

Eirini ARTEMI, Gregory Nazianzen's trinitarian teaching
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La doctrina trinitaria de San Gregorio Nacianceno basada en su Quinta Oración Teológica

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Abstract: Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, is one of the most important fathers and saints of the Christianity, because of his theological thought and his intense poetical style in his work. He is thought as a writer of a unique beauty and brilliance in his writings. In his era, the teachings of Eunomius and Macedonius were a great threat for the Church. The apprehension of the divine nature, being pure spirit, is impossible for a materially based consciousness, and the only hope for human beings to have knowledge of God, therefore, is founded upon their ability to transcend material limitation, when the soul is invited back by God to its true spiritual nature and destiny (*τέλος*) in communion with God. This economy of salvation, described as a purification and ascent, determines from the outset the radically 'economic' nature of theology for Gregory. Gregory insists on explaining how the Holy Spirit exists, underlining that the way of the existence of every person of the Holy Trinity is unique for each of Them. The word *ἴδιον* (idion: specific) is used to show the relationship between the persons of the Triune God, and not their common nature. For this reason the names Father, Son and Holy Spirit are referred to their relationship, and not to *οὐσία* (ousia: essence). Also these names (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) do not show the actions of the Holy Persons, because they are common. Otherwise there would be the danger to the Son of not being God. He would be only a creature. For the first time, Gregory uses the unity of the persons of the Holy Trinity as a pattern of the unity of the two natures of incarnated Word, Christ. He uses this type of pattern, because Gregory saw the danger of the heretical teaching of Apollinarius. The latter supports that the human nature of Christ is absorbed by the divine one. Also, there is another heretical danger in thinking the recruitment of human nature by the divine one as superficial, false, not real. So the Christ would not be real Human and God and He could not save the human race. It is clear that Gregory's trinitarian doctrine originates in a primary and profound soteriological imperative.

Key words: Triune God, triadology, divine nature, Gregory of Nazianzus

Resumen: Gregorio Nacianceno, el Teólogo, es uno de los padres y los santos más importantes de la cristiandad, a causa de su pensamiento teológico y el intenso estilo poético de su obra. Es considerado como un escritor de una belleza y una brillantez únicas en sus escritos. En su época, las enseñanzas de Eunomio y Macedonio eran una gran amenaza para la Iglesia. La aprehensión de la naturaleza divina, siendo espíritu puro, es imposible para una conciencia basada en lo material, y la única esperanza para los seres humanos de tener conocimiento de Dios, por lo tanto, se basa en su capacidad de trascender la limitación material, cuando el alma es invitada por Dios a regresar a su verdadera naturaleza espiritual y su destino (*τέλος*) en la comunión con Dios. Esta economía de la salvación, descrita como una purificación y ascensión, determina desde el principio la naturaleza radicalmente "económica" de la teología de Gregorio. Gregorio insiste en explicar cómo el Espíritu Santo existe, subrayando que el camino de la existencia de cada persona de la Santísima Trinidad es

único para cada una de ellas. La palabra ἴδιον (*idion*) se utiliza para mostrar la relación entre las personas de Dios uno y trino, y no su naturaleza común. Por esta razón los nombres del Padre, el Hijo y el Espíritu Santo hacen referencia a su relación mutua, y no a la *ousía*. Además estos nombres (Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo) no muestran las acciones de las personas divinas, porque son comunes. De lo contrario, habría el riesgo de que el Hijo no fuese Dios, sino solo una creatura. Por primera vez, Gregorio utiliza la unidad de las personas de la Santísima Trinidad como modelo de la unidad de las dos naturalezas del Verbo de Dios encarnado, Cristo. Él utiliza este tipo de modelo, porque Gregorio vio el peligro de la enseñanza herética de Apolinar. Este último sostiene que la naturaleza humana de Cristo es absorbida por la divina. Además, hay otro peligro herético en pensar la adopción de la naturaleza humana por la divina como superficial, falsa, irreal. Así Cristo no sería verdaderamente Hombre y Dios, y él no podría salvar a la raza humana. Está claro que la doctrina trinitaria de Gregorio se origina en un primario y profundo imperativo soteriológico.

Palabras clave: Santísima Trinidad, trinitaria, naturaleza divina, Gregorio Nacianceno.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. The historical environment of the era in which the Twentieth Theological Oration was written. 3. The Twentieth Oration and the definition of term *theologos* (theologian). 3.1. The Twentieth Oration. 3.2. The conditions for someone to be called a theologian. 4. The Triune God. 4.1. Trinity: “Monas in Triadi and Trias in Monadi”, One God in three persons. 4.2. The Substance of the Father. God the Father. 4.3. The Existence of the Son. God the Son. 5. Conclusions. Sources and Bibliography

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1. Introduction

“The divine nature is boundless and hard to be understood;
and all that we can comprehend of God, it is His
boundlessness.” (St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 38, 7*).

St. Gregory of Nazianzus (329-390) is, along with St. John the Evangelist, and St. Symeon the New Theologian, one of the few saints in the Eastern Christian tradition bearing the honorific title of “Theologian.” Through his work, he makes clear how someone can speak about God, *theologisei*, and connect with the Triune God. Only then everyone could become a shareholder of the attributes of the Holy Trinity and obtain partial but certain knowledge about God. Partial, also, is the knowledge that a man as a creature can acquire of God, since any man can know only God's attributes but never knows His actions. Gregory explains that, while pointing out the characteristics of God, we thus do not give a definition to the understanding of God. Such a definition is, in essence, impossible, because in any definition there is an indication of limits, and, therefore, an indication of boundaries, of incompleteness. There are no boundaries to God, and therefore there cannot be a definition of comprehension of God: “The Divine Nature then is boundless and hard to understand; and all that we can comprehend of Him is His boundlessness”.¹

¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, *Oration 38, 7, On the Theophany, or Birthday of Christ*, PG 36, 317CD.

