is internally complex. This is in contrast to the traditional doctrine of simplicity where God has no complexity in essence, but plurality in persons. With the new definition of person, the distinctions can be made with simplicity as persons take on many concepts that were reserved for the essence.

McCall concludes that the Father and the Son are "distinct centers of consciousness and will." The main argument was from the I-you relationship that is established from the prayer of Jesus in John 17 and the mutual love that unites the purposes of Jesus and the Father. Jesus is seen as "distinct and discrete" from the Father in the one identity.[45] This is an important phrase because McCall has already introduced the phrase as a characteristic of the Social Analogy model. He presents the unity in their working toward the same purpose and sharing mutual love for one another, as well as their being worshipped together as one God by the church. The plurality is seen in their distinct actions as each one possesses and exercises a distinct center of consciousness and will.

Having proposed what must be confessed, McCall looks to safeguard what the Trinity cannot be by defining the typical heresies. He argues that Arianism "is the archetypal version of polytheism."[46] He defines Arianism as associated with Arius, not the Neo-Arians. There are four principles of Arianism that must be avoided:

1. God was not always Father, he was once in a situation where he was simply God and not Father.

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[44]Ibid., 169. The quote is from Keith Yandel, "An Essay in Particualr Philosophy of Religion: A Metaphysical Structure for the Doctrine of the Trinity" (article forthcoming): 8.

[45]McCall, *Which Trinity? Whose Monotheism?*, 59.

[46]Ibid., 73.

2. The Logos/Son is a creature. God made him out of nothing.

3. The Logos is alien from the divine being; he is not true God because he has come into existence.

4. A Trinity of dissimilar hypostases exists.

His conclusions from the criteria above include the following. The Father and the Son must be understood as distinct centers of will and consciousness while also being confessed to be one God. Real distinctions must exist between persons as the term is used in it contemporary sense so that there is a "robust" doctrine of person.[47] The persons are united in by their relations with one another as each is equally God and in a mutual relationship with the other persons.

He addresses the issue of the Son's subordination by distinguishing between Soft Eternal Functional Subordination (EFS) and Hard EFS. Soft EFS states that the Son is only subordinate during his earthly incarnate career and this would be agreed upon by most evangelicals.[48] Hard EFS states that the Son is subordinate in every possible world. This means the subordination is more than ad extra, but it refers to the ad intra of the immanent, eternal Trinity.[49]

The danger of Hard EFS is that the Son would necessarily have an essential property that the Father does not possess. He argues from syllogism that if the Son has the property of subordination *de re* necessarily, he has an identifying property that the Father does not have. A key hinge in his logic is that if the Son "has it necessarily, he has

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[47]Ibid., 86.

[48]Ibid., 176.

[49]Ibid., 177.

it essentially."[50] The conclusion is that the Son has an essential property that subordinates him to the Father ontologically and makes him *heteroousios*. He recognizes that Plantinga's Social Analogy model might be a solution, but distinguishes his personal properties as "inner-Trinitarian" in contrast to these distinctions. He argues that if the Son does not have same authority as the Father, then he is not omnipotent with the Father.[51]

Within these persons, relationship exists, but they are not necessarily graded as Ware proposes. McCall argues that a doctrine of eternal Sonship is not necessary unless you hold to a strict unity between the immanent and economic language.[52] Further, any model that entails "ontological subordination of the Son to the Father is to be rejected out of hand" because it is Arian.[53] The accusation is that if the Son's basic identity in relation to the Father is submission, he does not have the same authority and power as the Father. This, by definition, means the Son has a different nature than the Father.

McCall's convictions are most clearly presented in his conclusion, where he presents a number of theses that should direct future Trinitarian dialogue and confessions. The first are concerned with method and include commitments to prolegomena, the biblical storyline, mystery, and the role of traditions. The main contribution here is his emphasis that the Latin and Social models are not clear in their discussion of unity and that more clarity needs to be reached. Another clarifying point is McCall implying that

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[50]Ibid., 179.

[51]Ibid., 182.

[52]Ibid.

[53]Ibid., 85.

univocal language for God may be acceptable as many analytic theologians propose.[54] The last series of theses seeks to protect the proper parameters for God and his creation so that pantheism and panentheism are avoided.

The second section proposes theses on the oneness-threeness distinction. The first is a commitment to monotheism as he has defined it as the identity of the creator apart from a numerical oneness. The second thesis states that each person must be fully divine and equal. The third thesis declares that the understanding of person "should insist on an understanding consistent with the New Testament portrayal of the divine persons, that is, as distinct centers of consciousness and will who exist together in loving relationships of mutual dependence."[55] This represents a major proposal as he has prioritized the term person and provided definite content for what the term must mean. By defining person in this way, he has already revealing his sympathy toward a social model of the Trinity.

The next two theses have to do with how the essence or unity is to be understood in future Trinitarian doctrine. The first discounts Latin Trinitarianism because it does not allow the robust sense of person and tends toward modalism. It also rejects forms of social trinitarianism and relative trinitarianism if they are reductionistic or tend toward modalism. The second thesis is more prescriptive as he propose, "Trinitarian theology should adopt either the constitution view or a modified version of ST [social trinitarianism]."[56]

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[54]Ibid., 222.