This paper deals mainly with the triadological teaching of St. Gregory of Nazianzus in his speech "On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops"². The knowledge of God is given to humans through theophanies or *theopties* (*the appearance of God*) and theological search. Our goal is the detailed exposition of the Trinitarian teaching of Gregory the Theologian. In his teaching, it is underlined unequivocally the consubstantiality and the *aidiotita*³ of the Persons of the One and, at the same time, Triune God. His arguments rest on solid Greek physics and metaphysics (and on prior conclusions), and he attempts to use analogies with what is observable in nature, ultimately discarding them in favour of what we may term "inspiration."

The teaching of Gregory for the Triune God is relevant to the time in which many heresies, such as Arianism, Eunomius' and Marcellus of Ancyra's teaching etc., had strongly made their appearance. These heresies were in opposition to the traditional Trinitarian, Christological and about Holy Spirit doctrines.

2. The historical environment of the era in which the Twentieth Theological Oration was written.

In 359, needing reinforcements against Persia, Constantius, son of Constantinus the Great, ordered many of cousin's Julian the Apostate best legions to march east. Instead, the troops stationed near Paris in mutiny and proclaimed Julian emperor. The latter moved slowly eastwards with them to what would have been a rebellious confrontation. But in 361 Constantius, moving westwards to meet Julian, died in Asia Minor. Julian the Apostate (361-363) was the new emperor. As imperial ruler, Julian had two primary goals: the complete abolition of the Christian religion, and the restoration of paganism, which had fallen on hard times in recent decades.

Julian, as a military man, likely was familiar with the maxim "divide and conquer." Accordingly, he encouraged strife among those who professed allegiance to Christ. He restored⁴ certain antagonistic bishops, who had been in exile, to their offices, He had the hope they would devour one another. So by recalling exiled bishops, Julian encouraged dissension among the Christians, who were already fighting the heresy of Arius⁵. The result was new heresies to be founded. The leader and the founder of one of the heresies was Eunomius (333-393) bishop of Cyzicus. For Eunomius, God was the ungenerated Being, the single, supreme, ultimate, and simple Substance. He held that the "Son of God" was actually created by the Father, and, though possessing creative

² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270 (=PG 35, 1065A-1081A).

³ Eternity

⁴ He ordered the bishops who were in exile, because of their heretic ideas to return to their ecclesiastic places, to their dioceses

⁵ Vlasios FEIDAS, *Ecclesiastic History*, I, Athens 1992, p. 507.

power, was not of His essence; further, the "Holy Spirit" was created by the Son in order to be the Sanctifier of souls. Christ was born and He wasn't eternal therefore, according to Eunomius, Christ cannot be called God according to his essence; his essence is creation. Similarly, Christ's essence is expressed with the notion "offspring" (γέννημα), while God's essence is denoted as "unbegotten" (ἀγέννητος). To sum up, Eunomius' argumentation, the persons of God had different names and because of this they had different essence⁶.

In 364 Valens (364-378) is the emperor to the throne of the empire. His reign started after a short period of Jovian's reign (363-364). The Emperor Valens (364-378) lent his powerful support to the Eunomians, even to the extent of persecuting the Orthodox. He was a vehement follower of the Arian branch of Christianity and actively persecuted the Catholic Church. In his reign many Orthodox were exiled. In 378, Valens was killed in the Battle of Adrianople against the Goths and his nephew Gratian became the new emperor. He favored Christianity and recalled all exiled orthodox bishops from the exile. The reign of Gratian formed an important epoch in ecclesiastical history, since during that period Orthodox Christianity for the first time became dominant throughout the empire. Gratian also published an edict that all their subjects should profess the faith of the bishops of Rome and Alexandria (i.e., the Nicene faith). The move was mainly thrust at the various beliefs that had arisen out of Arianism, but smaller dissident sects, such as the Macedonians, were also prohibited.

In 379 Gratian chose for his co-Augustus for East Theodosius, who favored the Nicene Christian religion (325)⁷. In 381, Theodosius summoned a new ecumenical council at Constantinople to repair the division between East and West on the basis of Nicene orthodoxy. Generally, Theodosius proved to be a champion of the orthodox faith, and his intent in calling this Council was to completely eradicate Arianism, and condemn Macedonios and Apollinarianism by establishing the teaching on the unity of the Holy Trinity and the complete manhood in Christ. In the end the council of 381 defined orthodoxy, clarified jurisdictions of the state church of the Roman Empire, and ruled that Constantinople was second in precedence to Rome⁸.

The general situation of this era was reflected in the twentieth oration of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus. From the first clauses of the oration, the holy father prefigured the reader of it for the context of this writing work. Simultaneously, Gregory expressed his reaction to those men that declared that they are theologians:

⁶ Stylianos PAPADOPOULOS, *Patrologia I*, Athens 1992, p. 365. See Eirini ARTEMI, "The religious policy of Byzantine Emperors from First to the Fourth Ecumenical Councils", *Ecclesiastic Faros*, 76 (2005) 121-163.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ S. WILLIAMS, G. FRIELL, *Theodosius: The Empire at Bay*, Yale University Press, 1995, p. 27.

When I see the endless talkativeness that haunts us today, the instant sages and designated theologians, for whom simply willing to be wise is enough to make them so, I long for the philosophy that comes from above; I yearn for that “final lodging”⁹, to use Jeremiah's phrase, and I want only to be off by myself¹⁰.

On the other hand the real theologian searches for God, and he is illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and can talk about the infinite God:

For nothing seems so important to me as for a person to shut off his senses, to take his place outside the flesh and the world—not to fasten on human realities unless it is completely necessary, and so, in conversation with himself and with God, to live above the level of the visible, and always to bear the images of divine things within himself in their pure state, free from the stamp of what is inferior and changeable. In this way, one is—and one is always becoming—a spotless mirror of God and divine things, assimilating light to light, and adding clarity to indistinct beginnings, until we come to the source of the light that radiates in this world and lay hold of our blessed end, where mirrors are dissolved in true reality¹¹.

3. The Twentieth Oration and the definition of term *theologos* (theologian: the man who speak for the God.).

3.1. The Twentieth Oration

The Twentieth Oration of Gregory Nazianzus, “On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops”, is one of his dogmatic orations. This work is written in the summer or in autumn of 380, after the writing of the five theological orations. By many considered to be a summary of the first theological treatise “On Theology”, this, however, does not seem to be accepted, because this base is in 380 and theological reasons were written at the beginning of that year. Many scholars place it in the spring of 380, and John McGuckin suggests it may be a reworking of his “first lecture” in the capital, given as early as September or October 379 AD¹².

The cause for this writing is the environment that prevailed then in the Church. His aim is to present “pseudo-theologians,” who “try to mould other people into holiness overnight, appoint them theologians, and as it were, breathe learning into them, and thus produce ready-made any number of

⁹ JER. 9:2.

¹⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 1 (=PG 35, 1065AB).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² J. A. MCGUCKIN, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, New York 2001, p. 243ff, 253ff.

Councils of ignorant intellectuals”¹³. Gregory explained which the criteria to someone to be called theologian are¹⁴.

The Holy Father accuses the bishops and many of priests of his time of incompetence of their priesthood. He feels angry with those who didn't have the right qualifications to be theologians. Most of them are theologians only by name but not by essence. The real theologian must have illumination by God, should be able to speak about God and should be purified and know adequately the Scriptures¹⁵. Gregory explains that a theologian must achieve his purification, before he purifies others. He must be defender of the truth; only then he would stand together with angels.

Continuing his oration, Gregory mentions events from the Scriptures and mainly from the Old Testament who were impious to God and became the cause of the punishment of Israel. Nazianzus wants to emphasize that anyone who is disrespectful to God or doesn't justify and punish ungodly people, he is unworthy to be serving God¹⁶. Instead, whoever is cognizant of his unworthiness, but tries to purify himself, then is illuminated and is given Grace by God to theologize¹⁷.

This oration is a dogmatic text and an exquisite literary creation. It also shows that this Cappadocian Father is very knowledgeable about the art of rhetoric and inept handler of Greek language. Its content is mainly a dense statement of Gregory's synthetic view of the orthodox doctrine of One God as a Trinity of Persons. Here as elsewhere, he emphasizes that the ability to approach this central understanding of faith in the right spirit depends, first of all on the moral¹⁸.

3.2. The conditions for someone to be called a theologian

In Gregory's view, Christian theology involves and represents a dynamic, lived relation between God and the theologian. The oration begins not with abstract information about God, but it clears that purification is the necessary condition for knowing God, for every theologian, as he grows in holiness in order to know God more fully¹⁹.

¹³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 27, 9, The First Theological Oration. A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians, PG 36, 20D.

¹⁴ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 1 (=PG 35, 1065B).

¹⁵ Ibid, SC 270, 1-2 (=PG 35, 1065B).

¹⁶ Ibid, SC 270, 2 (=PG 35, 1065B).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ B. E. DALEY, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, The Early Church Fathers, publ. Taylor & Francis, Oxford 2006, p. 98.

¹⁹ C. A. BEELEY, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008, p. 111, 88.

Gregory explains that as Theologian could be considered the man who speaks or writes treatises for God. Regarding Christianity, the theologian is the God-seer. He is the one who succeeds to realize the “most” of the divine truth in relation to God's truth, which neither decreases nor increases. The capture of the divine truth is succeeded with the lighting of the Holy Spirit.

...completing in detail that which was incompletely said by them concerning the Holy Ghost; for that question had not then been mooted, namely, that we are to believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are of one Godhead, thus confessing the Spirit also to be God²⁰.

The Holy Spirit enables the theologian to rise above the human level of life. He gives his intellect a light to understand truths and reach decisions not by reasoning things out, but by a kind of intuition. The guidance of the Holy Spirit is above reason. The theologian “communicates” with the Holy Spirit and the latter reveals him another part of the divine truth with His lighting.