[55]Ibid., 236.

[56]Ibid., 243.

Kevin Giles is the last major figure in the dialogue. His latest work, *Jesus and the Father*, clarifies and refines many of the arguments from his previous work, *The Trinity and Subordinationism*. Jesus and the Father seek to prove that the doctrine of the Son's eternal subordination is not biblical, but a new and dangerous idea, and historically guilty of the heresy Arianism. Of all the primary contemporary works in the debate, his is the clearest in what he seeks to accomplish and establishing the standards by which a conclusion on the doctrine of the Trinity should be reached. He argues that the heresy of subordination must be rejected and is defined as "to explicitly or implicitly teach that the Son and/or the Spirit are eternally subordinate to the Father in being, function, and authority."[57]

He begins by recognizing that the way many of the key terms are being used is confusing. In order to avoid the confusion, he proposes that all key words are given "the meanings found in our dictionaries and confirmed by everyday speech," and to define the terms when theologians use them.[58] He argues that the terms and roles should not be used to distinguish the persons because their roles change and traditionally they "operate or function inseparably and have indivisible authority."[59] He also claims that the term subordination necessarily implies differentiation and inferiority in common usage, and therefore must convey such in the doctrine of the Trinity.

Giles starts with the inseparable operations of the Trinity to argue that the three persons are equal and possess the same authority. Their inseparable operation, he argues,

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[57]Kevin Giles, *Jesus and the Father: Modern Evangelicals Reinvent the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 61.

[58]Ibid., 45.

establishes one essence and one will in the Godhead.[60] The main focus is that the actions point to unity, not a hierarchical distinction. He appeals to the church tradition as authoritative in this teaching as opposed to the Subordinationist model. He argues that the Cappadocians began with the Father as the source and cause of the Son, but for them, "this did not imply hierarchical ordering or the subordination of the Son and the Spirit in any way."[61] He believes that the Cappadocian doctrine of *Monarche* teaches that all three are the one *Monarchia* so that they are one in their nature and their work.

Giles argues that Nazianzen impacted the Council of Constantinople more than anyone else gathered there. He makes the argument that the Father being the *Monarche* of the Son never appears in Gregory's theological orations leading up to the council and are not in the creed produced by the council. The distinction between the two is merely relational, as implied by the names Father and Son. It does not present a hierarchical order, but only a distinction of order.[62]

1 Corinthians 15 shows a mutual subjecting where the Son subjects himself to the Father. Giles appeals to a number of scholars to prove that "greater" is reference to incarnational function as the Son is sent economically, but does not refer to the eternal Father-Son relationship.[63] His conclusion is that the Father and Son are ordered in their

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[59]Ibid., 46.

[60]Ibid., 58.

[61]Ibid., 77.

[62]Ibid., 223-25.

[63]Ibid., 120-23.

actions and functions, not subordinate, because the Son willfully submits.[64] The Father and the Son must share the same divine authority in order for them to be fully equal and *homoousios*.

Giles argues for a "weak" communal model where divine unity is "given equal weight with divine threeness."[65] The weak model is distinct because it states that the divine three "have one center of consciousness and one will" in contrast to the "strong" communal model that states that "each person is thought of as a center of consciousness."[66] The fear of heresy he seeks to avoid is tritheism as each person would be a divine being in himself without the other two persons.[67] He argues that if the Son is submissive in his will to the Father, two major problems are introduced. First, the Son has less authority, and therefore, is less divine than the Father. Second, the Father and the Son are not distinct, but separate in their Godhead.

Analysis of the Contemporary Similarities

Each of these models, the subordinationists and the equivalance, have made strong claims for their own positions and against their opponents. The main argument that each model proposes against the other is that they have introduced something dangerous and new. The main goal is to determine which of these models has presented the new, dangerous ideas. While there are clear differences in their doctrines, both models have a number of similarities. The main focus of this first analysis is to show that

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[64]Ibid., 127.

[65]Ibid., 81. He argues that Torrance represents what he calls a "weak" communal model in contrast to Scott Horrell and Millard Erickson who represent the "strong" communal model.

[66]Ibid.

both models have numerous beliefs in common that are contrary to the teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus. This section will demonstrate how these contemporary evangelical doctrines of the Trinity have changed the grammars of the Trinity. The main accusation here is that both are claiming that the other model has greatly altered the doctrine of the Trinity, when, in fact, they have both greatly altered the basic convictions and doctrines of the Trinity as set forth by Gregory.

The New Trinitarian Person

The first and most basic significant belief held in common by the subordinationist and the equivalence models is that they have changed the meaning of term person in the grammar of the Trinity. Person must have the meaning that is found in its contemporary usage and definition. This means it necessarily implies will, consciousness, love, rationality, etc. Each theologian has biblical texts to prove that this meaning of person is Scriptural, but none of them takes appropriate caution to determine how their new definitions of the term alter the meaning of the Trinity. The focus is to make sure the term person is used in its robust sense and emphasizes a relational God of three. McCall is the strongest and clearest on this point, while Giles is the most reserved. The confusion within the models and the contrast with Gregory is how the grammars of the one and the three get convoluted and confusing in the debate.

These contemporary theologians accept the definition for person according to how human personhood is understood. Giles separates himself from the others by denying the separate concepts of will and consciousness in the divine persons, but

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[67]Ibid., 205.

demands that the common dictionary meaning of the term be applied in the Trinitarian distinctions. The other theologians make strong claims that person must be full and robust, meaning that the concept of will and desire must be included in the person grammar. This demonstrates a great shift from the Patristic grammar of essence and person as for them there is only one will in the Triune God and it was limited to the essence grammar. The standards of what it means to be a person cause these shifts as the term person begins affecting and informing the doctrine of the Trinity, rather than safeguarding it.

The contemporary of concept of person confuses the basic distinctions of traditional Trinitarian thought. The concepts that were normally applied to the essence and unity are not the primary distinguishing marks of the three. The most significant aspect added to person in contemporary theology is will. The danger here is that there are three wills in God. This represents three distinct gods in the traditional grammar. There is also the danger of how the three wills are united together in the equivalence model and how the Father is not truly superior in the subordination model. The change in grammar presents a weaker confession of the unity of God because there is no longer one in the quantitative sense and there is a possibility that the three would not necessarily be operating inseparably since each has his own will. The new models propose a grammar for persons that entails what was traditionally understood as polytheism. They avoid the charge of polytheism by changing the criteria for Orthodoxy.

Gregory maintained a strong doctrine of monotheism so that there was only one will and purpose in the Godhead. He began with the economic Trinity understanding that the inseparable operations points to one essence and one will. Their inseparable

operations point to one will, not three. The contemporary theologians emphasize the actions in their distinctions as each person has a different role or function in the economic Trinity to the exclusion of the other persons.

Another major problem with the contemporary use of person is that it shifts what was a safeguarding term so that it now functions as a content informing term. Gregory used the concept of person to safeguard the distinctions. He began with Scriptural names and actions to determine how concepts should be distinguished between the one and the three. Person only referred to distinct agents in relationships because that was all that could be concluded from their names and actions. The contemporary model makes what was a safeguarding term a content producing grammar for the Trinity. The result is that each of the three has his own personality, which includes a separate nature and distinct will.

The way the term person is used among the contemporary theologians demonstrates a methodological shift. The primary problem is that the term person is applied to the Godhead and to humanity univocally. McCall calls future theologians to apply the terms univocally. Gregory's primary arguments are against the use of univocal language as he applied the Christian distinction of Creator-creature to his understanding of language. The Subordinationist theologians argue that the analogy of Father-Son and husband-wife should be applied to the Trinity as a strict analogy so that the very same structure of the human relationships should be read back into the immanent nature of the Trinity.

Gregory begins with the concepts of Father and Son as revealing truth about the two persons, but does not recognize limits for the analogy because of the Creator-

creature distinction. While using a number of analogies, he never emphasizes the authority structure in them. His goal in the analogies is to argue for unity and each person having the same essence. He also discounts the analogies as unable to express the full reality of God. Both contemporary models lose the concept of mystery and freedom of the Godhead by how they read human terms back into the Trinity.

Further, the contemporary theologians above all fit within the trajectory of the social analogy model. McCall argues that monotheism is not numerical, but only refers to who is identified as the only Creator God. Giles claims to hold to a weak communal model so that the will is not placed in the persons. The problem with the other social analogy models is that they emphasize the reality of the three persons in such a way that each has their own essence, or at least their own will. The argument could be made that having a different will necessarily implies that there is a substantial difference between the persons. Their argument simply assumes that the nature of the Father-Son relationship must be one of mutually willing to love and work with one another like human persons who are separated in their essence. The argument is from the traditional grammar of inseparable operations or harmony of work, but the conclusions are drastically different. The traditional grammar safeguarded unity in their distinctions where as the contemporary models emphasize the distinctions of each having their own will in their unique operations. All the theologians except Giles states that there are three separate wills in the Trinity that are bound by their interdependence upon one another in their communal relationship. The end result is three gods working together and not the three working from the single, same will. The concern is that this is a significant break from the traditions on the part of those who claim to have continuity.

Gregory should not be categorized among the contemporary social analogy models because they demand three real persons with individual loves and wills. He should be understood as presenting a strong relational Trinity where the three are primarily defined by their mutual relationship. He concluded that the three were distinguished by their relationships so that person had its primary definition of "center of relationship." Gregory safeguard concepts such as will from person because this would imply three gods. The three act out of one will toward one another so that a strong monotheism and a real relationship is secured. Just as one "person" can operate with two natures in the incarnation, three persons can operate with a single nature. To address the specific standard that the three must love one another, each person can choose to love the other persons but it is out of the same simple essence. This would present the strongest relationship because the three would share the same infinite love with one another and present that same love in salvation by operating inseparably. The problem with the contemporary model is that they demand that the infinite, spiritual God have relations internally in the same way that humans relate to one another.

The changes in what they claim to be in essence and person grammar is yet another instance where the contemporary models have more in common with each other than with the tradition they claim to be continuing. Gregory's grammar took great care in protecting the mystery and distinguishing his terms. Mystery is reduced in the contemporary models. The subordinationists reduce mystery by explaining the Trinity with a human analogy, which they understand univocally and as providing an explanation. The equivalence model theologians do the same by explaining the Trinity in creaturely terms. The confusion in keeping the grammars distinct is seen in how vague

the unity of essence is defined and in the unity being alike in nature and will, not identically the same.