Further, he inquired into the truth of our faith which had been torn asunder, confused, and parceled out into various opinions and portions by many; with the intention, if it were possible, of reducing the whole world to harmony and union by the co-operation of the Spirit: and, should he fail in this, of attaching himself to the best party, so as to aid and be aided by it, thus giving token of the exceeding loftiness and magnificence of his ideas on questions of the greatest moment. Here too was shown in a very high degree the simple-mindedness of Athanasius, and the steadfastness of his faith in Christ. For, when all the rest who sympathized with us were divided into three parties, and many were faltering in their conception of the Son, and still more in that of the Holy Ghost (a point on which to be only slightly in error was to be orthodox) and few indeed were sound upon both points, he was the first and only one, or with the concurrence of but a few, to venture to confess in writing, with entire clearness and distinctness, the Unity of Godhead and Essence of the Three Persons, and thus to attain in later days, under the influence of inspiration, to the same faith in regard to the Holy Ghost, as had been bestowed at an earlier time on most of the Fathers in regard to the Son. This confession, a truly royal and magnificent gift, he presented to the Emperor, opposing to the unwritten innovation, a written account the orthodox faith, so that an

²⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Epistle 102, 2¹⁻⁶ - Against Apollinarius; The Second Letter to Cledonius, SC 208, 2, (=PG 37, 180A).

emperor might be overcome by an emperor, reason by reason,
treatise by treatise²¹.

The donation of the grace of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity is achieved when someone is constantly struggling to get rid of his passions, to succeed his inner purity and purification of the soul through prayer, fasting and participation in the sacraments of the Church²². The careful study of the sacred texts of the Bible and the works of earlier Church Fathers has an important role in the effort for founding the grace of Holy Spirit. Mostly what matters the most, it is the true faith in God, trying to harmonize our life according to the will and commandments of the Triune God.

Although many Fathers observed the specific terms, our Church was parsimonious to attribute this characterization to Christian Church, Fathers, saints and teachers. So over the two thousand years of earthly existence of the Church only three saints worthy be called theologians. One was the beloved disciple of Christ, the Son of Thunder, John the Evangelist. The other was Gregory of Nazianzus and the third was Symeon the New Theologian. Only they managed to acquire the experience of the deeper and broader truth than which had been formed by the other theologians to their time²³.

In particular oration Gregory emphasizes that the theologian is not the one who was ordained priest and he is wise according to human standards, but the one that has been occupied by the grace of the Holy Spirit²⁴. This holy grace makes him anxious to wish the union with the Divinity. The true theologian has innermost peace and mental quiet. At the same time, he tries to be in constant vigilance to achieve the without ending renewal of his internal world, having always as base the true faith in Christ Jesus²⁵. Only then, the man works as an “unblemished inflectors of God” and he can theologize correctly²⁶.

²¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 21, 33, On the Great Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, PG 35, 1121B-D.

²² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 27, 3, The First Theological Oration. A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians, PG 36, 13CD: “Not to every one, my friends, does it belong to philosophize about God; not to every one; the Subject is not so cheap and low; and I will add, not before every audience, nor at all times, nor on all points; but on certain occasions, and before certain persons, and within certain limits. Not to all men, because it is permitted only to those who have been examined, and are passed masters in meditation, and who have been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least are being purified”.

²³ Stylianos PAPADOPOULOS, *Patrologia* II, Athens 1990, p. 499.

²⁴ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 1, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, PG 35, SC 270, 1 (=PG 35, 1065A).

²⁵ Konstantinos SKOUTERIS, *The meaning of the terms “theology”, “theologize”, “theologian” in Greek Fathers' teaching and in ecclesiastic writers to Cappadocians*, Athens 1989, p. 168.

²⁶ I COR. 13:12: “For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”.

In another part of this speech, Nazianzen notes that someone who speaks for God must be worthy, because God, the ultimate clean being, can be touched only by an absolute purified man. As we can understand, someone can theologize, can speak for God, only if

He has been examined, and is passed master in meditation, and who has been previously purified in soul and body, or at the very least is being purified. For the impure to touch the pure is, we may safely say, not safe, just as it is unsafe to fix weak eyes upon the sun's rays. And what is the permitted occasion? It is when we are free from all external defilement or disturbance, and when that which rules within us is not confused with vexatious or erring images.²⁷

Otherwise it will be like persons who mix up good writing with bad, or filth with the sweet odours of ointments. For it is necessary to be truly at leisure to know God; and when we can get a convenient season, to discern the straight road of the divine things²⁸. Only through purification in Christ, the potential theologian achieves to get rid of his passions but accepts with his whole being the fact of salvation²⁹. Support this view later, a passage from the work of another Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa. He supports that someone can talk about theology, only if he is purified, and has virtue and the grace of the Holy Spirit³⁰

The theology is an awesome project³¹, emphasizes Gregory the Theologian. Man fails to capture the eternal, *anarcho archi* (something which starts but it has no real start), the aidio (: eternal) and eternal God. Man cannot talk for Him or better about Him. This becomes more difficult when the mind is in diffusion. He must therefore be removed from anything that related to the observable universe and obtain the required inner peace. The latter was sought by the Holy Father throughout his entire life. It was what made him to be in constant struggle between monastic life and social contribution. He followed a middle way, since he considered that anyone who lives in the world is useful for others, useless, but for himself, because he is surrounded by the passions that agitate him. Instead, anyone who lives outside the world is certainly stable and looks God and therefore he is useful in himself, but he has "narrow" and

²⁷ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 27, 3, The First Theological Oration. A Preliminary Discourse Against the Eunomians, PG 36, 15A.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 1, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 4 (=PG 35, 1068D- 1069A). See Basil of Caesarea, On Isaiah, 14, PG 30, 621A.

³⁰ GREGORY OF NYSSA, On the Inscriptions of the Psalms, PG 44, 577D.

³¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 4, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 4 (=PG 35, 1069B).

restricted love for his fellow man. The best way of theology for Gregory is the vision of God. Only thus a greater degree of experience of the divine truth is achieved that is entirely consistent with the theological teachings of the Sacred Tradition and the Church.