Economic and Immanent Relationship Confused

Both contemporary models confuse the extremely important grammar of how the economic Trinity and immanent Trinity relate to one another. McCall argues that the Father-Son language would only be reflective of the eternal relationship if there were strict relationship between the immanent-economic. The actions of the Father sending the Son and the Spirit do not reveal an order of the Trinity. The conclusion from the economic not being reflective of a reality in the immanent is that any of the members could have become incarnate. This means the Father is not necessarily the Father, and the same for the Son. These names and relationships were merely adopted by God in order to redeem man.

McCall's denial that the names reflect the immanent Trinity is confusing in light of his claim that theological language can be univocal. If the language is univocal, then the names that God has chosen for his most intimate and personal nature should be seen as real distinguishers. The problem in McCall's model is that the actions of the persons do not correlate with the eternal nature of the Trinity. The three persons do not reveal themselves truly in their actions. He recognizes the Son being submissive in the incarnation, but argues that any claim of an eternal submission is guilty of Arianism. His own model placing the will in the person should not entail Arianism because it is only a distinction in the personhood, not the essence. Arianism is only a valid accusation if the nature of the Son is less that the nature of the Father.

Ware and Grudem are correct to point out that if the primary names, and their actions that coincide with them, do not reflect a reality in the Godhead, then God has revealed himself falsely. The names and actions of the persons must be true to the immanent Trinity even if his complete nature is not completely revealed. Ware introduces the most confusion concerning the immanent and economic relationship as his strongest argument for the submission of the Son is the economic reflecting the immutable eternal relationships of the Trinity. The confusion is introduced as the Son is subordinate to the Spirit in his incarnate, but not in the eternal Trinity. The focus of his argument is that these relationships are fixed, but he allows for the Son to be subordinate while operating as the God-man. Ware claims that the eternal relations of the Son and Father are real and fixed in the structure of their authority, but then denies the necessary correlation between the immanent and economic relationships between the Son and the Spirit. He is inconsistent with his own rules concerning how the immanent and economic relate to one another.

Ware replaces the traditional safeguard for distinguishing the Father and Son—eternal generation—with the concept of authority. He believes the Scriptural references to generation are only a reference to the incarnation and not a description of the eternal relationship. Following from his rule on the immanent and economic relationship, if the Father generates the Son in the incarnation this must reflect some reality in the eternal relationship. If Ware argues forcefully for the names reflecting the eternal reality, it

would necessitate that the relationship between the Father and Son would imply the mystery of eternal generation, which is the more natural way to read Scripture.[68]

With Ware's strong reading of the Father and Son being eternally related, the more obvious relationship is generation.[69] His argument against the use of eternal generation confuses its grammatical function because in his grammar it now only safeguards the distinction between persons. In the traditional grammar the generation of the Son it was always confessed alongside of declaring that the Son is unbegotten in his nature, so that it was limited in its function to safeguarding the personal distinctions. A hierarchy of authority would be a way of describing how that relationship functions, not the nature of the relationship itself. This relationship is presented stronger in Scripture and the tradition instead of the analogy of authority between Father and Son, Husband-wife. Ware's argument that his begetting is only a reference to the Son adding to himself a human nature deprives Ware of one of the most defended safeguards of the Orthodox confession.

The danger in how he appeals to the analogy of the Father-Son and the husband-wife is that the analogy functions univocally and appears to be a control in his doctrine rather than a metaphor for it. There is certainly an analogy to be made because of 1 Cor 11, but it must be held loosely because of the great difference between the Creator and the creature. Nazianzen begins with, "the Father is Father in the absolute

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[68]See John Dahms, "The Johannine Use of Monogenes Reconsidered," *NTS* 29 (1983), 222-32. Robert Letham also has a strong defense for eternal generation being Scriptural and a necessary safeguard for the Orthodox confession of the Trinity (Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 383-89).

[69]Lewis Ayres recognizes that pro-Nicene theology understood person and nature as distinct. Each person shared the same nature and provided a "clear expression that the eternal generation of the Son

sense, for he is not Son also; just as the Son is Son in the absolute sense, because he is not also Father."[70] The fatherhood and sonship among human families derives from the eternal Father and Son. Ware is correct that there is a hierarchy, but it cannot be just like the father and son in human families. The Father-Son language certainly distinguishes the persons, but the familial language has traditionally been read as providing strong grounds for uniting them as they must be equal in essence and authority because of their familial relationship.

The significance of the different trajectories is that the prolegomena of both contemporary theological models are ill defined and/or practiced. Ware establishes a strong rule concerning the eternal relationships, but then breaks his own rule with the Son's relationship to the Spirit. McCall claims that creaturely language is adequate to describe the Creator, but does not give the same univocal relationship for the language with which God has chosen to reveal himself. By contrast, Gregory's clarity on the immanent-economic Trinity is consistent in his use of language and analogies, and necessarily informs his understanding of salvation and spirituality. The order of the persons in how they descend to redeem sinners dictates how sinners ascend to salvation and spirituality. The confusion over the immanent-economic relationship is related to the confusion over the Creator-creature conviction that dictated so much of Gregory's prolegomena and doctrine.