The theology is impossible and unthinkable without the vision of God. As mentioned, the vision of God, the personal experience of truth is a function of purification:

Love what already abides within you, and let the rest await you in the treasury above. Approach it by the way you live: what is pure can only be acquired through purification. Do you want to become a theologian someday, to be worthy of the divinity? Keep the commandments; make your way forward through observing the precepts: for the practical life is the launching-pad for contemplation. Start with the body, but find joy in working for your soul³².

Only so the theologian will gain the experience of the knowledge of God, the knowledge of the uncreated attributes of the Holy Trinity, and not the knowledge of the divine nature, because His essence (*ousia*) is incomprehensible to everyone except the *Hypostases* of the Triune God.

The word for God is greater than any philosophy. The latter deals with mundane things and the concepts that are mutated; their meaning or their philosophical content is completely debunked. The rise in the level of theology resembles like climbing to “inaccessible mountain”. The man cannot achieve this only by his power and the exercise of his body and mind, because the theology is the fruit of the action of the Holy Spirit and the whole of the Holy Trinity, since all divine energies except the hypostatic idioms are common to all persons of the Triune God. The theology of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity arises from man's deepest experiences with God. It comes from the genuine living knowledge of those who have come to know God in faith.

4. The Triune God

4.1. Trinity: “Monas in Triadi and Trias in Monadi”, One God in three persons.

The holy Gregory begins the Twentieth Oration by defining the word “theologian” and how someone should theologize. Then, he gives the definition of what theology is and what its content³³. Theology, then, is the speech for God's word. The Holy Trinity is three “unconfused” and distinct divine persons (*hypostases*), who share one divine essence (*ousia*)—uncreated, immaterial and

³² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 4, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 12 (=PG 35, 1080B).

³³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 5-11,(=PG 35, 1065A-1081A.)

eternal. The Father is the eternal source of the Godhead, from Whom the Son is begotten eternally and also from Whom the Holy Spirit proceeds eternally. The essence of God being that which is beyond human comprehension and cannot be defined or approached by human understanding. In discussing God's relationship to his creation a distinction is made within Orthodox theology between God's eternal essence and uncreated energies, though it is understood that this does not compromise the divine simplicity. Energies and essence are both inseparably God. The divine energies are the expressions of Divine being in action according to Orthodox doctrine, whereas the Persons of the Holy Trinity are divine by nature. Hence, created beings are united to God through participation in the Divine energies not the Divine essence or *ousia*. Theology, then, is the real doctrine of the Holy Trinity. This teaching was revealed to the world by Jesus Christ himself and was preached by His Apostles. The Bible and Holy Tradition are the basis of theology for the Triune God.

The teaching for God must be based on faith, not logic³⁴. The rational being with his finite mind can not grasp the concept of the infinite God. Only if someone became a vessel of divine and the most perfect thought like Solomon and shareholder of the uncreated energies of God as Paul can speak for the God³⁵.

Gregory Nazianzen uses very specific terms to demonstrate the deity of the Son and Spirit by showing their relationship to the Father. He based his proof in the unquestioned deity of the Father, and then used relational terminology to explain how the Son and Spirit both shared in the deity of the Father and were distinct persons in and of themselves. The reference to the existence of three divine Persons of the Triune God, according to which each person is perfect God, debunks the heretical doctrines of Sabellius. The latter taught that there is one God in three *hypostases* (*persons*) but a *triprosopos hypostasis* (with three persons) that negated the existence of the three divine persons³⁶. At the same time Gregory makes reference to the consubstantiality of the divine *hypostases*, (*persons*) turning at his theological arrows against Arius' falsehoods:

But three are God's Hypostases, without mixture, confusion, analysis. The unity of the divine Persons is real as opposed to the purely "notional" (*monon epinoia theoreton: something that you see, but it is not real whst you see*) unity of several men. Thus if Father, Son and Spirit are distinguishable numerically as Persons, They are indistinguishable as essence. In relationship to the Father, the Son is identical in substance (*tauton kat' ousian: same in the essence*); and the analogy between the Trinity and Adam, Eve (made out of his

³⁴ Ibid, SC 270, 7, (=PG 35, 1069CD).

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Sabellius, a third-century theologian and priest, was a proponent of modalism. Modalism is a non-Trinitarian heresy claiming that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are simply different modes of God and not distinct persons within the Godhead.

rib) and Seth (the product of both) breaks down because the divine essence is indivisible³⁷.

And Gregory Nazianzen adds:

their unity would be based on the single, self-identical movement and will of the divine being, if I may put it that way, and on identity of substance. But the three *hypostases* (persons) would also be preserved, with no amalgamation or reduction or confusion conceived in our thought, so that the whole might not be destroyed by theories that honor the unity of God more than is appropriate.³⁸

As Gregory Nazianzen remarks, it is “absolutely simple and indivisible substance”, “indivisible and uniform and without parts”: *adiairetos esti kai monooides kai ameres*). In other words, he has transferred his emphasis from mere numerical unity to unity of nature³⁹.

The Persons of God have common substance, but have different hypostatic idiomas, the proper *idion*. Gregory emphasizes that it is wrong to think that there is one God, without accepting Him in personal *hypostases*:

we should not lump the three together into one *hypostasis*, for fear of polytheism, and so leave us with mere names, as we suppose Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the same individual. That would suggest we were just as ready to define all of them as one as we were to think each of them is nothing: for they would escape from being what they are, if they were to change and be transformed into each other. Nor should our argument divide them into three substances: either substances foreign to each other and wholly dissimilar, as that doctrine so aptly called “Arian madness” would have it, or substances without origin or order, which would be, so to speak, gods in rivalry... Nor should we minimize the Father's rank as ultimate cause, insofar as he is Father and begetter (for he would be the cause of minor and unworthy beings, if he were not cause of the divinity that we recognize in the Son and the Spirit). If, then, we must necessarily hold on to the one God while confessing the three *hypostases*, surely we must speak of three Persons, each one with its own distinctive properties⁴⁰.

³⁷ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Epist. 101 and 102, Against Apollinarius; The First and Second Letter to Cledonius, PG 37, 176-199.

³⁸ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 7 On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 7, (=PG 35, 1073A).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 6, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 6, (=PG 35, 1072B).

So for one more time Gregory turns against falsehoods of Sabellius and generally tropical or modalistic monarchianism, without, however, exclude the falsehoods of the heresy of potential monarchianism and of Arius. Their falsehoods had been condemned by the First Ecumenical Council in 325 AD, but the remnants of their teachings were still alive in the era of Gregory. After all, those falsehoods would torment the Church for several centuries.

The Christian teaching about God is based on the Word's revelation. For this reason the Christian dogma differs even from the Jewish doctrine of God. The only common between the two doctrines is that they refer to the one true and eternal God, without the Jews accept the existence of three *Hypostases* of the one God⁴¹. So Gregory debunks any Jewish thought about many Gods or the existence of a person to God.

Through this oration, St. Gregory seeks to make clear that the God of the Christians is One but has three consubstantial and co-eternal Persons. The Trinity is three divine persons (*hypostases*) who share one essence (*ousia*). There never was a time when any of the persons of the Trinity did not exist. God is beyond and before time and yet acts within time, moving and speaking within history. Thus, as the Father is "ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, ever-existing and eternally the same", so the Son and the Spirit are exactly the same. Every attribute of divinity which belongs to God the Father—life, love, wisdom, truth, blessedness, holiness, power, purity, joy—belongs equally as well to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The being, nature, essence, existence and life of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are absolutely and identically one and the same. Every action of God is the action of the Three. No one person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. And the divine action is essentially one. Besides Their common actions, each divine Person has His own idioms:

The right thing is that we should neither be such partisans of the Father that we end up cancelling his Fatherhood (for whose would Father be) if the Son's nature is alienated from him, and made into something else, through this talk of creation?), nor such partisans of Christ that we no longer even preserve his Sonship, if he does not look towards the Father as his cause?). ... If, then, we must necessarily hold on to the one God while confessing the three *hypostases*, persons surely we must speak of three Persons, each one with its own distinctive properties⁴².

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 6, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 6, (=PG 35, 1072B).

4.2. The Substance of the Father. God the Father

The substance of the Father is the source of existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit, Gregory the Theologian unequivocally declares,

Nor should we minimize the Father's rank as ultimate cause, insofar as he is Father and begetter (for he would be the cause of minor and unworthy beings, if he were not cause of the divinity that we recognize in the Son and the Spirit)⁴³.

Father is *aidios* (*eternal*), eternally begets Son and sends forth the Holy Spirit. So, the Son is born from the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father—both in the same timeless and eternal action of the Father's own being. In this view, the Son and the Spirit are both one with God and in no way separated from Him. Thus, the Divine Unity consists of the Father, with His Son and His Spirit distinct from Himself and yet perfectly united together in Him. With the phrase “One God and to one cause”⁴⁴, Gregory emphasizes the monarchy in the Holy Trinity, clarifies that the Son and the Holy Spirit come naturally and essentially from the Father, as the single “Anarchy authority”⁴⁵: “the Father is conceived and said to be both without origin, and origin himself, origin, in that he is cause and spring and eternal light”⁴⁶.

If someone tries to reduce the authority of the Father at the same time reduces the “value” of two other persons, which come from the Father⁴⁷. Father is called our God, for no other reason, because He bears eternally the Son. This, however, does not make him presbyter of His Son, because between the Persons of the Triune God, there is no time and order⁴⁸. God is indeed the creator of time.

The Father, however, as we stated, is the beginning for the Holy Spirit, too. He is the cause of the progress of the Spirit, again without any implication of

⁴³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 6, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 6, (=PG 35, 1072CD).

⁴⁴ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20,7, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270,7, (=PG 35, 1073A).

⁴⁵ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20,7, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270,7, (=PG 35, 1073C).

⁴⁶ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 7, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270,7, (=PG 35, 1073B).

⁴⁷ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 6, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 6, (PG 35, 1072CD).

⁴⁸ “When I speak of “origin,” do not insert there a notion of time, nor put some third thing in between the begetter and the begotten, nor divide he divine nature by mistakenly including something else with those two, who are equally eternal and fully joined. For if time is older than the Son, surely the Father would be its cause first of all; and how then would [the Son] be the maker of all times, if he is subject to time? How would he be the Ruler of all things, if he is bound and ruled by time himself?” (GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 7 On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 7). (=PG 35, 1073BC).

time and order in relationships of these two persons⁴⁹. God, after all, is above and beyond time, place, quantity and everything material and physical. In other part of the oration, the Father is characterized “as a source”⁵⁰. The term “source” is often given to God-Father by ecclesiastical writers, because He Himself is the source of the eternal existence of the other two Persons. Moreover several Fathers of the early Church as Athanasius the Great, liken the Son to river, to show the consubstantiality of both Person (Father and Son) and *synaidio* (co-eternal of them, their coeternal existence or characterize the Father as a light and the Son as the brightness of the light⁵¹).