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occurs with the unitary and incomprehensible divine being" (Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and Its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2004], 236).

[70]Or. 29.5 (250.184-86; PG 36.80), ET: Wickham, 162-03.

Analysis of the Contemporary Differences

The subordinatist model presents the better grammar to ensure a unity or harmony as the Son and Spirit necessarily submit to the Father. This is similar to Gregory's doctrine of the *Monarchy* of the Father as unifying the three. Its weakness is that it does not carry with it the other grammars of unity that add safeguards against polytheism. There is an order in the Trinity, but the cost of the subordinartionist order is that the Father could be considered the supreme God, as his will is supreme and he has an authority that the Son and Spirit do not share. The main problem is that where Gregory was comfortable leaving the exact nature of the relationship in mystery, the subordinationist have sought to explain exactly what the relationship is with the analogy of human relationships. The use of analogies must be grounded in mystery so that they are not pressed to far in order to protect God's distinction from his creation. The main problem for the contemporary models together is that they press philosophical concepts into the Trinitarian grammar so that mystery is lost.

Ware and Grudem are correct to conclude that the fact that the Son doesthe work of the Father, and that he was sent by the Father, reveals something about the eternal relationship of the two. The Son doing the Father's work has traditionally been understood as a claim for unity, not for distinction. The names and the actions do reflect an eternal order, but the Subordinationists introduce confusion into the equality grammar by defining it merely in terms of authority. The three must be understood as the one *Monarchia* as the creator and single God who willed creation into existence. The Father, Son, and Spirit must have equality in their aseity, power, and authority. The persons' inseparable operations demand equality in authority if each person is to have the power to

create and save. McCall and Giles are correct that the subordinationists' placing authority in the realm of person-grammar causes confusion because the term has traditionally been in the essence-grammar.

The subordinationist model places the concept of authority in the personhood; therefore, it is not guilty of subordinating the Son in his nature like Arius. There is a problem, however, because the model introduces confusion in how these terms have functioned in the traditional confession. It is illegitimate to accuse the subordinationist model with Arianism or for them to claim that they are continuing in the same grammar as Orthodox doctrines of the Trinity because they have introduced a significant change in grammar by placing the will and authority in the personhood. By making this shift, it would be inaccurate to accuse them of Arianism, but it is legitimate to question the consequences of shifting these concepts into the realm of person.

The Son having less authority in his personhood demonstrates the importance of placing the will in the one essence. The Son having less authority in his will raises questions over his ability and authority in creation, salvation, and revelation. These are the three actions that only God can perform. The Son must possess absolute authority to perform these actions in order for his deity to be equal with the Father. Placing the will in the personhood and then distinguishing the persons according to the authority of their will divides the persons according to their performances, rather than distinguishing them in their mutual relationships and unique roles in the economy. The Subordinatiionist model does not protect or safeguard the full deity of the Son because he lacks the same authority as the Father. They have introduced a break with the Orthodox confession and

introduced confusion by transferring the concept of authority from the essence-grammar to person-grammar.

The essentialist model adopts the single grammar of *Monarchy* meaning that the three together are the one creator in distinction from the creation. The East and West traditions have an explicit order in the Trinity that states that the Father is the cause of the Son in his subsistence or personhood. Gregory makes it clear that this makes the Father first in the relationship and not the essence. His grammar of an eternal relationship safeguards him from subordinating the Son ontologically. According to the standards of orthodoxy presented by the equivalence theologians, Gregory would be guilty of Arianism because he insists on an eternal dissimilar hypostasis. He has eternally subordinated the Son to the Father, but the subordination did not involve his will being submissive to the Father. Gregory's doctrine ensures that only the Son could have become incarnate, as the names reveal an eternal reality, even if the reality is then claimed to be a mystery. The order secures that the Son would be sent in every possible world in which there was an incarnation, but safeguards the mystery of what the relationship is because it is an eternal, infinite relationship.

The primary difference between Gregory and the contemporary models is their standards of monotheism. Gregory's grammar seeks to preserve the strongest sense of Monarchy as a single deity that includes the three persons. This means that mystery and distinctions must be protected by means of a number of grammars. The monotheism was not a mere unity of like natures or a harmony of wills. Rather it was the strong sense of monotheism that affirms one divine essence, but includes the three persons. The contemporary models extend the boundaries of Orthodoxy by giving a very limited

definition of Arianism and Modalism. The goal is to assert the three as strongly as possible and then affirm a unity. This is seen in their persistent claim to be Eastern by starting with the three and affirming three real persons.

The Subordinationist model breaks with the tradition by distinguishing the persons according to the authority of their wills. The Equivalence model breaks with the tradition by denying any real hierarchical distinction so that the unique personhood that is revealed in the economy of God is protected in the eternal reality. Both models deny or are vague concerning the single, simple essence and deny the single will of God that unites the three persons. Each model emphasizes one of the grammars that Gregory presented, but the one grammar is not enough to protect a real unity of the three and real distinction in the unity.

Contemporary models oversimplify the grammar for the one and the three so that the confession of the Triune God is not completely safeguarded. The lack of protection for the Trinity is related to the use of philosophical concepts to describe the Trinity. The more one thinks he has described the nature of God, the less he needs to protect the mystery. There is an imbalance in the contemporary models use of kataphatic and apophatic confessions. This demonstrates that the contemporary models have focused more on helping the church understand the Trinity rather than promoting worship and awe of the Triune Savior.

McCall's work is particularly guilty of reducing the grammar for monotheism because he proposes a Second Temple Judaism definition of monotheism and assumes that this is what influenced the New Testament writers. He defines monotheism as the one who creates so that all that is needed is a qualitative unity, not a quantitative

confession of a singular essence. This is a major break from the tradition that wrestled for years over how God could be one and three. His proposal is to dismiss the grammar of numbers, but this is impossible in light of Scripture and the tradition. The goal is to discover what qualities God has and then recognize how many belong to that class. This is part of the process Gregory achieves as he identifies who is divine by the actions they perform, but he never dismisses the concept of one. Gregory denies a monotheism too strict to include more than one person, but demands a monotheism that insists on one single essence. The danger in McCall's work is that he presents a mere monotheism not a strong doctrine of one God in order to maintain a robust doctrine of persons.

Both models demonstrate a change in their interpretations of Scripture. The contemporary models emphasize a number of texts in isolation to prove their doctrines and use of terms. One example of how Scripture is read differently is 1 Cor 15. Both contemporary models interpret "God will be all in all" as a reference to the Father. They differ on what implications this reading has on the Son's subordination. Ware uses the text to prove that the Father exercises eternal authority over the Son, and McCall interprets it to emphasize the Son willfully submits to the Father but the submission ends when the kingdom is handed over. Gregory reads the reference of God in the passage as the entire Godhead so that the Son reigns with the Father in eternity and the Triune God is all in all. The focus of Gregory's interpretation is that the Son's rule is eternal with the Father. The similarity in the contemporary theologians versus the interpretation of Gregory demonstrates that the former share a common interpretation trajectory that is contrary to Gregory's. This is significant in that both are claiming to have the tradition on their side, but neither interprets Scripture like the Church Father.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both models have confused the relationship of the immanent and economic Trinities and both confuse the various grammars so that concepts are being transferred from the one essence to the three persons and vice versa. The Subordinationist model presents a unity of wills and distinguishes the three in their personhood. This appears to meet Orthodox requirements at face value, but the concepts that are transferred between the grammars of essence and persons cause some concern regarding equality and the Son's ultimate authority. The Equivalence present a clear unity of three that are alike, but their new definitions of Orthodoxy and heresy changes the union and distinctions. There is a real difference and separation among the persons and there is a multitude in their unity. These are presented not as confessing paradoxes, but describing the way God's triune being exists.

When Erickson asks who has tampered with the Trinity, the answer should be both of these contemporary models. Both models claim that the other has introduced new grammars for the Trinity that have significant consequences. Both models are correct. Both models need to reconsider if they meet traditional Orthodox standards and if this is necessary. Gregory's grammars are thorough, sometimes complicated, but clearly safeguard against heresy and prepare the church to worship the Triune God who saves. The problems and questions the Contemporary Evangelical models introduce include:

1. The Contemporary Evangelical models fail to provide a complete grammar for the unity of God. Each model only emphasizes one grammar for the unity while redefining the meaning of one God. They introduce three wills in the one Godhead and appear to make the essence alike in each person rather than secure the strongest sense of one in a single, simple essence. The Subordinationist model relies on the Father's will and the harmony of the three wills while the Equivalance model relies solely upon the three operating inseparably. The former raises questions about the

Son's authority to create and save as God *a se* if he is dependent upon the will of the Father. The latter raises question about God's eternal existence as one God always in unity and the confession of monotheism.

2. The Contemporary Evangelical models fail to make proper distinctions between the one and three so that the essence and person grammars are distinct and safeguarded. The Subordinationist model safeguards the distinctions with the concept of authority, but the term has traditionally been used to argue for unity so that each person has divine authority to save. The Equivalence model safeguards the distinctions so that they are three real persons. The overemphasis on personhood causes each person to be separate and different in will.

3. The Contemporary Evangelical models have redefined the traditional heresies in order to present their doctrines as Orthodox. Both models define a mere Arianism and modalism and change the criteria for unity. There is no real ground for unity and the grammar for monotheism has been altered so that the numerical concept of one an invalid grammar for the Trinity. They insist that the plurality of the three must meet the same criteria of three among humans, and therefore, unity becomes the standard instead of the stronger confession of a single essence.

4. The Contemporary Evangelical models fails to practice a proper grammar in doctrine that speaks of God as wholly other than the created order. Both models speak of God univocally so that whatever person means in human being and human relations, it must also mean in the divine being and relationships. There is not a proper practice of protecting the mystery and freedom of God as both explain what God's being, threeness, and relationships are like. The Creator-creation distinction is confessed in both models, as well as a strong doctrine of aseity, but the confession is not consistent with their methodology and confession of God.