The first Person of the Triune God begets the Son apathetically. The passion exists only in the birth of man by man. But this has nothing to do with God. Only simply used words and pictures from the human life are misused to refer to God. However, we always must bear in mind that the relations that we describe, concern completely different Beings. God is incorporeal and uncreated, while man is corporeal and created:

Now if you think that the Son is subject to time because bodies are subject to time, then you will have fenced in the Bodiless One by a body; and if you insist that the Son must have come into being from what was not, because those who are begotten in our world once did not exist and then came to be, you will be comparing incomparable realities: God and the human, the body and what is without body⁵².

⁴⁹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 11, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 11(=PG 35, 1077D).

⁵⁰ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 1, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 1 (=PG 35, 1065A).

⁵¹ Ibid. ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, Discourse 3 Against the Arians, 3, PG 26, 328BC: “But if the Lord said this, His words would not rightly have been, 'I in the Father and the Father in Me,' but rather, 'I too am in the Father, and the Father is in Me too,' that He may have nothing of His own and by prerogative, relatively to the Father, as a Son, but the same grace in common with all. But it is not so, as they think; for not understanding that He is genuine Son from the Father, they belie Him who is such, whom alone it befits to say, 'I in the Father and the Father in Me.' For the Son is in the Father, as it is allowed us to know, because the whole Being of the Son is proper to the Father's essence, as radiance from light, and stream from fountain; so that whoso sees the Son, sees what is proper to the Father, and knows that the Son's Being, because from the Father, is therefore in the Father. For the Father is in the Son, since the Son is what is from the Father and proper to Him, as in the radiance the sun, and in the word the thought, and in the stream the fountain: for whoso thus contemplates the Son, contemplates what is proper to the Father's Essence, and knows that the Father is in the Son. For whereas the Form and Godhead of the Father is the Being of the Son, it follows that the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son”. Also see Ibid, 3, 5', PG 26, 329C. Ibid 1, 1, PG 26, 72C.

⁵² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 8, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 8 (=PG 35, 1073C).

The difference between the nature of the Person of the Triune God and people continuously is highlighted by the holy Gregory. This explains that as the term “genesis” –the Nativity— of God Son from the Father should not be understood in proportion to man. Thus the term “build or create” otherwise is interpreted in terms as concerned as the creation of God and it has different context in human history and life⁵³. The believer in Christ, then, must merely accept that the word *agennitos* (without birth) is for the Father, Son is born of the Father and the Spirit proceed by Him, without trying to penetrate by the logic into the knowledge of the infinite God. Besides, the relations among the Persons of the Triune God, and the essence of God are incomprehensible to any man and his material intellection⁵⁴. And the holy Theologian completes that God allows man to know what he needs to be aware for his benefit. If man looks the most of the divine truth, then he likely is in danger like loud voices, which for a lot of tension, come heavy and soon they become completely silenced, or like the eye which is gazing the glow of the sun. As more accurately one wants to see the sun, he causes more serious damage to his eyesight. So gradually he will completely lose his vision, since the exaggeration of the sun sight defeats the eye. This happens because of the man's attempt to look continually the sun as deeply as possible. Man should see the Sun only as much as this is safe for his eyes.

In conclusion, the Cappadocian Father refers to the existence of God the Father, based on the Bible and not on the secular wisdom. This avoids any

⁵³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 9, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 9 (=PG 35, 1075D). cf Psalms 148:5: “There is passibility involved in creating, too! Is it not passibility to imagine and to plan, and to break down into a myriad of details what has been thought of all as one? “Is time involved in his begetting?” Created things, too, come to be in time. “Is there place in it?” There is place in creating, too. “Is there an element of misfortune in begetting?” Misfortune is involved in creation, too. These are the things I hear behind your philosophical arguments; for often the hand does not put its final signature on what the mind has subscribed to internally. “But all things have come to be,” you say, “by his word and his will. For he spoke and they came into being; he gave the command and they were created.” When you say that all things were created by the word of God, you are not making use of our human notion of creating; for none of us makes things happen simply by a word. Nothing would be beyond us, after all, and nothing would require less effort than this, if simply our saying the word were the way to complete an action. But if God creates what is created simply by a word, creating for him is not like our human activity. Either show us some human being creating something by a word, or accept the fact that God does not create as a human being does. Design a city any way you choose, and let the city arise before you! Will that a son be born to you, and let the son stand there! Make the decision that something else be done, and let your willing lead to reality!”

⁵⁴ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 10, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 10, (=PG 35, 1077C). “All of this is what our abusers argue; all of this belongs to those who rashly attack everything we say. We do not think this way—this is not our opinion. But together with the Father's ingenerate being—he always was, for mind never slips away into non-being—the Son, too, was, in a generate way. As a result, the begottenness of the Only-begotten runs parallel with the being of the Father; he has his existence from him and not after him, except in respect of the concept of source—source, that is, in the sense of cause”.

heretical thought being created. The Father God is the only cause of the eternal existence of the Son and of eternal procession of the Spirit within the Trinity. Then, he emphasizes that the time does not enter into the relations among the divine Persons, because God is away from the time. Besides, the concept of time is a creation of the Triune God. Finally, the consubstantiality of the Father to the Son and the Spirit is specified, which is a key factor in the interpretation of the monarchy in the Triune God.

4.3. The Existence of the Son. God the Son

The Son is derived from the substance of the Father. As consubstantial with the Father, He is without beginning, He is eternal. *Anarchos* (without beginning) is considered in relation to time and not to the Father. Besides, He comes from the Father, having acquired apathetically an *aidios*: (eternal) on Him, thus the Son has a beginning, or a cause, the Father:

But the Son is not without origin, if one understands as his origin the Father—for the Father, as cause of the Son, is his origin also; but if you conceive of origin here on the basis of time, then he, too, is without origin—for the Master of time does not have time as his source⁵⁵.

The second Person of the Holy Trinity is the One through whom the Father created the world, visible and invisible. The Son is not the Father, but He is *synaidios*, (co-eternal) co-eternal with Father, as time has nothing to do with the nature of the Godhead. Centuries and generally the time are created by eternal God. There was no time when there was no Son. So it's silly to be said that the Son came *ex ouk onton*⁵⁶, (from nothing) as *mutatis mutandis* (: according the analogies) with people⁵⁷ and every created creature, animate or inanimate, material or spiritual⁵⁸. With the phrase *ex ouk onton* (from nothing)⁵⁹, Gregory directs against the falsehoods of Arius, who used this expression. Through this phrase, the leader of the heresy of Arianism tried to explain that the Son was not God but a long-standing creature that was created a certain time, whereas before he was to nothingness. Generally Gregory follows the

⁵⁵ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 7, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 7, (=PG 35, 1073C).

⁵⁶ Ibid, SC 270, 8, (=PG 35, 1073C).

⁵⁷ Ibid, SC 270, 8, (=PG 35, 1076A): "If the being of two things is not alike, then their begetting will also not be alike; but if this is not so, then God will be subject to material circumstances in every other respect, suffering and experiencing pain and hunger and thirst and all the other things that the body, or body and soul together, undergo. But your mind cannot accept that—for our conversation is about God! Do not, then, take his being begotten in any sense but a divine one"

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, Discourse 1 Against the Arians, 1, 5, PG 26, 21AB.

theology of the Council of Nice, the theology of Athanasius the Great and as Athanasius says:

‘The Son was not always;’ for, whereas all things were made out of nothing, and all existing creatures and works were made, so the Word of God Himself was ‘made out of nothing,’ and ‘once He was not,’ and ‘He was not before His origination,’ but He as others ‘had an origin of creation’.⁶⁰

The human mind can not conceive about God, such as the birth of the Son, nor the Son that has none of the irreproachable passions of human nature. Besides God Father could only spawn God from His essence, since the Generator is similar to the Brood:

If the being of two things is not alike, then their begetting will also not be alike; but if this is not so, then God will be subject to material circumstances in every other respect, suffering and experiencing pain and hunger and thirst and all the other things that the body, or body and soul together, undergo. But your mind cannot accept that—for our conversation is about God! Do not, then, take his being begotten in any sense but a divine one.⁶¹

The birth of the second *hypostasis* (*person*) of the Trinity is stated that is not subject to the laws of birth governing human leavens. The Son and Word of God has never been in the loins of Father and after a period of time, He was born, as it is mentioned characteristically for Levi⁶². Neither was He incomplete in the womb of Theotokos when he was arrested and later He became perfect at birth, as it happens in every human creature⁶³.

In conclusion, Gregory speaks of the deity of the Son with pretty intense style to this oration, apparently because of Arian's misbelief that remains sore about the Church. So Gregory wants in any way to refute the falsehoods of Arians for the Son. The Cappadocian Father emphasizes that the Word *gennatai aidios* and *achronos* (his birth is eternal and without time) by the Father. He is consubstantial with Him. This fact is something that we have to accept and not try to approach the mystery of the relationship of the *Hypostases*

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 8, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 8, (=PG 35, 1076A).

⁶² GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 9, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 9, (=PG 35, 1076D).

⁶³ GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS, Oration 20, 9, On Theology, and the Appointment of Bishops, SC 270, 9, (=PG 35, 1076D): “For I am not saying that the Son has come into being from the Father in this way, that he first was in the Father, and after that made his way towards being—he was not, after all, first incomplete and then complete, as is the law of our own process of generation”.

(: Persons) of the Holy Trinity by the finite human logic. Besides the human rational being cannot understand the various natural phenomena, how is it possible to be able to understand and realize the Uncontainable God?⁶⁴

5. Conclusions

Through this work of Gregory the Theologian, the conditions which are required for someone to be true theologian are initially highlighted. This teaching of St. Gregory clearly shows ~~that~~ a lot of attention to the conditions of Orthodox theology. If these conditions are altered, then man is driven to deviation from the truth and, therefore, adopts any falsehood, any heresy. Gregory states, therefore, that the importance of theology is connecting closely with the vision of God and the lavish grace of God to anyone who tries to speak for God. Therefore, the necessary conditions of correct theology are the sacred silence, the road to God, the purification of the heart from the passions and the divine illumination of the human mind.

Then he talks about the God who is One and Triune simultaneously. It is indicated indirectly that each person of the Trinity is a vector of absolute completeness of sulfur. The interpretation of the eternal existential cause and the relationship of the Father with the Son and the Holy Spirit is also exposed. Indeed, the reference to the mode of existence of the Son is extensive, while the Holy Spirit is very limited. This naturally causes a great impression at a time when the debate on the deity of the Spirit prevails. Then the holy Gregory is the key proponent of the deity of the Spirit at that time.

Gregory points out that we should not try to understand the relations of Persons of the Triune God based on human relationships. This may not apply, because the human vocabulary misused to man talk about God and to allow God to reveal part of the truth that can be understood by man. We should interest that God exists and seek the lighting of God to broach the things about God and not to try to find what is God.

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Abbreviations:

PG: Patrologia Graeca, Migne
SC: Sources Chrétiennes.