5. The Contemporary Evangelical models fail to protect the proper dynamic between the immanent and economic Trinity. The Subordinationst seeks to make a strong relationship between the economic and the immanent regarding the Father and the Son, but then breaks their own rules in the relationship of the Son and Spirit. The Equivalence Model raises questions about God's faithfulness in his revelation as the names do not point to real, eternal relationships in the Godhead.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The contribution of this dissertation was twofold. The first aim was to present Gregory of Nazianzus' doctrine of God. His grammars for how God is to be known and how the Trinity is to be proclaimed in the church were clarified in the first two chapters. The second aim was to analyze the contemporary models that claim Gregory as their historical precedent. The first step was to prove that the presumed East-West divide is more of a difference in emphasis of particular grammars as both Augustine and Gregory have similar models of the Trinity. The chapters analyze significant contemporary models. These include Rahner's Rule, Plantinga's primary-secondary substance social analogy, the Evangelical Eternal Subordinatist, and the Evangelical Equivalance models. The goal in presenting these various theological models is to call the contemporary models back to the Patristic tradition because it is a safer and provides a more robust confession of the Trinity that will lead the church to better worship the Triune God who has redeemed them.

There are a number of important elements in Gregory's doctrine that should be more valued in contemporary theology. First, Gregory is consistent in his methodology and doctrine. He maintained a healthy relationship between what could and could not be confessed about God. This is seen first in how he was consistent with how the Creator is distinct from the creation. This was a primary conviction that influenced his doctrine. The practical application was that a proper recognition of God's infinite and boundless nature results in a humble confession of his immanent nature being ineffable. The weaknesses of the human mind and human language must be taken into account when

confessing a perfect, holy, infinite God. The result is a theology that emphasizes what Scripture teaches and guards the confession. The emphasis in Gregory's doctrine is a grammar that is governed by while also protecting what is revealed in Scripture so that the church can confess the Triune God boldly and then analogies followed to prove some points. This in contrast to contemporary models that begin with a model or grammar so that the secondary aspects of the confession serve as a control for their doctrine.

Gregory also recognized that God intended to be known through his salvific actions toward man and was able to clarify what must be confessed about God based upon his revelation. He was careful in promoting what must be confessed and guarding the church against what could not be confessed. He was also careful in prioritizing the primary terms that are found in Scripture and limiting the role of the secondary terms as merely safeguards that protected what was revealed (essence, person). This allowed him to remain consistent in his language so that he presented a doctrine of the Trinity boldly, but with great humility concerning what had not been revealed. The economic Trinity related to the immanent, but the immanent Trinity was more than the finite, sinful eye could behold.

Second, Gregory provided clear grammars in order to safeguard the mystery and the message of the Trinity. He began with the actions of the three in order to demonstrate that the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit performed the actions that only God can perform. The argument was twofold. First, all three persons must be included in the Godhead because only God can create, save, and reveal God. Secondly, each person is clearly distinction in their actions so that it is not one God doing the work with three different faces. It was necessary for the church's salvation and spirituality to confess the inseparable operations.

The names of the three further clarified the unity and distinctions of the persons because the names Father and Son necessarily imply a same nature and two distinct persons in that nature. His methodology was to see that God was progressively

revealed as Father, then the Son, and then the Holy Spirit. The names provide a clear order in the Trinity that unifies and distinguishes the persons so that the Father sends the Son and the Spirit. This demonstrates distinction in actions and unification in purpose.

The final step was to understand how the three could fit within the strongest sense of monotheism. This is where his various theological rules help clarify what confessions fit within the person-grammar or the essence-grammar. The conclusion is that the three must be distinct in personhood but singularly one in a simple essence. The simplicity of God is not revealed in Scripture per se, but was seen as a necessary doctrine to protect the church from the confession of tritheism.

Gregory's grammar for the three and one was multifaceted so that God's Triune existence and his ineffable being are protected. First, he protected the unity of the Godhead and the one essence with the grammars of the Monarchy of the Father, the inseparable options, and the single, simple essence. The first two are clear grammars from how the three persons operated together in the economy. The third is a warranted conclusion from the actions of the three because the three must be operating from the same will and power. There cannot be more than one essence or will in order to protect the confession from polytheism. Second, the distinct persons were protected by the mutual relationships revealed by their names and actions. Each grammar protected the unity and distinctions in a unique way from different heresies and complemented the other grammars to produce a model for the Trinity.

Gregory's grammar is consistent within his model, protects what Scripture has revealed, and is tied to a clear doctrine of salvation and spirituality. His model and terminology is not the end of Trinitarian theology until the church see the perfect vision of God. They should, however, serve as guideposts for the church. The most significant strengths include the care he took in interpreting Scripture and how he employed a number of grammars to protect each aspect of the Trinity. The latter aspect of his theology is what made his theology significant, clear, and healthy for the church. The

infinite, mysterious Trinity must be confessed, but cannot be confessed simplistically. Gregory's doctrine is marked with awe and worship, but with great clarity concerning the truths of God that had been revealed.

Gregory's model was presented in order to demonstrate the clarity and thoughtfulness that characterized the Patristic/premodern doctrines of the Trinity. He should serve as a model for Trinitarian doctrine and many contemporary theologians claim him as their historical precedent for their innovations in doctrine. The following are ways in which contemporary models fail to meet the standards set by Gregory of Nazianzus:

The contemporary models present an oversimplified grammar to protect the unity and monotheism of the Trinity instead of using multiple grammars. One of the primary ways contemporary models changes the grammar for the unity of God is to modify the criteria for Orthodox monotheism. McCall adopts a "quality of being" grammar borrowed from Second Temple Judaism and Plantinga adopts the "same kind of being" criteria. Both limit tritheism to simply being Arianism instead of the strongest doctrine of monotheism that includes a numerical one. These changes in Christian monotheism also include defining the heresies of Arianism and modalism in the most basic ways. These heresies are reduced to their most basic definitions in order to allow for different kinds of unity and monotheism.

The main focus in contemporary Trinitarian models is to prioritize a robust doctrine of the persons so that there are a real three. The contemporary theologians prioritize the three in order to secure the strongest sense of three claiming that this was an Eastern method. Gregory, however, began with the three in order to demonstrate that by their actions they were all included in the one. Beginning with three was not to present three robust persons, but to show that all three perform the actions only the one God can perform.

The unity of the contemporary models is typically found in one grammar that only protect unity according to their new criteria. They present an oversimplified doctrine of unity that avoids one in the strictest sense to allow for their robust threeness. Gregory's grammar is superior for the mere fact that he employs a number of grammars that all work together to protect the unity of God. He is able to defend the strongest sense of unity in a single one so that there is no question of monotheism.

The contemporary models fail to protect the proper Creator-creature distinctions. This is seen in how they apply terms to the Godhead univocally from language that was meant to describe the created order. The most significant term is person. The modern concepts of "center of consciousness" and will are applied to the persons in order to give the strongest distinction. This in effect, divides the persons as each possesses his distinct will and desires apart from the other persons. Rahner avoids the contemporary meaning of center of consciousness, but still makes the concept of person univocal for God and man as a person experiences themselves in another.

The Creator-creature distinction is also broken by the use of analogies from the created order to describe God. Rather the analogy is Peter, James, and John, or father, mother, son, the being of God cannot be reduced to be like three humans. God is infinite, pure, and spirit whereas humans are finite, sinful, and material. Analogies can be used to demonstrate one aspect of God and his Triune nature, but ever analogy fails at a number of other points if used appropriately.

This criticism demonstrates the thesis that contemporary models of the Trinity seek to help the church understand the Trinity. I do not question the intentions of the contemporary theologians because what they have done is try to present the Trinity so that it is placed back at the forefront of the church's worship. Their models too often go beyond what is revealed in Scripture and beyond what the Fathers understood as an ineffable mystery that was only to be guarded. The focus of Gregory's Trinitarian work

is for the church to see how the Triune God operates in harmony for their salvation and spirituality so that they are able to worship him with awe and mystery. His prioritization of Scriptural concepts and using other terms to safeguard what has been revealed make his model safer and better at promoting worship in the church.

The contemporary models fail to protect the proper dynamic between the immanent and economic Trinity. The key figure in this criticism is Rahner because he introduces the major methodological shift that unites the immanent and the economic the strongest sense. The freedom of God and his perfect aseity as three persons is not protected because the Son and Spirit's existence is dependent upon the Father choosing to create the world.

The equivalance model does not unite the economic with the immanent because they only see the names and actions of the Father and Son functioning during the incarnate state. They fail to see that the relationships revealed in the incarnate state necessarily reveal the eternal relationships of the Godhead. Ware confuses his own rule concerning the economic and immanent Trinity. He says the incarnate relation reveals the true taxis between the Father and Son, but that the Son and Spirit are relation to one another differently during the incarnate state from the rest of eternity. The main concern in how the immanent and economic Trinity has been confused is that the contemporary models have not applied grammars consistently that help understand how the Trinity has been revealed in Scripture.

The contemporary models fail to provide proper grammars that protect the equality, unity, and distinctions of the three. By moving the concept of will and/or authority into the person-grammar, contemporary theology introduces a significant change from Gregory's model. This typically coincides with moving from a single, simple essence to a generic, common essence. These two together present three separate

divided gods. The claim for perichoresis seeks to unite them in their identities, but it does not safeguard a true unity of the persons. To further distinguish them according to varying degrees of authority introduces questions concerning the Son's authority to create and save. To distinguish them according to common-specific properties can have the same effect as the Son would derive his own nature from the Father. The outcome of both questions the aseity and freedom of the Son, and the Spirit. These changes ultimately introduce confusion in the grammars as each new idea has a significant consequence on the other grammars of the Trinity.

The contemporary models fail to claim the Cappadocians as their historical precedent. While the contemporary models all claim to have an Eastern precedent, it is clear from the argument above that they have introduced too many significant changes to claim Gregory of Nazianzus as their historical precedent. They have broken with tradition, or worse, possibly sought some evidence among the fathers for their own views in order to claim they are historically valid. Their treatment of Gregory is too simplistic as they do not read his grammar in light of one another an often chose those that best fit their own models.

For those that claim that they are moving away from a Western model toward an Eastern model, it should be clear that Augustine and Gregory have more in common with one another than any of the contemporary have in common with either Father. Theologians need to be more careful in their reading of the Fathers and seek to represent them fully and carefully before presenting their view is founded upon their tradition.

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